

# The Customer Journey

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# The Customer Journey



Looking at a tourism customer's journey we can consider how and where service levels affect their expectations and experiences

# CAITO Project Customer journey research

1. This data is based on evidence/feedback gathered from:
  - face to face semi-structured interviews with key customer journey stakeholders
  - stakeholder feedback questionnaires

Estonia, Finland, Latvia: tourist boards, TICs, regional & national government officers, tour operators, tour guide.

2. 2017 interviews totalled EST- 10; FIN – 8; LAT – 10
3. In 2017 and 2018 groups of students under took CJ testing trip in and between all three countries.

# Effectiveness of the integration between different modes of transport.

- **Integration is not good.** In rural areas it might be difficult to connect/transfer between different bus services and modes
- In bigger cities it works OK but **problems in rural areas**
- Would be **good to have a single travel ticket** across all areas in a country
- Need for more frequent trains/buses in rural areas,

# Effectiveness of the integration between different modes of transport.

- What we need most is a **direct bus connection from the airport to Lohja region**. Now you need to take the train from the airport to Helsinki, then transfer to the train for Karis-Ekenäs-Hanko or walk to the bus station for a bus to Lohja.
- The creation of good connections between transport services (including intermodal) which are easy and straightforward to use is **very important for the developers of tourism products and packages** and the agents selling these products/packages

# Quality and ease of understanding of travel information needed for the customer journey

- In bigger cities, it is possible to find information in English and there are different information signs meant for tourists including some electronic screens
- Much information can also be found from Google Maps.
- Some websites provide transport information across the range of providers but **most companies only provide their own information on their website.**

# Quality and ease of understanding of travel information needed for the customer journey

- At rural bus stops information is mostly only in national language (if it is there at all) and there is little information in stations and bus stops that are out of towns.
- As an example how do you know when you have arrived at Lohja bus station?

# Quality and ease of understanding of travel information needed for the customer journey

- Usually, information for single transportation is readily available.
- Problems start with intermodal transportation; ticket purchase options particularly for local public transportation systems are unclear.
- We need to be better at telling how to reach us. We are very focused on what we have to offer, but don't tell the visitors how to reach us!
- [www.visitlohja.fi](http://www.visitlohja.fi) tells about the main bus stop in Lohja, no links to any detailed info about transportation.



# Quality and ease of understanding of travel information needed for the customer journey

- On paper / online there is a need for significant improvement. Sometimes It is difficult for even a Finn to find info from the internet.
- Important to note that not all travellers speak English, Russian, Finnish or Estonian.

# Easiness for non-native speaking visitors in finding/locating information

- You can easily find information in google, but information at bus stops, inside public transport and transport hubs is often very limited.
- Japanese people do not know that there are many nice rural areas in our region, it would be helpful to add links of transportation on websites, so that visitors can search by themselves (if they read enough English).
- The info is widespread but without knowing what “vr” or “matkahuolto” or other services are, it could be extremely difficult to plan a trip.

# Easiness for non-native speaking visitors in finding/locating information

- Tourists who are not internet connected or haven't done their "homework" will have difficulties.
- The best way for providing information is online, but a major criterion is the availability of internet access at a reasonable cost.
- Roaming data works in the EU for those with an EU mobile phone contract but not necessarily for travellers coming from third countries. [Global roaming costs are high.](#)
- While this problem exists, information should be in as many places as possible.

# Acceptance of electronic tickets

- While bigger bus companies (and the train companies) do accept electronic tickets, most providers accept them only if they are printed on paper, but the number is increasing.
- Tickets can also be bought on board if there are vacant seats.
- The number of e-tickets is rising and with matkahuolto you only need ID to enter the bus. So, it is getting better. **But still many of the systems could work better together.** This is of course easier said than done.

# Acceptance of electronic tickets

- In most cases it is impossible to purchase tickets for rural bus services via the internet but it does depend on each provider.
- It is also possible to buy tickets for train trips and most bus trips that start (end) in coach terminals from the internet or using mobile application up to 10 days in advance.
- In many cases however it is not possible to buy tickets or find accurate information on travel services more than 10 days in advance of the journey. This makes it difficult or impossible for long-term planning for your journey and is a particular issue for tour operators who must plan months ahead.

# Ease for non-native speaking visitors in creating itineraries for rural locations

- I would say it is nearly impossible. It is a difficult task even for local people. The reason is that the rural bus networks are created exclusively for local people for their everyday use.
- Often drivers might not speak very good English. Plus, many long distance (or local?) buses don't have stop name screens.
- As for reaching rural locations, one must change a bus or train, but the websites for e-tickets work equally well for connecting trips.
- You need to hire a car, that's the only way to reach farms & small villages. Or take a taxi, we are in the planning stage for project Tourist Taxi.

# Ease for non-native speaking visitors in creating itineraries for rural locations

- Traveling in rural areas is difficult even for local tourist – to find information and to understand how to travel.
- As the move towards demand led transportation services (On Demand Bus Services/ 'dial-a-bus') becomes implemented more widely in remoter rural areas, timetabled transport services to these destinations will become less and less common.
- Thus, it may become increasingly difficult to create exactly timed itineraries and purchase tickets far in advance of the travel date.

## Easiness for non-native speaking visitors in identifying intermediate drop-off points

- In rural areas people seldom speak a foreign language. While people who work in hotels or restaurants usually do, local bus drivers, shop assistants very seldom do.
- This depends on luck, sometimes the drivers and others are good with English and are able to help. Sometimes not.
- If the driver speaks no English it is nearly impossible to find out which stop to get off, information in bus stops is usually only in national language
- Many rural bus stops do not have their name on them



## Easiness for non-native speaking visitors in identifying intermediate drop-off points

- The only way is to ask for the driver's help or other travellers help. Usually there are no signs.
- Some drivers are nice and tell foreigners that it is the right place for them or get off or tell the name of big bus stops in English when there are many foreigners **but often many of them are not brave enough or not used to doing this.**
- Very often rural buses do not have either audio or video announcements of bus stops.

## The level of understanding / appreciation by other sectors of their contribution to the (rural) tourist industry

- It varies very much from one location to other depending on the number of tourists they receive.
- But if local people are not used to tourists, then they need to be made aware of how to talk to a foreigner and that foreign tourists need more help and attention than locals but this also needs elementary English skills.
- Often, they feel that what they do does not matter. Reason behind is a the low salary but also a lack of training and lack of employee “ownership” in the business.

## The level of understanding / appreciation of their contribution to the (rural) tourist industry by government departments

- In the region of Western-Uusimaa, the understanding of rural tourism (especially foreign rural tourism) is weak and the potential is really not understood.
- There is very little support from government and it seems to be mainly the task of local enterprises to promote tourism
- In Finland tourism is growing and with it the awareness is growing rapidly. But there is still a lot of work to do.

# Provision of tourist information (in foreign languages)

- Such information is available in capital cities, much less in regional towns while in rural areas it can be almost non-existent.
- Slowly improving, often progress is depending on both local municipality and government funding and resources. No money- no signs!
- Many web sites are available in English and can of course be retrieved on the tourists' mobile phones, but note the data costs for non-EU residents can be high.
- There is scope for more signs in English about rural sightseeing spots (such as old churches, beautiful waterfalls) on main roads. There are many such valuable places, but they are hard for foreigners to find.
- Western-Uusimaa region is bilingual region (Finnish and Swedish), but addition to those, there is almost nothing.

# Services in foreign language to be found at the local area level

- Only in national languages, often not even that (the main pretext being that all local people know anyhow)
- In rural sightseeing areas, lack of public WCs.
- Tourist information centres/offices are available in many rural towns.
- Some tourism sector companies are pretty good in English and they provide their own services in English quite well.

# Opening times (days & times) of rural attractions and services (provision of emergency and out of hours' services)

- Quite ok, but needs to be improved a lot
- Legislation changed recently, so we are getting better customer friendly opening hours to many sectors right now actually

# Online information on parking areas, charges, chargeable periods, payment methods

- Easily accessible in the web but you need to know the actual name of the carpark you want to go to.
- Guides to the actual parking areas could be better in some cases and inform of charges.
- In the region of western-Uusimaa parking is not an issue and is often free of charge (except in Lohja), there is always room. But I'm sure this is not informed online.
- Not a lot of information on our local tourism websites.
- Nothing in foreign languages, other than Finnish and Swedish.

# Interviewee comments relating to the customer journey

- It is hard to imagine that an independent traveller from Japan could find his way in rural areas. It would only be possible with well-prepared itineraries and information kit they receive upon arrival.
- First we should get people moving to rural areas and to feel interested in its products. By doing this we would have an opportunity to see where and what to correct
- We have a lot to improve. Highest on the wish list is a direct transport link between Helsinki-Vantaa Airport and the Western Uusimaa region.
- Lot's of work to be done 😊
- Happy travelling in exotic countries with no signs in your own language but among very friendly and helpful people!



# Interviewee comments relating to the customer journey

- While many villages welcomed foreign visitors (tourists) as a result of depopulation and emigration of younger people, increasingly fewer people are left who speak foreign languages.
- In rural shops and even some tourist related service provision e.g. handicrafts and local food/herbal products, the knowledge resides within the older population and there is a need for more translation and guiding services for non-native language speaking visitors.

# Interviewee comments relating to the customer journey

- Enter Gauja: an idea is the creation of a series of “Daily Packages” based around using local public transport to and from Riga including: Sigulda, Cesis, Līgatne and Valmiera. These maps and routes were introduced in late 2017.
- To complement these a series of activity self-guiding route cards have also been produced which bring together access routes and activities linked to local transport.

# Any other comments relating to the customer journey

A major discussion point was **how to motivate and improve the attitude of public transport drivers and others in the service sector towards foreign (and especially Japanese) visitors**. It was stressed that these poor attitudes did not extend to all service sector personnel and in many cases management of transport companies were very supportive of hosting foreign tourists.

In some cases, problems could be put down to **lack of confidence in communication with foreign people**, in others it might be related to **provision of facilities or space for carrying tourist related equipment** e.g. luggage or bicycles- also an issue even with local leisure travellers.

Solutions might be found through **provision of training on the subjects of welcoming and providing services for foreign tourists**. This might also include content relating to local tourism related knowledge for front line tourism service provider staff.

It is hard to imagine that an independent traveller from Japan could find their way in our rural areas.

This would only be possible with well-prepared itineraries and information kit they receive upon arrival.

It is not all bad news ..... after my interviews, and Asnate's presentation in Latvia, their State Transport Directorate has introduced the first tourist related transport routes

So while Partners were sceptical to start with, now, the most sceptical of them is the first in being successful in getting changes introduced!

**Latvija 100**

AUTOTRANSPORTA DIREKCIJA

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# Iepazīstiet Latvijas valstiskuma veidošanās ceļus ar autobusu un vilcienu!

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Septiņi Latvijas valstiskuma veidošanās ceļi izvedīs jūs cauri visai Latvijai un mūsu valsts vēsturei.

Apceļojiet Latviju ar sabiedrisko transportu!

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Thanks for listening!