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Accommodation business concept

The sustainable Woode Hotel

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1 Introduction

Nowadays everyone is talking about the importance of sustainability and individual responsibility when traveling in order to reduce our carbon footprint and thus improve, or at least not worsen, the health of our planet. Hotel chains and independent hotels are, little by little, implementing sustainable strategies in their development plans to help reduce their impact on the environment.

Hotels around the world area applying sustainable strategies to maximize their green qualifications, so tourists can relax on vacation with the security of knowing that they are not harming the planet. For example, the luxurious Jumeirah Vittaveli complex in the Maldives. This hotel has been awarded the Green Globe Certification (GGC) as it has implemented 349 strict measures for sustainable development. One of its most interesting measures is the "Eco Pure" system, which treats seawater to create potable water (Tanveer, n.d) for its customers. Or also like the Hi Hotel in Nice on the southern coast of France that also has the GGC thanks to its sustainable practices such as the use of ecological cleaning products, shampoo and shower gels without packaging and bicycles available for the customers usage.

From here we began to investigate the options of hospitality business companies that we can find around the world. Going from a simple hotel in a big city, through an apartment in the mountains, to a hotel ship anchored in the port. And from this last point we realized the potential that maritime cargo containers have. A few years ago, we saw in the news reports about people who have remodeled cargo containers and built a tiny home in them. And we thought, why not create a hotel based on these containers and thus reuse and recycle them without damaging the local environment?

2 The analysis of the operational environment and the business idea

2.1 Accommodation concept

Our idea is to create a natural resort/hotel where the rooms are based on cargo containers. Located in the Turku archipelago, more specifically in the city of Naantali or its surroundings, the hotel will welcome tourists who visit the coastal city throughout the year. Thanks to having its own passenger and cargo port, and being 20 minutes from the city of Turku (City of Turku, 2019), it optimizes the transport of cargo containers, and thus minimizes the carbon footprint during the transportation.

Figure 1. Archipelago map and its different road connections

2.2 Operational environment

2.2.1 Evolution of the sector

Currently, worldwide, according to different sources consulted, tourism grew year after year until the COVID-19 crisis began. According to data from the UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) in the annual report for 2017, the latest report published, tourism grew by 7%, compared to 2016. The arrival of international tourists is also mentioned, which reached 1,323 million in 2017 and that 393 million more people traveled internationally between 2008 and 2017. As for Europe, according to UNWTO data, we see that it is the main destination in world tourism with 51% of total trips with 671 million in 2017 (World Tourism Organization, 2018).

According to the Visit Finland report (2020), tourism in Finland continued to grow and foreign overnight stays exceeded 7 million in 2019. Overnight stays increased by more than 201,000 compared to the previous year, so the growth rate was 3%. The months most visited by foreigners are still during summer and winter, leaving the months of April, May, October and November as the weakest.

The archipelago and the coast area had 1.1 million overnight stays in 2019, increasing by 6% with a strong growth in tourists from Scandinavia, the rest of Europe and Asia. 11% of foreign overnight stays in the archipelago occurred during the summer season, compared to 5% during the winter. In terms of travel motivations, in the national territory just under two thirds of the overnight stays abroad were made for leisure purposes. In the archipelago area, the month of July is the one that receives the most overnight stays, although business tourism remains stable throughout the year (Business Finland, 2020).
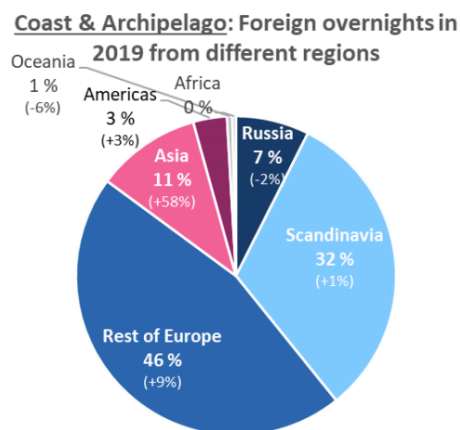

Figure 2. Foreign overnights in 2019 from different regions. (Business Finland, 2020).

2.2.2   Competitors

In Naantali there are quite a variety of accommodation companies such as luxury hotels, cottages, apartments and even tourist farms.

- **Direct competitors:** competitors who compete directly with our hotel.

1. Kultaranta Resort

2. Taattinen Farm

3. Livonsaari Caravan

4. Lomahyppäys - cottages in Rymättylä

5. Naantali Camping

- **Potential competitors**: competitors with the same business idea who are not positioned in a different market area. Information retrieved from

1. Quadrum ski & yoga resort - Georgia

2. Tiny urban escapes - Indianapolis, United States

3. Contain hotel by artikul architects - Czech Republic

4. Flophouze hotel, round top - Texas, United States

- **Future competitors:** potential competitors that are likely to enter our market (upcoming openings).

We do not have any announcement of upcoming openings in the same area where we plan to operate.

2.2.3 SWOT analysis

Table 1. SWOT analysis of our hotel

Strenghts	Weaknesses
- Optimal relationship between quality and price - Facilities adapted to avoid negative impact on the environment - Ease of container transport - Material resources of local origin - Ease of standardization in the construction process - No need for specialized labor	- The containers are quite narrow Need to adapt the business model to the measurements of the containers - Requires reform to be habitable Container maintenance can be expensive
Opportunities	**Threats**
- Ease of business expansion to other parts of Finland and Europe	- Local and national laws that do not allow construction in the desired area

- Part of a niche market in the hospital industry that can grow in the next 5 years - Travelers are looking for new destinations to discover - Finland is in the spotlight The hotel is part of the trip experience	- The culture of cottages in Finland - Multiple competitors in the area - The hotel does not fit into any category - Clients who become more demanding and require more extra services - In case of expansion of the company in Europe the laws may change

2.2.4 Target groups

According to the Hermes Themes magazine article (2017), most generations are to some degree concerned in their impact on the environment. 66% of Millennials say they are willing to pay more for the services of companies that promote positive environmental impact and approximately 80% want to work for companies that are committed to the environment (Hallstrom, 2017). This last point is also attractive to us since we need our employees to have the same values as our company.

We have identified the following target groups:

- Generation X (born between 1961-1981)

- Millennials (born between 1981-1997)

- Generation Z (born between 1997 - mid 2010's)

- Finnish couples

- European couples

2.3 Business idea

Cargo containers are a cost-efficient, versatile and customizable option for recycling. Originally designed to safely transport goods around the world, the durable construction of the container advantages the creation of new and innovative usages for it. Containers are easy to transport and adapt to any type of environment, and have proven to be particularly successful when transformed into different types of accommodation (Sánchez, 2017).
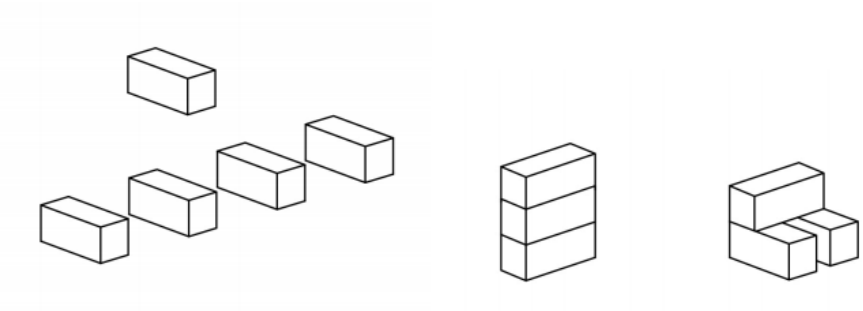
Figure 3. Possible ways to layout the cargo containers

After doing some research, we have found that most of the companies that sell second-hand cargo containers are located in Helsinki, but thanks to the location of our hotel, the connection between the two cities is ideal. We can find Finnish companies such as:

-       Scandic Container: https://www.scandiccontainer.fi/en/
-       Kontti: https://www.kontti.fi/
-       Kingbox: https://kingbox.fi/

In the following link you can find more companies in different ports of Finland, such as Vantaa, Oulu or Kotka. This could be interesting for us if we want to expand the business idea throughout the national territory. https://www.portofhelsinki.fi/en/services-companies/companies-operating-port/container-services

We have opted for choosing cargo containers since it is one of the best options because its size is ideal to host people inside without any discomfort. And, we also reuse and give these pieces another chance in their useful life. The containers that we are going to use are those that measure 20 feet long (6 m x 2.43 m x 2.59 m) and the price of each used container ranges between 2,500€ and 3500€, making it a really good cost-efficient option. Our business idea focuses on the 3 "Rs": recycle, reuse and reduce.

Our hotel is going to be called Woode Hotel and the slogan is "Rethinking your stay". With this slogan we want to homogenize the business idea with the values that it wants to transmit. We want the customers to connect the services we offer to our

brand. When the customers read the word "rethinking" we want them to believe that we are facilitating that their stay is the most ecological and sustainable and thus they do not have to do the mental process themselves of how to do to reduce their carbon foot during their trip. We are doing it for them. They will also have the opportunity to think about other parts of their trip and how they are affecting the environment. They not only have to take into account that the hotel is environmentally friendly but the means of transport and other services they consume. We made the logo look like a box with windows so it reminds them of the cargo containers

Figure 4. Woode logo examples

We will try to locate our hotel in a flat area of the archipelago near the sea. The hotel will consist of different habitable modules placed a few meters between them, leaving enough space for the client's privacy and for outdoor activities. The hotel reception will be located in a different booth from the guest booth.
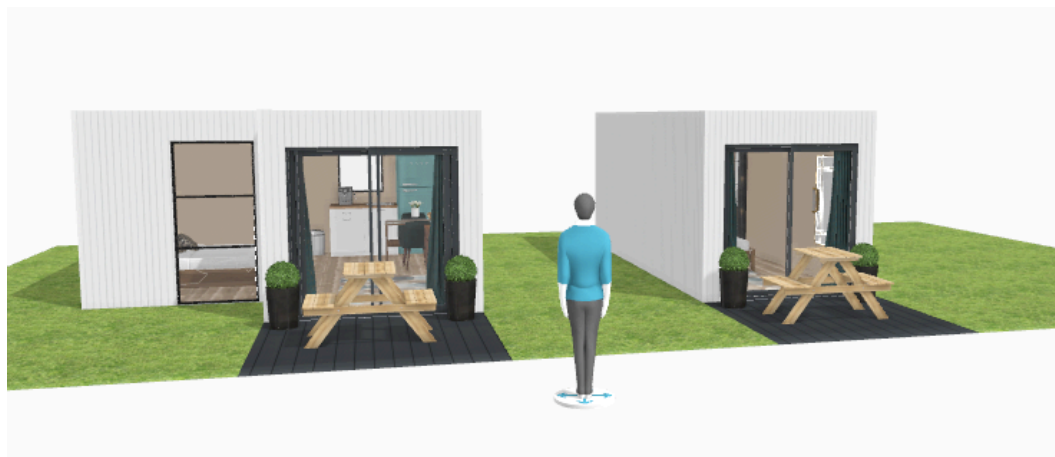
Figure 5. The different types of cabins/rooms arrangement from the outside

There will be two types of cabins / rooms for guests: a basic one made up of a single container and the Premium one made up of two containers. The basic room only has a 12 m2 room and a simple bathroom with shower. The Premium room is more spacious with about 20m2 and has a small kitchenette and a sauna with enough space for 2 people. An extra bed for a child can also be placed in this room.

Figure 6. Basic cabin/room layout example

Figure 7. Premium cabin/room layout example

Figure 8. Reception cabin layout example

3   Accommodation product

3.1   Physical elements

3.1.1   Style and functionality of the rooms

As we have mentioned previously, the hotel will be made up of different areas made from different cargo containers. There will be two types of rooms: the basic and the Premium. Both rooms will have the same type of decoration. We have decided to give it a more adult and formal image because the chosen target groups demand and value a good image of the hotel. It has been proven many times that they decide where to stay in hotels depending on the decoration and its differentiation from other hotels in the same area. They want to get the idea that they have discovered a jewel and thus be able to "show off" on social media (Sader, 2018). We will add design pieces to give more personality to the decoration and thus create a story concept that links the different parts of the hotel and create a homogeneous image, but without leaving the exclusivity feeling.

The colors we have chosen are blue, in all its variants, earth tones and gold. The psychology of color (Hauff 2018) has helped us to choose these colors and thus show

the image that we want to give to our potential clients. Blue brings confidence, responsibility and mentally relaxes. Brown is a good supporting color as it is a sign of structure, protection, and safety. And this can also be found in wood (material that we will use to renew the containers). And finally, gold represents luxury, trust and treasure. That treasure that we talked about before that customers want to discover. This color also brings the idea of abundance so we will try to show that sustainability does not have to go hand in hand with ordinariness.

The most abundant material that we will use for the renovation of the containers will be wood. This material is low-cost, low-tech and sustainable as it is a rapidly renewable resource. The benefits of wood are as follows: Low energy consumption to obtain it, it is recyclable, biodegradable, and has good physical and mechanical properties at the time of renovation (Borsani, 2011).

We will try to find used wood and thus give it another use, either by finding used furniture (renovating and reusing it) or pieces of used wood to build and decorate. We can also get it from a project that is found in almost all regions of Finland called Työpajat. This project consists of teaching working skills to unemployed people and thus making the most of the time acquiring new knowledge. With this strategy we want to contribute to social responsibility and support the local community.

The cabins will also have windows that will help the sunlight to enter and thus save energy as much as possible. And in the winter months, when sunlight isn't as abundant, they'll help customers gaze at the open sky and stars. Clients will have two bicycles located at the door of their cabins, thus we will promote the use of means of transport that benefit the environment.

Basic Room virtual tour (own elaboration) *:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BYAYgalHWctA2dtqIZrNoh8dnBfPg6A8/view?usp=sharing

* If the links do not work clicking on them try to copy paste to the search bar

Premium Room virtual tour (own elaboration):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xZnzrso84fJOJiFxG006_6426mSx7Lte/view?usp=sharing

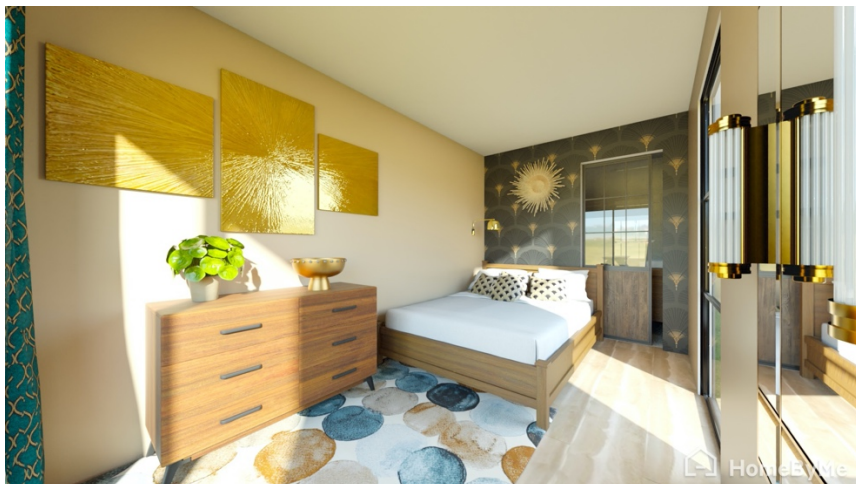*Figure 9. Premium room mock-up (own elaboration)*

Figure 10. Basic room mock-up (own elaboration)

Figure 11. Outside view mock-up (own elaboration)

3.1.2 Lobby and reception

The reception will be in a different booth from the rooms. In it we can find a rest or waiting area for customers, where they can have casual conversations with employees. We want the customer-employee relationship to be casual and for customers to feel at home. There will be a WC available to customers and employees. And a small office for the hotel manager.
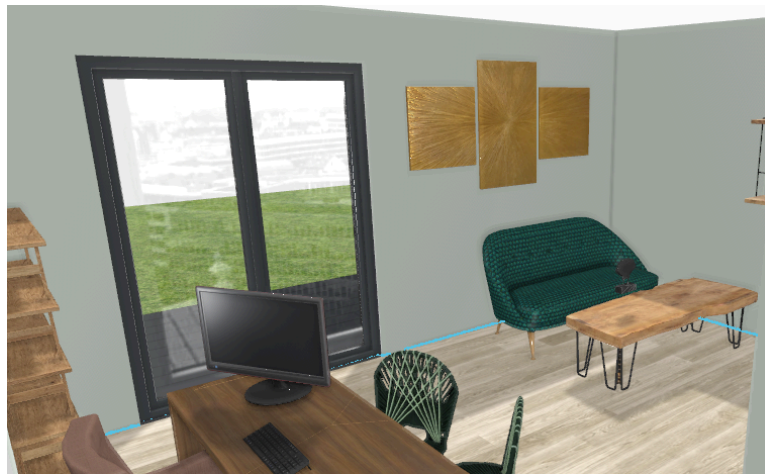
Figure 12. Reception mock-up (own elaboration)

Reception virtual tour (own elaboration):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/15zjWA7Wgx5BHbKF_4bcC_TGAvCaH3aRY/view?usp=sharing

3.1.3 Other facilities

The breakfast area will be placed in another cabin so there is enough room space for the customers to fit. We will also have a huge natural scenery so they can enjoy playing some outdoor sports or chill in the grass.

3.2 Service process in your company

According to Cavagnaro et al. (2018), the tourism experience consists of three main elements: the need to travel, the consummation of the experience itself and its subsequent evaluation. Our services solve certain needs that the client has during

these 3 parts of the trip. The process begins with the need to travel in a more sustainable way and gain new experiences through that idea. Our idea is to host people who are concerned about the environment but can also enjoy tourism as much as they did before. Make things easy for them so they get the impression that contributing to the environment is not difficult.

3.2.1 Customer journey

1. They find us in Booking.com/Expedia/hotels.com
2. They search for information and prices in our official webpage
    o They might go to social media to engage with our content
3. The webpage mentions the app and its benefits – the customer is attracted
4. Download app – they have more points to get a discount if they book directly through us
5. Look about our values and services in the hotel
6. The hotel covers their needs
7. Book a room
8. Confirmation letter e-mail – link to 360 virtual tour with background story and greeting from the staff – effects and visuals appealing for the customer – attracts the attention (available in different languages)
9. Arrival at the hotel
10. They can check in online (app) for a faster process or face to face in reception
11. Check in process in reception is friendly and casual. More like a conversation. Quality time with the customer but without leaving aside the time efficiency
12. Use of our services: bicycles, breakfast and outdoor sports, activities for the environment (cleaning the coast line)
13. Check out: we will give them a report of their stay and show them how much energy they have saved and how much they have reduced their CO_2 emotions during their stay
14. Feedback: send a link in the mail so they get more points if they answer. The best innovative idea given in the feedback form will be executed and they can get free nights and the credits for that idea. The customer is part of the company

3.2.2   Customer journey criticism

- Customers may not want the hotel to contact them many times, that is, they want to be sure of having a confirmed reservation, but without receiving 100 messages before arrival. They can be annoying.

- The app may not function as well as it should.

- During the stay, many things can happen so that the client is upset such as the water heater not working, there is not enough power in the light, that their expectations are not met.

- Clients can ask for additional services that we do not have before arriving and during their stay. This can lead to bad reviews and discontent during the stay.

4   Customer relationship management (CRM)

According to Michael Zunenshine (2021), benefits of using hotel CRM are that it helps to manage customer relationship, centralizes the database, analyzes the guest data, builds customer loyalty and tracks sales.

Michael Zunenshine (2021) states in crm.org, that the best CRM systems for hotels are Revinate, Thryv, Experience hotel, Freshsales, Netsuite, Salesforce, Copper, Guestfolio, For-sight, Guestware, Track hospitality CRM, TravelClick GMS, Quore, Clairvoyix and Navis.

4.1   CRM systems in other hotels

According to Gary Leff (2014), Hilton Hotels use OnQ as their CRM system. It is an IT centrepiece of Hilton's customer relationship management strategy-known as "customers really matter". The strategy is that employees who know guests better and their past experiences in Hilton can engineer constant improvement. The system is intermeshed towards meeting customers' preferences, making their check-in process faster and in the future, it may allow Hilton to sell extra added merchandise such as theatre tickets based on the show availability and interests of guests. Good example of OnQ's mission is that if customer has complained before about an overbook hotel

and then moved to another Hilton hotel, the system will make it less likely in the future that in the similar situation that customer has to "walk" away again. Idea of this system is to satisfy diamond and gold members rather than filling all the rooms. Hilton is now experimenting kiosks which are used in check-in. These kiosks use web services to call information from the CRM system. (Leff, 2014).

Hilton hotel has Hilton Honors loyalty program. Joining this program will provide lowest price to guests, free WIFI, digital check-in and points towards free nights. Hilton Honors loyalty program has many offers such as free nights, more points from specific destinations, early check-ins and late check-outs, credit cards and more points from booking more nights. The points can also be earned from car rentals and Lyft rides. (Hilton Honors).

According to hotel technology news, Radisson has implemented a new CRM platform and mobile application in 2019 for their hotels. It is a cloud-based solution. This new solution is designed to strengthen the franchise-owner touchpoints into a one portal that provides similar processes to achieve operational effectiveness. Aly El-Bassuni, Radisson Hotel Group vice president of Franchise Operations said that "The single-platform solution gives our franchisees the ability to analyze, consolidate and segment system data to personalize the right experience at the right time, enhancing their decision-making capabilities and enabling them to respond more quickly to ever-changing guest expectations." Part of Radisson's CRM is their mobile-first global webpage that gives excellent platform to Radisson Reward members. These are part of Radisson's five-year strategic plan which includes investing into new platforms and technology. (HTN, 2019).

Radisson Rewards program offers for its members: award nights, elite status, members only rate, complimentary water with every stay and points. The reward points can be used for award nights, airline miles, gift cards or prepaid cards. With the membership the guest can also get discounts on food and beverages, room upgrades, early check-ins and late check-outs, free breakfast and room availability guarantee. (Radisson Hotels).

4.2   Loyalty program for our hotel

With our loyalty program the guest can get upgrading to a better room, complimentary services from the hotel (welcome pack, romantic pack, sexy pack), notes from staff, free nights, discounts or free outdoor activities in nature parks, free bike rides and rideshares, free usage of environmentally friendly equipment for activities and free usage of electric car charging.

These can be implemented with other companies by giving them promotion in exchange of free things or activities to the customers. Our loyalty program is based on our app which we have designed just for our company. The idea of our app is that the loyalty program points can be collected and used through this app. The Woode app includes sustainability challenges that our guests can execute during their stay at the hotel. Executing the challenges guests can get extra points and the extra points can be used to our complimentary services. Because our business idea is based on sustainability, we want our loyalty program to support that as well.

4.3   Long-term relationships

Our hotel is one of the most sustainable in Finland. Our goal is to be fully carbon-free in the future. We believe that long-term relationships with our customers can be achieved by having similar values as they do because usually if the customer has same values as a company, they are more likely to stay as a loyal customer. Idea is to focus on our target group to achieve long-term relationships with them. As we stated above, we have quite good complimentary services for our loyal customers so we believe that giving our guests something extra, they would like to come again. Our values are sustainability and good customer service so we want our customers to feel welcome and that they are having the experience of really good customer service. This is why our staff has to be aligned with our values and this can be achieved with monthly training.

According to Hermes Themes, travel industry has changed a lot in last two years. Sustainability is trending right now and all generations seeking it. Even thought, it is a trend right now, it is believed that it will continue amongst tourists because consumer

preferences have changed completely. This page has stated that getting many customers and achieving long-term relationships comes with being eco-friendly company. (Hallstrom, 2017).

This page supports our idea of how we are going to complete long-term relationships with our customers. Because sustainability is trending right now, we think that we can gain customers quite easily.

5 Sustainability and responsibility

Sustainability and responsibility in our hotel would start with re-using the shipping containers and making them into hotel rooms. The containers would be renovating using unemployed people or young people experience. The renovating would be implemented with special program that reduces unemployment in Finland. When the hotel is ready, the program could continue by offering internships and then hiring unemployed people. There would be room energy management systems installed to each room to make sure that empty rooms do not use energy. Energy management system includes environmentally friendly lightning. Electric car recharging place would be installed right next to the hotel.

In our marketing we would promote the sustainable and responsible actions of our hotel. Our hotel will have clear instructions available for guests how to recycle waste and be more sustainable. In our marketing we would also promote nature-based tourism and alternative ways of getting to places. In our marketing we would promote our values such as sustainability, vegetarian and vegan eating and reducing CO2 emissions.

The hotel would have solar panels on its roof which provide energy and heat the water. The roof would have rainwater collecting system so the water can be re-used to flushing toilets. The cleaning department uses only environmentally friendly products and hotel room products such as soaps are replaced with them as well. The hotel restaurant uses only local foods and the customers are always offered a doggy bag to take with them. Leftover food from breakfast is given to foodbanks or homeless

shelters or it is sold in Resq app. With these actions our food waste would be in minimum. Our hotel does not use plastic cups and everything plastic is replaced with ceramic or wooden products. The hotel offers equipment to different outdoor sports that are environmentally friendly.

Our staff is educated yearly so the hotel would achieve its sustainability goals easier and that they can tell the guests about our green choices. The staff is educated also to promote educational tours to our guests.

In our business idea we have implemented app that will make it easier to our guests to use our other services. The idea of this app is to support the use of rideshares, bicycles and electric scooters and reduce our environmental effect. In the app customer can book our bicycles or electric scooters to them, lock and unlock them, use their membership points to pay for these and book tours or equipment. In the app it would be also possible to ask for rideshares or inform others about them and talk with other customers. The app could show how much emissions the guest has reduced by using alternative ways to get to places.

5.1   Development ideas

Development ideas for the future are that when we have enough capital, we would expand our company to other European countries, we would also start to donate money to environmental programs to equalize the emissions our company is producing. As we are using shipping containers as our hotel structure, its low cost will benefit our expansion to other places in Finland or in Europe.

In our future hotels the booking, check-ins etc. would happen fully online. With this we can reduce our costs and the environmental effects. We would continue educating our staff yearly to achieve our sustainability goals in the future as well.

According to Visit Finland, there are certificates Finnish companies can join or accomplish. The certificates are ECEAT Finland label which promotes tourism that supports sustainable land use and the protection of nature, Green Key Ecolabel which is the leading standard for responsibility and sustainability in tourism industry, Keep

the archipelago tidy which is an association whose aim is to keep Finland's coastline and archipelago clean. (Visit Finland, 2021).

These are the certificates we want to accomplish. Keep the archipelago tidy association has programs for cleaning our coastline and archipelago so we want to promote those and get our guests to join as well.

According to Visit Finland, Finnish food products can get these sustainability and organic labels. The labels are Hyvää Suomesta, Finnish Organic Food, EU organic food and 100% Finnish. Idea of the labels are that they are locally produced or sourced and the growing process has been organic and sustainable. (Visit Finland, 2021).

The products our Woode hotel kitchen utilizes only the food products that have some of these labels. To start with we are trying to use as much organic products as we can. In the future, the idea is to find fully local sources or grow our vegetables and such ourselves in the hotels garden. As we are growing our own vegetables, we will create activities for our customers to be involved in the process: growing, re-collecting and watering etc.

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