


## St. Petersburg Escape Experience Tour

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<p>The growing popularity of Russia as a tourist destination and the high interest towards escape rooms and quests opens new business opportunities and market niches. The aim of this thesis is to develop a tourist product based on the new escape room tourism concept combining the historical, cultural and game experiences. The choice of the theme and destination was determined by the authors' personal backgrounds and the proximity to Finland.</p> <p>The theoretical research was implemented with the use of several tools, such as Porter's Five Forces Model, SWOT-analysis, User Persona, BonBus analysis, Product Design Canvas, Value Proposition Design, Customer Journey Map, online survey and 5-step marketing strategy. The practical part provides the authors finding and application of the chosen methods to St. Petersburg Escape Experience Tour development. The selection of these particular theories results in understanding of the current market situation, defining the main target customer groups and sets a framework for the product development. The project plan chapter presents the timeline for the development process and describes the steps the authors took and will take from ideation to the product launch.</p> <p>The details of the developed product are presented in Appendix 1 and include environmental analysis, customer target group defining, itinerary choices and combination and market entry strategies. The product development was supported by the authors experience gained from testing the itinerary elements during the self-performed study trip to the selected destination.</p> <p>The actual work is aimed at providing a sustainable base for the possible future launch of a new authentic and multidimensional tourism experience product, based on the existing demand and satisfying the customers' need for a new type of adventure tour to St. Petersburg.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b> Tourism, experience, escape room, touristic product, escape room tourism, Saint Petersburg	

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# **1 Introduction**

This paper is a product-based thesis aimed at creating a new tourism product comprising several types of tourism experiences, such as cultural, museum, enogastronomic and escape room. By this work the authors would also like to introduce the new concept of escape room tourism.

Escape room industry is a relatively new and rapidly developing entertainment sector. Its constant expansion is opening new business markets which are yet to be explored. The escape room tourism phenomenon has evolved due to the escape room industry rapid development and has not yet been analysed.

The aim of this product oriented thesis is to elaborate a new touristic product, a 6-day tour from Helsinki to St. Petersburg, which would combine both the cultural tourism entertainment program and escape room game experience. The product will be based on the main concepts of tourism experience economy.

The subject has been chosen as the authors are interested in tourism relations between Finland and Russia, since nowadays there is a lot of room for this kind of business development. The choice of the theme has been made considering the authors' knowledge of the escape room industry operations and general customer service experience. This work is neither sponsored or commissioned by any organization, however it might be a starting point for launching own touristic start-up.

## **1.1 Objective**

The main objective of this thesis is to create tourism product for the following launching of a tourism start-up. The thesis includes the preliminary analysis of the environment and the market, customer segmentation, detailed description of the concept and itinerary, and market entry strategies. Before launching the product, authors first tested the product themselves and adjust it if needed. Following that, tourism professionals would be invited to come and test the product and give a feedback in order that authors would be able to re-design the needed parts of the project.

The thesis is aimed at providing a clear and well-elaborated scheme for launching this touristic project based on the theoretical knowledge of the industry obtained by the authors as part of their Degree Programme in Hospitality, Tourism and Experience Management.

## **1.2 Product description**

It is planned to create 6-days tour that will be combining of cultural and escape room programs. The authors decided to use St. Petersburg Lines ferry as a means to make use of a 72-hour visa free rule for foreign tourists coming to Russia. During the tour, the visitors will see the city from an unusual angle, play several escape rooms, learn about the country's history and taste local food.

In the beginning of the development process the philosophy and the goals of the product will be determined. The value proposition for the customers is to be elaborated. As the next step, the authors will provide the environmental analysis considering the competitiveness at the destination, customer behaviour, political, economic, social and technological factors.

The third part relates to the development of the product concept itself. And within this part the authors will provide a thoroughly elaborated itinerary, cooperation strategies and analysis the concept from different perspectives.

## **1.3 Methods**

The methods chosen to use in the actual thesis are mostly qualitative. The reason for this choice is based on the need to get more information not in numerical form. Qualitative data are harder to analyze than quantitative ones due to their descriptive form. (McLeod, 2008.)

For the environmental analysis, the authors used two methods: Porter's Five Forces Model and SWOT analysis. This approach helps to analyze the potential of the target market and estimate the possible risks of entering it.

During the customer segmentation stage the authors used online survey, BonBus company portfolio and User Persona tools. The first one is partially quantitative as for the proper research of the customer groups the authors needed the numerical information, such as the amount of respondents from Finland and other countries, the number of escape rooms played, gender balance and other parameters. However, the survey also contained open

questions where the respondents could provide us with the personal information and their vision of the escape room tourism concept related issues. Company portfolio via BonBus tool is also rather a qualitative method as it shows the correlation of the target groups with the products provided. User Persona is a qualitative method requiring a prominent level of empathy towards understanding the target group behavior and motives. Such range from quantitative aspects to highly qualitative requiring empirical approach is aimed at providing a multi-sided analysis of the customer groups the project is targeting.

In the product development part, the authors agreed to use Product Design Canvas, Value Proposition Canvas and Customer Journey Map. All of these methods are quantitative and were chosen due to the necessity to reveal the cause-and-effect relationships between all the factors affecting the product development process. Besides, such approach can help to see if there is a balance between the demand in the market, purchase intent and the current product offering.

The market entry strategy is also based on the qualitative approach of a 5-step market entry strategy developed by the authors. However, at a later stage, during the development and analysis of social media and online strategies, the quantitative approach should be used in order to estimate the marketing development process in a clearly visible way.

#### **1.4 Key Definitions**

Some of the key definitions used in the actual work are as follows:

Escape room game – live-action team-based games where players discover clues, solve puzzles, and accomplish tasks in one or more rooms in order to accomplish a specific goal (usually escaping from the room) in a limited amount of time. (Nicholson 2015.)

Escape room tourism – travelling to different cities and countries as a matter of curiosity and desire to participate in local escape room games. This is a new concept of tourism that has never been studied before and is hereby presented by the authors of this thesis. The authors believe that each escape room has its own authentic features that are differentiated regarding the local culture, history, language, beliefs and traditions.

Experience - a staged and memorable set of events that is rich with sensory perceptions, engaging the guest in a personal way. (Pine & Gilmore 1998.)

Tourism experience – any occurrence that happens to a person outside of his or her usual environment within a contracted time (Scott, Laws, & Boksberger 2010.).

Business strategy – according to Michael D. Watkins is “a set of guiding principles that, when communicated and adopted in the organization, generates a desired pattern of decision making. A strategy is therefore about how people throughout the organization should make decisions and allocate resources in order accomplish key objectives. A good strategy provides a clear roadmap, consisting of a set of guiding principles or rules, that defines the actions people in the business should take (and not take) and the things they should prioritize (and not prioritize) to achieve desired goals.” (Watkins 2007.)

## **2 Analysis, development and market entry strategy**

This part of the thesis provides with the theoretical framework for the product development. First, the authors tried to estimate the potential risks of the target environment in order to see if it is worth launching the product there and if it is, what potential threats an entrepreneur could face and what is the competition level in order to find the opportunities to make the most of the actual conditions. After that the research of the target groups was performed and the image of a “perfect” customer was developed. And the final part is the theoretical framework for the product development itself, the tools that help to see the elements of the product, the customer views and the available resources in a nutshell and to get the best possible outcome based on the research findings.

### **2.1 Environmental analysis**

This chapter is aiming at providing the authors the idea of the current market situation, the level of competition and the available development opportunities. At first, the authors tried to give a general representation of the product considering its strong and weak points and the room for improvement. After that a deeper evaluation of the potential market threats will follow.

Analysing the environment is an essential step before launching a business as it is important to understand the external and internal features that might influence the business performance. The environmental analysis gives the vision of the potential threats and opportunities within the chosen market and it should be taken into consideration in the decision-making process concerning all the project development phases.

The authors have chosen two methods of environmental analysis: SWOT Analysis, to get a wider picture of the product position, its strong and weak points and its potential development opportunities, and Porter’s Five Forces Model, that makes an impact on the possible threats within the chosen environment. The analysis of the competitive forces and their causes helps to analyse the company’s potential profitability as well as gives the space for influencing the future development. Porter states that company strategists should be as concerned about the healthy industry as they are about their own company’s position. An unobstructed vision of the industry structure is vitally important for effective strategic positioning. (Porter, 2008)



### 2.1.1 SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a tool used to define the strengths and weaknesses of the business as well as to estimate the potential threats and define the future opportunities for its development. The advantage of this tool is that, despite its seeming simplicity, it helps to determine the position of one's business in the market, its drawbacks and the ways to minimize them and the potential of future development.

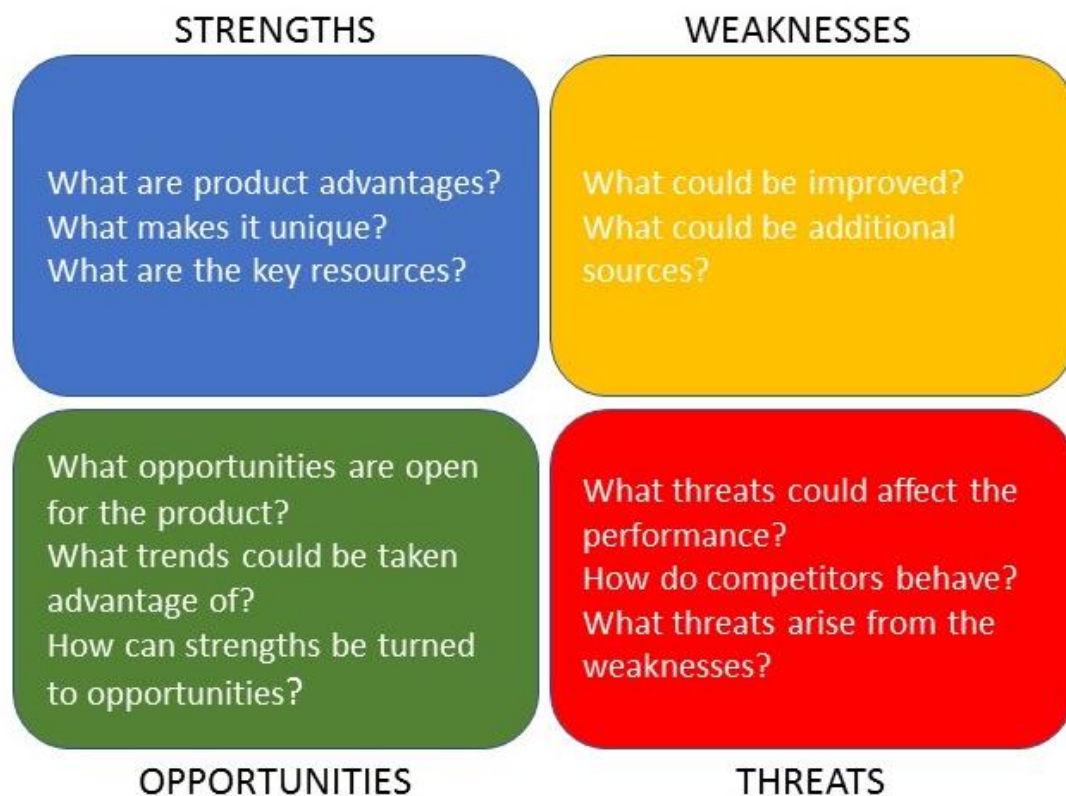


Figure 1: SWOT analysis Template

SWOT analysis is useful and important tool in strategical business for existing companies and for start-up companies. It helps to understand risk and highlight opportunities of the company in long-term perspective. By applying SWOT method authors would analyse current situation of the market, weak and strong sides of own business concept.

Strength and Weaknesses are parts of the internal analysis, which the product itself can have influence on. While Opportunities and Threats are the external factors, which cannot be controlled by the object.

The internal factors analysis should include such aspects as human resources, physical resources, finances, activities and processes, past experiences. Though strengths and weaknesses are internal characteristics, the outside perspective of other individuals should not be overlooked. (Community Toolbox)

The variety of external factors is very hard to limit, so only the most related to the current product aspects will be evaluated, such as, future trends, economic development, funding sources, demographics, legislation, local events. (Community Toolbox)

A clear view of the product's weaknesses and threats gives the company a chance to face and overcome them using the strategies based on its strengths and opportunities. This approach would help to build a steady strategic plan for business implementation.

SWOT analysis is criticized for non-sufficient theoretical background and a lack of criteria to identify the noteworthy particulars (Valentin 2005.). Due to this, SWOT sometimes is found ineffective as it rather provides with a general picture with little consideration of past experience of a company. However, the authors are using it in the actual paper, because the general picture, without any ready solutions and past experience, of the product potential is exactly what is needed at an early development stage.

### **2.1.2 Porter's Five Forces Model**

The Porter's Five Forces Model was first elaborated in 1979 by a young professor of Harvard Business School, Michael Porter, and with time became one of the cornerstones of the following business research. The author distinguishes the following forces: threat of substitute products, threat of new entrants, bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of buyers, rivalry among existing companies. Below a more detailed description of the Five Forces is provided. (Porter 2008.)

**Threat of substitute products:** A substitute product is a product that can provide an analogous value to the customer. A company faces this risk due to its product replacement by the substitutes from another industry. The threat of substitute products affects the market and decreases the chances to achieve profitability. The decrease of profitability occurs due to the fact that a customer might decide to purchase the substitute product instead of the company's one. However, the availability of close substitute products allows the industry to increase its competitiveness and vice versa. (Wilkinson 2013.)

There are several issues defining the level of the substitute threat. The first one is the price differentiation, i.e if the costs for the offered product and its substitute are more or less similar than the threat is considered to be high. In case the substitute product price is lower, this creates a price ceiling, and the threat is even higher. Also, the quality of the product should be considered as one of the factors in a similar way: if the quality of the substitute product is better or the same the threat can be considered high. And the last factor is the functions, attributes and performance, which, in case they are better than the ones of the company product, also increase the substitute threat level and decrease the profit potential. (Wilkinson 2013.)

**Threat of new entrants:** When a new company appears in the market, in order to get competitive, it has to make such an offer that would attract the customers to it. This might be reached by offering lower prices, reducing costs and making a difference in its offer. In case this happens, the old players on the market have to adjust in order to keep their competitiveness at a relevant level. (Wilkinson 2013.)

However, there are also several reasons influencing the profitability in the short term, such as weather, force majeure, business cycle. The evaluation of the competition within the market provides the space to control and alter competitiveness and profitability within the medium and long term. (Wilkinson 2013.)

In the development of the current project, the challenge is to enter the market and gain competitive advantage among the existing companies. Thus, a lot of attention should be given to the project implementation plan and marketing strategy.

**Bargaining power of suppliers:**

The suppliers of commodities, products, labor and services have an opportunity to influence the operations of a company. For instance, they can agree to collaborate only on some special terms, set high prices or refuse to work at all. (Wilkinson 2013.)

**Bargaining power of buyers:**

This threat relates to the customers' influence on the companies in order to make the later ones provide an altered version of the product, reduce the prices, increase the quality of the product or the customer service. This sphere should be analyzed from the customer's perspective. (Wilkinson 2013.)

### **Rivalry among existing companies:**

For many companies, it is a major factor that influences the competition level in the field. Sometimes there is an aggressive rivalry, sometimes it is just limited to non-price competition in the innovation sphere, marketing or business models. This threat considers the amount of competitors in the sphere, the market growth level, market saturation, entrance and exit barriers, competitors' specifics, marketing expenditures and the rivals' ambitions.



Figure.2. The Five Forces that shape industry competition (Porter 2008.)

Nilofer Merchant, professor of Stanford University, however states that the Porter's Five Forces Model does not always work nowadays. She believes that a model developed almost 40 years ago, despite its multiple advantages, does not cover the specifics of the current social media era. (Merchant 2012.)

The authors agree with the abovementioned statement, that Porter's Five Forces Model does not consider the power of social media, however it was still decided to use the as one of the tools of environmental analysis, as it is still a good way to define the existing threats in the market. Supplemented with extra attention towards social media representation, at the stage of marketing campaign development, Porter's Five Forces is an optimal tool to be used in the product development.

The methods used above, in case it is proved that the environment is positive for the new tourist product, allow the authors to pass to further stages of product development, such as defining the target customer groups.

## **2.2 User Persona**

Based on the previously received data, the authors made an image of the potential target group using the user persona tool. This tool is implemented by creating a fictional personality who would be a typical representative of the target group of the product. This kind of approach help to shift the focus to the customer and get a wider understanding of his or her motives and desires, as well as to deliver empathy for them. (Merholz 2009.)

According to Harvard Business Review, User Persona is a “single tool that does the best job at spreading empathy throughout a business” (Merholz 2009.). There are several rules of creating a User Persona that help to encourage empathy:

- Giving the User Persona a real name;
- Thinking of the User Persona typical behaviour and motives;
- Including basic demographic information;
- Making a statement in User Persona’s own voice (Merholz 2009.).

With the use of this tool the authors hope to start understanding the potential customers from their own perspective and to realize their needs better.

The way of constructing a user persona optimal for the developed experience escape tour was agreed to be as follows:

- 1) General description of the goals, defining the needed information about the customer group, ways of getting these data.
- 2) Formulate key questions and address them to potential customers.
- 3) Information analysis.
- 4) User persona construction on the basis of the received data.

However, at an early stage the usage of a complete portrait of an ideal user might cause serious complications as at a start level the general understanding of the customer needs is more vital than the images of its separate representatives. Another problem that often takes place during the product development is that the development team builds its work based on the images of those ideal customers, omitting the fact that this differentiation might not be enough. In this case, the user persona might become a useless tool. To make a profound and really working user persona the authors will try not to make the typical mistakes, such as using only numerical indicators, using only qualitative indicators, trust in total representativeness and stability of the created persona. (Turbek)

### **2.3 Company portfolio via BonBus tool**

The authors have participated in Company Portfolio Workshop in order to define the target groups and their correlation with the offered products. The workshop was based on the BonBus tool and was organized by the inventor of the tool herself, Teija Aarnio.

The tool is used to create a company portfolio which helps to see the connections between the products offered and the target customer groups clearly. The portfolio is structured in such format that would in future development assist in planning sales, develop customer-oriented services and products and to define sales supporting strategies. At the end of the workshop the authors were also given feedback for the results of their work from the tool inventor.


At the workshop the authors worked with the most commonly used basic version of the service portfolio, describing which services are sold to which customers. The first step was to indicate the names of all the customer groups from the customer perspective and write a short description for each of them. It was essential that the name was given in such way that customers could easily define themselves into one of them. The groups should have also been defined from one perspective and every customer should fit to only one group. (Aarnio 28 March 2017.)

The second step was to make a list of products and services the company sells and also to name them from the customer's perspective with a short definition provided. Extra attention was applied to the questions if a customer could easily understand what the product is, if the products were defined within one perspective and if the service was defined as a whole, not as a set of components. (Aarnio 28 March 2017.)

After that the correspondence of the products and customer groups had to be marked in the table. The portfolio can be considered successful in case there is only one clear correspondence. In case there could be more or the correspondence was unclear the tool user had to come back to the previous steps and try to define the target groups and products more precisely.

Services  
Principle identical with cars



TOYOTA					
AYGO		X			
COROLLA			X		
PRIUS				X	
PROACE					X

Services  
Principle identical with cars



TOYOTA CAR					
Tires		X	X	X	X
Engine		X	X	X	X
Seats		X	X	X	X
Lights		X	X	X	X

Figure 3. Good (on the left) and bad (on the right) examples of BonBus tool usage (Aarnio 28 March 2017.)

According to the tool inventor, it is very important to create products that are aimed for certain type of target group. The potential customers should be able easily to define own group and desirable product. Creation of products for specific targeted customer groups allows to understand customer needs and fulfil them. Moreover, after certain time the company that created business products can make product and service analyze for understanding the profitability of each target groups. Because there is always a possibility that the expenses for certain group of customers are too high and do not give good profitability for business. (Aarnio 2015, 180-190.)

The clear understanding of the environmental specifics and with the target groups defined, it is possible to pass on to the product development stage using all the received data from the previous parts.

## 2.4 Product Development

In this subchapter, the authors discuss the tools that will be used in the process of product development. The authors concentrate on such tool as Product Design Canvas, Value Proposition Canvas and Customer Journey Map. The choice of the tools was determined by the specifics and needs of the developed product.

The Product Design Canvas is aimed at combining the awareness of the available tools, resources with the features of the target customers, their backgrounds and values, as well as with the planned end result in order to see how all the elements fit each other. Value Proposition Canvas helps to analyze the customers' needs deeper, their perception of the product and the ways to make the most of its positive sides, as well as eliminating the negative ones. Customer Journey Map is the last tool of the product development phase and it aims at trying

to see the whole product through the customer perspective. By using this tool it is not just possible to see the participant's perception of this or that part of the tour, but also to monitor the transitions between all the parts, seeing the whole way of the customer through the developed experience. The authors assumed that using these three tools would be enough for a thorough and detailed new tourist product development.

#### **2.4.1 Product Design Canvas**

As a basis of product development, the authors agreed to use the Product Design Canvas tool. This tool is aimed at developing a structured picture of all the integral parts of the product development and eliminating all the possible ambiguity related to this process. The canvas consists of several elements listed below (Voorhorst 2013, 33-42.)

- 1) User – User is the customer who chooses the product aiming at reaching some target or goal. By this tool, it is possible to determine the specifics of the product user and their motives.
- 2) Tasks and Objectives – All the users have their own goals, either externally given or a personal intention. These goals define functions and interaction possibilities that can be offered, as well as their importance.
- 3) User skills/experiences – The background of the customers, their previously acquired skills.
- 4) Product – All the parts of the Product Design Canvas combines lead to the development of the product. It is a multidimensional concept combining the users' needs with production and management issues.
- 5) Resources and materials – The design of the product is performed within the circumstances of the limited resources. The used ones influence the product development at every dimension.
- 6) Tools and technologies – The product might be limited by the tools and resources. It is important to develop the product within the available technologies and expertise without limiting the creators' creativity.
- 7) Perception – The presentation of the products' possibilities: its levers of influence, functioning, market position, clarity of communication.
- 8) Action – The needs that the product is aimed at satisfying, the possibilities given to the customers.
- 9) Context of use – The reasons why the current product is to be selected among several other equivalent products.
- 10) Pricing – Setting the price corresponding to the selected customer group, market and competition level.
- 11) Product portfolio – In most cases the product must have a portfolio that matches the requirements of the product type.



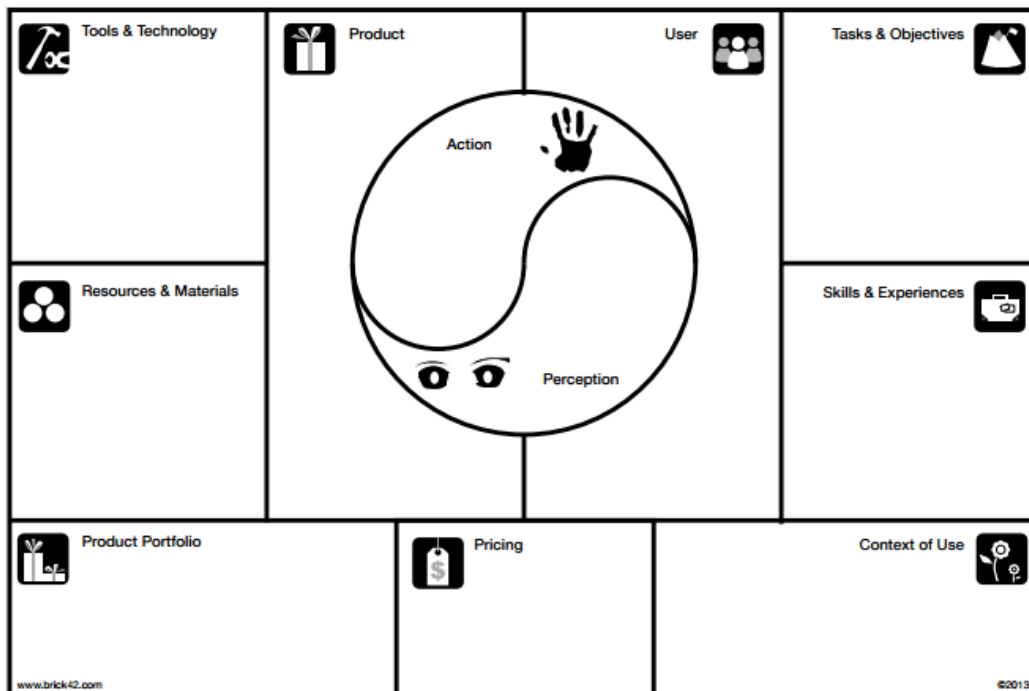


Figure 4. Product Design Canvas (Voorhorst 2013.)

Product Design Canvas is a multidimensional tool which concentrates not only on the end-user related aspects, such as customer needs, the way the product is used within a certain context, but also emphasizes the production related factors, for example the implementation of the components, their connections, as well as business related factors. The choice of Product Design Canvas tool was made due to the fact that it covers all these aspects and might be the best tool in the process of the current project development. (Voorhorst 2013, 33-42.)

Product Design Canvas is used in the actual product development as it is an optimal tool that combines the environmental conditions, the needs of the potential customers and the resources available for the product launchers. The authors assume that it will give a clarified vision of the developed product, its specifics, positioning and scope. Based on the results of the Product Design Canvas it is easy to pass to the value creation stage and find out which would be the best way to analyze and meet the needs and requirements of the experience tour customers.

#### 2.4.2 Value Proposition Canvas

Each product development process should be directed towards the creation of the product that meets the needs and the values of the customers. Product development canvas is a

suitable tool to develop and organize product goals within the company's business. However, it can be misleading regarding the customers' needs and values.

Alexander Osterwalder created a useful application that can be used for discussing, testing, examining and afterwards designing valuable proposition for customer products. This application was discussed in his book *Value Proposition Design: How to Create Products and Services Customers Want* (2015). The author himself called it "plug-in tool to the Business Model Canvas" (Osterwalder 2012.).

Paul Marsden, psychologist and researcher in the field of consumer behaviour, provided the following definition for Value Proposition Canvas: a framework for innovating products and services that people actually want because they are useful in helping them achieve what they want to achieve (Marsden 2015.).

Value proposition canvas basically has two main parts: customer profile and value map, as can be seen on the picture below:

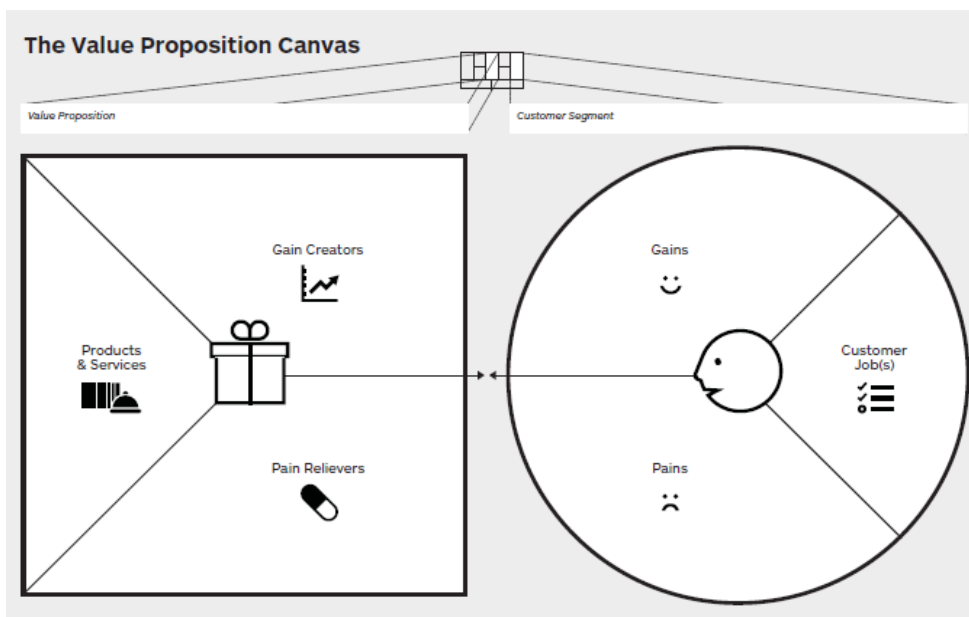


Figure 5. The Value Proposition Canvas (Osterwalder, Pigneur, Bernarda & Smith 2014.)

The authors decided to use value proposition map as a tool for better understanding customers' pains and gains in own project plan. This tool will be very beneficial specifically before creating Customer Journey Map.

## **Customer profile**

Customer profile includes summarized information about targeted customer. Generally it includes such part as customer jobs, customer pains and customer gains.

Customer jobs define all things the customer is eager to do in his/her functional job, social life and emotional life. Customer's demands and needs are also related to customer's jobs. It can be a small need as to get from one point to other, or a bigger one, for example, to get memorable transformational experience during the customer's own holidays. Generally all customer jobs derive from different parts of his or her life. It should be noted that not all areas of life have the same significance for the customer. Some of them are more important, while others are less. For example, for some people successful career matters more than richness of emotional life.

Customer pains include all the factors that give frustration for the customer during, after or before completing the job. The pains can be emotional, functional or auxiliary. All risks, unintended results, obstacles are related to customer pain. It is advised to be quite specific in the severity of customer pain. Customer pains can be signified by the list of triggering questions. For example, how much negative emotions the queueing time gives to the customer.

Customer gains represent all positive outcomes that the customer is expecting from the service provider. Osterwalder and his co-authors distinguish required gains, expected gains, desired gains and unexpected gains. Required and expected gains are the reason why customer come to this or that service provider. Desired gains are something that customer secretly wants to receive as a bonus, while unexpected ones are the benefits which customer even does not think about. Customers' gains can be learnt the same way as customers' pains by specifically triggering questions.

It can be very useful to begin with one's own understanding of customers' needs. Designing of the customer profile can provide with the ideas what the customer possibly wants and dislikes. The following interview aims at proving how close to the reality the service provider has been. Generally the complete process of creation customer profile contains the following steps:

- Choice of the targeted customer
- Identification of the customer jobs
- Identification of the customer pains
- Identification of the customer gains
- Prioritizing the jobs, gains and pains

(Osterwalder, Pigneur, Bernarda & Smith 2014, 12-22.)

### **Value map**

Value map can be defined as all services and products that are suggested by one's business idea. The value proposition of company is built on the basis of the company's offerings to its customers. All products and services can be classified as tangible/physical, intangible, digital and financial. Moreover, all the company's offerings are related to two big groups i.e. pain relievers and gain creators.

Pain relievers are aimed at easing certain customers' pains in social, emotional or working life. They include specific tools and procedures that can be used to avoid obstacles before, during or after getting the job done. For example, what kind of payment options the company is planning to use to avoid queueing or what methods the company is planning to implement to help the customer to fight with inner fears and limitations.

It is also important to make a gradation of more and less prioritised pain relievers. The relevance of pain relievers is calculated according to the amount of values it gives to one's customers.

Gain creators are designed to provide benefits and positive outcomes that match customers' expectations and needs. There should be gain creators that are most relevant to summarised customer profile. Moreover, gain creators are the segments that can significantly make one company stand out compared to the others.

The entire process of designing value map is quite similar to the creation of the customer profile. And it has the following stages:

- Description of all available products and services
- Summarized pain relievers
- Summarized gain creators
- Classification of all products, services, pain relievers and gain creators according to significance of offered values

(Osterwalder, Pigneur, Bernarda & Smith 2014, 29-31.)

### **Multiple fits**

After designing the two parts of value proposition canvas it is important to check how well one part is connected and matched with the other one. There should be multiple fits in each section.

Customers jobs are supposed to match with products and services provided by the company, while customers pains and gains should fit to the pain relievers and gain creators. This kind of approach is significantly different from the approach of creation psychodemographic profile. Proper investigations of customers' jobs, pains and gains help to understand the real drivers and value propositions that can make difference for one's customers.

The authors decided to use value proposition map as a tool for better understanding customers' pains and gains in own project plan. This tool will be very beneficial specifically before creating Customer Journey Map in order to get a better perception of the product from the customer point of view.

### **2.4.3 Customer Journey Map**

Customer Journey Map is a visualization of the process that a person goes through to accomplish a goal used for understanding and addressing customer needs and pain points (Kaplan, 2016). It is a powerful tool that is used in the process of product development. The main reason to create Customer Journey Map is the need to visualise the whole road, so-called journey of customer before, during and after the service experience, for understanding all issues that can arise.

Customer Journey Map does not have a strict structure or the rules of creation. Every organisation creates their own Customer Journey Map. For example, Megan Grocki, an experience strategy director at Mad Pow, suggests including the following components to Customer Journey Map (Grocki 2014.):

**Characters:** the main actors who represents all wishes, goals, potential obstacles of the consumers. This can be example of person form desired targeted group.

**Timeline:** total amount of time for each stage during service experience. Timeline can last a few minutes or few hours.

**Emotions:** all emotional expressions during each stage as frustration, happiness, amusements and so on.

**Touchpoints:** all interactions between consumer and organisations or its representative;  
**Channels:** all places of interaction, it can be website, office, call centre, mobile application.

Besides above mentioned components it is also recommendable to include moments of truth and supporting actors. All interactions that leave memorable positive emotions can be related to the moments of truth. Supporting actors such as family, friends or colleagues can have impact on the interaction between main characters or service provider. For example, the friend can recommend to the main actor service and products of certain organisation.

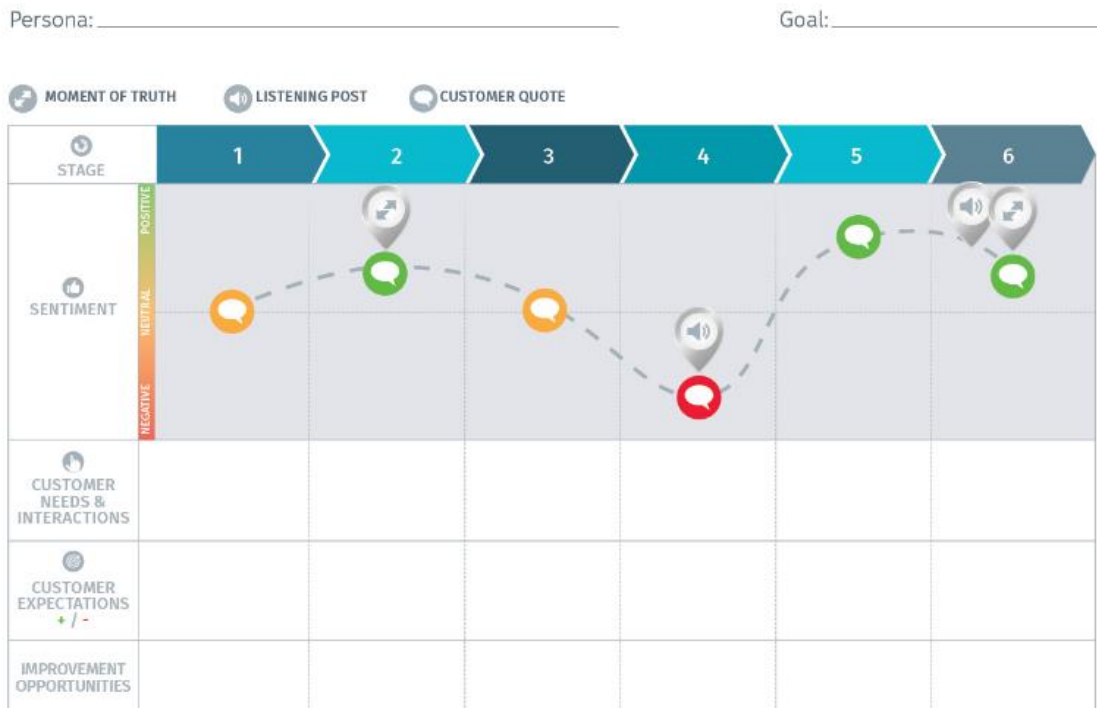


Figure 6. Customer Journey Map template (Clarabridge)

Jim Roberts, the founder of BlackerRoberts Ltd consultancy, suggests to divide the whole Customer Journey Map to certain activities of the customer: awareness, discover, purchase, use and bond (Roberts 2013). And each activity can highlight the channel of interaction between customer and service representative. The interaction can occur via social media channels, phone, e-mail, whether it can happen in the store.

Customer Journey Map can be characterised by visualisation and storytelling (Kaplan 2016). The whole journey is designed from the customer's point of view. The tools and the guidance of creation Customer Journey Map can be different but nonetheless they all have the same output – creation of customer's experience map. Generally, each Customer Journey Map targets certain goals of its creator.

The creation of Customer Journey Map is a complicated process. And it can require applying such methods and tools as brainstorming, Gantt chart, the use of calendar, user story map. During the creation of Customer Journey Map, it is necessary to take into consideration all customers' stages, emotions and possible hidden obstacles before during and after the service. Customer Journey Map reflects possible dialogues during interaction, customer's reaction and expectations.

Customer Journey Map is a tool that helps to predict and overcome possible issues that customer can face during, before or after service. This tool has a lot of benefits for creating a real customer-oriented service. Customer Journey Map provides a lot of opportunities and benefits for the used product and service. First of all, the tool provides with a chance to look at the service from the customers' point of view and as a result it helps to receive a common view of the service experience. The whole map can define and highlight so-called moments of truth. These moments of truth can show the real reasons why the customer wants to get exactly this service. It helps to concentrate on the moments and stages that are significantly valued by the customers and skip the moments that are not so important, thereby company can optimize its costs (Customer Champions). Due to creation of well-thought experience framework it is possible to build customer loyalty to the brand and the company (The Excellence Centre Team 2016). Good visualization of provided service allows to reveal weak points of service on the stage of its creation. Moreover, by observing the gaps between each stage it is possible to improve the level of service (Hughes 2016.).

The authors are considering the use of Customer Journey Map for visualization purposes of the created product. It is not planned to create a very detailed Customer Journey Map. The main reason for using this tool is to define customers' sentiments, moments of truth and possible gaps between stages.

After application of all the above-mentioned procedures, i.e environmental analysis, defining the target groups and product development, the authors consider passing on to the next stage of the project, the market entry. By that moment, it is very important that previous parts have been duly implemented as they will provide a basis for the future operations.

## **2.5 Market Entry Strategy**

When entering a new market, it is essential to realize the threats and competitors that the entrepreneurs might face. This is especially important in case the company owners are not very experienced business people and cannot evaluate all the possible risks. The authors came

up with a 5-step market entry strategy. It is partially based on a 5-Steps Primer to Entering New Markets (Strank & Steward 2013.), when it comes to entry options and strategies.

**Step 1. Commitment:** Commitment implies that the product developers make the product canvas and get a clear vision of what exactly they are offering to the customers, in what scope and limits. At this stage, the final defining of the target customer group is achieved as well as the product concept is elaborated. This step is to be mainly analysed in the Customer Groups Analysis chapter. (Cleverism 2014.)

**Step 2. Identifying Entry Points:** With the identified target groups, it is possible to distinguish the specific points of market entry. This is especially important with the limited budget circumstances and in order to maximize the potential future profit. The choice of the entry points should not only include advantages and disadvantages of their usage, but also ideally to leave space for further development possibilities. The criteria used to identify the entry points are the provision of access to the aimed market, the availability of need, competition in the market etc. (Cleverism 2014.)

**Step 3. Defining Market Entry Strategies:** First of all, as part of this step it is needed to set the product price and to see the connection between its affordability for the target audience and feasibility for the business. After the pricing is completed, the product image within the customer perception should be elaborated. (Cleverism 2014.)

**Step 4. Action plan:** At this stage, the market entry implementation solutions are made. This part, in the product launching process, includes the marketing plan, campaigns and timelines for them. The main milestones, such as sales targets and market share are to be defined. (Cleverism 2014.)

**Step 5. Test and feedback analysis:** Making a pilot version of the product to be tested on a group of tourism related professionals with diverse backgrounds and experiences could help the authors to realize the weak points of the project and to eliminate them after the feedbacks are received.



Figure 7. 5-step market entry strategy



## **Marketing specifics of various experience types**

St. Petersburg Escape Experience Tour is comprised of several types of experience, such as, museums and excursions, escape rooms, inter-cultural communication and enogastronomy. The marketing strategy should be elaborated with the consideration of all these types in order to fit the customers' needs. Due to the variety of the experience types use within the product it is very important to consider a proper approach towards marketing all of them and to which type of people they correspond. The basic types of experience, used within the product, and proper approaches to them are the following:

### **- Museum experience**

The museum experience gives the benefit to the visitors related to both mindfulness and non-mindfulness states. Personal emotive and physical environments affect to a great extend the experience outcome. It is recommended that marketing the museum experiences should consider behavioural approach, assuming that the physical environment influences the visitor's behaviour and the experiential perspective. (Scott, Laws, & Boksberger 2010.)

### **- Multi-cultural experience**

Satisfying the customers from a different culture(-s) might be a challenge for a service provider. However, the foreign travellers are usually more tolerant towards service failures and appreciate the experience just due to the fact that they are living it through at this particular moment. Strictly speaking, visitors of the foreign culture enjoy the mere fact of being in an unfamiliar cultural environment which creates an added value to the tour. (Scott, Laws, & Boksberger 2010.)

### **- Escape room experience**

Marketing the escape room experience might be challenging due to the fact that it is impossible to give to many details about the game, therefore the customer agrees to this experience type based on the service provider promise and feedbacks. For this reason, the promise should be very clearly stated and reflect the real game. As a part of the tour, the choice of escape rooms should be made according to the tour specifics i.e. related to the destination culture or history in order to satisfy the customers' interest.

### **- Enogastronomic experience**

Enogastronomic tourism experience (tourism aiming at tasting local food and beverages) is a way to learn about local culture through its food and beverage. This concept has developed from the basic local food consumption to a wider idea of knowing the whole destination through tasting and participating in local repast traditions. From this perspective, it should be

noted that the tourists' expectations are not just food consumption but learning the story behind this or that dish, meet the producer and emerge into the historical context. (Viganò 2003)

The complete creation of the marketing strategy is not aimed to be covered within the current thesis since this would require a separate detailed research of a pretty wide scope, therefore the authors will generally analyse the potential marketing sources, methods and the ways they will help to enter the market.

A lot of impact will be made on social media marketing considering the specifics of the product. The creation of the product website and usage of the partners' channels is also to be described. The latter is quite an important marketing tool since the authors' start-up is a new product in the market and the marketing channels of the more well-known partners will be very helpful.

## 2.6 Summary for tool usage

In the process of product development, the authors are using quite a number of various tools. The aim of this is to make sure of the multi-sided approach towards the product elaboration in order to minimize the potential risks. In order to show a clearer picture of which tools were used and for what reason, the authors made the following summary table.

Table 1. Tools used in the product development

Name of the tool	Aim of use
SWOT analysis	Analysis of the strong and weak points of the elaborated product, estimation of opportunities and threats within the target market
Porter's 5 Forces	Analysis of the threats of the selected market, their influence of the developed product, competitiveness analysis of the environment.
Online survey	Defining the biometrics of the potential customers, their interests, escape room tourism experience and the demand of the developed product.
BonBus tool	Finding the correlation between the general target groups and the services provided, creating a clear basis for the company portfolio.

User Persona	Creating a fictional image of a “perfect” customer, empathic perception of the product from the customer perspective.
Product Design Canvas	Seeing the available resources, customers’ needs and product details in a joint picture in order to avoid any ambiguity.
Value Proposition Design	Designing the product that totally fit to customers’ need and expectation. It provides good understanding how much developing product can satisfy the customer from desired target group.
Customer Journey Map	Visualisation map of suggested experience with defining customers’ stages, sentiments and moments of truth. This tool allows to understand possible gaps and opportunities for improvement on the stage of product’s development.
5-step Market Entry Strategy	Elaborating a strategy to enter the market with a new product, reach the target groups and gain competitive advantage.
Study trip	A personal test of the itinerary parts in order to have a better perception of the product from the customers’ perspective and further amendments implementation.

The application results of all these tools can be found in Appendix 1. The authors assume that the use of multiple tools, despite its challenges, provides with an opportunity to develop a sustainable new tourist product.

### 3 Planning and Implementation of the Project

In this chapter, the planning and implementation of the project's process will be reviewed. The authors will discuss the background of the project, its stages, schedule and limitations. Limitations and risks will be observed from the point of view of the project's process and as well the final product itself. Below the scheme of the used tools and their interconnections can be seen.

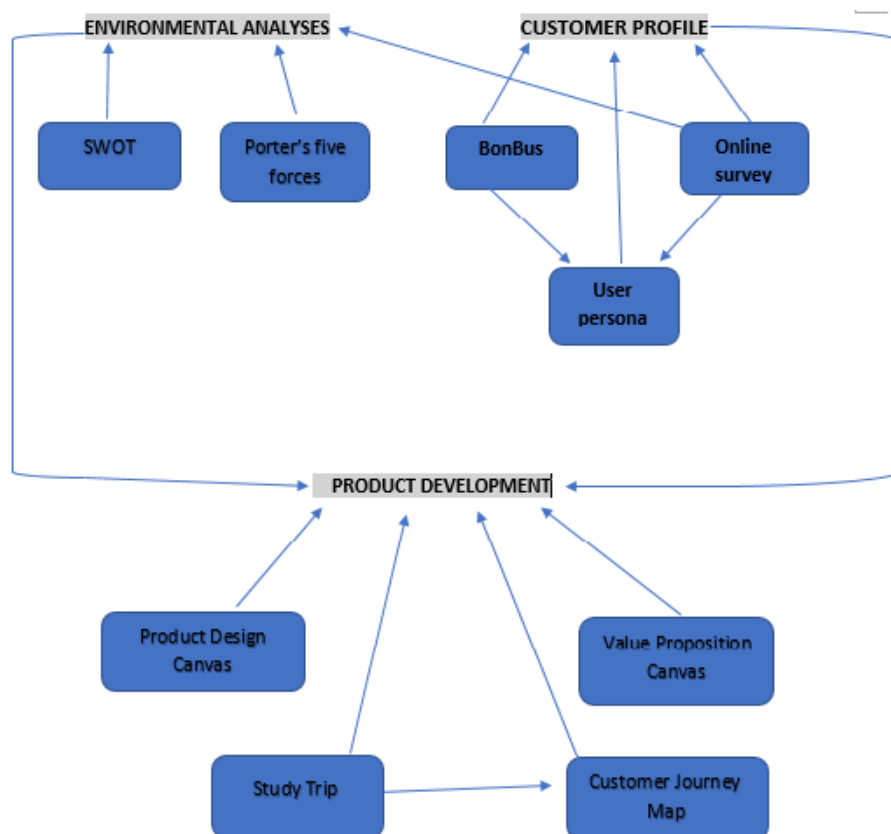


Figure 8. Product development scheme

#### 3.1 Background of the project

The specifics of the product have been chosen due to the authors' interest towards developing tourism relations between Finland and Russia, due to the various business opportunities in this fields and also the authors' personal backgrounds. The decision has been made considering the authors' knowledge of the escape room industry operations and general customer service experience, as well as acquaintance to the cultural environment of the planned destination. The preliminary idea of the actual thesis was chosen about a year ago. However, the majority of its aspects were implemented and finalized within the several months of focused product development. This work was not sponsored or commissioned by any organization, however the authors hope to make it a starting point for a start-up of their own.

### 3.2 Project plan and process

The authors were using the knowledge and experience received during the studies at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. First of all, the authors began to work on environmental analysis and application of tools that were planned to be used for the product development. It was decided to use SWOT analysis and Porter's Five Forces Model for environmental analysis. Originally the authors were considering the use PESTEL analysis, but in the end, it was decided that SWOT, despite its relatively vague nature, would give a better understanding of the environment related to the product potential.

The customer target groups analysis was performed via the use of BonBus tool and User Persona. BonBus tool was a totally new tool for the authors, as it is a relatively new tool developed by a Haaga-Helia teacher. The authors took part in the workshop conducted by the tool creator in order to get assistance in the tool application to the actual product development process. The User Persona tool was used as a way to see the product empathically, from the customer perspective. It was chosen as a good option for considering the customer needs.

After some discussions and research for the product development stage, the authors decided to use Product Design Canvas, Value Proposition Canvas and Customer Journey Map. With most of the tools the authors were already familiar and had experience of their application. Experience pyramid was one of the tools that was under consideration for the product development. However, later it was clear that Experience Pyramid does not fit well for product development, as the authors were creating the tour using already existing products and services. Besides, the variety of the provided experiences within the tour is so wide that it would be very time and effort consuming to apply this tool to all of them properly. Experienced Pyramid was replaced by Customer Journey Map as this tool was giving valuable information that had direct impact on the tour's itinerary creation.

The online survey was created and implemented at an early stage of the project in order to see if the need for such product really exists and to preliminarily estimate its demand potential. The authors aimed at getting several dozens of replies from the people acquainted with escape room entertainment industry. The survey was conducted in five days targeting the non-CIS citizens, mainly those of Finland and other EU states.

Originally the authors already had a draft idea for itinerary of the product. However, the research on theoretical framework and product development itself helped to evaluate the existing ideas and to amend them for the sake of better outputs. The authors thoroughly elaborated the itinerary, cooperation strategies and analysed the concept from different perspectives.

The final step for working on the product development was a study trip to Saint Petersburg. During the trip the authors tested the chosen services, parts of the Customer Journey Map and as a result made amendments changes to the final version of the product based on the personal experience findings.

Before implementing the product plan the authors created the schedule grid. And it should be noted that the authors did not face any major challenges following the scheduled deadlines considering a thorough time management. On the whole thesis process, the authors had constant communication with the thesis coordinator and each other. There have been several meetings for discussion of the main thesis points and received results. After completing each part of the project the authors had meetings with the thesis coordinator in order to make amendments and discuss the related issues.

	week 9	week 10	week 11	week 12	week 13	week 14	week 15	week 16	week 17	week 18	week 19	week 20
Completing thesis outline parts												
Contacting and meeting with thesis coordinator												
Writing introduction part												
Writing theoretical frame												
Making quantitative survey												
Product development												
Study trip												
Working on project plan part												
Making last changes according thesis coordinator feedback												
Creating presentation and abstract												

Table 2. Schedule grid

### 3.3 Limitations and risks

Before project implementation the possible risks regarding the development process were discussed. Among them the authors identified personal risk issues related to workload, health condition and the schedule of thesis coordinator. It was clear that any possible delays

of online survey replies cannot affect the project process significantly because the thesis was product based. According to the planned schedule, the whole thesis was supposed to be completed during the coming three months. And the main risk could have been in irrational use of time. For avoiding any delays in successful completion of the project, the authors were using proper time management. In order to ensure completion of thesis by the agreed date, the work was divided into certain basic parts with scheduled deadlines. Constant communication and meetings of authors and their coordinator contributed to the completion of each part of the project on schedule.

The authors made some research for development of this product. However, they understand that any project has certain issues that can affect its success. Based on all the previous chapters, the authors take into consideration the below mentioned possible risks and limitations.

The authors are planning to launch a start-up company for implementing their own product. And as it is known, starting a new company always involves a variety of risks. The authors are limited in experience and entrepreneurial knowledge. Due to the lack of experience in running any kind of business, the authors have high managerial, execution and financial risks. There is always a chance to overlook important moments and details that can significantly affect the company. Since it is planned to launch and run the company by two people, the authors understand the need to clearly divide the responsibilities and business functions. The team culture should be built in a way to avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication that can crucially affect business and teambuilding in a negative way.

Proper marketing can be half of the future success of a new company. The authors developed marketing ideas and plans to be used in future. However, there is a risk of not finding the needed budget for further development and implementation of the marketing strategy. The budget source for launching the start-up is still under discussion.

It is planned to launch a company in Finland while the tour itself will take place in Russia. And as a result, certain legal aspects should be taken into consideration. The authors are planning to get familiar with Russian legislation regarding tourism business operations. Moreover, since all of the tour participants will most likely be non-CIS citizens, it is very important to avoid the issues that can lead to any kind of accidents. Most likely such kind of risks can occur during the free time activities, especially in the night time. For avoiding this kind of situations, it is planned to create clear instructions and "terms and conditions" that will be signed compulsorily by the tour participants.

The creators of the escape experience tour are not planning to move to Saint Petersburg or be there during the trip. It is planned to hire several local guides; the ones that can speak fluent English and are well acquainted to St. Petersburg. The reason behind this is lower labor costs in Russia and the absence of need to provide the guide with her or his accommodation and transport. These guides will be in charge of the tour groups and its participants. Apart from the hired staff, the tour involves participation of partner organizations guides and escape room staff. Any partnerships involve a risk of a non-proper performance of the responsibilities by one of the parties. This kind of situations also requires signing a written agreement with listed consequences in case of one's obligations failure. For decreasing the abovementioned risks, the authors are considering to hire trustworthy and experienced staff with excellent communication skills. Moreover, it is planned to be in constant contact with all the partners for implementing optional itinerary parts in case of any unpredictable changes and issues.

The authors accept the limitations regarding the desired target group. The tours are limited by the age of the participants. It is not mentioned in the description or the marketing strategy of the project, however, the activities and the itinerary themselves are not likely to attract senior travelers or participants with physical limitations. All of the above mentioned obviously narrows down the potential range of customers.

The authors are planning to create and use a proper risk management strategy for alleviating all possible risks and dealing with uncommon situations. Finding a mentor before launching the start-up also will be very beneficial for educative and guiding purposes. The constant update of business strategy according to the market situation will allow to keep strong position among possible competitors. The authors aim to put a lot of effort in the creation of friendly and supportive work atmosphere among staff and partners of the company. This, in turn, will contribute in avoiding some of the possible risks and as a result will impact the level of customer's experience.

### **3.4 Evaluation**

In the authors' opinion, the product is based on the innovative and significantly new product idea. The authors suggest a new perspective of merging two existing industries: Tourism and Escape Room games. According to the implemented research, St. Petersburg Escape Experience Tour meets all the requirements for successful entry to the Finnish market.



The objective of the actual thesis was defined in the beginning and as a result it was elaborated further on. The authors tried to receive the results with a strong theoretical and practical explanation and discussion, supplemented with visual representation by graphs, tables, maps, photos and figures.

The authors used different innovative tools for research and product development and tried to properly apply them to the product development. The project process and its implementation was presented and described in detail. Possible perspectives of product development also were discussed and presented in the actual thesis.

## **4 Discussion**

The authors believe that theoretical part of the thesis proved itself to fit well the development of the project. All tools and methods that were discussed in the second chapter were useful and beneficial for creating the product itinerary. In this chapter, the reader would be able to get acquainted to the thesis process details, its learning outcomes and the work conclusions.

### **4.1 Thesis process**

The authors began a focused work on the actual thesis in March 2017. As mentioned above, there were no challenges related to the topic choice as the idea evolved already a year ago. At the initial stages of the thesis planning, the authors were considering to create business plan for their own tourism start-up company. However, after a meeting and discussion with the thesis coordinator, the authors were advised to concentrate on the tourism product itself aiming at creating a well-thought and detailed itinerary and description for it.

Thereby the whole thesis process was devoted to the tools analysis, research, brainstorming regarding aiming product and further implementation of the chosen tools to test, check and improve the products itinerary. Generally, the whole thesis process took about three months. The authors did not face any major challenges during the thesis process, due to their well-planned schedule and a priority to graduate before the end of the study year.

### **4.2 Learning outcomes**

The main learning outcome of this thesis was to get a finalized tourism product., i.e. 6-day visa-free Escape Experience Tour to Saint Petersburg. The product includes transportation, accommodation, and detailed itinerary schedule (Appendix 2). The itinerary is a combination of escape room games and quests, unusual tours, excursions and enogastronomy. The future participants of the trip have free time for their own activities. However, the authors also created the list of suggested places (Appendix 3) that perfectly fit to the concept of the product.

During the product development, the authors used the knowledge received in the process of their degree studies, as well as they used their analytical skills to apply the tools that have not been covered during the study program. The authors assume that they have successfully applied those knowledge and skills for elaborating a new tourist product of such volume and diversity of its elements.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The authors one more time would like to highlight that the product discussed in the actual thesis is a part of a future start-up. The next planned step is creation of a business plan and finding potential investors. After completion of all the required stages, it is planned to launch a start-up company by the spring 2018. The test tour will be implemented before launching the trip for regular customers. During the test tour, the authors will test the itinerary parts again and collect the feedbacks for the last changes and updates of the product. And as it was already mentioned before, the test tour will include participants with professional knowledge in experience and tourism, thereby the idea will be tested in two ways: from the perspective of regular travellers and professionals.

The authors are satisfied with the chosen topic. The actual work provided with the opportunity to make proper research and analysis for the potential demand. Moreover, it allowed to apply available theoretical knowledge in practice and it is possible that it will result in a new tourist start-up company entry to the Finnish market.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Product Plan

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## PRODUCT PLAN

The authors are developing the tourism experience project based on the theoretical framework described in the previous chapter. The aimed outcome of the product development is itinerary for St. Petersburg Experience Escape Tour. In future, it is planned to implement finalized itinerary in real life as a business concept for a start-up company. The finalized itinerary can be found in Appendix 2.

The authors used Fosters' Five Forces and SWOT for analysing environment and current market situation. Customer targeted group was distinguished and discussed by using such tools as BonBus, online survey, user persona. Product design canvas, value proposition, Customer Journey Map were used in product development.

Authors also performed study trip and its finding can be found in separate subchapter. This trip allowed to test authors own ideas and make some improvements regarding itinerary, Customer Journey Map and list of interesting spots that are planned to be recommended for participants' optional free time

## 1 Environmental Analysis

In the following chapter the authors applied the selected methods to evaluating the environment and the possible perspectives of St. Petersburg Escape Experience Tour launch. The two tools used for this purpose are SWOT-analysis and Porter's Five Forces Model. The first one aims at providing the general assessment of the strong and week points of the project, the ways to eliminate its drawbacks and make the best of the available opportunities. The second one is a deeper analysis of the market, considering the existing threats, competition level and bargaining powers.

### 1.1 SWOT analysis

**Strengths:** The main strong side of the product is its uniqueness. Currently there is no analogue experience tour from Finland to St. Petersburg and the concept of escape room tourism has not been used in tourism industry so far. The absence of direct competitors gives a chance to gain competitive advantage in case of proper project implementation. This tour is also planned to be quite authentic and involves communication with local people which provides with an opportunity to see the real stories and get involved in the local culture deeply.



The tour provides the customers with the multisensory experience. Their activities include learning through quests and excursions, teamwork engagement, tasting of local food, experiencing the atmosphere of the destination past and present. The diversity of these experience types will not let the customers get tired of the standard excursion format and in case of good implementation will lead to transformational experience.

Another strength of the tour is that most of the partners involved in it are very easy to replace due to the high competence level among the tourism and experience service providers in St. Petersburg.

**Weaknesses:** The main weak point of the project is its limited budget and the absence of the prior entrepreneurial experience of its developers. These two factors are connected to each other as seeking assistance from potential investors might be complicated by the fact that the seekers cannot show any successful business background, given this project is their first attempt on the entrepreneurial path.

The limited budget might not allow the project to have a proper marketing campaign and thus to get enough participants for the break even. Another weak point is that St. Petersburg Lines is the only transport company that has a right for visa-free entrance to Russia, thus it has a very high bargaining power and is irreplaceable.

The possible weak point could also be in case the amount of bookings exceed the available capacity for the tour. This weakness can be easily dealt with by the limitations put to the online booking system. Still in case of booking errors there should be a risk management plan to deal with a bigger amount of customers.

The tour is also partially weather dependent, as some of the excursions take place outside and the experience might be damaged by the bad weather conditions. For this reason, the authors plan to have a few solutions aimed at minimizing the negative effect of the forces of nature which are to be described in more detail further.

**Opportunities:** One of the opportunities of the product development could be making wholesale agreements with the partners. It is common practice for service providers to offer lower prices for a group of customers using the service. This could possibly apply to most of the partners in the destination including hostels, tour providers, museums and restaurants. It might also be possible to find an optimal solution for transportation, using a minivan instead of the public transport.

In case of the growing popularity of the tour it would be possible to extend the group number. Though in this case the group will have to be divided in two or more smaller groups and some of the tour parts will have to be taken in different times. For instance, the tour to St. Petersburg yards, entrance halls and communal apartments can be provided for the maximum of 15-20 people without damaging the experience.

As was mentioned before, the authors have little experience in entrepreneurship. However, this could be partially supplemented by the start-up assistance opportunities, such as getting help from StartUp School, Hub13, NewCo Helsinki and other start-up assistance initiatives.

Nowadays, the interest towards Russia as a destination is growing and this could be used in further development of the tour operations. In case St. Petersburg Experience Escape Tour is launched and operated successfully, the authors have several more ideas in developing the experience tourism in Russia and CIS region, for instance tour to Moscow and Ethnographic Park Museum, North Experience tour to the White Sea and Nomad Experience in Kazakhstan.

**Threats:** The possible threat could be the competitors that could develop a similar product and get their share in the market. In case their budget and professional sources are better than the ones of the authors, they might gain the competitive advantage in the market. The authors see no other way to deal with this threat other than to constantly work on the quality of the product and the added value.

Another highly possible threat is the schedule breakdowns. There is always a chance that something unexpected happens that the planes schedule cannot be followed. Minor breakdowns are not a big problem if this happens on the phase of a visit to Grand Maket Russia for instance but in case of an escape room it might be hard to postpone a game or change its time. To minimize the impact of this threat the guide should be well aware of the schedule breakdown plan and know what kind of actions he or she could take in such situation. For this reason, a risk management plan is to be developed.

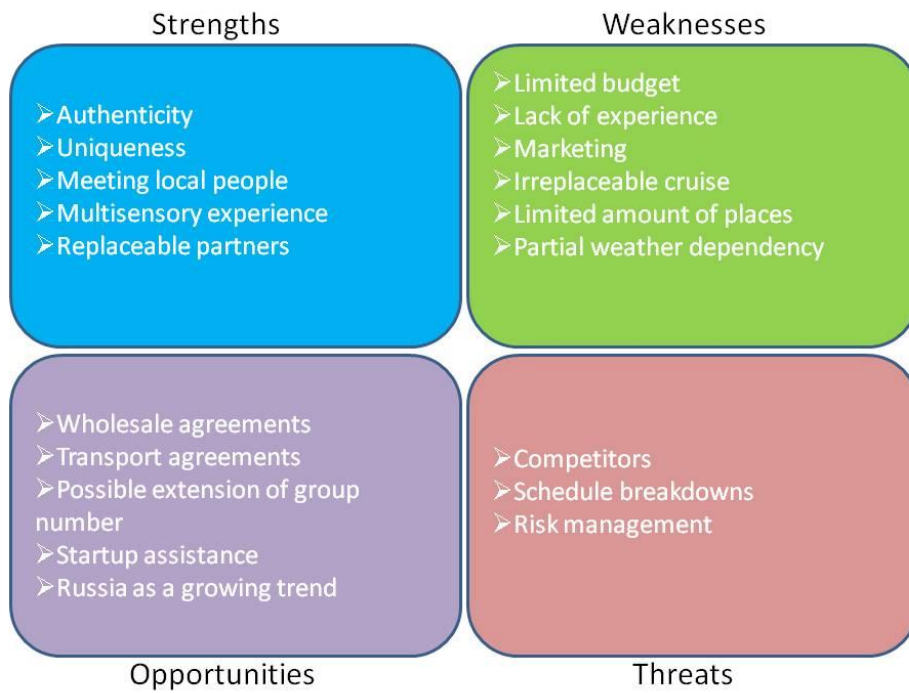


Figure 9: SWOT analysis of St. Petersburg Experience Escape Tour

### 1.2 Porter's Five Forces Model

The authors have analyzed the experience tour project according to Porter's Five Forces Model. The results of the evaluation are presented in the following figure with a detailed description below.

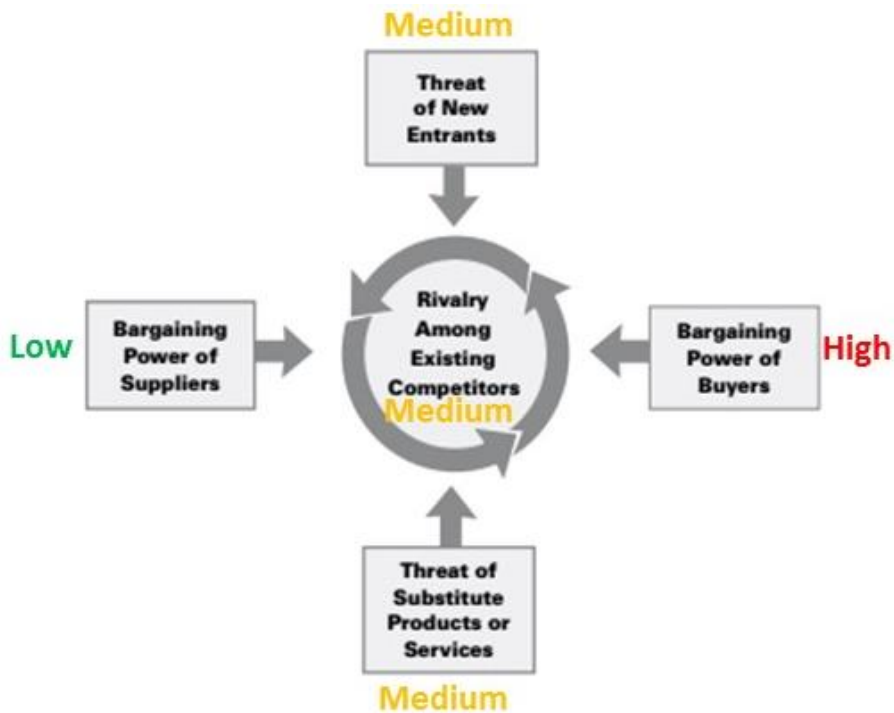


Figure 10. Porter's Five Forces Model analysis

### Threat of substitute products - Medium

The substitute products for the experience tour to St. Petersburg could be any short-term tours to other popular destinations. According to Statistics Finland report of 2016, the most popular destinations are Estonia, Spain and Sweden. The first one acquires 29% of all the leisure trips. The high season for going to Estonia is May, July and August. Sweden is also popular July and August, as well as in November. (Tamminen & Okkonen 2016)

After a significant fall of demand for travels to Russia in 2014, the number of trips has been increasing but the level of 2013 still has not reached yet (Tamminen & Okkonen, 2016). The Central European states have witnessed a decrease in the amount of Finnish travellers in 2016, while the number of trips to the UK increased slightly. Eastern European states are still growing in demand among the Finnish citizens. (Tamminen & Okkonen 2016)

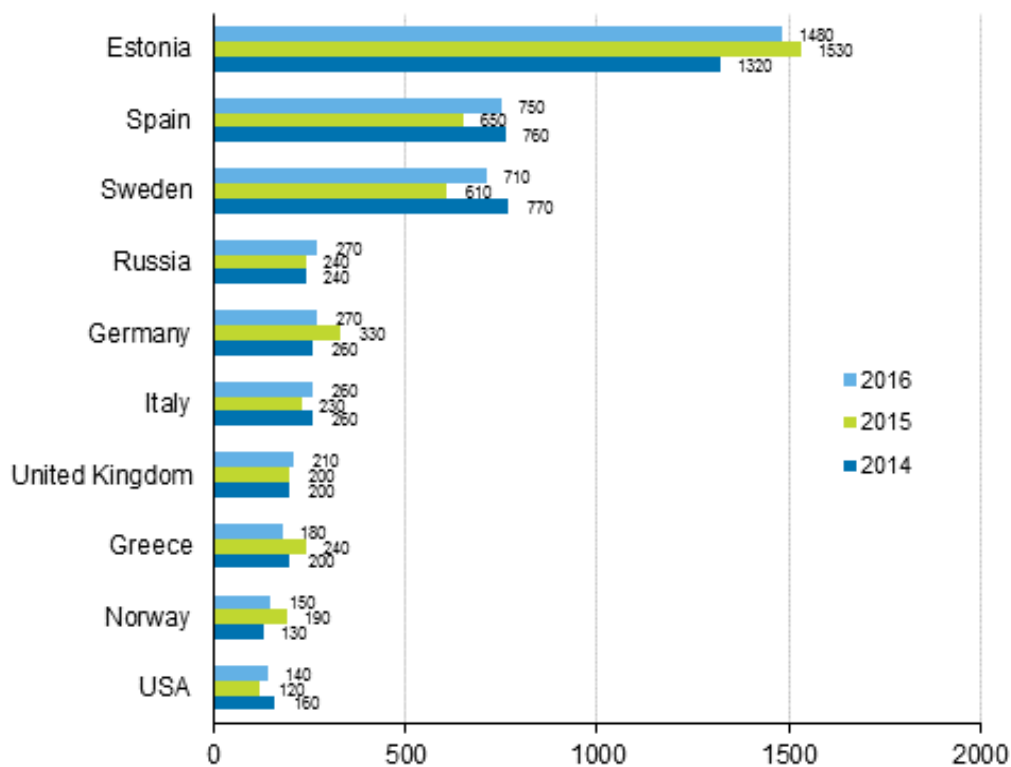


Figure 11. Finnish residents' most popular destinations for leisure trips with overnight stay in the destination country in 2016, 2015 and 2014 (Tamminen & Okkonen 2016.)

As for the price range of the substitute products, the popular cruise trips to Estonia and Sweden are definitely cheaper than a cruise to St. Petersburg in most cases. They also provide a wider range of options to choose the time and day of the departure while the trip to St. Petersburg without a visa can be done with only one option available.

But on the other hand, Russia is still considered a quite exotic destination even though Finland is its closest neighbor. One of the reasons for this is a complicated visa acquisition process. Thus, a possibility to visit this country without a visa wins a competitive advantage compared to other destinations even though they are easier to reach.

### **Threat of New Entrants - Medium**

Profitable markets always attract new entrants and the increased competition level decreases the profitability drastically. Therefore, the competitive advantage should be kept stable in order to keep the profit level high. (Wilkinson 2013.)

It is complicated to create any entrance barriers in the industry the authors are dealing with. Because the tour operations is quite a transparent issue and there is no way to get any patents on its activities, so there is a risk of the similar products entry to the market. However, it could be possible to make agreements with some of the partners, such as hostels, escape rooms and cafes about the mutual cooperation and marketing support.

It would also be more complicated for a non-Russian speaking entrepreneurs to enter the same market because the Russian business environment is in many cases based on the cultural integrity and ability to communicate in Russian. To successfully cope with this threat the brand reputation is very important so special attention should be paid to the image of the project.

### **The Bargaining Power of Suppliers - Low**

The main suppliers for the elaborated experience tour are the cruise company, hotels, restaurants, escape rooms and museums. The only supplier that is of vital importance for the project is the cruise company since St. Petersburg Lines is the only company in the world that has an agreement with the Russian government about a 72-hour visa free entrance to Russia.

As for the other partners, the authors examined the hostel market in the destination. Unfortunately, there have not been any recent researches in this field, therefore the research of 2014 has been used as the most relevant one. It should be stated that competition level in hospitality industry is very high (Vnukov 2014.), so it will be easy to find alternative options in case of accommodation even in high season.

The volume of offer in the sector of restaurants, museums, non-traditional excursions and escape rooms is also quite rich and exceeds the existing demand. Therefore, considering all the above-mentioned facts, the authors evaluated this threat level as low.

### **The Bargaining Power of Buyers – High**

Bargaining power of the buyers is the most significant threat for the elaborated project as the success of the company directly depends on the amount of the buyers and their attitude. At the primary stage of market entrance choosing the best available marketing channels is one of the most important parts of development. Also, the customer service and the project management should be extremely well-performed.

Touristic products are very much dependent on social media feedbacks. Even one negative feedback might affect the reputation of the company. Thus, the authors realize the necessity to keep a dialogue with the customers and the need for changes and adequate response to negative feedbacks, if any occur, in order to keep the product quality at a proper level.

### **Rivalry Among Existing Firms - Medium**

So far, the price of the product developed by the authors is planned to have a significant price advantage compared to the other tours to St. Petersburg. Besides, currently all the existing tours to this destination are pretty standard, combining the most known sights of the city, while this product's aim is to make an unusual multidimensional tour with a deep immersion into Russian culture.

The success of the project also depends a lot on the right choice and usage of the distribution channels. Thus, a detailed research of marketing strategy is to be provided in this paper. Even though so far, this product is deemed quite unique in the market and does not have any direct competitors, if we speak about non-traditional tours to St. Petersburg, the traditional tours still form the competition.

Table 3. Amount in tourists from Finland to Russia within the past three years (Russia Tourism 2016.)

Year	Amount of tourists	Amount change (%)
2014	1 380 000	
2015	1 415 853	+3.5%
2016	1 319 030	-7 %

The authors have analyzed the volume of Finland outbound tourism to Russia in the recent years. In 2016 there has been the decrease in the amount of registered trips from Finland to Russia, however that might be determined by the political reasons.

## **2 Customer groups analysis**

According to Prof. Hax from MIT University, customer segmentation is the first critical task of any business strategy. The reasons behind this are the variety of customers' needs, capabilities, business economics and strategies, willingness to engage and demographic characteristics. The most attractive customer is stated to be the one with the biggest gap between his or her needs and the ability of the service provider to satisfy them. (Hax 2005)

In order to define the relevant customer groups, the authors used three methods: the online survey, company portfolio workshop and user persona tool.

### **2.1 Online survey**

The aim of the online survey was to figure out if the assumption that the concept of escape room tourism really exists and is worth elaborating. Another aim was to see if the people who like escape room games would be interested in escape experience tour to St. Petersburg, how much they would be willing to pay and what their demographics is.

The authors have conducted the online survey among the people interested in escape room games. The survey was conducted online by using Google Forms application and was published in escape room related Facebook groups (InsideOut Escape Games, Escape Room Startups, Escape Room Enthusiasts etc.).

For the authors, it was important to make the survey among the people who already know what the concept of escape room is about that is why the survey was announced in these particular groups. All in all, we received 43 responses and the whole statistics can be found in Appendix 1. The reason for using a relatively big amount of respondents was based on the necessity to find out if there is a need for the elaborated product in the Finnish market and if there is then what are its specifics.

The main goal for creation the interview was to understand the amount of potential customers who would be interested in the created concept. Authors also were interested in the purchasing power of the targeted customers, mainly the price that the potential customers would be willing to pay for the product.

After analyzing the results of the survey, it can be stated that the biggest age group of escape room interested people (34,9%) is 26-30 years old. Younger people of 18-25 are just a little bit behind (32,6%). And people of 30-35 and over 30 years old make up together 31.2%, while very young people below 18 years old is very insignificant.

The survey also showed that females are twice as much interested in escape rooms as males. As for the nationality of the respondents, the results can be seen in the graph below. Even though, the target market of the project is deemed to be Finnish citizens, the authors do not want set limits and assume that tourists from other countries, who come to see Finland, could also be interested in the elaborated product. Therefore, the number of Finnish respondents was 56% and the ones from other EU countries – 24%.

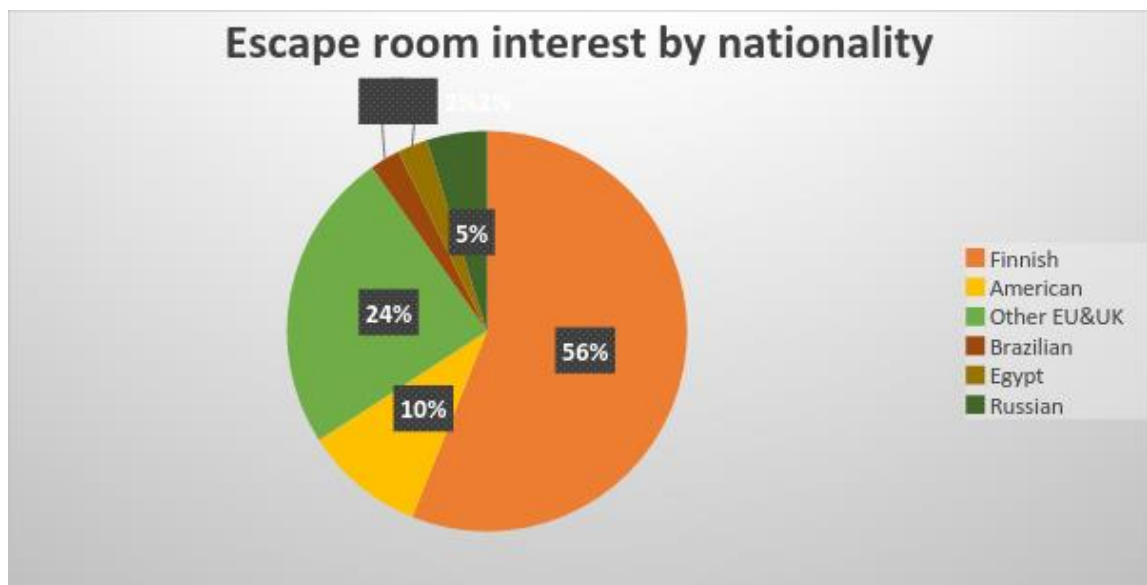


Figure 12. Escape room interest by nationality

Most of the respondents had already had quite a rich experience of escape room games, which does not mean that only experienced people will be part of the project target group, but the authors assume that the results of the survey are more credible and helpful if the respondent knows the industry well from the customer perspective.



Almost 70% of the respondents stated that they have been to escape rooms in other countries. And 93% occasionally plan an escape room game during their trips. The last figure can be estimated as a very positive indicator of a niche for escape room tourism development.

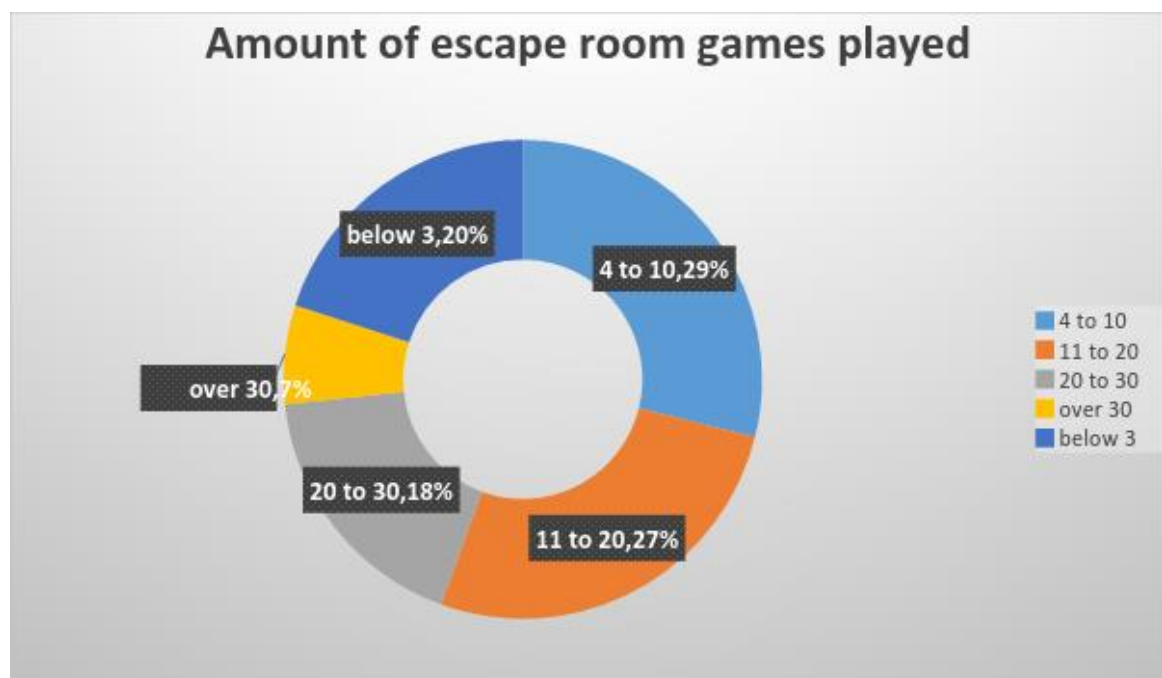


Figure 13. Amount of escape room games played by the respondents

The most popular responses concerning the locations of their escape room experience were big European cities and the USA. However, the escape rooms of Russia have not been mentioned at all. While developing the experience tour idea the authors took into account the escape room boom that took place in the European part of Russia in the past few years.

Big Russian cities are often overlooked as an escape room destination, none of the online service respondents mentioned playing an escape room there. However, there are more than 20 escape room companies registered in St. Petersburg. The world's biggest escape room franchise, Claustrophobia, also originates from Russia (Bulgarina 2016.). The tense competition makes the companies struggle to provide extra customer value and look for unusual types of escape rooms in big cities, such as St. Petersburg.

The types of escape room that interest the respondents also varied. There was a relevantly similar interest for scary and non-scary escape rooms. The biggest interest is observed towards history based games and difficult ones. There was little interest towards sport quests and performances (games with actors), however the authors believe that this can be explained by the fact that such kind of escape rooms do not exist in Finland and are very few in Europe in general, if any.

Among the criteria for the perfect escape room games the respondents mentioned trustworthy environment, well-elaborated themes, high-tech puzzles instead of ordinary locks, good storytelling, multiple rooms and secret doors. Suitable for kids escape rooms were considered to be not so interesting.

As for the respondents' interest in St. Petersburg as a touristic destination, 86% of them claimed to be interested in taking part in an experience based tour with a cultural program and several escape rooms included. According to the survey the respondents' interest in St. Petersburg is based mainly on history, architecture, culture and subculture and meeting locals.

The authors also asked the respondents about the sum that they would be willing to pay for a short escape room based experience tour to St. Petersburg. And the biggest amount of responses varied from 200 to 500 euros for a 3-night trip, which gave the authors the approximate price range for further tour development. The survey had been made before the authors made a decision to arrange a bigger, 6-night, trip, therefore the pricing was later defined respectively.

## **2.2 BonBus tool analysis**

The first step was to identify the target groups the company is planning to concentrate on. The groups were not supposed to be overlapping each other, so that the representative of one group could not be as well related to another one. On the basis of this approach the authors distinguished four target groups:

- young individuals (18-25 years old),
- adult individuals (25-35 years old),
- DINK couples (double income, no kids couples)
- Companies, related to both companies of co-workers on teambuilding trips (mainly SMEs) and special event groups, such as bachelor parties or birthday celebration trips.

The second step was to identify the types of products of services the company is supposed to provide. The authors distinguished three possible service types:

- Experience tour: lower price but less privacy (staying in hostel, common cabin on board the ship);
- Experience tour with: higher price but more privacy (staying at private hotel rooms, private cabin on board the ship);
- Tailored experience tour (a tour elaborated considering the specific experience needs of

the customer, personalized and individual).

On the basis of these data the next step of the workshop was to find out which product is supposed to be targeted at which customer group. In case there were more than one products related to one customer group the workshop participants were supposed to return one step back and one more time to speculate on their target groups and products types.

As can be clearly seen from this scheme, the main target groups for the provided service would be the young individuals (18-25 years old) that will be deemed as the potential customers of the cheaper option of the experience tour. The adult individuals (25-35 years old) and DINK couples would be the target group for the more expensive tour option. While the companies would be the target group for all sorts of tailored types of the experience tour. The last targeted group is planned to be more customer personalized and therefore as a result the most expensive.

After the above mentioned workshop the authors got the results presented in the following table:

Table 4. Correlation of products offered and target groups

		Young individuals	Adults	Couples, DINK	Companies
		Students, individuals, young adults, middle income	Families, modern humanists, higher income, higher demands	Flexible, open-minded, good income	Teambuilding, different age and interests
Escape room tours for youngsters	Escape rooms, cultural tours, café, hostel, shared room on boat	✗			
Escape room tours for adults	Escape room, cultural tours, café/restaurant, hotel. Individual apartment on boat		✗	✗	
Tailored trips for individuals and companies	Personalized experience (certain type of escape rooms and cultural tours)				✗

### 2.3 User Persona

Based on the online survey and the BonBus tool analysis the User Persona for the tour should be a young female with middle income, interested in sports, travelling and personal development.

She has settled values but is still searching for the life route. She believes in sustainability and wants to know what kind of products she is consuming and how ethically they were produced. She is already a professional in her field but does not have a family yet making a choice in favor of travelling, new experiences and personal development. She is intelligent, socially active and adventurous.

Since our general main target group is young adults, it should additionally be said that the youth travelers currently make up 20% of all trips. Researches show that this type of travelers are experience-seekers traveling with the interest towards culture, adventure or relaxation. (Scott, Laws, & Boksberger 2010.)

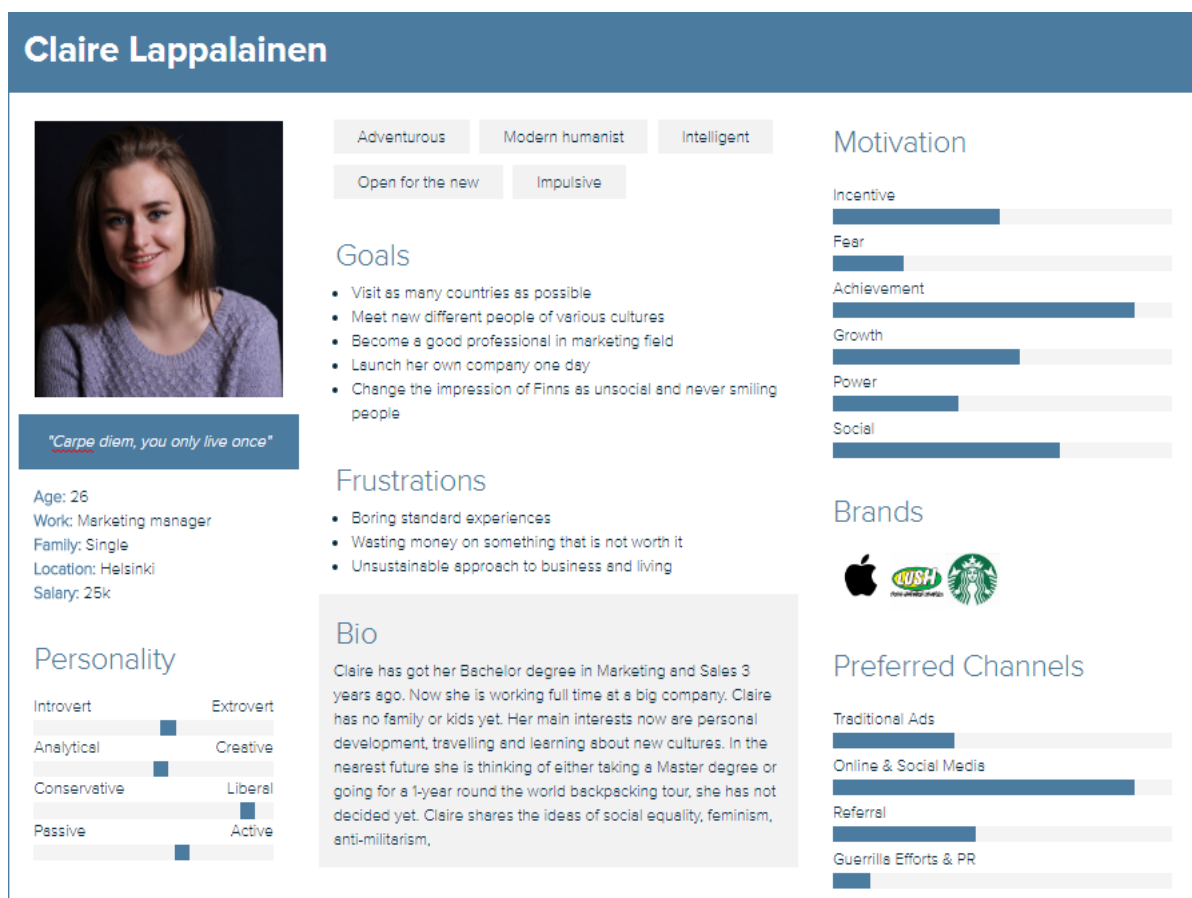


Figure 14. User persona

Based on the results of the online survey, almost all the people from time to time plan escape room during their travels to other cities and most of the same respondents are also interested in St. Petersburg as a destination. Though at the same time they admit their little knowledge

of the city and the country. Based on this it can be stated that the demand for experience escape tour really exists in the market and it is possible to get into this niche with the product elaborated in this thesis.

### 3 Study trip findings

The authors have performed a study trip to St. Petersburg in order to test the selected parts of the itinerary. In this chapter, the findings based on the trip experience will be described.

**Escape rooms:** As it has already been mentioned, the competition among the escape room companies in St. Petersburg is quite high. However, the authors have played two of them during the trip and had a conversation with the staff of one of the companies. Apparently, the choice of the games gets limited due to some linguistic game specifics: in some games the puzzles and/or hints are based on the Russian language, and it would be impossible for a fully non-Russian-speaking team to solve them. For this reason, the choice of the games will be based mostly on the game applicability to the English-speaking team even if it reduces its relation to the cultural realities.

A positive observation was that even the middle-priced games provided a very unusual set of puzzles and used the elements of a performance in it (i.e. participation of actors in the game). Besides, the iLocked quest company developed their own game type – escape room theatre, which would be a totally new experience for the Finnish people. It should be stated, that the variety of escape room games, their complexity and range is still growing steadily in St. Petersburg, ready to provide an outstanding experience to the customers.

**Tours:** The authors have visited both the tours that are planned to be included in the tour itinerary: “Soviet communal apartments” and “Soviet bomb shelter and a watch tower”. As for the later one, the tour is slightly physically demanding and requires a person to be wearing comfortable clothes and shoes. It is not applicable to physically challenged people, thus in case there are some people like this within the tour group a suitable replacement should be provided: for instance, a viewing platform of Isaac Cathedral which has an elevator and provides a perfect view over the city.

The communal apartment tour, in the authors opinion, did not correspond to its name fully. Most part of the tour took place in the yards and entrance halls of the buildings, which was very interesting and exciting. The visit to the communal apartment took about 15 minutes, which is quite understandable because it was a real apartment with real people living in it. Still even such a short visit provides an instant out-of-routine transformational experience to

the customers, which will be described in more detail in the Customer Journey Map part. Still the authors have agreed to address this product as “Yards, entrance halls and Soviet communal apartments tour”.

The authors have discussed with the tour guides the potential opportunities for future cooperation. It was confirmed that both these excursions can be implemented in English with the content adapted for non-Russian citizens. The authors have exchanged contact details with the guides in order to get in touch with them directly in future without using the tour aggregator websites as intermediaries.

**Grand Maket Russia:** Grand Maket Russia is a miniature layout of the main Russian regions. The layout is divided into two parts: east and west by the arch symbolizing the Ural mountain chain. Customers can get acquainted to the geography, infrastructure and specifics of Russian regions. The layout has a lot of smallest details reflecting on the cultural specifics of the country with a bit of irony. Grand Maket Russia provides multi language assistance, the brochures near the entrance are translated into the most widely spread languages and even in Finnish.

The very positive finding of this place was that it is a totally transparent project. One can see the craftspeople working on the layout details in the craft room behind the glass, as well as the observers of the layout watching the dozens of monitors. The visitors can also watch a 30-minute movie about the history of the layout in English.

**Restaurants:** The authors have visited the Russian cuisine restaurant “Mother’s Country House” (Mama na Dache) which reflects the late Soviet Union phenomenon of city people moving to summer country houses. The restaurant managed to implement the authentic cozy atmosphere of a country house belonging to a person from a big Russian city, very typical from the late 80’s till nowadays, a mixture and a transfer period between the rural and the urban lifestyle. The restaurant serves national dishes and beverages adjusted to the modern tastes (for example: chicken Kiev with French fries). Also, there is an option to order a samovar tea-drinking ceremony with traditional pastry for a group of people, which would provide an added value to the elaborated touristic product.

The second café included in the tour is the Green Room located in the art loft project Etagi (translated as “Floors”). This café is a part of the art space located in an 8-storey building full of design shops, exhibitions and all sorts of art related events. This place is popular with the

young people of the city who are interested in modern design, art and newest trends. By including Etagi and Green Room café to the itinerary, the customers have a chance to see the contemporary Russia side and how different it is from Russia of the past.

The authors also visited a restaurant called Soviet Apartment which was not planned to be a compulsory part of the tour. However, the idea, the atmosphere and the servings were so authentic and well-elaborated, that it has been decided to leave it as a recommended option. The restaurant describes itself as a “nostalgic cafe” and reflects the atmosphere of a 60’s-80’s apartment.

**Hostel:** The authors have chosen to stay at one of the hostels considered to be used within the tour, Funky Sport Capsule Hostel. The hostel beds are made as a capsule, closed from each side which provides the customer with far more privacy compared to a normal hostel bed. The hostel also has private rooms for a higher price. Therefore, it could be an optimal place to use in the elaborated tour, so that it suits our target customer groups, both who prefer dormitory and private accommodation.

It should be concluded, that the English versions of most of these places’ websites are either poorly developed or nonexistent at all. It means that they have not been really oriented to the foreign customers so far, concentrating mostly on Russian speaking tourists, and besides other touristic companies have not been using them in their tours. However, we believe that they give a very deep and profound insight into Russian culture and that is what could make the elaborated product unique and special gaining the competitive advantage.

## **4 Product Design**

In order to start the construction of the Product Design Canvas it is first important to clarify a few points. The first sub-chapter will provide justification of the chosen itinerary points, the second one will give a short insight in the pricing strategy and the third one will be the Product Design Canvas based on all the above-mentioned researches.

### **4.1 Itinerary points justifications**

The developed product consists of several very different activities aiming at giving the customers a profound and multisided insight to the Russian history and culture. The whole itinerary can be found in Appendix 1. The experience starts even before they get on board the ship - the authors plan to make a small quiz on the website with just one random question, in

case the customers answer it correctly they will get a promo code for a free drink in the ship bar.

The examples of the questions could be as follows:

- Who is St. Petersburg named after? (answer: St. Peter, not Peter the Great)
- Almost 10% of St. Petersburg territory is covered by water. Do you know what the city is called sometimes because of this? (answer: Northern Venice)
- Before 1995 St. Petersburg had the longest ..... (340km) in the world. However, now this record belongs to Melbourne, Australia. Other cities known for this are Lisbon, Geneva, Amsterdam. Helsinki also has it pretty developed. What is it? (tramway)

While on board the ship the customers will also have an opportunity to play a short quest. In order to elaborate the tasks, this has to be agreed with St. Petersburg Lines and the access to the ship is required. But the basis of the game will be used the same way it is done by Helsinki city quest company "Look&Run": the players have to follow a specific link, complete the task and the answer to the task will be the word or the number that they will need to add to the link to proceed to the next task.

- Example: What year St. Petersburg was founded (1703)? Multiply this number by 4 (6812). Find the cabin with the same number. The last word on the table next to it is the key to the next task!

Ten tasks like this would be enough to provide an unusual experience to the customers, engage their interest in the destination and to make an additional value to the standard cruise entertainment program.

The authors also plan to make a self-guided quest-route around St. Petersburg in the form of a game, which the customers can follow in their free time if they are interested. Initially, the plan was to create a route game by the authors themselves. However, the research showed that there have been many route games like this created already and even a set of game maps published and being sold at some of the book shops of the city.

Thus, the authors consider the possibility to get in touch with the professional route creators or the author of the book in order to agree upon the terms of their game usage in the developed tour. The authors believe that this service providers could be interested in such cooperation since all these games are written in Russian and not adapted to the English-speaking public, which could be done by the authors.



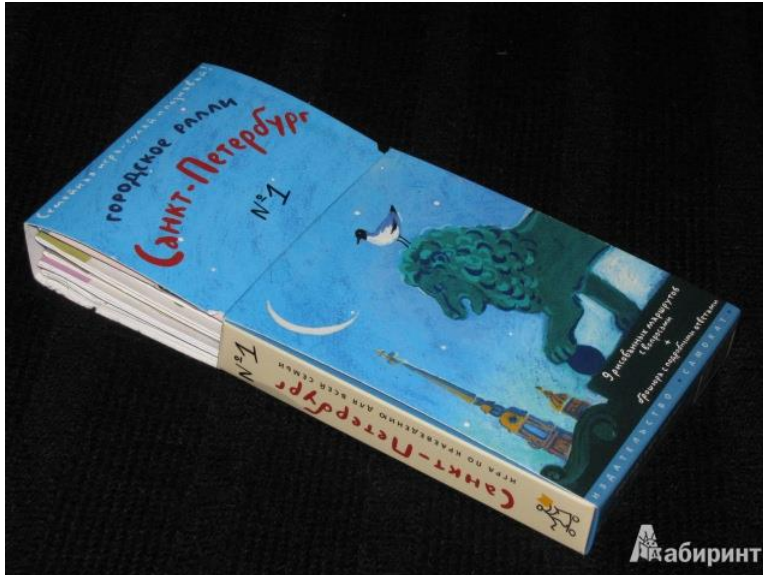


Figure 15. “St. Petersburg city rally” set of city-quest maps by H. Pataki

The choice of hostels as accommodation was determined not only because of the desire to make the price lower for the young people who are used to staying in dormitories during their trips. Another reason is teambuilding. One of the aspects that makes this product unique is that total strangers become a group during the tour and it is not just a standard touristic group with zero communication level within it, but the participants will have to communicate at least during escape room games. That is a big advantage for the people who want to experience escape room tourism but always travel alone or with a friend and cannot make a proper team to make escape room experience interesting and exciting.

St. Petersburg Experience Escape Tour will give them the opportunity to be part of the group of people with the same interests, engaged in the game process and with the same motivations. Thus, the authors assume that hostel accommodation could affect the teambuilding process in a positive way and increase communication level. The aim of the tour is not just to give people a short touristic experience but to let them find new friends and stay friends in the long perspective.

Out of the huge amount of very interesting and untypical excursions offered in the market, the authors chose the tour to St Petersburg yards, entrance halls and communal apartments and the tour to a Soviet bomb shelter and a watch-tower. This choice was made because both these tours give a very deep insight in the recent past of the city and the whole country. The first one gives a chance to see how real people live, what their everyday routine is, how they feel. The second tour, first takes the customers high over the city, where they can see all the main city sights, and then it instantly gets them underground. Both locations tell the

story of the city related to the war times and also show how the local people survived during this complicated historic period.

Grand Maket Russia is a relatively new project, opened in 2012. It provides a clear geographical view over the whole country. But apart from geography it gives a cultural insight, as there are many small scenes reflecting the typical cultural traits. For example, a car garage with a secret basement where a man could have small parties with friends secretly from his family. Some of these scenes would require a long explanation to let the foreigner understand what it means, but the authors believe that this layout is unfairly overlooked by the touristic companies.

The choice of the restaurants has been mostly explained in the “Study trip findings” chapter. To sum up, the authors chose the Green Room Café representing the new modern St. Petersburg and the “Mother’s Country House” to show the transfer period between rural and urban life in late Soviet Union.

## 4.2 Pricing and finance

The authors have estimated the costs of the tour, which however can be different by the time of the product launch. The estimation was made for four options of customer amount: 5, 10, 15 and 20 people.

Table 5. Estimated income statement

Income statement							
	5ppl	10ppl	15ppl	20ppl			
Sales	2850	5700	8550	11400			
Costs					Hostel about 15e per person per night		
Cruise	500	1000	1500	2000	3 escape rooms 50e per game (team 2-6ppl)		
Fuel/harbour fee	150	300	450	600	3-day public transport ticket 7e		
City bus tour	125	250	375	500	Fuel and harbour fee per person 30 eur		
Hostel 3 nights	225	550	675	900	City bus tour per person 25 eur		
Escape room	150	300	450	600	Museums and tours 15+15+8, 38e per person		
Transport	35	70	105	140	Food 8e per person, 2 lunches		
Museums, tours	190	380	570	760			
Food	80	160	240	320	price per person	No of ppl	total price
Guide	150	150	150	150	570	5	2850
Total costs	1605	3160	4515	5970	570	10	5700
					570	15	8550
					570	20	11400
Gross profit	1245	2540	4035	5430			
Tax 10%	124.5	254	403.5	543			
Profit after tax	1120.5	2286	3631.5	4887			

The research was limited by the fact that St. Petersburg Lines has a flexible pricing system and the sum depends on the season, popularity of the date and some other factors. However, the authors found that there is a manager cooperating with groups and touristic companies so it might be possible to make a fixed price agreement in future for a smoother cooperation.

The cruise company website states that the city bus tour is compulsory for all the tour participants. The authors' experience shows that it is not so strict in the reality but still a bus overview tour could be a good starting point to get to know the city, thus it is considered a part of the tour.

The average hostel price in St. Petersburg is 15e per night, double rooms - about 40e. In the income statement the authors used the dormitory price. In case the customer chooses a double room, the price will grow accordingly.

The price of escape rooms in St. Petersburg vary from 30e to 150e per game. In the compulsory part of the tour the authors considered the 3 average escape rooms for about 50e per game. However, as an extra service, the customers can choose to play some untypical quests for a higher price but a higher experience level. Such as, escape room theatre, escape room performance or a sport quest.

Initially the authors planned to hire a minivan for traveling around the city. But later this idea was withdrawn in favor of public transport. The minivan day costs are relatively high considering the fact that the car is not needed often due to the small distance between many locations. Thus, the authors decided to give the customers unlimited 3-day ticket for all the types of the city transport (metro, tram, bus, trolleybus) which costs only 7e. This would give the participants the freedom of move in their free time. It also should be stated that the local transport is experience itself and the metro can even be considered a museum experience.

The two tours chosen for the product are estimated about 15e per person, and the Grand Maket Russia entrance price is 8e. The authors might consider to include the audio-guide price in the tour price in future if it proves itself to be important.

Both the restaurants used in the tour provide business lunches on weekdays for reasonable price. They both have a wide variety of dishes and most likely will suit the tastes of all the customers. Also, "Mother's Country House" restaurant has an option of a Russian tea drink-

ing ceremony with a samovar, which is only 8.5e for a group of 5-6 people. It is a cheap option to provide a huge add value and local experience, so the authors are considering this option as well for future development.

The customers get on board the ship themselves and are met by the English-speaking local guide after the bus tour in the city center. For the next 3 days the guide follows the program of the tour, solves the ad hoc problems and helps the customers to plan their free time activities. The authors agreed that the salary of the guide should be 150e for a tour, considering the working hours and 24hours availability by phone, Skype, Viber or WhatsApp during the period while the group is located in St. Petersburg:

- day 2: 2pm-6pm (4 hours)
- day 3: 10am – 6:30pm (8.5 hours)
- day 4: 12pm – 5:30pm (5.5 hours)

### **4.3 Product Design Canvas**

The Product Design Canvas tool was used fully in order to see the product in a nutshell, even though some of its parts, such as portfolio, are not very essential at such an early phase of the development. However, this tool was used in order to see connections between the launchers' and the customer' perspectives, the available resources and skills, their application to the tasks and goals of the project.

The authors have tried to construct the Product Design Canvas based on the previous research. The user section is defined according to the customer groups analysis and a user persona tool. Thus, the end user for the tour is young person or a DINK couple with middle income, ready for new experiences and adventures. They know the concept of escape rooms and prefer non-banal excursions over the classic ones. Their goal is to get a multisensory experience and learn about the history and culture of the destination. They want an authentic dive into the local life, not a refined old-fashioned product for tourists. They know their demands and understand that a good experience is worth paying for. They are open for new, ready to communicate with the new people despite the mentality specifics and get actively engaged.

The product is the experience escape tour developed with consideration of these customers' needs and with an attempt to add a bit of extra value to it. The choices of the itinerary parts have been discussed above. The resources used in the product construction are limited in terms of finance and entrepreneurial experience of its founders. However, there are sources to get implementational support at the initial stages, as well as the financial support sources

can be found even though not easily. The authors have a suitable education for developing such kind of product, experience in customer service, intercultural communication and management, which they consider to be a very important resource for the project launch.

The tools that are planned to be used for the product are making cooperative ties with the partner companies, active usage of social media and online marketing to promote the product and getting assistance from the organizations that provide help for the Finnish start-ups.

The product portfolio will present the product as a new concept of travelling, the escape room tourism experience. The tour will be marketed as a deep dive into the Russian history and culture, a mix of learning and game experience. Some basic parts of the tour will still stay quite standard, such as travelling by a cruise ship, staying at a hotel. For this reason, the authors try to make this experience a bit more diverse by adding a quest game to the cruise ship and using hostels for accommodation and teambuilding spirit.

The Action section reflects what the product is supposed to do with the customer and it can be stated that the experience escape tour gives the customers a chance to meet their expectation to get involved in the local culture, meet local people, taste local food and at the same time get a lot of game experience. The presentation of the possibilities is clearly defined in the itinerary (see Appendix 1) and should be as clearly stated at the stage of the marketing strategy development.

The pricing strategy has been discussed in the previous sub-chapter. The developed tour to St. Petersburg is within the middle price range of touristic products. However, it is still cheaper than the other cruise ship tours to St. Petersburg comprising the classic destination program model.

The authors assume that the tour is elaborated within quite a propitious context. The escape room experience boom has just passed but it is still in its peak. However, now it has reached the stage when people are looking for new types of quest experiences and are not satisfied with the existing ones. Due to the fact that the quest development in St. Petersburg has gone much further than in Helsinki, it is possible to provide the customers with such opportunity. Besides, the interest towards Russia and CIS states is growing and one of the factors restraining the tourism to this destination is the complicated visa process. In the elaborated tour, the visa question is solved by the special resolution given to St. Petersburg Lines for non-visa travels.

The authors plan to use the results of the Product Design Canvas model in the further development of the product, as well as in construction of the business plan and implementation strategies.

## Product Design Canvas

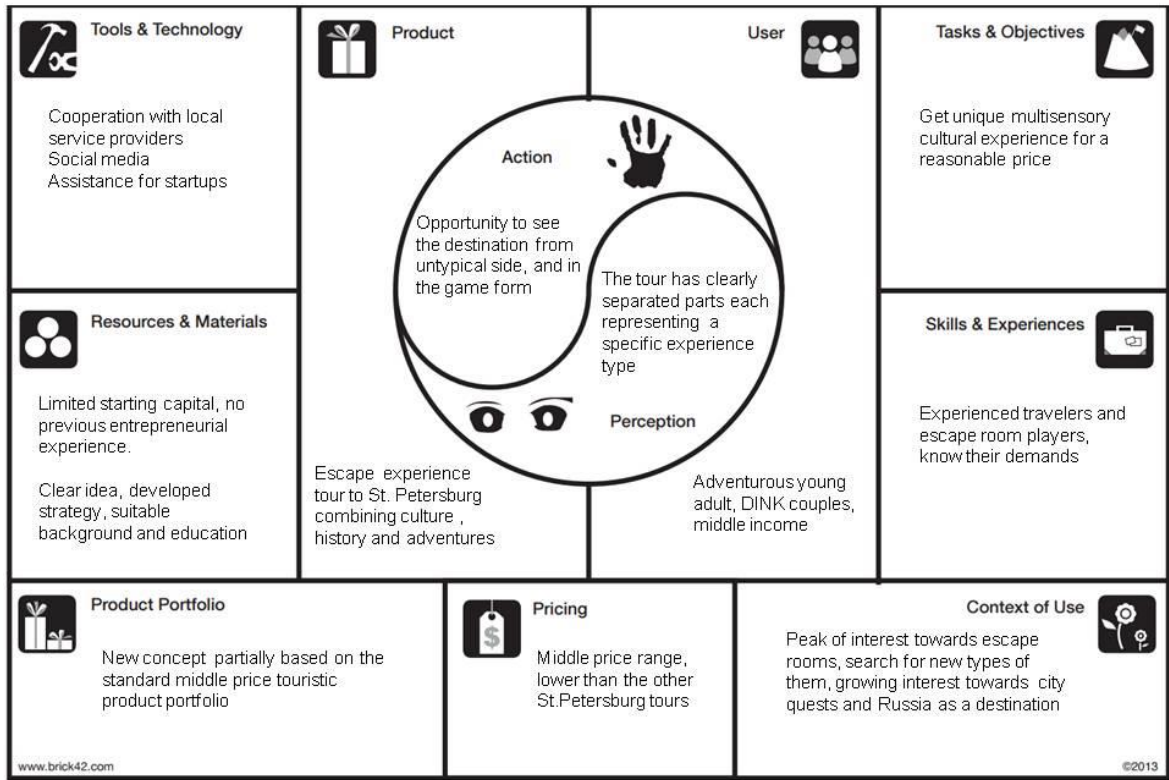


Figure 16. Product Design Canvas

### 4.4 Value Proposition Canvas

The authors applied value proposition canvas theory in product development. It helped to understand how tour's itinerary suggestions can fit to customers' needs and demands. User persona, Claire Lappalainen, the one that was already mentioned and described in previous subchapter, will be used here for creation full customer profile.

Claire belongs to the targeted customer segment – young individuals. Her main job as an adventurous customer is to get new experience for her social and emotional life. She already played in escape rooms of Helsinki. But they are quite expensive and do not suggest enough options that can trigger her emotional life. Also, Claire likes to travel and get new cultural experience.

Thereby the authors have distinguished following customers' jobs:

- I want to get new experience
- Let me play escape room games
- Show me new culture

By choosing suggested tour to Saint Petersburg Claire has following expectations, so-called gains:

- She wants to have safe and organized tour
- She is desiring new cultural experience
- She is interested in different escape room games

However, at the same time Claire has different fears that can impact on her choice. She is uncertain about some aspects of the organised tour. Claire has following pains:

-She does not speak Russian and she heard that not all people speak English in Saint Petersburg including service industry.

- Claire usually was travelling to European countries where she did not have to make any visa. That is why she is not sure how to make visa to non-Schengen country. She does not know how much it costs and how long it will take to make it.

- Claire was travelling alone to other countries before, but she is not ready to go by herself to Saint Petersburg.

- Claire is eager to play exciting escape room games but she cannot believe that there are games performing completely in English.

After creating customer's profile author analysed value map of proposed products and service. The business idea suggests Experience Escape tour to Saint Petersburg. In total tour lasts 6 days and has scheduled programme with compulsory and optional itinerary. It includes transportation by St. Peter Line boat, accommodation in hostel, 2 escape room games, 2 guided cultural tours, lunch of local cuisine, constant contact with English speaking guide. Free time of the participants can be tailored by suggested list of selected spots for food and fun lovers.

Among the most valuable gain creators of the offered business idea authors highlighted following:

- 1) Itinerary suggests entertaining schedule with compulsory and recommended parts. All tours elements are completely safe and participants are supported by English-speaking guide.
- 2) Non-banal unique cultural tours will get familiar participants with unknown history of Russia and show interesting spots of Saint Petersburg.
- 3) All escape rooms will be chosen according to the wishes and interests of the participants

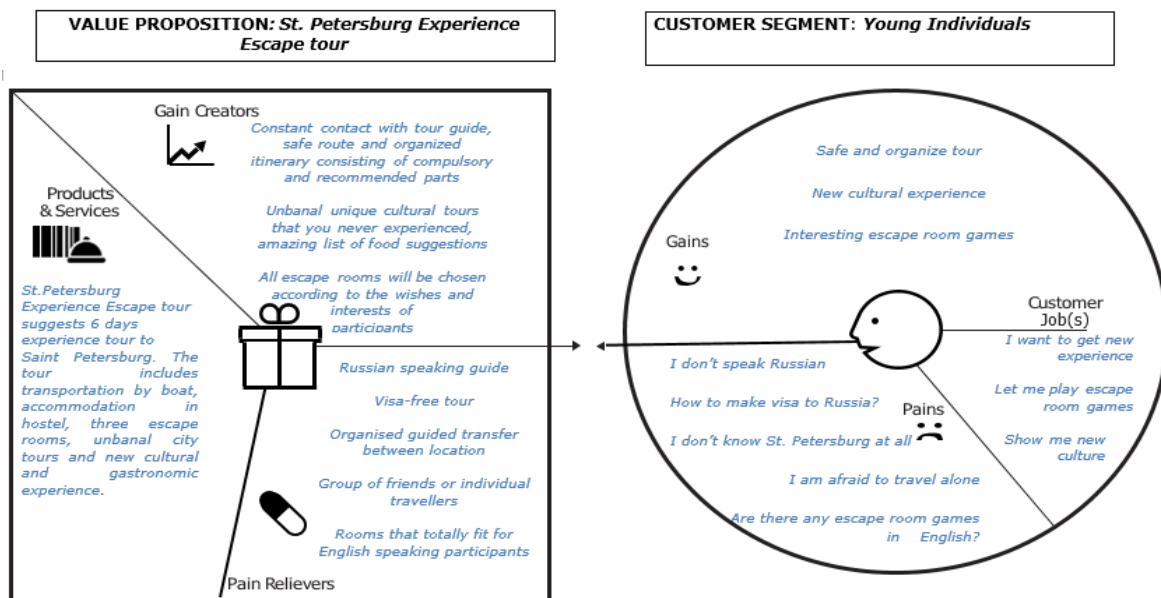


Figure 17. Value proposition Canvas

Well-chosen pain relievers can impact on customers' choice and make their life easier and happier. The following pain relievers were chosen as the most prioritised:

- 1) The tour suggests Russian speaking guide that would help in all transferring between compulsory part of the itinerary. Moreover, participants can contact the guide any time during own free time for information or translation.
- 2) The tour does not require applying for visa to enter Russia thanks to chosen transportation method.
- 3) The tour fits to both individuals and group of friends. If participants are eager to visit Russia and play local escape room games but cannot find like-minded persons among own friends, the tour organisers will take care of that.

The most important moment in creating of value proposition canvas is to analyse how good customer profile fits to value proposition map. As it can be seen in the figure 15, Value proposition Canvas has multiple fits in all areas. Customer jobs are satisfied by products and service of the suggested tour. Desired gains of the customer profile find fits in gain creator section of value proposition. Pains of the customers are alleviated by pain relievers of suggested value map.

## 5 Customer Journey Map

Customer Journey Map was created for visual understanding of the customers' experience path. On the Customer Journey Map one can clearly see such elements as moments of truth (the most memorable moments of the trip that can lead to transformational experience), emotions of the customers, their expectations and opportunities for improvement of customers' experience. The complete Customer Journey Map can be found in Appendix 3.



Before creating the Customer Journey Map, the authors made a map with all the compulsory and potential elements of the tour. This map can be seen in Figure 17. The blue color marks are escape rooms located in the central area of the city, the orange ones are the excursion start locations, the green ones are the hostels that suit the quality standards of the tour and the purple ones are the selected restaurants. As can be clearly seen from this map, almost all of the sights are located in the very center of the city. Only Grand Market Russia is not shown in this map as located outside of the city historical center, but it is easily accessible by public transport.

The authors chose a few different options for hostel accommodation. All of them have good rating of customer reviews and, what is most important, they are located in the center of the city with close distance to the main points of itinerary.

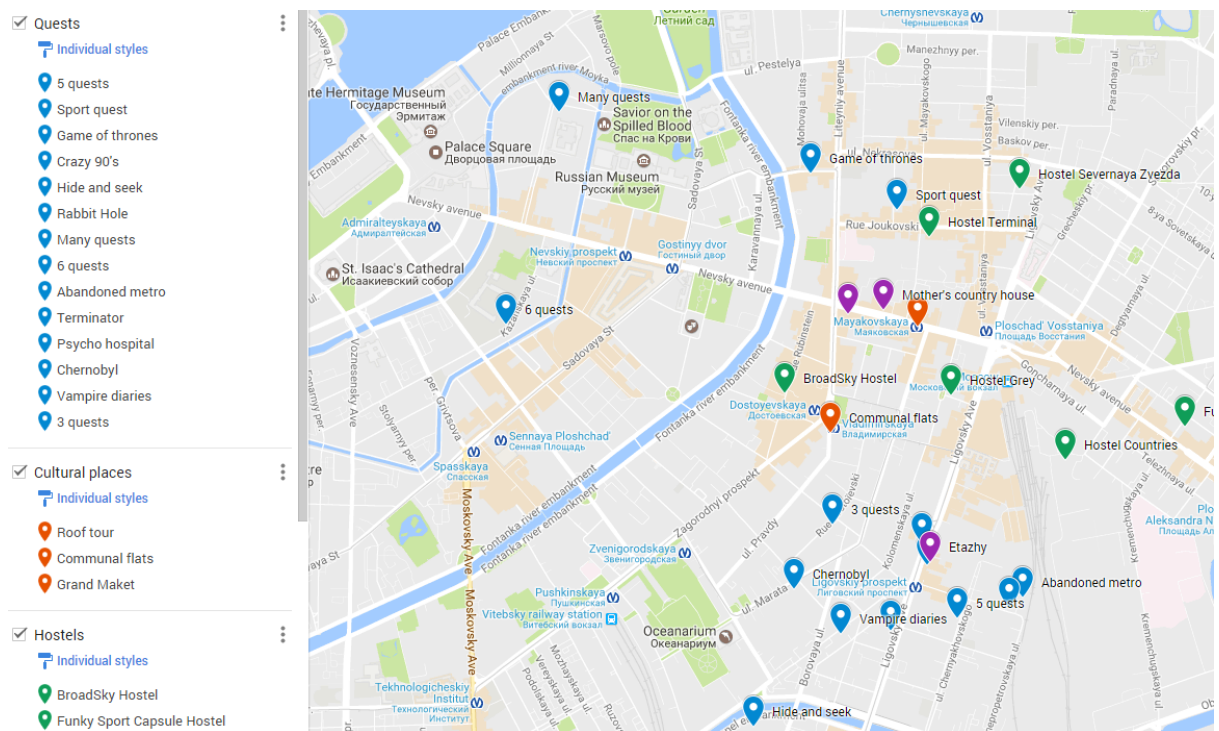


Figure 18. Map of the tour elements

Customers' journey path begins with considering the idea about getting new emotions and experience, exploring a new culture and getting to know new people. After this stage, customers used to make research by asking their own friends and relatives or by browsing internet for choosing the alternative that can fulfill one's needs and goals. It is a very important stage for creators of the project, since there is a chance to grab attention of the potential customers and motivate them to buy the product.

After making the decision, any customer expects easy payment options and quick replies to one's questions regarding the trip and itinerary details. For these purposes the authors are

considering to create a properly thought through website and the active social media channels. After the company launch and in case of the proper implementation of the idea, it will take some time for the company brand to get known. Thereby, proper marketing strategy is very important for successful project launch.

As already mentioned in the itinerary justification part, after the booking of the trip is made, the company managers will always stay in touch with the customers by providing support information regarding the trip, small tips of how to get ready for the trip and also possibly small quizzes to create the proper mood.

Customers independently travel by St. Petersburg Lines boat, where they already can begin small vacation by enjoying food and entertainment program provided by St. Petersburg Lines boat staff. Moreover, the authors also plan to provide the participants with a chance of additional fun by suggesting them a small quest onboard. Thereby, the travelers can make themselves ready for excitingly competitive and entertainment experience of the trip's itinerary. It should be noted that on the boat there is still a chance to join the tour for a certain amount of customers that have interest for that. They can take part in the tour, with the cruise and hostel costs extracted from the price, because the authors believe that everyone who learns about this product onboard the ship have already taken care of their accommodation.

After disembarkation, the participants have a city bus tour arranged by the cruise company. At this point the authors cannot impact much on the experience quality. However, they believe that the chosen company provides with a high-level service.

When the city bus tour is finished, the participants finally meet their tour guide. The meeting point will be the last pitstop of the bus, presumably Moskovskiy Railway Station. From there all the participants will be taken to the chosen accommodations. All hostels, that were taken into consideration by the authors, are in close distance. For example, according to Google Maps it takes 13 minutes to get to Vintage & Funky Sport Hostel from there by walk, or for example it takes 16 minutes to get to the Broad Sky hostel by tram.

All arrangements regarding transfer from one pitstop to another will be made by the tour guide. In most cases, the participants just walk from one destination to another, because all the chosen itinerary points are within a close distance from each other. If the weather is rainy and cold, the public transportation is always available and from the first day the participants will get unlimited city transport card for the length of their stay. For example, it is planned to use public transport for getting to Grand Maket Russia. The whole route takes about 33 minutes by tram. Also, the authors plan that the guide will have one-use raincoats to give out

to the participants in case of rainy weather in order to make the experience more comfortable.

In case of any urgent issues there is a taxi option. Yandex Taxi (Russian analogue of Uber) can be booked by phone application or online. The authors were using taxi option during the study trips. And one trip within the central city area of 15-20 minutes cost about 2-3 euro.

Generally the authors highlighted the following possible moments of truth for the customers during the trip:

- Booking the trip
- All escape room games
- Excursion in Grand Market Russia
- Tour to the soviet bomb shelter and a watch tower
- Time in ETAGI Loft-Project
- Tour to St. Petersburg yards, entrance halls and communal apartments
- Sharing emotions and impressions about trip

These moments of truth have significant impact on customers' memorable experience and Moreover they can be the reason why participants will become loyal customers and would like to repeat similar experience some day. And what is also important, they can be triggering moments for recommending tour to the customers' friends and relatives.

Since all the participants are people with different backgrounds and demands, the moments of truth can vary depending on the personality and interests. Moreover, the amount of moments of truth can be even bigger because all participants every day have free time for their own entertainment. And besides, as mentioned in the theoretical part, staying in the out-of-routine authentic context is experience itself.

The Customer Journey Map was partially tested by the authors during their study trip. Since the authors were on study trip for just a few days and went there by bus, it was not possible to test all itinerary pitstops. Authors came to a conclusion that the timetable and the itinerary fit the initial idea of the tour. And there should not be any interruptions and issues for transferring between the destinations. However, it is still planned to fully test and check this assumption before the launching of the product. The authors are planning to perform a test trip with the participants who have professional knowledge in tourism and experience industry. These participants can be invited for instance from alumni students of Haaga-Helia UAS.

## 6 Market Entry Strategy

5-Steps Strategy implementation is planned to be performed in the following way:

**Step 1: Commitment.** The authors have identified the main target groups in detail in the Customer Groups Analysis in detail. To sum it up it could be stated that the main accent will be put to Finnish young people 18-35 years old, both solo travellers and young couples, with middle income, open minded and adventurous. The product offer is fully defined, however the minor changes are still possible depending on the future findings in the implementation process. The budget sources and limits are to be determined at this point as well based on the available funding resources.

**Step 2: Identifying Entry Points.** For a new company with a limited budget it is always a challenge to make a proper marketing campaign, thus the entry points should be determined carefully. Considering the choice of the target groups, it would be the best option to put the main emphasis on online marketing. But also, especially at the starting phase, it is very important to use the partners as the marketing channels, such as advertising the product at the websites and brochures of St. Petersburg Lines cruise company, Visit St. Petersburg, Visit Russia. Such approach would not be too resource consuming but address the needed target group of young people who are usually active internet users.

**Step 3: Defining Market Entry Strategies.** The pricing policy has been elaborated in the Product Design Canvas chapter in detail. Generally speaking, it is a middle-priced product, affordable for the middle income young people seeking for new authentic experiences and interested in Russian culture. According to the online survey and market analysis, it can be stated that the need for experience tour is quite enough in the market to make a business in this niche with relatively low direct competition at the present moment. The product image of a tour for young active people seeking for multidimensional experiences can be achieved by proper representation within the marketing campaign, which is not complicated to implement based on this thesis results.

**Step 4: Action Plan.** The action plan of the tour includes such stages as establishing a company within the Finish legislation, making agreements with all the partners within the tour, hiring an English speaking guide residing in St. Petersburg permanently, making legal arrangements concerning a foreign touristic company operations in Russia. After all the administrative procedures are done and the product developed at earlier stages. The authors consider starting the marketing campaign two months before the first tour. The website and all the social media channels should be set in operation by that time. The primary optimal sales target

would be to reach 10 people per tour, considering that 5 people would provide with the breakeven point in case the tour is made at least twice a month for the start. A more detailed research should be done on these aspects before the launch of the product though.

**Step 5: Test and feedback analysis.** After the product is ready it is planned to arrange a test tour for the industry professionals of different backgrounds, experiences and personalities. This would allow the authors to see the weak points of the product from the customer perspective and to eliminate them as much as possible before actual operations start. The trip for this group will be either fully paid by the company or partially paid depending on the available budget. It is also planned to make some marketing materials based on this trip, i.e short video representing the tour, photos, real feedbacks.

### 6.1 Online marketing

The most important representative part of the marketing would probably be the website of the tour. The website should be user friendly, with clear structure, main aspects of interest on the main page and a more detailed description in specified sections.

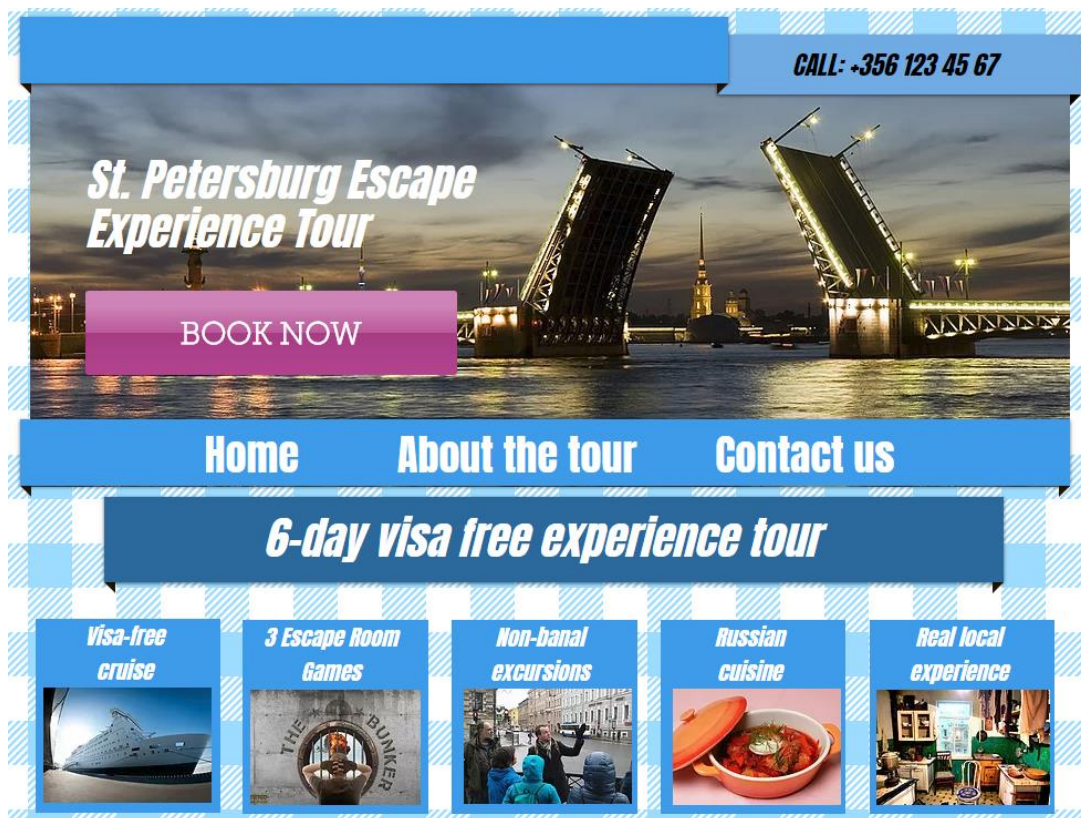


Figure 19. Website sample

The users will have an opportunity to book the tour through the easy and flexible booking system through which they could choose the type of accommodation (dormitory or a private



room), if needed add additional products and make the payment. The authors plan to make an option of 10% pre-payment (the rest to be paid 2 weeks before the tour) with a full refund in case of cancelation in order to ease the decision-making phase and attract more customers. The website will have a section with customers' feedbacks, photos and press releases. SEO optimization of the website is to be determined within the marketing strategy.

The marketing strategy should involve the company's presence in all the major social media, such as Instagram, Facebook and Youtube. All the social media accounts should be active, with new posts at least twice a week on Facebook and Instagram and at least one new Youtube video every 2-3 months.

The paid advertisement on social media is to be used with consideration of the target groups and other parameters. The Tripadvisor page should also be considered with extra attention since nowadays it is one of the most important travel resources.

The authors have collaboration ties with graphic designers which at the product launch phase could be used for creating of marketing material. The one example of marketing material made by a designer by the authors request can be seen below.



Figure 20. Marketing material sample

The marketing sample was created with an aim to present the basic parts of the tour, i.e. cruise travel, quests and escape rooms, local people, history and food. During the development of a full-scale marketing strategy the approaches towards marketing various types of experiences, described in the theoretical part, are to be considered in order to meet the requirements of the target groups.

## **6.2 Other marketing channels**

The authors plan to market the tour through the channels of the partner companies. The major one of those would be St. Petersburg Lines. Marketing on their website would be beneficial for both parties and would be seen by a big number of the cruise customers.

The potential marketing partners could also be websites of Visit St. Petersburg and Visit Russia. These organizations are aimed at attracting more tourists to the destination and the elaborated tour could be interesting for their target audience as well. Also, it is possible to market the tour in tourist offices in Finland.

Another opportunity to promote the tour is to cooperate with the gift companies like Elamyslahjat, Gift4you or Great Days. These aggregator websites sell the variety of experiences as gifts and ask for 10-15% of the price for each sold item.

The authors also consider the possibility to market the product within the student networks such as ESN, HELGA, AIESEC, HYY, AYY, FUAS etc. The tour could be popular among the students and especially the ones who came to Finland for exchange semester.

And the last tour marketing option described in this chapter is the use of Finnish bloggers' reviews in return for a free trip or a trip discount depending on the blogger popularity. It is common that the customers trust more the experience of another person, especially if it is described from the customer perspective.

## Appendix 2. Itinerary

### *Day 1, Wednesday - Departure from Helsinki*

#### 15:00 - Check-in starts

Don't forget your passport or ID!

Note: if you answer a question on the [link](#) correctly, you will get a free drink in the ship bar!

#### 19:00 - Departure

We sail on board of magnificent Princess Anastasia. Please arrive at Helsinki Sea Port West Terminal at 18:00 latest. It is better to get on board earlier to avoid queues and enjoy a variety of restaurants and bars, cinema, swimming pool, jacuzzi, sauna, gym, casino and a duty free zone.

You can book a separate cabin for yourself or your group (1, 2, 3 or 4 people) or we can accommodate you with some other participants of our tour.

Try our onboard quest for free and win another prize!



### *Day 2, Thursday - Arrival at St. Petersburg*

#### 14:00 - Disembarkation

At 14:00 your 72 hour VISA FREE stay in St. Petersburg starts. Have a relaxed breakfast on board before that as there are 3 very intense days ahead.

#### 15:00 - City Tour on bus

You will have a bus tour around the main sights of the city.

#### 16:00 - Meet your guide and check in to the hotel

You will be staying in one of the top-rated St.Petersburg hostels in the very heart of the city! There will be all the necessary facilities, such as wifi, kitchen equipment, hairdryer, vending machines and many activity offers. Breakfasts are included in price.

#### 18:00 - Escape room

Tonight you will play the first escape room of the tour! The choice of the room will be based on the group preferences. It might be scary, active or funny but definitely unforgettable!

#### 19:00 - Free time in the city

Take a look at a list of our extra activities!





## Day 3, Friday - Geography and Culture

09:00 - Breakfast at the hostel

11:00 - Grand Maket Russia

Grand Maket Russia is an interactive 800 m<sup>2</sup> miniature of all Russian regions performed with amazing attention to the details.

14:00 - Russian cuisine lunch

The authentic Russian lunch is included in the tour price. You can choose between several lunch options:

Salad+soup

Salad+main course

Main course+soup

Salad+soup+main course

Salads	Soups	Main courses	Drinks
Russian salad Dressed herring Vinaigrette Mushroom salad Crab salad	Chicken soup Borshch Solyanka Pea soup Mushroom soup	Potatoes with mushrooms Stroganoff with buckwheat Chicken fricassee with rice Outlet with mashed potatoes Grilled fish Murmansk style	Coffee Tea Russian berry drink

16:00 - Soviet communal apartments tour

18:30 - Escape room

19:30 - Free time!

Take a look at a list of our extra activities!



## Day 4 - Saturday, History and Art

Today you will have a free morning. You can go to one of the many city museums or choose any of the extra activities from our list!

13:00 - Tour to the soviet bomb shelter and a watch tower

15:00 - ETAGI Loft-Project

It is one of the most well-known multi-floored art space of Russia. The center currently consists of two modern art galleries, several exhibition areas, the Green Room café and a rooftop area with a stunning view of the city, all occupying an area of 3000 square meters. Here you will have a late lunch and some rest between the two games.

17:30 - Escape room

19:00 - Free time!

Try our Pub Crawl Tour (15e no drinks, 25 e - 6 shots, 33e - 10 shots)

Or a watch the bridge raise from the roof (30e, summer time only)

Or take part in one of our city quests for free!



## *Day 5 - Sunday - Departure from St. Petersburg*

09:00 - Free time

Take the last walk along Nevsky prospekt and enjoy the view. Or take part in our city quest if you did not have a chance to do it before. But don't be late for the ship!

12:00 - All on board!

19:00 - Departure

Embarkation must be completed by 13:00 latest to qualify for the 72 hour VISA FREE visit. You can once again enjoy the various facilities of Princess Anastasia and watch the city at the sunset from the ship deck.

We will continue having fun on board!



## *Day 6 - Monday - Arrival at Helsinki*

07:00 - We are back!

You can still have a breakfast on board, no need to be in a hurry.





## Appendix 2. Additional products and sights

### FOR MUSEUM FANS



#### **Hermitage**

Art and culture museum, one of the largest museums in the world. The collections occupy a large complex of six historic buildings along Palace Embankment, including the Winter Palace. You can see the works of art by Da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, Tizian and many many more.

Price: 13 €



#### **Russian Museum**

The largest museum of Russian fine arts, also one of the largest museums in the country. Here you can see the famous "Black Square" by Malevich,

Price: 8€



#### **Peter and Paul Fortress**

The original citadel of St. Petersburg founded in 1703 by Peter the Great. The fortress has several notable buildings around the 122m tall Peter and Paul Cathedral. The cathedral is the burial place of almost all Russian tsars. By the walls of the fortress there is a sandy beach on the bank of Neva river.

Price: Free (fees for optional museums)



#### **Isaac Cathedral**

The largest orthodox cathedral in the city. Its dome rises over 100, above the city and is covered with pure gold. You can raise to the colonnade by walking 262 steps and have the best view over the city.

Price: 8€



#### **Museum of Soviet Arcade Machines**

Get a chance to become a child of the late USSR and play the arcade machines they used to play. All these machines were once constructed at secret military factories and now got restored to let you have some fun!

The ticket includes an excursion and 15 games.

Price: 8€

## FOR UNUSUAL TOUR ENTHUSIASTS



### Pub crawl tour

Experience the night life of St. Petersburg and see how Russians party! The recent years have formed a subculture of art-cafes, clubs and bars, some of which have no signs to be found by random visitors.

Price: 15€ - no drinks, 25€ - 6 shots, 33€ - 10 shots



### Bridge raise from the roof

See the best night event of St. Petersburg from the roof top. Dress warmly and put comfortable shoes on!

Price: 25€



### Romantic photo session on the roof

A great opportunity to get the memories of the city in the form of the romantic walk on the roofs. You will not only see the city from the top but also have a set of professional photos.

Price: 70€ for 2 people

## FOR FOOD LOVERS



### “Kvartirka” Café

Café of Soviet nostalgic aesthetics. The interior is filled with the items of a bygone era: books, vinyl discs, lamp shades. Every hall of the restaurant shows old Soviet movies on old-fashioned TVs.

Average bill: 20€



### “Teplo” Café

Warm and cozy place serving traditional Russian dishes. “Teplo” is translated from Russian means “warmth”, and this is exactly what this café offers to its customers. **Especially** nice on a rainy day. On the summer one the outdoor terrace is available though.

Average bill: 20€

## FOR ESCAPE ROOM PROFESSIONALS



### **Sport escape rooms**

A team quest combining the intellectually and physically demanding tasks. Choose the challenges of Fort Boyard or take part in the real Hunger Games. Relatively good physical health is needed as well as sport clothes.

Price: 50-80€ per team



### **Escape room theatres**

A combination of an escape room and a real theatre with decorations, drama and actors. The hints are not given as in usual escape room, but to get help one should ask the actors the right question within the story line.

Price: 100-120€ per team



### **Really scary escape rooms**

And by scary we mean REALLY scary escape rooms. The ones where one will cry and call for mommy. Before trying this, you will have to sign the personal responsibility agreement and choose the fear level (low, medium or hard).

Price: 30-80€ per team

All rights of the used photos belong to the service providers.

### Appendix 3. Customer Journey Map

#### The legend



thoughtful person



amazingness, laughing so hard you're crying



sleepy, tired person



happy person ready to chill out



shocked, astonished person



relaxation and happiness



happiness, joy



person sharing hugs and emotions



confused person



person enjoying tasty food










satisfaction














Moment of truth



### Making decision and Day 1, Departure from Helsinki

Stage	Considering about getting new experience	Research	Making decision	Booking	Getting ready for trip	Check-in	Departure	Time on the boat
Sentiment								
Customer's needs and interaction	The desire to try something new and add more excitement into one's life	Find options that can fulfil their needs and goals	Get full information and receive fast responds on questions.	Book tour online, Mobile phone and online	Get ready for the trip, interaction with organisers by mobile phone and internet.	Easy check-in		Food, rest, entertainment
Customer expectation	Memorable experience	Information that easily available online	Clear information about tour' itinerary	Easy online payment	Proper information about upcoming trip	All required info about next stages of the tour is already received		Good service
Improvements Opportunities	Not found	Create well-detailed web-site and actively use social media for advertisement	Grab customers' attention and perceive them to buy the trip	Good website and well-chosen payment options	Constant contact with customers after tour booking. Entertaining in Facebook by post and quizzes regarding trip.	Provide information about location of the boat, be there to be sure everybody comes on time.	Not found	Provide information about what to do on the boat (available food, entertainment spots). Create small quiz.

### Day 2, Arrival to Saint Petersburg











Stage	Disembarkation	City tour on bus	Transfer to hostel	Hostel Check-in	Free time	Transfer to escape room activity	Escape room	Free time
Sentiment							 	  
Customer's needs and interaction	Easy passport identification and visa process	Introduction to the main sight-seeing of the city	To be guided to the next destination	Easy and fast check-in	Customers are hungry	To be guided to the next destination	Entertainment, new emotions	Food, entertainment, rest
Customer's expectation	Good service	Interesting information	Easy and quick transfer	Good service	Food time, find close food options	Easy and quick transfer	Good service, interesting storyline, memorable experience	Interesting food and activity options
Improvements Opportunities	There is a chance of bad English among customs' staff.	Organisators cannot impact much on this tour because it is provided by the boat's companies. However they believe that provided service on is on the high level.	Know different options of the route and transportation	Provide accommodation according to the wishes.	Provide options for late and quick lunch	Guide everyone to the escape room	Book escape game according to interests and wishes of the customers	Provide list with recommended spots and things to do












### Day 3, Geography and Culture

Stage	Breakfast at the hostel	Transfer to Grand Maket Russia	Time in Grand Maket Russia	Transfer for lunch time	Russian cuisine lunch	Transfer to apartment tour	Soviet communal apartment tour	Transfer to Escape room	Escape room	Free time
Sentiment			 		 		 		 	  
Customer's needs and interaction	Food, rest	To be guided to the next destination	Interesting information	To be guided to the next destination	Excellent food	To be guided to the next destination	Interesting information	To be guided to the next destination	Entertainment, new emotions	Food, entertainment, rest
Customer's expectation	Tasty food and good service	Easy and quick transfer	Memorable experience	Easy and quick transfer	Excellent service, memorable experience	Easy and quick transfer	Memorable experience	Easy and quick transfer	Good service, interesting storyline, memorable experience	Interesting food and activity options
Improvements Opportunities	Not founded	Know different options of the route and transportation	Small quiz for getting more entertainment	Know different options of the route and transportation	Be aware about any allergies or food preferences of the customers for avoiding customers' unsatisfaction.	Know different options of the route and transportation	Prepare plastic raincoats for participants in the case of weather change	Know different options of the route and transportation	Book escape game according to interests and wishes of the customers	Provide list with recommended spots and things to do

### Day 4, History and Art

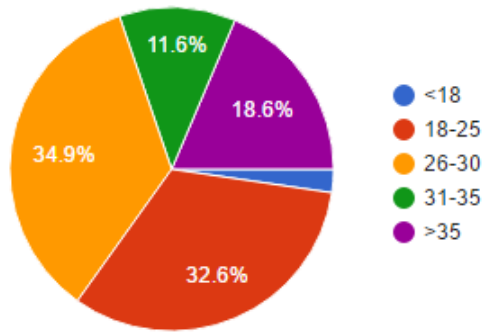
Stage	Free morning time	Tour to the soviet bomb shelter and a watch tower	Transfer to ETAGI Loft-Project	Time in ETAGI Loft-Project	Transfer to Escape-room	Escape room	Free time
Sentiment		  		 		  	
Customer's needs and interaction	Food, entertainment, rest	Interesting information	To be guided to the next destination	Entertainment	To be guided to the next destination	Entertainment	Food, entertainment, rest
Customer's expectation	Interesting food and activity options	Memorable experience	Easy and quick transfer	Good service memorable experience	Easy and quick transfer	Good service, interesting storyline, memorable experience	Interesting food and activity options
Improvements Opportunities	Provide list with recommended spots	Prepare plastic raincoats for participants in the case of weather change	Know different options of the route and transportation	Tell about the concept of the project, short history of launching and available service and interesting spots	Know different options of the route and transportation	Book escape game according to interests and wishes of the customers	Provide list with recommended spots and things to do

Day 5, Departure from Saint Petersburg, day 6 Arrival to Helsinki

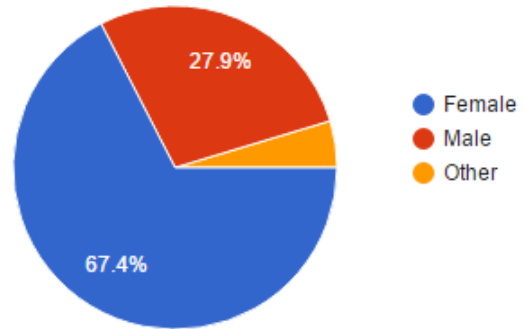
Stage	Free time	All on Board	Departure	Time on the board	Arrival to Helsinki	Sharing emotions and impressions	Giving feedback	Thinking about new trip next season
Sentiment				 		 		
Customer's needs and interaction	Shopping, pics, enjoying last hours in St. Petersburg	Be on time on the board		Sleeping and relaxing after active time during last days		Customer wants to share own impressions and emotions with friends and family	Customer gives feedback in one week after receiving survey link by email	Customer considers to repeat similar tour but with other escape rooms and cultural part options. OR Participation in tailored tour with friends/family for certain occasion
Customer's expectation	Food, entertainment,	Easy and quick transfer		Good service				Receive quick and full reply for won questions
Improvements Opportunities	Provide list with recommended spots and things to do	Know difference options of the route and transportation	Not found	Last quiz for most attentive participants of the tour	Not found	Post pics of the trip in Facebook	Suggest discount for next trip	Create program for new seasons for loyal customers OR create tailored tour by request

## Appendix 4. Escape room tourism online survey results

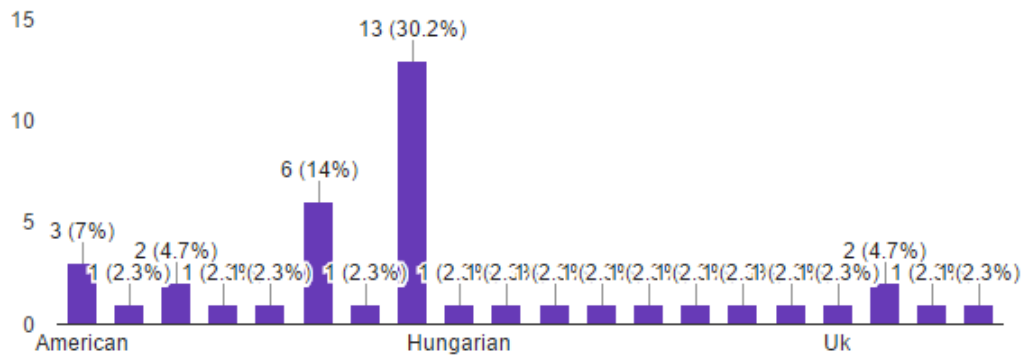
Age (43 responses)



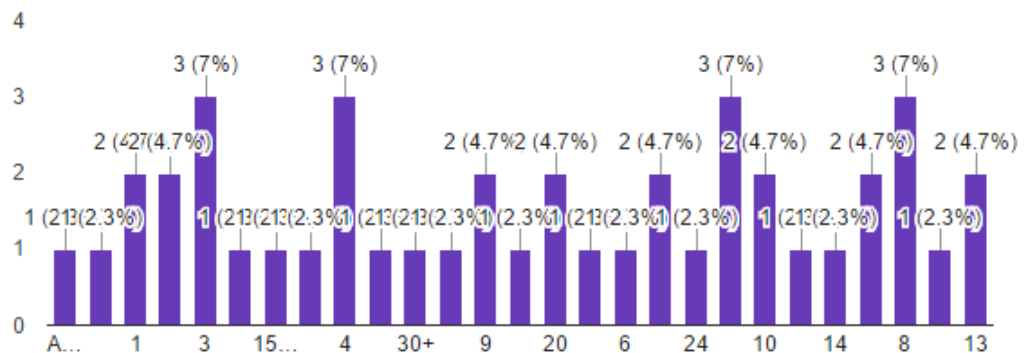
Gender (43 responses)



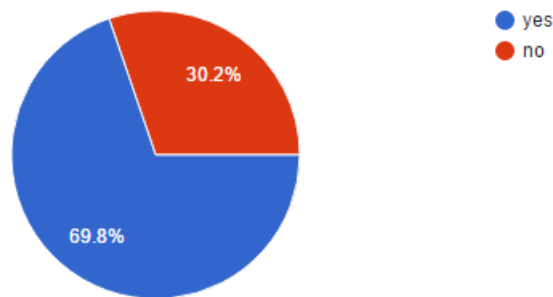
Nationality (41 responses)



How many escape room games have you played? (43 responses)



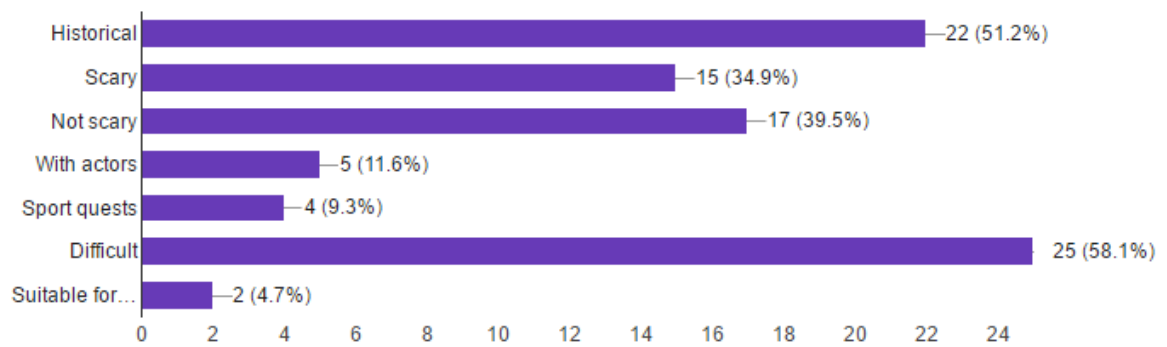
## Have you been to escape rooms in other cities/countries? (43 responses)



### If yes, where? (29 responses)

Hungary (Budapest), Russia (St. Petersburg, Petrozavodsk :)
Tallinn, Oulu
Budapest, Tallinn
Australia
Stockholm and Amsterdam
Madrid
Stockholm, Tallinn
Chicago
Berlin and Stockholm
Vienna
tallinn, prague, barcelona
Tartu, Estonia
Espoo and Helsinki, Finland
Estonia, Netherlands
Iceland, germany
Los Angeles, Stockholm, Barcelona, San Francisco
Prague, Stockholm, Phoenix
Sydney
Helsinki, Berlin
All around europe
usa
Germany, Andorra, France, Spain, Hungary, Czech Republic, Turkey, Singapore, Malaysia, UK.
New York, Grand Rapids, Toronto, Buffalo, Lancaster
London, Valencia, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Santa Cruz de Tenerife,
Paris
Bialystok/Poland
Myrtle Beach, SC. Charleston, SC. Orlando, FL. Augusta, GA
Spain, usa, romania, ceck republic, poland
Czech republic, Prague

## What kind of escape room you like most? (43 responses)

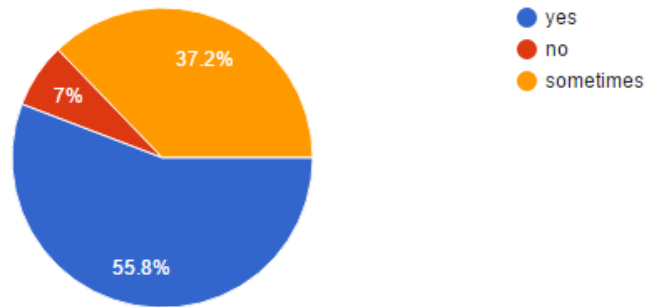


## Any other types you especially like? (18 responses)

- The type doesn't matter as long as it is immersive and has good puzzles
- Surreal fantasy, well themed, less locks more surprising tech
- With a good story and strong atmosphere
- Design is really important. Something that will take you away from everyday life.
- Multidimensional
- fantasy themes
- Ones with a good story
- Apartments/rooms with several rooms.
- With puzzles etc so you are not just following instructions.
- Ones that binds you to the story of the room via clothings, hand cuffs etc, and also ones with multiple, not-so-obvious hidden rooms
- Challenging enough, logical solutions to the tasks.
- Strong thematics are fun
- Different kinds of themes from the "normal" (office-type)
- Detective ones
- quest
- Mystery, Time Travel
- Crime
- Anything that has a good story, linear is nice

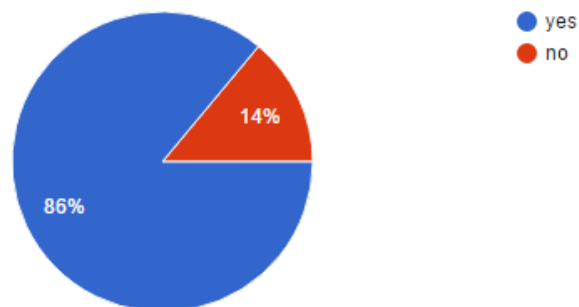
If you travel to another city/country do you plan a visit to a local escape room?

(43 responses)



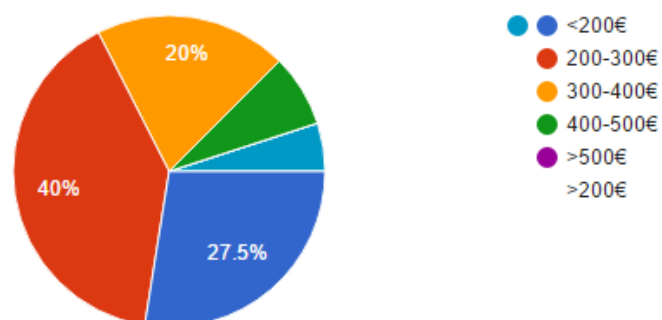
Would you be interested to go to St.Petersburg and combine cultural program and escape room experience?

(43 responses)



How much would you pay for a 3-night visa free trip to St. Petersburg from Helsinki combining cultural program and 3 escape room games?

(40 responses)



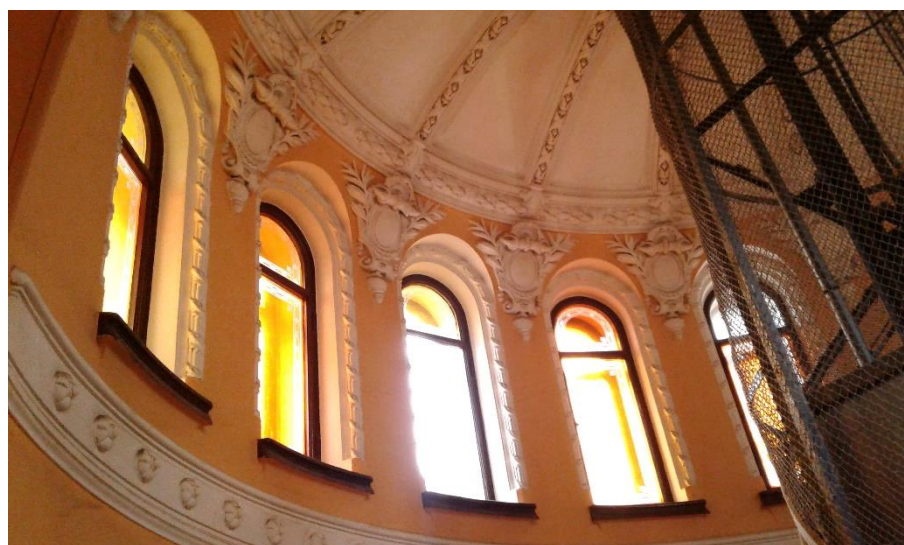
## What attracts you in St. Petersburg as a destination? (31 responses)

Food
EVERYTHING!
Hermitage, sights, overall atmosphere
City of culture, getting visa makes it a not-so-easy destination
Culture, traintrip
History
I have never visited there so the city and the culture as a whole.
Architecture, food, escape rooms
History, culture, prices
I know so little about it!
subculture and would be cool to meet locals.
Never been, different culture, architecture, russian friends
Great history
History, architecture
architecture, museums, food
Architecture
History and architecture
Shopping
Culture and cuisine.
History, culture and the fact that it's relatively near
History, sightseeing
History, arts
The city is wonderful
Bever been to russia
Big multicultural city
Buildings
The unknown, since I haven't been there yet. But when I'll do, I want to see historical monuments first.
Tourism
Someplace new and exciting to visit
Not sure
Culture and history



## Appendix 5. Study trip photos

### Tour to St. Petersburg entrance halls, yards and communal apartments



## Mother's Countryhouse Café





## Grand Maket Russia





## Loft-Project Etagi, Green Room Café



## Tour to the Soviet watch tower and bomb shelter

