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GONE TOO WILD

by Expedition gone too far

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Introduction

This assignment has been an integral part of our course 'Product development and pricing' this spring 2014. In this task we have been developing a new product concept under the Maupertuis-theme for the Tornio Valley area. The project began in the middle of February by us taking part in a FAM-trip, during which we were shown around the beautiful Tornio River Valley, where the explorers, led by Mr. Maupertuis himself, once were doing the measuring that would make the region one of the ground-breaking areas in the world in the field of science.

The commissioner for this assignment is the Maupertuis foundation and the assignment is related to their project 'On the footsteps of Maupertuis'. The objective of this report is to give a clear picture of the Maupertuis-product our group has designed, the whole development process and the results and conclusions we have reached. This report looks at the product from different perspectives, such as the operating environment, target market and customer groups and pricing, marketing and realisation of the product concept.

Operating Environment of Tornio River Valley

What is an adventure trip? The Adventure Travel Development Index (ATDI) defines adventure travel as “interaction with nature, interaction with culture and a physical activity – at least two and preferably all three in the same trip”. Our trip answers the following classification and really is an adventure. But is it a good product? Will it be demanding? Will it stand against the competitors? These and the other questions are vital to answer while developing the product.

We have familiarized ourselves with the magazines, related to the tourism in Tornio-Haparanda area, Lapland Business Review 2014, and the websites, regarding tourism development in the area. We have found that “Gone Too Wild”, the product we have been developing, could definitely be associated with the concepts of developing the whole area. Here are the reasons why.

First of all, as a part of Lapland, Tornio River Valley has fresh air, untouched nature, and beautiful picturesque views. Moreover, the infrastructure is well-developed here: good roads and the benefits of civilization are easily found. Additionally, the area is situated on the border between Sweden and Finland which makes it a significant trade centre as well. All the points mentioned above show that the destination offers lots of opportunities for tourism, and for adventure tourism particularly.

Those opportunities are used here in this area already. Let us take the “Midnight Sun canoeing” as an example. This annual event is popular among the local people, and it could be considered as a similar one to our product in the way of “challenging yourself”, sport experiences, long distances (Lapland Business Review, 2014). On the level of Lapland and Finland, we could give several examples of the similar sport events: Rovaniemi Marathon, held every summer at the end of June in Rovaniemi, the capital of Lapland, or Pirkan Kierros in the beginning of June in Tampere. It says that sport events are popular among Finns, and according to our experiences, those little summer

challenges are often accepted by the common citizens who are not sportsmen.

The area of Tornio River Valley is well-developed, however, not big enough to have strong competition. There are surely large tourism companies, offering different kinds of sport activities, such as Nordic Safaris or Arctic Iceroad Production. But also there are many companies, offering unique experiences in the area. According to Wikitravel, 2014, the examples of nature adventure traveling are: bird watching in Alkunkarinlahti, Golf yard Green Zone Golf, guided nature trips in Palogården. Independence of the offered products provides opportunity for coopetition. Coopetition is also one of the aims and key points of our product as far as it is the range of several different activities merged into one.

It is vital to mention that sport aspect is an essential, but still not the only part of "Gone Too Wild". Cultural and cognitive part, presented by the Maupertuis story on the background could enlarge the target group. Moreover, storytelling is the strongest part of holistic approach of developing the tourism product. It makes the adventure attractive, different, in some way logical and coherent and, consequently, improves also the quality of it.

All in all, Lappish nature offers marvellous views, sustainably developing tourism helps to keep the beauty; developed infrastructure gives an access to the area and more opportunities for tourism; Finnish culture and the passion for the sport particularly is making the sport and adventure tourism demanding; and the growing target group, looking for wild and untouched places to visit, even more excitement to feel, and refreshment to get, makes it profitable.

Target market and customer group

An adventurous and extreme product needs a carefully thought-out target market and a special customer group. In order to make the product work in real life, the marketing of the product needs to be aimed at the most suitable markets by identifying the character of the product and segmenting the markets (Boundless 2014).

The product "Gone Too Wild" falls into a market niche, which has its own customer group existing. The key idea of the product is a demanding challenge in the nature where one's physicality is put under high usage and stress, and where mental sangroid is needed. Four days in the wild with different extreme activities, sleeping outdoors and adjusting to primitive lifestyle can take a traveller or explorer to a place where they need to step out of their comfort zone, and that is partly where the expedition is aiming. The product is most likely once-in-a-lifestyle kind of expedition where one can challenge themselves and still enjoy the surroundings as well as the cultural aspect by the Maupertuis stories.

The target market for the product is fit and active, young-minded, and adventure seeking who likes nature and culture and who is aiming for the extreme challenges. Finnish Tourist Board has made a research of travellers who would most likely travel to Finland based on people's values and attitudes, and one segmentation of theirs is a clear target group for our product: Modern humanists. They have already travelled and seen much and they are interested in new experiences and self-development and are looking for adventures as well as safe challenges (Finnish Tourism Board 2012). The customer group of "Gone Too Wild" can come from different countries including Finland and can as well be individuals as group travellers, but what pulls them together is a strong will towards challenges and outdoing themselves.

Age is not a defining issue in the product; a participant can be either a 16-year old professional athlete or a 50-year old active veteran - but fit and healthy physical condition is needed in order to complete the expedition. The guides used for the product are experienced and they have profound knowledge of the area with its flora and fauna as well as the activities and history of Maupertuis. Even if the expedition is challenging, one of the key ideas of it is also to enjoy the nature and get together with likeminded lovers of extreme activities and simply have fun together.

Tourism Product Concept “Gone Too Wild”

Base of the product

“Gone Too Wild” is an adventure product organized in the area of Tornio River Valley. It is a tailor-made summer product for groups of five to ten customers. The product is built on the following themes: history and heritage, nature and environment, and sports. All these themes are essential for the product and it cannot be produced as a whole experience without all of them.

History and heritage are working as glue for the product. They provide the background story for it. This theme will give the answers for questions like: Why does the product exist? Why is it organized in this specific area? This theme is based on the expedition of Pierre-Louis de Maupertuis.

The expedition has its roots in the beginning of 1700s when the scientists had a debate of the shape of the earth. For finding the answer to the debate, a group of scientists and explorers, led by Maupertuis, travelled north to take measurements around the Tornio River Valley area. With the triangulation measurements Maupertuis was able to prove the idea of Isaac Newton, etc. to be right – the earth was flattened from the poles. (Terrall, M. 2002.) These findings, made in Tornio River Valley, made the area one of the scientifically pioneering areas in the world.

During the expedition, the triangulation measurements were made in nine different points in Tornio River Valley. These points were Tornio, Kaakamavaara, Luppio, Huitaperi, Aavasaksa, Horilankero, Pullinki, Niemivaara and Kittisvaara. (Lapinkavijat 2014.) These measurement points are working as a base for the route of the “Gone too wild” product. They are also in an important role on the second theme: nature and environment.

The customers will familiarise themselves with the area of Tornio River Valley by following the route of the measurement points used in the expedition. The only part of the trip which is done by car is the transfer from Tornio to

Kittisvaara. Otherwise the customers will have a chance to enjoy the outdoors and the nature of the area. During the trip the customers will get to see the area from multiple viewing points, such as from the river and from the top of the hills. This will give a wide image of the area and its versatile nature.

Also the accommodation will be arranged in a way that the customers can get the most of the beautiful sights of Tornio River Valley. During the four-day trip the customers will camp with the guide in tents in the middle of forest and river benches.

Third theme, sports, is taken into account while planning the transition from one measurement point to the next. These transitions will be done by different kinds of sports, all of which are nature friendly and will provide another way to familiarise with the environment. Kittisvaara – Niemivaara – Horilankero – Pullinki part will be done by bicycles, Pullinki – Aavasaksa – Luppio by paddling, Luppio – Huitaperi – Kaakamavaara by foot (hiking), Kaakamavaara – Karunki by horse and Karunki – Tornio by rafting. These activities will make the product diverse and physically challenging.

Product includes

Besides the three core themes the product includes many other services and things. First of all, the product is totally tailor-made and it can be modified to perfectly fit each customer group and their needs. And even though the product is originally planned as a summer product it can be modified to suit other seasons as well. Secondly, all the necessary equipment for the activities and camping will be provided by the organizer. Customers need to bring their personal utensils, right attitude and motivation with them. Thirdly, the transportation for the gear from camp to another will be taken care of by the driver. This means that the customers do not need to carry the camping gear, and such all day as the activities are already physically demanding. Fourthly, the customers will have experienced guides for their trip. The guides are familiar with the area, history and the activities done during the journey. The guides are also responsible for keeping the story of Maupertuis' expedition

alive by telling facts and stories, by showing and presenting the sights, and by making the customers sense the history of the area. Fifthly, the product includes traditional Lappish food and farewell evening with sauna.

Most importantly “Gone Too Wild” is not just a product built from the services – it is an experience in all possible forms. “Gone Too Wild” takes into consideration all the steps of Kano model by fulfilling the basic needs, like accommodation and food; expected needs by being a tailor-made product; and excitement needs by offering something unique and innovative (Eriksson, M. 2013). Also “The Four Realms of an Experience” by James Gilmore and Joseph Pine has been heeded as the product combines all these aspects (education, entertainment, aesthetic and escapist) with the active participation of the customers in to one big experience. “Gone Too Wild” is also a product which gives the customers a chance to challenge themselves, push their boundaries and step outside of their own comfort zones.

Ownership and actors

“Gone Too Wild” is a versatile and complex product. It includes many different activities, elements and actors. For making it work, and a success, the co-operation between different parties needs to be seamless and effortless. All actors have to have a clear idea of the whole product and its diversity. To make this possible it is necessary to have one company which owns and takes the responsibility of the product as whole.

In this case we have chosen Nordic Safaris to be the owner of the “Gone Too Wild” product. It is an already existing DMC (Destination Management Company) which has experience in operating in the Tornio River Valley, Lappish culture, history of the area and versatile activities (Nordic Safaris 2014). It also has the gear and possibility to arrange many of the activities planned for “Gone Too Wild” (Nordic Safaris 2014). For subcontractors and co-actors, for activities like cycling, horse-back riding and paddling, we have named a few smaller local companies. This will support the idea of socially

sustainable tourism, the localness and the participation of locals in tourism development (Knox, P. – Mayer, H. 2012).

Uniqueness and innovativeness

“Gone Too Wild” is one of a kind product in the area of Tornio River Valley. It offers a wide range of activities, local history and nature to the customers. It is leading the customers to have another, new, perspective to look at the area as a whole.

Even though the actors producing the product are Finnish, “Gone Too Wild” will be arranged along the border river, separating Finland and Sweden. This way the product serves also the Swedish side of the river by familiarising the customers with the views, info, and other such aspects. This way the product is developing tourism on a local level as well as on a regional level. (Prokkola, E. 2007.)

Sustainable Pricing

When calculating price for the “Gone Too Wild” product, we first have counted a price for each module, then combined all the parts together and that makes the total price. In the appendixes at the end of this report an excel file is attached and all the modules and the final pricing are included in it. We have used cost-plus pricing and market based pricing ideas when doing the pricing for the product in a way that first we have counted the total costs for the product and then in the different modules we have been familiarising ourselves with the prices that other companies are offering for similar kind of activities.

First we have counted prices separately for all activities, which are cycling, canoeing, horse riding and rafting. In the excel in the ‘Final product pricing’ – tab there are net prices for each of those modules but when checking the pricing for each individual activity (in the following tabs), we have counted them in a way that they include the employee costs, VAT’s and so on, so that those are the gross prices for all those activities individually. The cycling price is based on one company’s bike-hiring prices so it is based on the market and same is the case with canoeing which is an average price based on different companies’ equipment rental price. The horse-riding price consists of gear-rental and the transportation of horses which is done by walking from the stables to the starting point. Rafting price is based on equipment-rental costs and the gear needed is provided by the Nordic Safaris.

Then, the salaries follow. The salaries are counted according to individual contracts for all three guides; The first guide is the one who is always with the group. He takes care of the customers, all the activities and cooking. That is why his salary is 13€ per hour and the working day is 12 hours long on paper. In addition he is paid half-day allowance. The second is the driver, who has a salary of 10€ per hour because his tasks are easier, including driving and assistance in cooking breakfasts and dinners. He is also paid the half-day allowance. On paper he works ten hours per day. The last guide helps with

the horse-riding and comes with the horses from the stables. The horse riding itself takes three hours but his pay is counted for eight hours because the horse transportation time and time for preparing and finishing works are also included in the working hours.

The portion card is included in the excel file. Then there are some other costs, meaning the gear and gift costs. In the second last tab of the excel file there is equipment and gift module in which everything is mentioned. Most of the gear is to be rented and there are internet links to all the web pages where we have got the price information from.

The last module is the transportation and first we have counted the price for minibus rental, then how many litres the car consumes in the trip and then how much the petrol is going to cost and then combined it all together.

Planning and realisation of a product this kind is extremely hard and time-taking, therefore the contribution needs to be high and it means high price in general.

The actual price was counted with variable costs of 480€/person, however, just in the last checking, it was noticed that there was a minor mistake in calculation of costs and the actual amount of variable costs per person is 611 €. As the price 999€ per person was decided with lower costs structure, the profitability of the product with the given price is not as good as it was originally planned. There would be only 30 % contribution without commission when the variable costs are 611€.

However, we did not start pricing the product again, but to get the profitability in desirable level, the company should lower the variable costs to the level of 480€ per person, which means that less activities are included in the product. However some activities can be sold as additional services with extra price.

Marketing communication and distribution

Creating marketing strategy is a crucial task. Choosing successful marketing ways could depend on many different factors, connected to the customer's life. It could be geography – where people live, demographics – the age, the income, family situation and education. Also the trip details play a significant role in the potential marketing distribution channels. They could be the following: the purpose and length of the trip, psychographics. The last one, meaning the interests, values and tastes that traveller finds essential, is the most sophisticated to be defined, however, at the same time, the most effective way to market one or other product (A Guide to Starting and Operating an Adventure Tourism Business in Nova Scotia, 2005). This is why we would like to emphasise the values, tastes and interests additionally to the basic information about the traveller in order to define the most effective ways of marketing our “Gone Too Wild” product.

Among all the possible target groups listed in the Adventure Tourism Market Report, 2010, our extreme product is suitable for the younger generations, GenY (people aged between 18 and 30) and GenX (people aged between 31 and 44). Due to the fact that our product is supposed to be marketed as a “once-in-a-lifetime experience”, it is especially interesting for those who have high money level and low time level. Those people have already begun building their careers, they have hobbies and the time is deficit and valuable as never. GenXs and GenYs tend to book their trips through travel agencies and this is one of the distribution channels to be proposed.

Research online	23.2%
Consult friends and family	17.8%
Book airfare/hotels online	11.4%
Consult magazines/newspapers	8.7%
Visit a travel agent	8.1%
Purchase a guidebook	7.5%
Book through a travel agent	5.8%
Watch a travel program about the destination	5.6%
Will not prepare before leaving the destination	5.2%
Visit a destinations marketing or tourism promotion organization	4.1%
Book through a tour operator	2.7%

Table 1: How Do Adventure Travellers Prepare For Their Trips?

However, the curious table found at the same source shows that adventure travellers tend to be keen on the “rare” and definitely not the mass tourism places. For this reason they search for the experience reviews, shared on the internet in blogs, on social networks, thematic travel forums.

One more distribution channel to be suggested is marketing in similar sport or extreme events. For example, in the Winter Swimming World Championships, held in Rovaniemi in March 2014, the envelope for the competitor included two or three flyers of the upcoming events or destinations. There was a Rovaniemi marathon description and information of Norway as a nature destination. The same step could be made here. There is a “Midnight Canoeing” annual event in the Tornio River Valley.

Moreover, our product includes the cultural aspect, which is the Maupertuis expedition as a background of the route and the common thread of the whole trip. Consequently, as we mentioned earlier, one more potential focus group is Modern humanists. Culture and history along with the sport component will attract them. This is why the cultural places, such as museums, exhibitions and the other sights will be the place to have the information about the product, at least on the flyers.

As has been mentioned above, our product is a "once in a life-time" experience. We have suggested the slogan for the adventure on the product card; "Are you ready to accept the challenge of your life?". This is supposed to convince the travellers to go for purchasing the tailor-made unforgettable experience. Please, find the renewed product card in the appendixes.

Realization of the “Gone Too Wild” Product Concept

The product “Gone Too Wild” is based on networking in Tornio River Valley. The DMC in this case is thought to be Nordic Safaris as it is located in the area and already offers most of the activities that we use in our product. It is also an active safari company, which has experience in safari activities in practice (Nordic Safaris 2014). A close networking is still important with nearby stables as well as other companies in the area as the product is so exclusive with its extremeness and the activities are located in many different locations around the area. Most of the equipment is already owned by Nordic Safaris and the other acquisitions can serve the company also with further activities or programmes (e.g. camp cookers and gas).

As the target market for the product is very limited, it can turn out to be either a challenge or a strength. There are no competitors for this product neither in Lapland nor in the whole country. Other activity packages are less extreme, or the more extreme sports are usually done only in very private groups specialized to those sports. In this product the aim is to offer a possibility to challenge oneself but also offer a safe and controlled meeting place for active athletes who want to travel and combine their favourite thing, extreme sports, in an easy way where everything is taken care of for them at the same time. In order to do this, the group size is set to be relatively small, 5-10 people and safety issues are playing a great role.

Risk table and rescue plan are important papers to have and delve into, but practical issues matter even more. The guides need to be professionals and have certificates from rafting and paddling. They also need to know the surroundings, the nature and the sports and be very fit and healthy and able to take stress and responsibility. As a driver is participating to camping parts, they need to also have knowledge of wilderness and safety issues. The car is not only for moving equipment from one place to another but also for safety, in case something happens during the expedition, the help is always near.

The first version of the product happens during summer but it is easily modified to a year-around product by simply changing the activities (e.g. paddling to skiing, rafting to snowshoeing). Weather may vary much in Lapland even during summer days, so weather changes are needed to be seen as part of the expedition. Weather influences also the activities; water level affects to the streams in River Tornio, raining turns the expedition even more challenging and during dry and warm days, the mosquitos are present more. Weather cannot still cancel the expedition but it is vital to take into account.

Development ideas for the product are various. As the whole product is easily modified and tailor-made according to each customer group, also the product itself can be modified in smaller parts. One product can turn out to be various different products if it is seen too challenging, too extreme or placed in too narrow a market niche. From a four-day, five-activity –challenge it could be made into a two-day, three-activity –challenge or even a one-day challenge with shorter distances and still many activities.

There is also room for more networking, for example with cross border companies on the Swedish side and that could also give a new perspective for tourists visiting Tornio River Valley as well as give new stories of Maupertuis. But even if the product may change in the future, the safety issues in each activity are the most important issues in the product to take into account, no matter whether they are highly extreme or even very soft adventure activities. Good times in safari business come from safe and well-planned settings.

Conclusion

The measuring points are the base for the route of the “Gone Too Wild” product. The trip to Tornio River Valley was extremely hard physically and mentally for Maupertuis and the expeditors, and sometimes even dangerous. This product is also challenging physically and even mentally, but of course, the safety issues have been carefully taken into account, and for example, a risk table has been made. In an adventure product of this kind, challenges offered by the weather and nature can have an effect on the product’s outcome but as the sun did not always shine for Mr. Maupertuis either it is all just a part of the expedition.

This product has lots of potential because at the moment no-one is offering adventure-programmes of this kind in the region. The area has lots of opportunities for adventure tourism because the Tornio River Valley has good infrastructure and beautiful, untouched nature. “Gone Too Wild” is an adventure and sport product but it has the cultural and learning side in it as well. It is unique because it is tailor-made and gives a chance for the local companies to do networking and co-operation.

Our product is about participants exceeding their limits and pushing the boundaries, and even stepping out of their comfort zone. It is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and is about accepting the challenge and participants outdoing themselves.

“Are you ready to accept the challenge of your life?”

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Appendix

Blueprint

Excel table

Product card

Risk table