Northern Lights Tourism without Northern Lights

Guest Expectations and Alternative Experiences

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Bachelor of Arts
Professional Experience Production

Luleå University of Technology
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FOREWORD

Time just run by. It is nearly 15 years ago when I, for the first time, landed in Sweden and fell in love with the country, people and the atmosphere. 12 years of the last 15 years was the time I spent in Sweden, specifically speaking Jokkmokk, Luleå, Piteå and Kiruna. Yes, I persistently stayed in Norrland (Northern Sweden). These are my second home. As much as I am proud to be a Japanese, I am proud of being a Norrlännning (Northern Swedish inhabitant). Who is not proud of one’s hometown? Who doesn’t want to be a tour guide to tell all the fantastic things in these places?

First of all, I would like to thank all my informants and questionnaire respondents. I admire your ideas and strength to execute them. I hope this thesis would give you more energy and motivations to provide magical nights to your guests.

My study years at LTU wouldn’t be a reality without any help and encouragement from Caroline Stenbacka Nordström and Hans “Hansi” Gelter. Caroline, you showed me the way to face challenge in Academic context. You never loose faith in me. I couldn’t thank enough. Hansi, You are my everlasting mentor. Thank you for your encouragement to fight through this thesis.

I also want to thank my friends who supported me and believed in me.

To Jimmy, I want to send a lot of love for his support and patience.

Finally, My mother Yukiko Eshima, my father Nobuyuki Eshima and my sister Akari Kanzaki are the ones I would like to thank most of all. Not only financial support during all these years of studying in Sweden, but also mentally support that you believed in me.

This thesis is for my dearest family, Mom, Dad and Sis, and maybe future me.

この論文は、最愛なるカカ、トト、カリへ捧げます。それと、将来の自分にもかな。

Naoko Eshima
2015-06-28, Borlänge
ABSTRACT

Today, we use the word “experience” frequently. We live in an experience society where the most attractive economic offering is experiences. Tourism is one part of the experience economy where tourists expect memorable experiences. In the Northern part of Nordic countries, Northern lights tourism has boomed up during the last decades. But Northern lights are natural phenomena. You cannot control them. There is no guarantee to see them. This thesis have therefore purpose to study how an extraordinary experience would be offered with help of experience production perspectives. Areal limitation of the study has been Kiruna Lapland in Northern Sweden.

Study showed that the visitors of Kiruna Lapland mostly expect to see Northern light. Thus, most of the northern lights tour providers have no other plan for bad weather- and/or solar conditions. Since we human beings cannot control the natural phenomena, the tour providers should be prepared with alternative experiences for the guests. These should be unexpected experiences that bring the experience into the mind. In addition, they should engage the guests in active way, since Northern light tours tend to be a passive aesthetical experience.

SAMMANFATTNING


1. INTRODUCTION

On my 31st birthday, I worked as a tour guide and was out in the darkness with some guests to see Northern lights. The moment the date turned to my birthday, my guests and my colleague surprised me by celebrating my birthday. Even the northern lights could show off to celebrate me. It was one of my flow experiences as a guide of northern lights hunting. But it is unfortunately not always like this when you are out on a northern lights hunting tour because of the weather and solar conditions. I always considered how I could, as a guide, do to enrich their experience even in hopeless conditions.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Travel & Tourism
Tourism has the biggest impact upon the world economy today. The economic growth of tourism has reached 9.8% of global gross domestic product (GDP). This contribution comprise 7580.9 billion U.S. dollars (WTTC, 2015). Although tourism is still not recognized as an economic endeavour and therefore neither is it as an academic subject of study (Cooper e.d., 2005).

Tourism is difficult to define. Its complexity makes it hard to draw a line how much of tourism-influenced industries includes in the tourism industry. Although by the needs of Tourism Statistic, concepts of Tourism were defined in a publication “Recommendations on Tourism Statistics” by UNWTO in 1993. This was the first world standardization connected to tourism statistics (Lennon, 2001). This definition is also used in their publication “Agenda 21”.

“Travel & Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes.” (UNWTO, 1996:30)

"...The growth in Travel & Tourism Economy GNP slowed in 2008 to 1.0%. This followed four consecutive years of increases, averaging 3.6% in real terms, and in which 27 million jobs were created.” (WTTC, 2009:6)

Despite the economic growth of tourism in the late decades, as I explained in the beginning of this chapter, it slowed down to small growth in each year since the on-going global recession (WTTC, 2008).

2.2 Nature Tourism
Nature tourism is often called nature-based tourism. As the attractions of these products usually are nature and its by-products, it is also strongly related to eco-tourism and
sustainable tourism. Acceptable definitions of these terms are highly considerable subjects to discuss (Cooper et al., 2005).

2.3 Northern Lights Tourism
Northern Lights tourism in Northern part of Nordic countries has boomed in the last decade (Heimtun, Jóhannesson & Tuulentie, 2014). However, as it is a niche of nature tourism in sub-arctic area, there is limited number of academic sources. Google Scholar showed 27 results on searching for “Northern Lights tourism”, 4960 results for “Northern Lights” + “tourism”. It could mean that the definition of Northern Lights tourism is not really confirmed or defined by scholars. The problem in this matter is assumed that it is hard to draw a line between winter tourism and Northern lights tourism. We could measure how big winter tourism is in Northern Finland. Although, it is complicated to distinct whether they visit there for the Northern Lights or for Santa Claus. In Sweden, both research and marketing studies have indicated increased interests from European countries such as Germany, France and the UK (Herberlein, Fredman & Vuorio, 2002).

Himtun, et al. (2014) carried out a research about Northern Lights tourism in Iceland, Norway and Finland. They claim that important destinations for Aurora tourism are: Reykjavik and Akureyri in Iceland, Tromsó, and Alta in Norway and Rovaniemi and the region around Muonio in Finland. Generally speaking, development of mass tourism in bigger cities is faster than smaller cities. Norwegian Northern Lights tours tend to be expensive but duration of tour is longer. Finland often offers combination with other outdoor activities. In Reykjavik, the mass tourism is remarkable.

2.4 Tourism in Experience Society
Today, we use the word “experience” frequently. The word comes up everywhere. Looking at advertising on TV and magazines, we find the word. This is because “experience” became a convenient word that express a product as something newer, better, bigger, more fun etc. than anything you have ever purchased before (O’Dell, 2005).

According to Pine and Gilmore (2011), experience economy is an economy where the fundamental economic value is focused on experience. The economic value naturally moved on from agriculture, industry and services to experience. People cut back their money spending on commodities, good and service for purchasing experience. This change is caused by increased postmodern consumer behaviour (ibid.).

Entrance of experience society also means to step up in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Wahlström, 2002). Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is made from his theory about human needs that a person could not recognize or pursue next higher need in the hierarchy until
her or his currently recognized need was substantially or completely satisfied (Maslow, 1954).

![Figure 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Figure modified after Maslow, 1954)](image)

### 2.5 Perspectives of experience production

According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), this emerges of new postmodern society means for companies to offer experiences. To turn a service into an experience the service providers consciously “use services as stage and goods as props to engage an individual. “ (Pine & Gilmore, 1999:11) As experiences are personal, subjectively perceived and intangible (O’Dell, 2005), the experience stagers have to engage the guests in a personal and meaningful way (ibid.).

Pine and Gilmore (2011) have described a memorable experience visually with their model “The Experience Realms”. It has two dimensions that show level of guest participation and connection. The connection in this context means relationships between the guests and the experience, either the experience goes into the guests or the guest goes into experience. Absorption is where a person’s attention is occupied from a distance and immersion is where a person physically (or virtually) becomes a part of the experience itself. When an experience is absorbing and needs active participation, you have an educational experience. Entertainment experience is absorbing but passive. You consume an event passively but get feeling of being a part of experience: esthetical experience. Escapist means an active participation with immersing feeling (ibid.). When all the aspects contains in an experience, it is located in the Sweet Spot (in the middle of the model), there the experience is the richest (ibid.).
Figure 2. The Experience Realms (figure modified after Pine & Gilmore 1999:30.)
3. RESEARCH AREA

3.1 Research discussion
As a former Northern Lights tour guide in Kiruna, it is sad that there are barely any academic researches about Northern Lights tourism in Sweden and that Himtun, et al. (2014) have left out Sweden as one of the important Northern Lights destination in their research. Kiruna and Abisko might be a young and small destination compared to Raykjavik, Tromsö and Rovaniemi. It also means there is great possibility to make an economic growth.

In this experience society, companies have to develop their product in an experience production perspective. Experience stagers, ergo Northern Lights tour providers in this case, have to make sure that their guests get memorable experiences. But Northern Lights are natural phenomena. Both weather conditions and solar conditions have to be good to catch a glimpse of them. There are no guarantees that you can experience northern lights even though you join a Northern Lights tour. The expectations that customers have built until they get on the tour are stunning green lights dancing in the very dark sky as they see in the brochures, homepages and social media. How do these expectations affect customer satisfaction when the main attraction is not delivered?

3.2 Purpose of Study
The purpose of this study is to examine Northern Lights tourism in Sweden and expectations of Northern Lights tourists to explore possible alternative experiences in the absence of Northern Lights.

3.3 Research Questions
Research Question 1:
What does the Northern lights tourism look like in Swedish Lapland?

Research Question 2:
What are the expectations of these Northern lights products for Japanese guests?

Research Question 3:
What do providers of Northern lights tours do in case of bad weather- and solar conditions?

Research Question 4:
From an experience productions perspective, how can extraordinary experience be offered in the absence of Northern Lights?
3.4 Limitation of Study
This research was carried in the area where Kiruna Lapland Ekonomisk Förening (Kiruna Lapland Economic Association) covers, as same area as Kiruna Municipality in Swedish Lapland. As the Japanese market is important for Kiruna, the Research Question 2 is focused on them.

3.4.1 Kiruna & Abisko area
Kiruna is northernmost town in Sweden and located 145 km north of the Arctic Circle. Whole Kiruna Municipality has approximately 23 000 inhabitants in an area of 20,715 square kilometres (Kiruna, 2015).

Even though there is long history of indigenous Sami people’s settlement in this area, the town of Kiruna is just over 100 years old. The history of Kiruna is history of mining in Sweden. The reason why Kiruna was founded at that time was making a society for miners who worked in the iron ore mine Kirunavaara. (ibid.) Today, the mine is world’s largest underground iron ore mine. The mining company offers underground bus tour regularly. The mining causes a big project for Kiruna people; moving a part of the town.

“Kiruna is a popular travel destination for both Swedish and international tourists, mostly because of its world famous Icehotel. The northern location makes it a good place to observe the midnight sun and northern lights.” (Kiruna, 2015)
ICEHOTEL is located 17km outside Kiruna. The hotel builds every year by snow and ice by the riverside of Torne River. Winter 2014/2015 was the 25th anniversary (Art at ICEHOTEL, 2015).

Northern Lights occurs polar and sub-polar area around geomagnetic poles. Auroral zone is a band of area where most auroras occurs. Whole Kiruna and Abisko area is inside of the Auroral zone. Thus, high mountains in Abisko create microclimate that classify to desert.

The last decades, especially Abisko has got a huge attention, in different media, as a one of the best places in the world to see Northern Lights. Travel guidebook Lonely Planet has introduced Abisko in the articles of “world’s most illuminating experiences” (The World’s Most Illuminating Experiences, 2015). National Geographic has broadcasted a Northern lights movie from Abisko. BBC, CSN and Reuters have been contacted to make reportage about Abisko. (Besöksliv, 2015) Also, Kiruna is a nearest gateway for Abisko visitors.

Comparing Swedish Northern lights tourism to Finnish, Norwegian, Icelandic and North American ones, the volume and the economic influence is not as great as theirs.

### 3.4.2 Japanese Market

“Why are the Japanese people so fascinated by Northern Lights?” This is the question I often got when I lived in Northern Sweden. I also heard about a myth that explains this strong fascination on the lights; Japanese couples who come all the way from Japan just to see Northern Lights, believe that “it will help increase fertility, and because they believe that if they conceive a child under the shimmering night sky, the child will be especially fortune, strong, wise, beautiful, intelligent, and gifted.” (Avrech, 2002:76)
A Jungian psychologist Gloria Avrech had encountered this myth in Alaska and found later that there is no such myth or belief in Japan. Then, why are Japanese obsessed with the lights?

Japanese are obviously also famous in North America for their obsession with Northern lights as much as the myth was created as a modern legend. In addition, the Japanese has been taking roll of pioneer of new destinations for Northern Lights watching. For instance, Northern Lights tourism in Iceland started by demand from Japanese travellers (Heimtun, Jóhannesson & Tuulentie, 2014). Thus, there have been direct flights offered from Tokyo to Kiruna at least twice a winter during the last three winters. This shows a stable interest from the Japanese market.

This is why it is interesting to address the expectations of Japanese guest on Northern Lights experience, and meeting their expectations would be a challenge for Northern Lights tour providers. Here, I consider that the experience production perspectives help to understand the complex of problem and solve it.
4. METHOD

4.1 Research approach and quality
My study combines deductive and inductive approach to draw conclusions. Patel and Davidson (2003) mean induction starts from empirical works of individual cases or phenomena and thereafter a theory will be built. Deductions originate from theories. A speculated hypothesis from the theories will be tested in reality (Ibid.).

A research can be carried out either quantitatively or qualitatively. Quantitative research includes gathering a volume of facts and statistical analysis (Hartman, 2004). On the other hand, qualitative research uses analytical generalization as research approach (Stenbacka, 2001).

Quality of a study is measured by various degrees of reliability and validity (Thurén, 2006). To ensure the quality of the research, it is essential for a quantitative research to keep credibility of collected data (Patel & Davidson, 2003).

Reliability means that the measurement is implemented correctly. If any other researchers carry out same survey and it leads to same result, the survey has high reliability. Such a result is called for intersubjectively testable/measurable result (Thurén, 2006). If any other researchers carry out the same questionnaire survey, observation and interview, the same results should be achieved to keep high reliability.

Validity means that you have investigate what you aim to investigate (Thurén, 2006; Patel & Davidson, 2003). Even if the survey achieved high reliability doesn’t necessarily mean that it has achieved high validity. However a high reliability is a condition for a high validity (Patel & Davidson, 2003).

4.1.1 Approach to Research Question 1
What does the Northern lights tourism look like in Swedish Lapland?

The information to answer Research Question 1 (RQ1) will be searched in Internet, not only homepages of provider of northern lights tours, but home pages of Kiruna Tourist Office, social media and brochures. Mattias Mannberg, marketing manager at Kiruna Lapland Economic Association, gave me additional data by answering questions by e-mail. This is because there is limited information of the subject. The choice of interview method as e-mail is an only practical reason.

These are the questions I asked to him to answer RQ1;
Which destinations are Northern Lights destinations?
- How many tours offered in Kiruna/Abisko?
- How many providers that offers Northern Lights tours?
- Which types of northern lights tours? (Aurora hunt tour, snowmobile, horse-ride, photograph, same culture)
- How many guest nights generate Northern Lights tourism in Kiruna/Abisko?
- What is the economic impact of northern lights tourism in Kiruna/Abisko?

Internet searching was carried out by starting to visit homepages of Kiruna Lapland Economic Association, Swedish Lapland Economic Association, Visit Sweden (marketing organization of Swedish tourism). In this way, regional and national and international perspectives of Northern Lights tourism in Swedish Lapland were possible to present.

4.1.2 Research Quality for Research Question 1
My respondent of RQ1 Mannberg has been working as marketing manager last several years and he therefore has good insight of winter tourism in Kiruna municipality. As I consider he is one of the best persons to have overall picture of Northern Lights tourism, the validity of the result of RQ1 is high. Considering that the responding method was e-mail, Mannberg would answer the same even if the questions were asked again. The reliability is therefore high.

4.1.3 Approach to Research Question 2
What are the expectations of these Northern lights products for Japanese guests?
It is a quantitative study approach by analysing questionnaire data made by the author in another purpose. The survey was performed to 55 respondents from 4 Japanese tourist groups who visited Abisko and stayed at STF Abisko (Abisko Mountain Station) in March 2010. The questionnaire paper was written in paper in Japanese. The respondents answered in Japanese, which the author translated to English afterwards.

The questionnaire consists of 14 closed questions, four open questions and 27 combinations of them. Four of the most relevant survey questions were picked up as follows:
- What are the expectations of visit of Kiruna/Abisko?
- Has their experience lived up to their expectations?
- What have they achieved with their visit?
- What else would they like to do?

4.1.4 Research Quality for Research Question 2
Even though this questionnaire survey was made in another purpose, I realise that the result is highly relevant in the research questions. The choice of destination and the targeted groups are practical reason
The guest segments could have changed since the survey was made five years ago. The biggest guest segment of Japanese guest visiting Kiruna area would match WTO’s definition of WHOP (Wealthy Healthy Old People). It is unlikely that it would have made a big change of expectations on an Abisko trip over five years.

Questionnaire survey is formed by the research questions that have several main subjects; expectation of them and expectation for experience of their visit. The answer alternatives to choose of are partly based on my own experience. Considering my Japanese background and knowledge and experience of Northern Sweden and Abisko, I realize that the possible answer alternatives would most likely to be similar to the truth. External input was the survey questions of Antarctic experience by Gelter et al. (2010). In order to describe an experience of exotic place, there is a great similarity in the possible answers. The validity of survey is therefore relatively high.

4.1.5 Approach to Research Question 3
What do providers of Northern lights tours do in case of bad weather- and solar conditions?

Interviews with the seven companies are presented in the table below (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informants</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Tour name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chad Blakley, CEO</td>
<td>Lights Over Lapland</td>
<td>Abisko</td>
<td>Nightly Aurora Photo Tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Håkansson, activity manager</td>
<td>STF Abisko</td>
<td>Abisko</td>
<td>Night Visit at Aurora Sky Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Ideskär, guide</td>
<td>Lapland Resort Björkliden</td>
<td>Björkliden</td>
<td>Northern Lights Lavvu Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette Niia, photographer &amp; guide</td>
<td>Scandinavian Sami Photoadventure</td>
<td>Kiruna</td>
<td>Aurora Borealis Photo Tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefan Dierig, guide &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Kiruna Aurora Tours</td>
<td>Kiruna</td>
<td>Night Cruise to Abisko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunnar Selberg, CEO Marta Drewniak, guide Finn Wiström, guide Mattias Lomvik, guide Emilio Modahl, guide</td>
<td>Kiruna Guidetur</td>
<td>Kiruna</td>
<td>Aurora Colosseum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klas Tigerström, head guide</td>
<td>Splitcane Adventure</td>
<td>Abisko</td>
<td>Chase the Aurora Borealis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer RQ3, I would ask few questions to the providers of northern lights tours.
U0017F Degree C Project Experience Production

Naoko Eshima, naoesh-6@student.ltu.se

Spring Semester, 2015

- What do they do in case of clear sky without northern lights appearance? (Plan B)
- What do they do in case of bad weather conditions, ex.) snowstorm? (Plan C)
- How often (%) did they do the plan B and C in one aurora season?

In addition, my own experience as an empirical data will be applied here.

4.1.6 Research Quality for Research Question 3
The number of informants for RQ3 makes the validity of data relatively high. The author knows some of them personally. This fact can make the reliability unstable. However, since the author does not work in the same business anymore in the region, some familiar faces are assumed to be positive to the data gathering of RQ3 by making relaxing environment for the informants.

4.1.7 Approach to Research Question 4
At last, in order to answer RQ4, all the gathered data will be analysed and compared with theories of experience production’s perspectives by literature study. Books, academic research papers and articles of scientific journals are applied here.

This approach is more likely to be inductive. However, my approach for this part of the study is not completely inductive, since inductive method is based on the reality in a theory neutral way (Hartman, 2004).

4.1.8 Research quality for Research Question 4
A literature review was conducted in order to address the expectations of the visitor of Kiruna/Abisko and suggest guidelines of alternative experiences. This part of study means analysis of data and theory comparison and the validity depends on the author’s analysing ability. Thus, the researcher’s background, sense of values belief and identity matters in a certain degree (Denscombe, 2009).

4.2 Summary of Research Approach and Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| RQ 1              | - Internet searching  
                    - E-mail questions to Marketing Manager of Kiruna Lapland Economic Association | High | High |
| RQ 2              | Questionnaire survey on Japanese overnight | Relatively high | High |
4.3 Ethics

Research ethics refer to how the research subjects and informants are treated (Vetenskapsrådet, 2011). All the informants of RQ1 and RQ3 have offered to be anonymous in this research paper. However, all agreed that their name, product and company name would be presented in this research paper. For RQ2, there were no places in the questionnaire to write respondents name. In this way, they have no hinder to be honest about their opinions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Ethic Level</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ3</td>
<td>Interviews to Northern Lights tour providers, 7 companies</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Relatively high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ4</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. RESULTS and ANALYSIS

5.1 Northern Lights Tourism in Swedish Lapland (RQ1)

"The Northern Lights appear around the beginning of September (Kiruna) to around the end of March all over Swedish Lapland." (The Northern Lights - Sweden, 2015)

Swedish Lapland is a region that is marketed as Sweden’s northernmost destination (Swedish Lapland, 2015). Kiruna has the biggest number of Northern lights products; 50 - 60 products by around 10 providers.

The majority of the international tourists visits Kiruna area during winter season which often is defined as a period from December to March in Kiruna. One of the strong reasons to visit at Kiruna area is Northern lights (Mannberg, 2015).

It offers a range of different Northern lights tours; simple aurora hunt tour, evening snowmobile tour, horse-ride/horse sleigh tour, evening photo tour, evening tour with Sami
culture etc. These are sometimes including dinner, supper or “fika”, Swedish habit of coffee break. For instance, one of the popular products Aurora Sky Station in Abisko has multiple course dinner in the tour (Ibid).

Visit Sweden recommends to go to Abisko for the very best chance to see Northern lights. Abisko is located in Kiruna municipality and one of the popular destinations both in the winter and summer (The Northern Lights –Sweden –VisitSweden, 2015).

Mannberg (2015) estimates approximately 300 000 guest nights that generates in the period of September to March in Kiruna area including Abisko. Even if not every one of them has an aim to see Northern lights, it is an important attraction of the area in winter seasons.

He also considers the guests from England and Japan as the most common international winter tourists between December and March. Even in September and November, there is a potential to develop, since Northern lights are visible in autumn as well as winter (Mannberg, 2015).

5.2 Japanese guests’ expectation of Northern lights (RQ2)

5.2.1 Expectation of experience in Abisko

What are the expectations of the Abisko visit?
Number 1 Expectation:
Northern lights watching (80%)
Snowshoe hiking (5,5%)
Take photo of Northern lights (1,8%)
Dog sledge (1,8%)
Enjoying natural environment (1,8%)
Fishing (1,8%)
No answer (7,3%)

The most dominating answer through the entire respondent group is Northern lights watching. Some respondents having snowshoe hiking in the program were expecting the activity as most.
What are the expectations of the Abisko visit?

Number 2 Expectation:
- Enjoying the natural environment (20%)
- Northern lights (5.5%)
- Snowshoe hiking (5.5%)
- Dog sledge (5.5%)
- Hiking (3.6%)
- Meet wild animals (1.8%)
- Cold of the Nordic country (1.8%)
- Snow mobile activities (1.8%)
- Culture experience (1.8%)
- Quiet moment (1.8%)
- No answer (51%)

Half of the respondent group left this question blank, which means there is just one purpose of their visit in Abisko. However, eleven respondents which is 20% of the entire respondent group expects to enjoy the nature in Abisko.
What are the expectations of the Abisko visit?

Number 3 Expectation:
Enjoying the nature (5,5%)
Dog sledge (3,6%)
Fishing (3,6%)
Mountain climbing (3,6%)
Refreshment (3,6%)
Northern lights (1,8%)
Snowshoe hiking (1,8%)
Photographing (1,8%)
Sightseeing (1,8%)
Quiet moment (1,8%)
Skiing (1,8%)
Culture experience (1,8%)
No Answer (67,3%)

Nature experience is the also expectation in third place. Looking at the rates, this result shows mostly that it barely exists so many expectations on experience in Abisko.
5.2.2 Satisfaction of experience in Abisko

Has your experience live up to your expectations?
N= 51
No answer= 4

The experience met expectation #1

Figure 9. Satisfaction of Experience in Abisko
Comments about fulfilling expectations
I couldn't enjoy the northern lights. (19 persons = 34.5%)
I saw northern lights! (7 persons = 12.7%)
I confirm that northern lights are not easy nature phenomena you can see. (5 persons = 9.1%)
Hoping for tonight in Kiruna. (2 persons = 3.6%)
I saw shooting stars. (2 persons = 3.6%)

In order to meet their expectations of experience in Abisko, northern lights appearance had a great role. This is because their biggest expectation is northern lights as it is showed in the last questions. The only group that successfully see Northern Lights is the group C. That results positive effect on fulfilled expectation of the group.

5.2.3 Achieved elements of the visit

What have they achieved with their visit?
Achieved elements by the experiences in Abisko

Figure 11. Achieved Elements by Abisko Experiences

Adventure (1 person = 1,8%)
Stories to tell (7 persons = 12,7%)
Life changing experience (3 persons = 5,5%)
Learning of culture and nature (4 persons = 7,3%)
Enjoying landscapes (11 persons = 20%)
Separations from everyday life (18 persons = 32,7%)
Spend good time with company (7 persons = 12,7%)
Experience of northern lights (12 persons = 21,8%)
Activity participation (9 persons = 16,3%)
Have a soulful experience (2 persons = 3,6%)
Nothing special (4 persons = 7,3%)
Others (4 persons = 7,3%)

5.2.4 Japanese guests’ wish of experience in Abisko

What else would they like to do?

- Sami culture activity
- Varied activities “I would like to have variation in activities. If there is no northern lights, we need other activities.”
- Communication with the local people in activities
- Trip to Narvik
- Mountaineering
- Learning culture and history of the place
- Taking picture of Northern Lights
- Come back after 5-10 years to see the nature conditions is the same

Most of respondents mentioned about coming back to spring and summer time to enjoy the nature in different way by e.g. hiking in the mountain.

A cultural experience with the locals to learn the culture and history of the place was also in their minds.

Meals seem to be an important part of the experience for the respondent groups. There are some expectations improved gastronomic experience that did not meet during the Abisko visit, even though there was no mentioned expectation I could see in the questionnaire result, but it appeared in the comments about Abisko visit.

5.2.5 Analysis of data

More than half of these research groups had just one purpose of their visit in Abisko; Northern lights. The questionnaire results shows clearly that the guests who could see Northern lights (group C) are satisfied with experience in Abisko.

At least one of the guests mentioned about alternative activities in case of Northern Lights absence. That alternative experience might be suitable with a cultural experience with the locals as the comments in the last question indicate.

These groups of Japanese guests consider that they have mostly achieved a moment of separation from everyday life, through enjoying the landscape, activity participation and Northern lights watching.

5.2.6 Conclusion of Research Question 2

- When the expectations about Northern Lights are not fulfilled, the guests need to be satisfied with something else.
- Northern lights appearance is big key of satisfaction with experience.
### 5.3 Northern lights tours in Kiruna/Abisko (RQ3)

The informants of RQ3 are all Northern Lights tour providers in Kiruna and Abisko area. They are presented in Method Chapter. (Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Starting Place</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Duration &amp; time</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lights Over Lapland</td>
<td>Nightly Aurora Photo Tour</td>
<td>September 20th to March 26th</td>
<td>STF Abisko</td>
<td>Abisko National Park</td>
<td>3,5h 8:00PM – 11:30PM</td>
<td>Adults 1195 SEK, Students 995 SEK</td>
<td>Camera, tripod, backpack, warm overall, head lamp, warm drink, guiding services and approximately 3 hours of searching for and photographing the aurora in Abisko National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STF Abisko</td>
<td>NIGHT VISIT at Aurora Sky Station</td>
<td>November to March (Open only on Thursdays-Saturdays in November)</td>
<td>Chairlift ride in Abisko National Park</td>
<td>Aurora Sky Station in Abisko National Park</td>
<td>Up to 5h (9:00PM – 01:00AM)</td>
<td>STF-member 645 SEK, Non STF-member 745 SEK</td>
<td>Warm aurora watching overalls, return ticket by chair-lift and guided tour. Booking: There is a limited number of tickets to the Aurora Sky Station each night. Reservation in advance is recommended. If there are any tickets left one of the nights you can buy them on site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland Resort Björkliden</td>
<td>NORTHERN LIGHTS LAVVU EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>Mondays &amp; Saturdays from December 1 until March 28 2015</td>
<td>Hotel Fjärllet in Björkliden</td>
<td>Björkliden</td>
<td>2,5h (8:30PM – 11:00PM)</td>
<td>780 SEK/person</td>
<td>Snowshoes, hot drink, fika and guide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian Sami Photoadventures</td>
<td>Aurora Borealis Photo tour</td>
<td>November to April 15th</td>
<td>Hotel Pick-up in Kiruna/Jukkasjärvi area</td>
<td>15km outside Kiruna or 2 alternative locations</td>
<td>4h (7:30PM – 11:30PM)</td>
<td>1490 SEK/person</td>
<td>Transfer from your hotel, guide, warm winter clothes and shoes, a lamp and a camera plus tripod.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiruna Aurora Tours</td>
<td>Night Cruise to Abisko</td>
<td>September 20th - April 10th</td>
<td>Hotel pick-up in Kiruna/Jukkasjärvi area</td>
<td>Area between Kiruna and Abisko</td>
<td>5,5h (9:00PM – 2:30AM)</td>
<td>1380 SEK/person</td>
<td>Guide, transfer from/to your hotel, coffee / tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiruna Guidetur</td>
<td>Aurora Colosseum</td>
<td>September 20th - April 10th</td>
<td>Kiruna Guidetur office in Kiruna city centre</td>
<td>5km outside Kiruna on frozen lake</td>
<td>4h (7:00PM – 11:00PM)</td>
<td>795 SEK/person</td>
<td>Guide, snowmobile-sled (guide drives snowmobile), winter clothing (boots, winter overalls, thick gloves, warm hat), dinner, transfer from Kiruna Guidetur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splitcane Adventure</td>
<td>Chase the Aurora Borealis</td>
<td>December - March</td>
<td>Abisko Mountain Lodge at 9:00pm</td>
<td>Abisko mountain</td>
<td>2,5h (9:00PM – 11:30PM)</td>
<td>475 SEK/person</td>
<td>Snow shoes and warm drink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 3 shows that all the tour providers are active during the high season; beginning of December to the end of March. However, 4 of 7 companies are available from September. It is remarkable that Abisko companies tend to stay in Abisko. Kiruna companies often offer pick-up service at hotels in Kiruna/Jukkasjärvi (Icehotel), and drive them outside the town to move away from the light pollution.

Between 9-11pm, all the tour is out on the tour. One of the tour including supper starts earlier than the others. An Aurora-hunt tour starts late as 9pm and ends late as 2.30am. It is varied whether the companies borrow warm clothing to the guests as a including service.

Table 4. The Targeted Aurora Products and their Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Plan A – the product</th>
<th>Product Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lights Over Lapland</td>
<td>Nightly Aurora</td>
<td>The tour starts by meeting the guide at STF Abisko Tourist Station. The guests get all the gear you need except SD memory card which the guest should bring them selves. The guests get instructed how you use the camera to take photographs of Northern lights before they get equipped with all the camera gear and warm clothes. The guide leads them into Abisko National park. Light Over Lapland has several spots to stay depending on the weather and solar conditions. All the spots are located in 10-15 minutes distance. There is a Sami structure Lavvu(Tepee) on the spot. At first, the guests get instructed to put focus on infinity in order to take photograph of northern lights and stars. During the tour, the guide teaches the guests about night photography in nature. The tepee will be illuminate by fire so that it will be beautiful effect on the photography. The open fire functions as warmth for freezing guests and also warm up their lingon berry juice to serve the guests. The guide also tells about history of Abisko National Park, Lapland’s folklore, Northern lights in local culture and science behind northern lights and constellations of what they can see in the sky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photo Tour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STF Abisko</td>
<td>NIGHT VISIT at</td>
<td>The Night Visit starts with a chairlift ride in the darkness all the way to the Aurora Sky Station. Because of the darkness, there is already chance to see northern lights or a lot of stars on the way. At the Sky Station, there is a small café and souvenir shop. The guided tour will be regularly held several times by the aurora guide during the evening, both in the Northern Lights Exhibition and outside. The scientific explanation of the northern lights, the myths and the folklore are some of the things the guide tell the guests on the guided tour. The guests can feel free to go up to the look-out tower, lay down in the snow to look up the sky or learn more about northern lights at the Northern Lights Exhibition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aurora Sky Station</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland Resort Björkliden</td>
<td>NORTHERN LIGHTS</td>
<td>The tour starts by meeting the guide at the Hotel Fjälet in Björkliden. The first thing you do is putting snowshoes on and head out to the lavvu, a sami peat hut. It is located in a viewpoint 1,5 km from the hotel. In the lavvu, the guide make an open fire and serve warm lingon berry juice and “fika” so they can warm them selves by sitting around the fire on the reindeer fur. The guide talks about northern lights and the area, e.g. what northern lights is and what’s not, where they come and the mountains in the area. While waiting the northern lights, there will be more stories to tell as it show under plan B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LAVVU EXPERIENCE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian Sami Photoadventures</td>
<td>Aurora Borealis</td>
<td>Pick-up service is included for the guest staying in Kiruna and Jukkasjärvi area. The last stop will be a gathering place for handing out gears including camera, tripod and winter clothing. Here, it will also be a place for instruction of camera and night photography. It usually take takes 30-40 minutes. The guide for the night judges which one of their locations they will take the guests. Scandinavian Sami Photoadventure(SSP) has three locations in three different directions. The first one is located 15 km outside Kiruna, the second 20km far from the city and the third 25km to the opposite direction from the second one. The first thing they do when they reach the location is taking pictures. They look for the Northern Lights through the camera. If the lights are visible regardless through the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The contents of the Northern Lights tours are quite similar. These targeted products are different kind of Aurora tours. 2 of them are photo tours. 1 Aurora hunting tour, 2 snowshoe hike tours and the rest of 2 have built special attraction at the destination to spend the evening or experience the Northern Lights. The guide talks about similar subjects such as Northern lights, its science and mythology, local life, history and Sami culture. Some have big amount of contents and the other have almost nothing on the itinerary.
practicing night photography or fire show. entertaining and live carries is the most difficult to predict. Table 5 shows a plan B in case of clear weather but no Aurora. My personal opinion is that it is the most difficult to predict. Even an eruption has occurred a while ago, solar wind that carries the energy from the sun can be strong or weak. (Norrsken.2015) Keeping entertaining and live the hope alive seems to be a common plan for all of them. Some of them put focus on other things than Northern Lights by taking photograph of stars, forests, practicing night photography or fire show.
## Table 6. The Alternative Plan C for the Aurora Products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Plan C – the alternative product</th>
<th>Product description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lights Over Lapland,</td>
<td>Nightly Aurora Photo Tour</td>
<td>Even it is snowstorm outside, Light Over Lapland go out with the guests to their tepee. They still learn the guests about night photography and about northern lights. The guide tries to get things going with different things to take picture of, instead of northern lights. The example can be snowy portraits, so called snow globe shoot. The open fire in the tepee will be also one of the beautiful objects to take photo of. Even making the campfire is exciting for guests. Depending of the weather, the guide gets ready to bring marshmallows for the guests. By the open fire, the guests grill the marshmallows and the guide tell the stories about northern lights, nature and folklore, personal northern lights experience and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STF Abisko</td>
<td>NIGHT VISIT at Aurora Sky Station</td>
<td>When it is too cold or too windy to operate the chairlift, STF Abisko provide another program which on their home page named “Aurora NoGo program” STF Abisko judges if the weather conditions are suitable to operate the chairlift for safety reasons. The criteria to Aurora NoGo program is that the wind is stronger than 17m /second, the temperature is lower than -23 Celsius or the wind chill is colder than -27 Celsius in wherever between the lift starts and ends. The evening starts by meeting the guide at the STF Abisko who takes the guests to the guided tour at Naturum, nature museum located just beside of STF Abisko. At Naturum, there will be a lecture about northern lights at the lecture hall by the guide. In this program a movie about northern lights. If the weather permits, the guide take the guests for a walk to the Sami structure located by Abisko Canyon. Inside the tent, people can sit around an open fire and warm themselves during the guide tell them stories about northern lights. Those who want, have opportunity to follow the guide to longer walk e.g. to the lake Torneträsk for 40 minutes to 1 hour. STF Abisko clearly states that northern lights are not guaranteed, since it is a natural phenomenon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland Resort Björkliden</td>
<td>NORTHERN LIGHTS LAVVU EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>Because of the mountain weather, it can be extremely heavy snowstorm in Björkliden. They go out to the lavvu as always, as long as the guide judges that the tour is doable. The extreme weather makes the guests change the focus from the northern lights to weather and winter survival. The lavvu keeps them warm in any weather.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian Sami Photoadventures</td>
<td>Aurora Borealis Photo tour</td>
<td>If the weather condition is terrible for the northern lights watching in Kiruna area, the guide decides to go further to look for the northern lights. It could be one hour-drive for one way. This alternative is something Scandinavian Sami Photoadventure does not try until they really have to. They perceive that the guests will be happy about that even they could see northern lights because of the long distance from the Kiruna city. The guide for the night judges if it is profitable to go far to see northern lights. If it is not, the groups go to the closest location where Scandinavian Sami Photoadventure thinks cosiest of all. Sometimes, the guide shows the group pictures of night photography.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiruna Aurora Tours</td>
<td>Night Cruise to Abisko</td>
<td>The guide for the night checks the weather conditions and judges the chance to see Northern lights. The judgement is 0% chance of Northern lights, the Kiruna Aurora Tour inform the guests about the conditions and cancel the tour. However, the guide judges there is a 3% of chance for Northern lights, the tour will be held. In the radius of 25 kilometres’ distance from Kiruna, the guide seeks a clear sky in weather forecasts in different media. As they are 6 guests at most, the guide discuss with the guests for the changing directions and changing itinerary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiruna Guidetur</td>
<td>Aurora Colosseum</td>
<td>To fill up the tour with something else is what Kiruna Guidetur has described about plan B and plan C. There is not any big differences between plan B and C. The group spends more time inside the lavvu. The guide tries to put focus away from the Northern lights by talking something interesting from the area. However, the guides try to keep the hope alive.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the case of intensive snowstorm, they inform the guests that there is chance for the guests to cancel the booking with cancellation fee, and also that the tour will be more about experience an extreme arctic climate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Splitcane Adventure</td>
<td>Chase the Aurora Borealis</td>
<td>Unknown (As the plan A and B content same things,)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Splitcane Adventure cancels the tour because of the weather c:a 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STF Abisko</td>
<td>NIGHT VISIT at Aurora Sky Station</td>
<td>Approx. 70%</td>
<td>Approx. 20%</td>
<td>Approx. 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapland Resort Björkliden</td>
<td>Northern Lights Lavvu Experience</td>
<td>Approx. 50%</td>
<td>Approx 20%</td>
<td>Lapland Resorts cancels the tour because of the extremely bad weather, 10% Tour is held in bad weather, 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandinavian Sami Photoadventures</td>
<td>Aurora Borealis Photo tour</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>Approx. 3%</td>
<td>Approx. 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiruna Aurora Tours</td>
<td>Night Cruise to Abisko</td>
<td>Approx. 92%</td>
<td>Approx 3%</td>
<td>Kiruna Aurora Tours cancels the tour, 2% They drive to search the better weather but no result, 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiruna Guidetur</td>
<td>Aurora Colosseum</td>
<td>Approx. 60%</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splitcane Adventure</td>
<td>Chase the Aurora Borealis</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Ordinary snowstorms seem to be no problem for most of the tour providers. However, in case of extremely heavy snowstorm, more than half of them have cancelled the tour because of the weather, even though it occurred only a couple of times in one season. STF Abisko has quite different product in case of plan C. They therefore have clearly stated that there is no refund in case of their plan C so called “Aurora No Go Program”.

Bad weather conditions often mean more work for the guide. For photo tour providers, there will be more night photography practices. For Aurora Hunt tour providers, the guide has to look harder for a place with better conditions. The rest of them usually talk about something else than Northern Lights. Stories about extreme weather, how to protect themselves from frostbites and personal experience of the nature are some examples of stories to tell.
Plan C seems to have two different scenarios depending on how bad the weather is. For most of the Northern Lights tour providers, there seems to be no difference in plan B and C. Often they have statistics of successful aurora night. But none of them have statistic of whether collar or weather conditions that caused unsuccessful aurora nights. It was therefore difficult to get the answers.

According to this data, Northern Lights hunting tours and photo tours keep a high accuracy of Northern Lights. This is partly because hunting tours could freely change the destinations to have good conditions. Photo tours could, through camera, be a witness to weak northern lights that you would have missed with your naked eyes.

Contributed factors:
Kiruna Guidetur and Kiruna Aurora Tours also mentioned that they have relatively high proportion of spot on booking that contributed that there are fewer bookings in bad conditions for Northern Lights than in good ones. Kiruna Guidetur has their office in the city centre of Kiruna where you can book tours. They estimate their spot on booking as 30% of their entire booking regardless day or night tours. Kiruna Aurora Tours made a big sign to win attention of tourists at Kiruna Tourist Office in the city centre where you can also book most of the tours in the whole Kiruna municipality.

### 5.3.1 Analysis
The only one clear plan C was Aurora NoGo program of Night visit at Aurora Sky Station by STF Abisko. This might be necessary because a big part of product will be replaced in a bad weather conditions.

Most of them answered that they do not have either plan B or C. I assume rather that there is not instructed or agreed plan in each company. The guides use their creativity and knowledge to entertain the guests. As it should be a company’s interest to achieve customer satisfaction, they have to make sure that there are suggested plans in case of plan B and C-conditions. However, I realize an advantage to have possibilities for creativities where the guides improve contents by their experience.

It is also remarkable that they often do not see any distinctions between “waiting time” for Northern Lights in the successful Aurora evening and No Aurora evening. What they do during they wait for northern lights and what they do in bad weather conditions contains same things. This is why they often do not have any difference between plan B and C. STF Abisko has clear difference in itinerary. This is why, except STF Abisko, it was really hard to get answers of percentage of occurrence on plan B and plan C.
Splitcane Adventure answered interesting perspective of plan B and C. Klas, head guide, is convinced that their tour is the best when you do not see the northern lights. When the lights appear, all the attention is paid to them. Klas finds it hard to get the guests listen to anything. They scream, take pictures, try to take picture with cell phone camera to post it online.

5.3.2 Conclusion for Research Question 3

- Most of the products are operable even in bad weather conditions. That makes no difference in plan B and C.
- Plan B & C commonly are keeping entertaining and live the hope alive. Existing elements in the tour contents usually will be extended, such as telling stories about culture and history, practising night photography and so forth.
- The companies rely on the guide’s creativity, knowledge and entertainment skills.
- They rely on the guest’s understanding that nature phenomena are not controllable.

5.4 Experience Productions perspective (RQ4)

5.4.1 Summary of Research Question 1-3

RQ1
Kiruna Lapland (Kiruna municipality) has the biggest Northern lights destination in Sweden. The majority of the international tourists visit Kiruna area during winter season which often is defined as a period from December to March in Kiruna. One of the strong reasons to visit at Kiruna area is Northern lights.

RQ2
Northern lights appearance is big key of satisfaction with experience. In case of no Northern Lights, the guests need to be satisfied with something else.

RQ3
Plan B and C look mostly same and the existing contents are extended. As the companies instructed the guide about alternative plan, the customer satisfactions rely on the guides’ skill, and also on the customer understanding about nature phenomena.

Many of the informants summarised this winter season as a good Northern Lights year. Then, what happens in a bad one? Should a nature phenomenon steer customer satisfaction? How can you make sure about customer satisfaction?
5.4.2 Kano model
Kano (1984) model shows a correlation between quality elements and consumer satisfaction. It is not as simple as developing elements of a product always leads to a satisfaction on a product consumer side. His theory offers an insight into the product attributes that are perceived to be important or unimportant to customers. The providers of the product need to address product attributes into different quality categories.

Bergman and Klefsjö (2010) have found connection between Kano’s quality categories and customer needs categories by Williams & Bertsch (1993). They identify three different customer needs.

**Basic needs**
These needs are taken for granted when fulfilled but result in dissatisfaction when not fulfilled. Since customers expect these needs and view them as a basic factor, the customers do not perceive as a quality element.

**Expected needs**
These needs simply lead to satisfaction when fulfilled and dissatisfaction when not.

**Excitement needs**
These needs result satisfaction when fulfilled, but when it is not fulfilled, consumer accepts and it does not lead to dissatisfaction.

![Figure 12. Kano-model modified by Bergman & Klefsjö (2010:307)](image-url)
5.4.3 Analysis with Kano Model

To address this model in products Northern Lights tours, Northern lights and all the promised elements in the tour program are placed as expected needs. These elements are marketed.

Basic needs are unspoken and perceived as obvious elements for the customer. An example is air conditioner in the vehicle works well so that you do not freeze inside the vehicle. The guests take it granted that AC works in the vehicle.

In the plan B and C situations, the experience stagers cannot count on the Northern lights to appear and contribute the guest satisfaction. In this case, the excitement needs will be the only needs companies could fulfil, because the excitement needs and expected needs are only up-going arrows in this model. I suggest the excitement needs in this context are the alternative experiences. These needs are unspoken and therefore unexpected. This is why there are potentials to get unexpectedly higher customer satisfaction.

Figure 13. Kano-model meets Northern Lights Alternative Experience (Figure modified after Bergman & Klefsjö 2010, p.307)
5.4.4 Analysis with the Experience Realms

Northern Lights watching is about gazing the beauty of the nature’s show in the earth-scale. These kinds of experience mean aesthetic experiences that signify passive participation and that the guests let them selves immerse into the experience.

In order to enclose to the sweet spot, in other words, memorable experience, the experience should be more active in the guests’ participation. Thus, the experience should be more absorbing.

Figure 14. The Experience Realms meet Northern Lights Alternative Experience (Figure modified after Pine & Gilmore 1999, p.30)

5.4.5 Discussion to Extra-ordinary Northern Lights Experience

As it showed in the analysis of Kano model, the only needs the companies could fulfil to earn it are excitement needs, when the expected needs (Northern Lights) are not contributing to customer satisfaction, such as plan B and C situation.

Plan B situations:
• Star-gazing and astrological stories – Telling stories about astrological mythology
which belong to the visible stars

- Sami mythology of stars and Northern lights – Sami people was scared of Northern lights. Making thrilled feeling with some drama
- “Keep-you-warm” excise

Plan C situations:

- Movies about Northern lights – Learning the science behind the Northern lights through the movie so that everyone understand what happens when the sky glow green.
- Pictures with stories – presenting local life or Sami life by series of pictures. The story make the guests relate to the locals.
- Survival practise – taking shelter, keeping warmth and making fire

5.4.6 Conclusions

- Northern lights tourism in Swedish Lapland is relatively small but highly significant part of tourism in Swedish Lapland.

- 50-60 Northern lights tours in different structure are available from September to March in Kiruna Lapland.

- The majority of visitors in Kiruna Lapland is international tourist and England and Japan is distinguished from other nationalities between December to March.

- Japanese guests expect almost only Northern lights when visited Abisko in Kiruna municipality.

- Sub-arctic nature experience is also interesting for Japanese guests.

- Most of the Northern lights tour providers had no specific and instructed plan for bad weather- and solar conditions. Most of the cases, the guide make an extended version of some already existing element of the tour.

- Experience production perspective suggests to stage unexpected experiences in order to earn guest satisfaction.

- As a Northern light tour tends to be aesthetical experience, it needs a more absorbing experience that engages the guests in active way.
6 DISCUSSIONS

6.1 Method discussion
I wanted to study how experience productions perspective could guide the experience stager to create alternative experience in the case of bad weather- and solar conditions. To answer the research questions, the chosen methods were questionnaire survey, interviews and literature study. I consider that the choice of method depending on what research question was correct, considering the research result.

The study reliability could have been higher if the questionnaire data would be done in the present. The guest segments could look different now compared to five years ago. The biggest guest segment of Japanese guest visiting Kiruna area, would match WTO’s definition of WHOP (Wealthy Healthy Old People) which matches my respondents. However, it is unlikely to make a huge change of expectations on an Abisko trip over five years.

Analysis as a research method is influenced by researchers background, sense of value, and identity (Denscombe, 2012). My interview respondents, in my opinion, have a lot of ideas that I wish I had. This is why I hope this thesis would be a help to guide them how they could execute their ideas.

These suggested examples of alternative experiences are just my idea. It could have some influence from my background as tour guide in positive and negative way.

The true challenge the experience stagers will face in order to execute these ideas is how you engage them in the sub-arctic winter climate.

6.2 Research Result Discussion
Generalization of the interview data was the most difficult part of the study. As RQ 3 take qualitative research method, it concerns analytical generalization (Stenbacka, 2001). My interview respondents, in my opinion, have a lot of ideas that I wish I had. This is why I hope this thesis would be a help to guide them how they could execute their ideas.

These suggested examples of alternative experiences are just my idea. It could have some influence from my background as tour guide in positive and negative way.

The true challenge the experience stagers will face in order to execute these ideas is how you engage them in the sub-arctic winter climate.

6.3 Further Studies
In this thesis, we get overview of Northern Lights tourism in Swedish Lapland and experience productions perspective of Northern Lights experience. In addition, we have looked what the
experience stager could do in the bad weather and solar conditions. In the future, it would be interesting to deepen the alternative experiences about how we can perform the suggested alternative experiences. There are different ways to execute. Storytelling as a tool for memorable experience and it gives meaning to our lives (Mossberg, 2003). Interpretation and hospitality are worth to look up in depth because the guides’ role is vital in all kind of guided tour.

This research got me an further question in international Northern lights tourism. As mentioned before, mass tourism is still strong in this business. If I get a chance, I would like to compare the mass tourism and small-scale tourism like Kiruna Lapland in the perspective of the economic impact and experience production. Which generates memorable experience?

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APPENDIX

Tour 1: Extraction of tour information from homepage of the tour provider; Lights Over Lapland
(http://lightsoverlapland.com/index.php/photo-trips/nightly-photo-tours)

Nightly Aurora Photo Tour
When: September 20th to March 26th (Minimum 3 people/tour until December 1st). Where: Abisko National Park, Sweden see map
Meeting place: STF Abisko Turiststation
Time: 8:00 PM – 11:30 PM
Price: Adults 1195 SEK // Students 995 SEK
Includes: Camera, tripod, backpack, warm overall, head lamp, warm drink, guiding services and approximately 3 hours of searching for and photographing the aurora in Abisko National Park
We ask that you provide your own SD memory cards to be used in our cameras.
Make a booking request here!
Optional round trip transfers:
Abisko Östra – STF Abisko Turiststation 150 SEK/person Björkliden – STF Abisko Turiststation 300 SEK/person
More info
Frequently asked questions

Join one of Lights Over Lapland’s professional photographers for an opportunity to see and photograph the aurora borealis in the wilderness of Abisko National Park. Due to clear skies and virtually no light pollution Abisko is one of the greatest places in the world to see the
northern lights. We will provide you with a high quality camera & lens and quickly teach you the skills that you will need to find and photograph the magical aurora borealis. Even if you have never used a camera before you have an extremely high chance of going home with beautiful aurora photographs and memories that will last a lifetime! Small groups ensure a very personal and genuine experience. Trips are available from October until the end of March.

Additional information: It is important that you bring warm clothes to wear under your overalls and warm insulated winter boots for your feet. We ask that you provide your own SD memory cards to be used in our cameras. We recommend a minimum of two to four gigabytes of storage space. Memory cards are also available for purchase if needed (8 GB: 250 SEK).

Lights Over Lapland’s tours are designed in a way that will accommodate as many different levels of physical fitness as possible. We usually walk less than one kilometer per direction to and from our many locations in Abisko National Park. It is common to walk in deep snow and in cold conditions during our tours. If you have any physical limitations that may cause you to be unable to walk a total of two kilometers please inform us when you make a booking so we can discuss your needs ahead of time.

Itinerary:
8:00 PM Meet at the Abisko Turiststation
First you will meet your guide where you will be given a high quality camera and we will spend a few minutes explaining how to use it. All of the camera’s settings will be taken care of in advance so that all you have to do is enjoy watching and photographing the aurora borealis. You will also be given a pair of warm overalls to help keep you safe and comfortable during your night in Abisko National Park.
8:30 – 11:00 PM The adventure begins!
Your guide will use their many years of experience to lead you into Abisko National Park where you will search for and photograph the magical aurora borealis. During this time we will discuss the history of Abisko National Park and give you a local’s insight into Lapland’s folklore. You will learn how the aurora fits into the local culture and your guide will share information that will help you understand the solar system and the countless stars and constellations above Abisko National Park. We will explain the science behind the aurora in layman’s terms so you can understand exactly what you are seeing when you watch the aurora borealis dance overhead. During your adventure we will also discuss the impact that strong solar storms and the auroras that they create may have on modern society in the years to come.
11:00 – 11:30 PM Return to Abisko Turiststation
Upon arrival to the Turiststation you will collect your memory card full of photographs of the evening’s adventure.

Tour 2: Extraction of tour information from homepage of the tour provider; STF Abisko
(http://www.auroraskystation.com/en/night-visit/)

NIGHT VISIT
The night visit starts with a beautiful chair-lift ride up to the Aurora Sky Station. Enjoy the
silent Abisko National Park in darkness. Your eyes will gradually get used to the completely dark skies and soon you will see more stars than ever before.

At the Aurora Sky Station there’s a cosy café, souvenir shop, look-out tower and northern lights exhibition. Be sure not to miss the popular guided tours.

INCLUDED IN NIGHT VISIT
Warm aurora watchers overalls, return ticket by chair-lift and guided tour.

BOOKING
There is a limited number of tickets to the Aurora Sky Station each night. We recommend that you book and pay your visit in advance to be guaranteed a ticket. If there are any tickets left one of the nights you can buy them on site.

NOVEMBER, 2015
Open Thursday – Saturday
Opening hours
21.00-01.00
Guided tours
22.00, 22.30, 23.00, 23.30
Price
STF-member 645 SEK
Non STF-member 745 SEK

DECEMBER 2015 – MARCH 2016
Open Monday – Sunday
Opening hours
21.00-01.00
Guided tours
22.00, 22.30, 23.00, 23.30
Price
STF-member 645 SEK
Non STF-member 745 SEK

The night visit starts with a beautiful chair-lift ride up to the Aurora Sky Station. Enjoy the silent Abisko National Park in darkness. Your eyes will gradually get used to the completely dark skies and soon you will see more stars than ever before.

At the Aurora Sky Station there’s a cozy café, souvenir shop, look-out tower and northern lights exhibition. Be sure not to miss the popular guided tours.

Please note!
When booking any of the services or products at Aurora Sky Station, we cannot guarantee that you will see the Northern Lights.

Please also note that, for safety reasons, Aurora Sky Station may be closed at short notice because of weather conditions: strong winds, extremely cold temperatures, blizzards, etc.

Statistics from past seasons show that Aurora Sky Station is open 90 percent of scheduled times and the Northern Lights are visible 70 percent of the evenings/nights that Aurora Sky Station is open.

If Aurora Sky Station has to be closed for safety reasons a special Aurora NoGo program will
come into effect.

**Aurora NoGo program**
If the chair lift is closed for reasons given above an “Aurora NoGo” program is provided as an alternative: we stay in, or around STF Abisko Mountain Station. The program includes a movie about the Aurora Borealis and a guided tour of Naturum (The Nature Room). Weather permitting there will also be an aurora walk to look for/at light phenomena and/or stories about the Northern Lights, around the fire in our lavvu (Sami tent).

*Since the Aurora NoGo program replaces a visit to Aurora Sky Station none of the amount charged for the scheduled visit to Aurora Sky Station will be refunded.*

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**Tour 3: Extraction of tour information from homepage of the tour provider;**
**Lapland Resort Björkliden**
(http://bjorkliden.com/en/northern-lights/)

**NORTHERN LIGHTS LAVVU EXPERIENCE**
We travel by snowshoes to our lavvu, a peat hut situated 1,5 km from the hotel. It’s up there, without interfering artificial light, the Northern Lights can be seen at their finest. By a warming fire inside the lavvu the guide will tell your more about the magic of Northern Lights and the Björkliden area.
Recommended minimum age is seven years.
When: Monday & Saturday 8.30 pm – 11 pm (December 1 – March 28, 2015)
Price: 780 SEK per person. Included in the price: snowshoes, hot drink, fika and guide.
Participants: max 12 people

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**Tour 4: Extraction of tour information from homepage of the tour provider;**
**Scandinavian Sami Photoadventures**
(http://scanphotos.weebly.com/tours.html)

**Aurora Borealis Photo tour**
Experience Aurora Borealis in another way. Scandinavian Sami Photoadventures takes you out in the dark polar night to try to catch the northern light with camera. Whether you are a beginner or a more experienced photographer, our guides will help you to get exclusive pictures for your photo album.

We take you to one of the best places in Kiruna for auroral photography. While waiting for the Aurora Borealis we teach you the basics of northern light/night photography, using either your own camera equipment or ours.

Price: SEK 1490/person
The price includes: Transfer from your hotel, guide, warm winterclothes and shoes (specify size in your booking), a lamp and a camera plus tripod. Bring your own memory SD card with minimum 4GB or buy one on location - price SEK 200.

Tour 5 Extraction of tour information from homepage of the tour provider; Kiruna Aurora Tours
(http://www.laplandauroraborealis.com)

ABisko aurora excursion
Our special aurora arrangement for individual travellers and photographers with advanced ambitions will bring you to Abisko - the "village of the northern lights". Due to its unique location Abisko is known for its many clear nights, which makes it one of the world's best places to see the Northern Lights! Your driver-guide will meet you at 9.00 PM at your accommodation in Kiruna or Jukkasjärvi. He will give you a safe car trip in search for your best Aurora picture.
From Kiruna towards west you're going to pass small settlements and wide open swamp areas. Following parallel to the railroad tracks of the Kiruna iron ore train you will soon reach Abisko. On our way we will make stops at scenic viewpoint locations and take a nightwalk on the ice of lake Torneträsk. We don't set up a detailed itinerary for this trip and it is NOT about to stop in Abisko to just turn around! Depending on the weather and aurora situation we might pass Abisko and continue towards the border to Norway. So you will have the biggest chance to see aurora out here in the snowy high mountain area!
At app. 2.30 AM we will be back in Kiruna and drop you in front of your hotel/hostel.

We accept max. 6 participants on this excursion. Your guide will stop where ever you want to take your pictures. Take your time to focus on to your focus . No impatient travel mates, no group dynamics, no time pressure - we go out to watch aurora in Lapland!

SEK 1380/person - min 2 persons

Included: Guide, car fuel, coffee / tea

Every evening from sept. 20th - april 10th

With booking or inquiry regarding this tour please mention the EXCURSION-ID: KAT-PEP-15 Guiding available in English, Swedish, German, Spanish

Tour 6: Extraction of tour information from homepage of the tour provider; Kiruna Guidetur

Evening tour to a Colosseum made of ice on the Torne River. We go by minivan to our camp close to the Torne river. From here we ride on a sled attached to the guide's
snowmobile. Our guide drives on the frozen river until we reach the Colosseum. We sit on reindeer fells inside the colosseum. The position of the colosseum gives us great possibilities to see the northern light, the weather here is clear most of the time, there is no other disturbing lights and you and we will have a good view of the sky towards north. If it gets cold we go back to the camp and warm up around the fire. Our guide will serve typical Lapland's dinner around the fire.

**Price includes:** guide, snowmobile-sled (guide drives snowmobile), winter clothing (boots, winter overalls, thick gloves, warm hat), dinner, transfer from Kiruna Guidetur.

**Duration of tour:** 4 hrs

**Total duration includes:** time for transfer, changing clothes, break for meal/coffee

**Distance covered:** 5 km

**Departure point:** Kiruna Guidetur office at 19:00. We meet about 30 minutes before departure time for changing into warm clothes

**If you have booked pickup service:** Pick up from ICEHOTEL is 60 minutes before start time of the tour. Pick up from hotels in Kiruna is 15 minutes before the start time of the tour.

Please be on time. We usually have a couple of places to pick up guests from and if you are late, we can NOT wait in consideration of other guests.

**Price:** SEK 795/person, SEK 395/child under the age of 12 years.
Pick up from a hotel costs 75 SEK/adult, 37 SEK/child.
We charge 300 SEK per person on every tour from 24th of December to 6th of January.

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**Tour 7: Extraction of tour information from homepage of the tour provider; Splitcane Adventure**

**Chase the Aurora Borealis**

Abisko is one of the best places in the world to experience the northern lights. The latitude 68° north is really good to start with. The clear sky, “the blue hole over Abisko”, is another thing that helps. It doesn’t occur every night but if it does...

The tour starts at 9pm from Abisko. We put on snowshoes and head off into the polar night. Usually we see lots of tracks from the different wildlife that wander around Abisko. We stop and try to figure out which animal is going where.

After about 45 minutes we reach one of the good viewing points in the area and take something warm to drink while we wait... Hopefully the gods have been with us and we start our way back home, which we reach around 11.30 pm.

On requests

9pm – 11.30pm
475,- SEK p/p

Snow shoes and warm drink included.