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**FUTURE NATURE- AND ECOTOURISM**

**Final thesis  
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## ABSTRACT

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<p>The aim of this thesis was to discuss the need of an eco-certificate and what ecotourism is about. This task was suggested to the writer by the tutor teacher and the topic for the thesis was future nature- and ecotourism. Interviews were conducted with six different outdoor companies in Pietarsaari region. The interviews were transcribed and analysed. There were four students from different education fields conducting the interviews in the area of Ostrobothnia and the writer conducted the interviews in the area of Pietarsaari. The commissioner for this study was Kvarnen Samkommun in Kronoby and the contact person for this given task has been Carola Wiik, who is the project leader. The future nature- and eco-tourism project was an EU funded project.</p> <p>The thesis was designed to be two-part. The first part is the theoretical part that creates the theoretical basis for the second part of the research. The purpose of the work was to find out if there is a need for an ecotourism certificate in the area of Ostrobothnia. In the second part which is the research part the writer discussed sustainable development within tourism in Finland. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and afterwards analysed in order to establish if there is a need of an eco-certificate in the area of Ostrobothnia.</p> <p>The theoretical part consists of Future nature, Ecotourism and Ecotourism certification, and in the sub-topics the writer discusses what the topics stand for and what eco-tourism looks like in Finland. Eco certificates in Finland are discussed, and the Nordic countries are discussed briefly.</p> <p>There was a clear interest in ecotourism and the certification, some of the participants was concerned about cost and work load. Based on the gathered material from the interviews, it seems that the lack of information and knowledge showed a little hesitation in the participants. With more information and education there could be a possibility of grown interest.</p>		

### Key words

Certification, Eco certification, Ecotourism, Nature tourism, Tourism, Sustainable tourism.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

An excessive growth has been seen in the field of eco-tourism worldwide in the past years. It affects the whole world and ecotourism as a term grows day by day. The purpose of the thesis was not to teach how to live a more eco-friendly life, but the purpose was to discuss ecotourism and analyse the gathered material. The emphasis was put on ecotourism and certificates. The aim of this thesis was to discuss the need of an eco-certificate and what ecotourism is about. This task was suggested to the writer by the tutor teacher and the topic for the thesis was future nature- and ecotourism which felt like a natural choice for the writer because of the interest in this particular field. There were four students from different education fields conducting the interviews in the area of Ostrobothnia and the writer conducts the interviews in the area of Pietarsaari. The commissioner for this study was Kvarnen Samkommun in Kronoby and the contact person for this given task was Carola Wiik, who is the project leader. The future nature- and ecotourism project is an EU funded project. A meeting was held regarding the task and the list of companies to interview was presented, during the meeting the writer got all information needed for the task, and a contract was signed between the commissioner and the writer.

The aim with this thesis was to establish if there is a need for an eco-tourism certificate in Ostrobothnia. The project aimed to map potential future clients for nature and ecotourism companies in Ostrobothnia and to investigate the conditions for nature and ecotourism in the project area. The thesis was one of four similar theses' written on the same topic, but the studies had been done in other areas in Ostrobothnia. Personal interviews were conducted with six different outdoor companies in the area of Pietarsaari, with the aim of getting to know the companies' needs and wants regarding the eco-certificate.

The thesis was designed to be two-part. The first part is the theoretical part that creates the theoretical basis for the second part of the research. The purpose of the work was to find out if there is a need for an ecotourism certificate in the area of Ostrobothnia. In the second part which is the research part the writer discussed sustainable development within tourism in Finland. The interviews that were recorded were transcribed and afterwards analysed in order to establish if there is a need of an eco-certificate in the area of Ostrobothnia.

The theory part of this study discussed eco-tourism. As the field of eco-tourism is known worldwide the focus was put on the particular fields of what eco-tourism means. The impact people have on nature are discussed, and the chapter after that discusses eco-tourism in general, what it is and how one should act when traveling. The history part discusses the origin of the concept started, when people started to grow a concern for the environment and which big happenings have changed the way of thinking. In the last sub-heading chapter the writer discusses how eco-tourism is seen in Finland, what changes have been made and what will be done in order to keep the flora and fauna there is in Finland.

The writer used a qualitative research method by interviewing seven different outdoor companies in the area of Pietarsaari, Ostrobothnia. Sixteen questions were asked in a personal interview with the company representatives the interview was recorded and afterwards transcribed. Depending on the discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee the time varied between fifteen to fifty minutes. A passion for the topic was noticed which led to a longer interview with some of the participants. The writer got a list of fifteen companies but due to the busy schedules and the lack of interest for the topic, six interviews were completed with a variety of companies, and most of the companies interviewed were outdoor companies that offer paddling, nature walks, fishing in different areas and schooling about nature and its flora and fauna. Some of the companies offer restaurants, meeting spaces, garden, animal care and feed and camping possibilities.

Chapter three discusses certifications, Finnish certifications are explained, how they look and what they contain. The writer wrote overall about the certifications in Nordic countries and the importance of preserving the nature and environment that already exists, there were shortly presented the Nordic countries and the way of looking at eco-tourism and what they are doing to preserve the nature and environment. A variety of books on sustainable development and eco-tourism were explored for the thesis. Reliable internet sources and literature were also used as sources. A very great help in the thesis was provided by the literature of a variety of authors Hemmi, Kalmari, Kelola, Honey and the tourism principles and practices book. The old sources are reliable because the principles, thinking and beliefs have not changed over the years.

## **THE PROJECT**

The commissioner and writer held a meeting regarding the thesis and the subject in August 2017. During the meeting the writer got information about the project and about the commissioner's wishes. There are three other students in Ostrobothnia writing a similar thesis and conducting similar interviews with other outdoor companies. Ostrobothnia is divided into four parts and four different students conduct a similar study in order to establish if there is a need of an eco-tourism certification for companies in Ostrobothnia. The thesis is one part of a bigger project, Future nature and eco-tourism, which is an EU funded project. (Wiik 31.08.2017.)

### **1.1 The commissioner**

Kvarnen Samkommun is an educational organization with three branches: folk high school, citizen institute and art school. The organization and its project staff have solid experience in planning, development, administration, implementation and reporting of EU-funded projects and various types of educational projects via the Education Board. The organization has worked as project owners for e.g. development projects funded through the Leader program and investment projects specializing in project management. (Kvarnen 2018.)

The project coordinator of the organization also has previous experience of tourism projects, e.g. an ecotourism project in 2004, an Interreges financed Community Tourism project in 2006, and the Kokkola-Pietarsaari airport project between 2012 and 2013, which was financed via Mellersta Österbottens Förbund and Österbottens Förbund. (Framtidens natur- och ekoturism 2018.)

### **1.2 The project**

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the development of a rural area that is attractive to tourists, both national and international, in cooperation with the area's development companies, tourist organizations, associations and entrepreneurs. The aim is to investigate the conditions for nature and ecotourism in the project area. In cooperation with the area's tourist organizations and Visit Finland whose task is to promote tourism in Finland, the project aims

to map potential future clients for nature and ecotourism in the project area. (Visit Kristinestad 2018)

The project will map the existing and potential tourism actors with the opportunity and willingness to be part of a joint network for nature and ecotourism in the area. The aim is to define actors and service providers, their current product selection, their product development needs, education, sales and marketing channels and funding focusing on nature and ecotourism. The project thus wishes to identify both existing and potential actors in nature tourism, and, with this project, it is possible to find from those natural tourism actors those who have the prerequisites and interest in developing their ecotourism activities. (Visit Kristinestad 2018.)

In a research which is done within the Landsbygdsutveckling i Skandinavien (LISA) – Framtidens landsbygdsturism i Skandinavien (2012) it is stated that rural tourism is a global trend. In the autumn of 2015 a tourism survey was conducted in the region of Pietarsaari, and the topic of the survey was sustainable and optimal cooperation for the Pietarsaari regions tourism. The survey was on the initiative of the Pietarsaari development company Concordia. In the survey, the need to get a new start for a sustainable and lingering tourism in the Pietarsaari region was studied. This was a new start also due to the fact that the 7 Bridge's Archipelago, which was serving as a marketing channel for tourism in the region, lost their executive leader in autumn 2014. The mapping was primarily a general survey of the situation in the Pietarsaari region. The survey was conducted in the form of a web survey for 230 companies and as 30 deep interviews with companies and associations in the region. The survey was made as a general tourism survey in the area and did not apply to specifics for rural tourism, nature and ecotourism. Concordia's survey included the municipalities of Kronoby, Luoto, Uusikarleby, Pedersöre and the city of Pietarsaari, it does not include the Kokkola region. (Framtidens natur- och ekoturism, 2018.)

In all, it can be noted that in the Pietarsaari region there is a number of players in the tourism sector. These actors are often small companies, associations or organizations engaged in a small-scale business that often is very seasonal. The operations are often run outside of the main work or as an addition to e.g. agricultural operations. Often, there are not enough resources, time or money for product development or marketing. Collaboration between the actors is uncommon and everybody is involved in their own business. No synergies or dynamics arise between the players or within the sector. (Framtidens natur- och ekoturism 2018.)

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The survey has mapped the possibilities for development of nature and eco-tourism in the area of Kokkola, Pietarsaari, Kaustinen, Kristiinankaupunki, Kaskinen and Närpiö. They have mapped the market and defined a profile of potential customers as well as identified their needs and wishes. At the same time, the customer's information search behaviour has been mapped with regard to the targeted marketing, and the project has also mapped existing and potential tourism actors, products and experiences that fit into the customer profile. The need for further education within the fields of development, marketing and finance among the actors within the nature- and ecotourism industry has also been charted. (Framtidens natur- och ekoturism 2018.)

## **2 NATURE IN THE FUTURE**

No one is able to predict the state of the world in the year 2050. Many of the products then in use have not even been invented. In the forestry sector, the research must continue, as well as the development and the commercialization of new products and services. Corporate funding must support research, product development and inventive innovation. It is likely that there will be tens of billions of people in the world in 2050 and the climate change has increased dryness, floods and plant diseases. Energy-efficient and climate-friendly products and materials are likely to be highly sought after. The biodiversity of forests in terms of species and the ecosystem services produced by them are the lifeblood for the survival of the planet. When talking about natural resources, one should keep in mind the question of where the limits of the Earth's carrying capacity go. What is the limit, when the loss of biodiversity turns against people also in economic terms? Or has this limit already been exceeded? Every year, the date that humankind has spent the renewable resources of the year becomes earlier and earlier. Last year it was already on August 20th. If everyone were to spend as much as Europeans, 6 globes would be needed. (Vihreät 2014.)

The most diverse habitats in the world are located in the tropical area where the humid and warm tropical climate has remained virtually unchanged, without being discussed by the ice age, for millennia. The Unsustainable use of forests, forest clearing for fields or wood of one special tree species, global warming, and dryness and forest fires reduce the surface area of diverse tropical habitats. The influence of humans is also reflected in the life of the seas, lakes, rivers and various wetlands. Overfishing, fish farming and the increasing waterborne transport reduce eutrophication or acidification affects species' relationships. Natural exhaustion also has serious economic consequences. The decline in biodiversity weakens the global GDP. The most vulnerable are the poorest countries whose living conditions are based on local multifaceted nature. (Edu 2016.)

### **2.1 Finnish nature**

Finland is the most forest rich country in Europe. Three quarters of the land area is forest. The forest is a resource for Finland in many ways. It provides work, it is a source of renewable

energy, paper and pulp, a treasure trove of natural products and a versatile refreshment opportunity. A special feature of Finnish forests are the rights of every citizen called every man's right. It is rare in the rest of the world that one can freely live in the forests, ski, pick berries, gather mushrooms, hunt, tent, hike and fish, and all this fun is available to people for free. The plentiful forest resources are bound to care for people in the best possible way from the perspective of ecosystems. In the Finnish forests there are 814 endangered species of Finland's 45,000 species. Finland is committed to stopping the biodiversity loss by 2020. (Vihreät 2014.)

The picturesque landscapes accommodate many animal and bird species such as bears, wolves, lynx, eagles, cranes and swans, as well as the world's most unusual seal. Many nature photographers come here to take part in excursions where you can photograph wildlife in its natural surroundings. Excellent places to view wildlife are in one of the 37 national parks that are open to the public all year round. In the wildlife gallery one can see some of the most iconic animals and birds. (Visit Finland 2018.)

Speaking of forests arouses passions because everyone has a personal relationship with the forest in Finland. Sometimes it is disturbing that confrontation is built between forestry and forest protection. Economic forests play an important role in safeguarding recreational nature and biodiversity. Sustainable and good management of forests and the preservation of forest biodiversity is also a condition for the economic exploitation of forests. Finland is strongly involved in the decision making when forest lines are drawn in EU and internationally. It is important that the forestry policy responds to changes and anticipates the future challenges and opportunities. Finnish forest expertise has a worldwide demand for both protection and product development. The forest policy must be built on an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable basis. In drafting a national forestry strategy 2025, it is important, alongside the goal of economic well-being, to set strategic goals for the ecological sustainability of forests as well. (Vihreät 2014.)

## **2.2 Benefits of nature**

People's living environment has a significant impact on their well-being. Studies show that the proximity of nature in the living environment reduces mournfulness and increases happiness. Seeing nature, experiencing it and active living in nature, according to studies, increase the

well-being of people in many ways. The natural well-being effects come quickly and last for a long time. (Mielenterveystalo 2018.)

The exact reasons for the positive impact of nature on the health are unclear, but there are signs that there are beneficial substances in the air a person inhales in nature. It is stated, for example, that people breathe in bacteria that strengthen the digestive system and can break down substances that one could not otherwise turn over, which adds nutrition that benefits a human being both physically and mentally. Additionally, plants and bacteria that live on them will have several essential oils that can help us fight harmful microorganisms. Nature also seems to have a beneficial effect on our stress level. Measures of stress hormones, respiratory distress, heart rate and sweat excretion in subjects suggest that a small natural dose of even a picture of nature can have a calming effect and improve people's ability to perform. It nevertheless seems that there is a connection between nature experiences and a good physical and mental health. That is a really strong argument for a walk in the woods, by the lake or the sea. (Illustrerad vetenskap 2016.)

### 3 ECOTOURISM

The world's most rapidly growing industry is the tourism industry, and this is the industry that enabled 1, 2 billion tourists to travel the world in 2015 (UNWTO, 2017). Tourists become more environmentally conscious and they are even ready to change their behavior in order to see a change in the world. The concept of ecotourism was created as a result of the threats facing the species-rich areas because of deforestation. (TIES 2017.)

Tourism affects the environment and the population in the countries where it is common. Certainly tourism leads to socioeconomic development and generates in principle 200 million jobs worldwide. However, the negative impact of tourism on the native population of the host country and the environment they live in can no longer be ignored. In the worst case, tourism can lead to depletion of natural resources, ruined beaches and wildlife well as a change in the domestic culture of the host country. In order to preserve the environment and the domestic culture of the world's countries, the UN appointed the year 2002 to be the UN Year of Ecotourism. The UN Economic and Social Council refers in its resolution to Agenda 21, adopted by 182 countries in the world in 1992. Agenda 21 sought sustainable development in the tourism sector. By making tourism and travel contribute to the conservation, protection and restoration of the Earth's ecosystems. And to integrate environmental awareness into the tourism industry. The international year of eco-tourism was also to promote the understanding of cultures and to strive to preserve the national culture of tourist countries. The hope was that this in turn would make a valuable contribution to world peace. (UN environment 2018.)

Ecotourism is about sustainable travel, communities and uniting conservations. This indicates that those people that participate, implement and market ecotourism activities are supposed to adopt certain principles regarding ecotourism. The principles for ecotourism are:



FIGURE 1. Principles for ecotourism. (TIES, 2017)

### 3.1 The impact of people on nature and the environment

The global understanding of the world (and also of tourism) requires taking into account both the interaction between the human being and the natural environment. This interaction system can be roughly divided into two parts: how the environment has influenced and influenced the enchantment, and second, how the human being has used and use the environment. Regional sophistication and well-being are clearly divided: developed countries with 20% of the world's population use 80% of the Earth's energy and natural resources. In developing countries, extreme poverty lives on 80% of the global population. Market rules on the use of natural resources have led to the formation of a gap between the rich and poor, but also to the imbalance of ecosystems. (Hemmi 2005, 13-14.)

As a part of one ecosystem, humans have contributed to nature and the environment throughout their lives. The damaging impacts have increased all the time, though in the last couple of decades, the number of international agreements, measured by international organizations and environmental programs has significantly reduced the negative environmental impacts. The United Nations World tourism Organization states that the arrivals of tourist internationally have

increased with an average of 6, 5% every year since 1950 (25 million) to 2005 (806 million). The tourism industry was worth approximately 525 billion dollars in the year 1998, which accounted for 6% of the global export of services and goods. In 2020 it is anticipated that there will be over 1, 6 billion arrivals internationally every year, and it is estimated that approximately 378 million long-haul flight will arrive and about 1,2 million intra-regional arrivals. Tourists carry an extremely big responsibility, as they can force positive change by their choices. Traveling to eco-travel destinations instead of supporting big hotels, can changes the modes of travel to having a lower impact on nature. This is a way for tourists to contribute to real socio-economic benefits in the country they arrive in. (Hemmi 2005, 13-14.)

When discussing the future of tourism, scientists are unanimous: the explosive growth of tourism cannot continue indefinitely. Changes are needed and should be reflected in the choices made by tourists in the business of the industry as well as in local and international laws and agreements. The most important thing of the environment is that the attitude towards traveling changes. Instead of growing demands and individual focus, tourism is returning to softer, humane and close-hearted values. Tourists are aware of the impact of their travel decisions and favour responsible consumption. Locally produced services and long, high quality products replace disposable experiences and goods. (Kalmari & Kelola 2009, 179-181.)

The current type of Western-style middle-class self-evident opportunity to travel is a transient step in human history. It can also happen that virtual tourism reduces the attractiveness of long and long-haul flights, when people no longer need to travel to the other side of the globe to experience something new and inspirational. In the ideal situation, there are also fewer trips and more local and domestic trips. Changes are needed at the state and international level as well. In the near future, sustainable development is part of the international agreements in the field of tourism, which oblige tourism companies to take practical action instead of talk. This is achieved by the EU directive that tourism products sold in the EU must comply with EU environmental, energy efficiency, labour standards and standards. This way, travel companies cannot withdraw from their responsibility by claiming that the resort is subject to loose laws. (Kalmari & Kelola 2009, 179-181.)

### **3.2 What is ecotourism**

Ecotourism today is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" (TIES, 2015). Ecotourism is an activity where authorities, service industries and tourists combine to allow tourists to travel to genuine areas to admire, study and enjoy the existing nature and culture in a way that does not exploit resources but helps to preserve the original environment. In harmony with nature tourism, adventure tourism and farm tourism, higher demands are placed on the actors working in eco-tourism and a joint effort is a must. (Björk 1997, 7.)

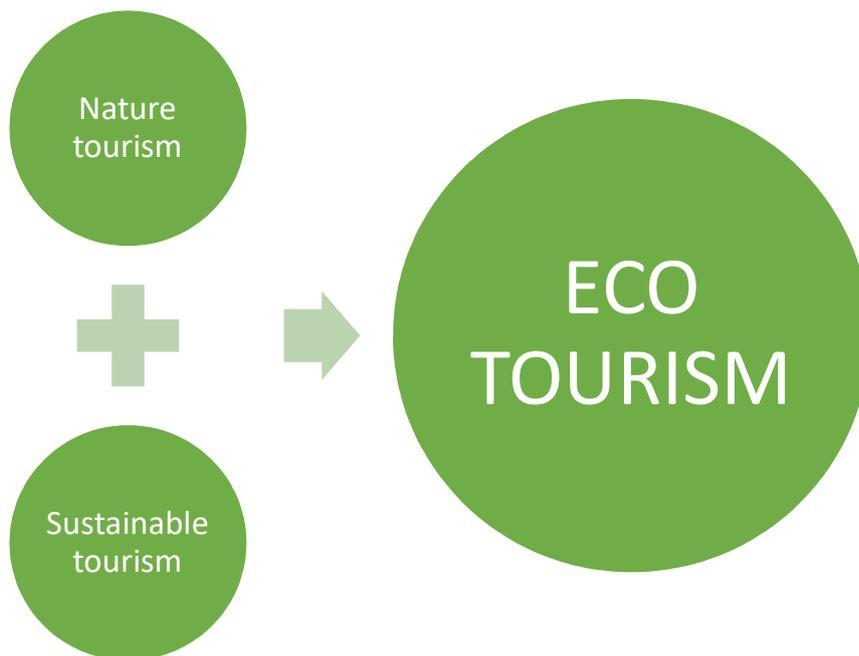


FIGURE 2. How eco-tourism is born.

Kalmari, Kelola (2009, 7) state that the tourism industry accelerates climate change, and 5% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions is caused by tourism. Many of the most vulnerable ecosystems in the world, such as rainforest and coral reefs, have damaged when they have been harnessed relentlessly to the use of tourist masses, and tourism also adds to pollution and littering. Dry areas suffer when water is wasted in hotels, water parks and golf courses. In developing countries, locals have had to move out of the natural parks and hotels have stranded. There is not always a fair compensation for the locals. People living in this area often receive only a small part of the vacationers' money, up to 70% of the tourist budget can stay in rich countries when a traveller purchases flights and insurances and travels using Western companies. (Kalmari, Kelola, 2009, 7)

Many may think that it would be better to stay home, but tourism can also do well. In many idle countries, tourism is a major employer. For example, in Africa, it creates 2-6% of jobs. There are also jobs for women and uneducated people. With tourism, the local infrastructure may be healed; roads are refurbished and services improve. For many endangered wildlife areas, tourism can be a rescue: it encourages local people to guard important nature reserves when they realize that they can live as well. Instead of feeling trees, the trees are kept growing. Forest animals and plants are studied, and species are protected with new enthusiasm. It is not worth stopping tourism, but one should pay attention to the choices made. Tourism, as well as many other industries, is at a crossroads where a responsible and sustainable way is to chosen. (Kalmari, Kelola 2009, 8.)

Ecotourism is growing rapidly, and it is the most powerful sector in the tourism industry, yet it still is the less travelled path. Millions and millions of tourists still travel for beach holidays, traditional cruises or mass tourism holidays during which a misunderstanding of nature may occur. Nature is viewed at theme parks, overcrowded campsites and palm-fringed poolsides. In the past three decades there has been a shift in the paradigm concerning nature tourism and protected area management. Today the people that live close to any protected area are involved and benefited from the effective conservations to find the harmony between nature and people. Nature tourism today means more than just wilderness experiences, as it means also activities for tourists where their impact on nature is minimized and where both the surrounding human population and protected areas are benefited. The shift means more understanding and consciousness within the field of ecotourism, this leads to creativity and experimentation, this often happens at a park or project. Ecotourism as a concept has delivered new practices and principles to the layers of for instance the private sector. Despite of some restrictions today's tourists have a choice of which road they wish to take. (Honey 2008, 443-447.)

### **3.3 Eco tourism history**

The development towards the environmental sustainability principle can be traced back to the 20th century, when the first concern about the planet occurred. This lead to a manifestation of national parks and protection societies e.g. Yellowstone national park in the USA in 1972, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the UK in 1887 and the National trust in the UK in 1894. Towards the late nineteenth century national parks were constructed in commonwealth

countries such as New Zealand, Canada and Australia, and within the UK this development happened in the beginning of the twentieth century. (Fyall, Cooper, Gilbert, Fletcher, Wanhill 2008, 215.)

The 1960's were a facilitating era where one could see a considerable movement towards a major concern for Planet Earth. During the post-war era one could notice a rapid economic development and special shifts with the understanding of the fragile state that Planet Earth was in after the first images of earth from space was seen. In the beginning of the 1970's the first United Nations (UNEP) Conference with the Human Environment (Stockholm 1972) was held. An action plan for the environment was presented and it was based on a program called Earth watch which concerned the global environmental assessment, also environmental management activities and a support system for international and national movement of management and assessment. (Fyall, Cooper, Gilbert, Fletcher, Wanhill 2008, 215.)

According to Kalmari, Kelola, (2009, 10) the environmental problems caused by tourism have been known for a long time. Even though it is difficult to schedule a summary for a certain year, a lapse occurred in 1987, when the so-called Brundtland Commission published our common future report. The Commission had been asked by the UN to consider how to slow-down the nature destruction and its adverse effects on human development. The report introduced the concept of sustainable development, meaning development, which satisfies the needs of the present. Particularly important in the definition is that for the first time human social and economic needs were taken into account alongside the natural carrying capacity. Until then, environmental and nature conservation had been treated separately from the problems of human well-being and the proposed solutions had often been incompatible. (Kalmari, Kelola, 2009, 10.)

The Commission's report drew attention to the link between poverty and environmental problems, and it was felt that economic growth is often based on the unsustainable use of natural resources. In addition, it was found that environmental problems jeopardize political stability, as they are very different in different societies. The writers called for renewable energies to be used, poverty reductions and the minimization of industrialization and urbanization. (Kalmari, Kelola, 2009, 10). Hemmi, (2005, 75) states that the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, UNCED in 1992, was a revolutionary meeting whose decisions

were aimed at resolving the environmental and population problems of the Earth, applying then and now. (Hemmi 2005, 75.)

After the Rio Summit, various parties have tried to intensify the general principles of sustainable development, and these principles have also been applied to the development of sustainable tourism. The general principles of sustainable development are similar to the general principles of sustainable tourism. Sustainable development is often defined as social, biological and economical, and these dimensions are linked to each other, which is more apparent in solving the problems of developing countries. A sustainable arrangement is one that remains or remains alive. (Hemmi 2005, 76-77.)

Hemmi (2005, 75) states that the UN Millennium Declaration includes the goal of developing a global partnership. The concept means acting for a more equal world, increasing aid, debt relief and creating a fairer trading and financial system. The use of this concept has become more common and it is intended to replace the term development aid. Ecological (environmental) sustainability requires that each country and company stops the depletion of natural resources and reverse the growth in the number of renewable resources. Likewise, action is not taken to endanger the diversity of nature. Integrating the environment and development into decision-making is important. Biodiversity must be protected as an intrinsic value, but preserving it is also a prerequisite for sustainable development, as many people need products, and functions are dependent on them. The ecological sustainability perspective is therefore based on a natural-looking perspective. Ecologically sustainable development is considered to require a shift from favouring the quantitative development of production to the promotion of qualitative development. (Hemmi 2005, 75.)

### **3.4 Ecotourism in Finland**

Responsible behaviour for the tourism companies in the future will be an increasingly important way to act and make sustainable choices. The most important indicators of sustainability in tourism services are water and energy efficiency, waste management, the use of local products and services, local employment, nurturing cultural heritage and addressing the local population. At a time tourism companies understand the importance of responsible practices for their business and the future of the environment. The importance of the matter is growing at a high rate in Europe. Although the travel decision itself has a direct impact on only 22% of

tourists, compliance with sustainable development principles is expected from tourism services. For 40% of German tourists, it is important for holidays to be ecologically sustainable, resource-saving and environmentally friendly. Responsibility is also closely linked to the clarification of the competitive advantage of Finland's main driving force and the utilization of purity. Finland is committed to the EU's decision to significantly reduce carbon emissions over the coming decades. Low carbon is also an important objective of EU financial instruments and is a key element of the new funding period for the Structural Funds for development projects. Projects to be financed will require measures to promote this. Therefore, tourism should also invest in the development of low-carbon tourism. (Visit Finland 2017.)

Eco-friendliness, socio-cultural and economic responsibility must be reflected in both theory and practice and therefore it is recommended that tourism companies respect the principles of sustainable development in all dimensions. Various types of sustainable development indicators and coaching are available and often also involve certification. Once the criteria have been met, the company will have access to the logo. (Visit Finland, 2017) The goal of sustainable development is to safeguard existing and sustainable development for the coming generations. Finland's national work on sustainable development implements the policies of the United Nations, the European Union, the Arctic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. In Finland, the Sustainable Development Board is responsible for integrating the international goals of sustainable development into the national policy. Finland's goals for sustainable development are set out in the social commitment "Finland we want 2050". Social commitment promotes sustainable development throughout society. In this, the government and administration, together with social actors, commit themselves to promoting sustainable development in all their work and operations. The objectives set out in the commitment will become more concrete with the actions that the different actors of society undertake to promote sustainable development. (Ympäristöministeriö 2016.)

In businesses both moral and legal environmental responsibility exists. Legal responsibility means local, national or international law. Responsibility is based on acceptable practices in the community or industry. No action against moral responsibility has been legally sanctioned, but it can have social consequences. At the general level, environmental responsibility means the responsibility for the ecological environment when key issues are the efficient and cost-effective use of natural resources, water, air and soil protection, safeguarding biodiversity, climate change control and responsibility for the environmental impact of the product's life cycle

and its operation value chains. In practice, environmental responsibility for companies is their own business environmental awareness and influence. The company's environmental responsibility is partly based on legislation set by the authorities and partly on the customer's perspective. Companies need to know which permits the company's operations require, or to which of all the authorities they should be addressed. Companies comply with the Environmental Protection Act obligation to be aware of the environmental requirements that apply to it. (Visit Finland, 2009.)

Environmental issues are extensively applicable to both business and society as a whole. In companies, eco-efficient operations are built into business logic: saving energy and materials also improves financial performance. Customers' needs and a functioning market are an efficient planner for environmental work. To be competitive, the company has to manage its environmental impact in all its operations. In addition to market forces and competition, environmental measures are managed by increasingly heavier regulation and guidance covering all the company's activities. Resource Efficiency is a way for companies to produce competitive products and services so that energy, natural resources and materials are used as economically as possible. This saves both inputs, costs and the environment in parallel. Resource efficiency has also been raised in the EU as a strategic theme, which will have a major impact over the next few years in different policy areas. The guiding principle is life-cycle thinking, whereby the raw material, product and waste policy are also increasingly interconnected. Resource efficiency is best served by encouraging self-directed development of companies to improve their competitiveness. This is also true of the EU's waste policy and regulation, which is currently undergoing revamping. (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto, 2018.)

#### 4 ECOTOURISM CERTIFICATION

Ecolabels or environmental certifications are a testament to the successful environmental work of the company. The eco-labels of tourism do not only bring out environmentally sustainable businesses, but also create goals and guidelines for sustainable activity. Thus environmental work is goal-oriented and long-term. Certificates are also an excellent marketing advantage. Most of the time, they are quite reliable sales pitches without unnecessary green promises. Since many eco labels are also familiar to customers, they offer a customer promise of a company's sustainable environmental work. Different certifications may have very different criteria, and having a mark of approval does not always mean first class environmental activity. For example, the Nordic Ecolabel has very strict criteria, but there are also hundreds of certifications that consumers do not know. (Honey 2002, 78.)

Many of these certifications grant an "eco-label" developed by them for the sole promise, with monitoring the actions taken or future actions. Certification can therefore be done with green laundering. A company is granted a certain certificate when its business meets the criteria of the trademark. The most well-known and trusted certifications are paid and require a significant amount of continuous work even after the sign is issued. Acquiring a certificate is not necessarily a breakthrough, but in today's fierce competition in the tourism industry and the increasing popularity of sustainable tourism, having an eco-label may be of great benefit. Tourism environment certificates are very popular in Europe. Only in Holland there are already 600 Green Key certifications. The popularity of the signs tells about the need to separate and respond to the growing awareness of tourists about the adverse effects of tourism. (Reilunmatkailun yhdistys, 2018.) A certification is one part of complementary activities by which a service, system, or process is evaluated for agreement against a classic standard. (Honey 2002, 78)

Eco tourism certifications in the tourism sector act as an encouragement to boost businesses to accomplish meaningful improvements in their environmental accomplishments. They are voluntary tools that provide a productive complement to formal regulations by the national authorities. Credible eco certificates advertise sustainable consumption patterns by providing accurate and concise facts to consumers in order to help them to identify the services and products which is a good achievement of environmental performance. (Front & Buckley. 2001. 15).

In the past 15 years, the number of certifications for ecotourism has been growing momentarily. A worldwide growth has been seen in the number of certified tourism companies that are setting standards for the approximately 60 companies that are operating in the field today. Nearly all of the certification programmes are national or regional. Most of the certification programmes have this far concentrated on the environmental issues which are a reflection of the priorities in the 1980s and 1990s. (Gössling, Hultman 2006. 64.)

#### 4.1 Certificates in Finland

Green Start is a Finnish responsibility training program tailored to the tourism industry by the Finnish Tourist Board and Haaga-Perho. It is a day-long coaching that gives the business the tools to tell customers about sustainable choices in their business. During training, a pragmatic action plan will be launched to promote environmental issues and accountability. To date, 30 tourism companies have completed coaching. Green Start training is included in Visit Finland's Laatutoni Exclusive level modules or can be ordered for a company as a single training course from Haaga-Perho. The Green Start has the advantage of being tailor-made for tourism and covering all areas of responsibility. It can be run regardless of the Quality Score. Eko-kompassi is an environmental management system suitable for SMEs and public events, and the certificate is used by 50 tourism and restaurant operators, both at events and venues. The certificate contains 10 criteria for the companies and events to commit to. It is based on the international environmental management standards and Nordic systems. Eko-kompassi is currently available in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, Hyvinkää and Tampere. (Visit Finland 2018.)



Figure 3. Eco Tourism Certification logos in Finland. (Visit Finland 2018)

The Green Destination Quality Net (DQN) have created an environmentally-oriented quality program for tourism centres and tourist areas by matkailun edistämiskeskus, metsähallitus and Haaga-Perho. The program helps to strengthen the image of the tourism industry's responsibility. After getting coaching, the area gets access to the logo. Green DQN has the advantage that it is a custom-tailored coaching program for the client. (Visit Finland, 2018). Joutsenmerkki is voluntary for companies, and companies can apply for it for their products or services that meet the criteria. Nordic Ecolabelling has developed criteria for about 60 different product groups. The criteria take into account the most significant environmental impacts for each product group throughout the life cycle. The Joutsenmerkki Label aims to promote sustainable development, which is pursued step by step. This means that the Joutsen criteria will be tightened every 3-5 years. When the criteria are tightened, the license holders have to retrieve the character again. For this reason, the number of products with Joutsenmerkki on the market varies annually. (Ympäristömerkintä, 2018). The Finnish Organic Tourism Association ECEAT (European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism) promotes and develops ecologically sustainable tourism that supports organic farming, natural and environmental protection, sustainable land use, protection of cultural heritage and landscapes and ecological livelihoods in rural areas. Getting a certification is based on the fulfilment of the criteria, and at the moment there are 20 companies in Finland that hold the ECEAT certificate. ECEAT's advantage is that it is an international tourist brand and also includes quality standards. (Visit Finland, 2018).

WWF Green Office is a pragmatic environment management agency. It helps companies reduce their ecological footprint at the workplace and reduce their carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions. Workplaces have countless opportunities to promote sustainable development and make environmentally friendly solutions. The WWF Green Office environment system is a great help for this job. It is suitable for small and large offices, both in companies and public administrations or organizations. The certificate inspires and involves the staff in everyday tourism, improve environmental awareness, and achieve cost savings. The power of the program lies in the community: every employee can influence the office's eco-logical footprint. (WWF Finland, 2018). The Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is a voluntary environmental management system for all businesses and organizations. The environmental management system is an organization's environmental management tool that identifies the indirect and immediate environmental impacts of its operations, products and services and works systematically to reduce emissions and waste as well as energy and resource consumption. As a

result, the environmental impact of the operation is reduced and the costs are reduced. (Ympäristöhallinto 2018.)

#### 4.2 Certificates in Nordic countries

Tourism in the Nordic countries has increased sharply over the last decade, and it is believed to increase further in the coming decades. Tourism has become an important employment and it constitutes an important part of the countries' foreign exchange earnings. There is a major difference in how many tourists come to the different Nordic countries. Comparison between different countries is difficult because there is no or only limited statistics on travellers. Norway, Sweden and Finland have, for example, no statistics that provide a comprehensive overview of the number of foreign tourists coming to the countries. For Iceland, however, there are such statistics. To Iceland, about 200,000 foreign tourists came in 1996, which is an increase of about 50% in ten years. Surveys in Norway show that 3.1 million foreign tourists came in 1995 and the increase has been around 20% in the last decade. (Saeprsdottir, Gisladdottir, Grönning-saeter, Zettersten, Högmänder, 1998, 65)

### NORDIC COUNTRIES



### MOST SUSTAINABLE

FIGURE 4. The Nordic countries (Matthews 2016)

It is probably best to use the overnight statistics when comparing the extent of tourism in the Nordic countries. The number of guest days has been recorded in hotels and other places of accommodation such as hostels, camping and the largest mountain cabins. There is a signifi-

cant difference between the number of registered domestic and foreign tourists staying overnight in the Nordic countries. Only in Iceland there are more stays by foreigners than domestic tourists in different accommodation facilities. Most foreigners staying in Nordic countries are Europeans. Scandinavians is the largest group that comes to each country. Of individual nations, German travellers are the largest group in Iceland, Norway and Sweden, but in Finland there are mostly Swedish tourists. (Saeprsdottir, Gisladdottir, Grönningsaeter, Zettersten, Högmänder, 1998, 65)

The fact that the market for green travellers is perceived to be great, that tourism sees opportunities for sustainable tourism and that the Nordic countries intend to invest in green growth means that sustainable tourism will form an important part of the plans for the future of the Nordic region. There is a long tradition in the Nordic countries in promoting sustainable development. Successfully and actively the Nordic countries have worked on several different international and national forums to avoid unsustainable exploitation and scarcity of natural resources. The Nordic countries have also been able to recognize and implement a number of innovative partnerships that utilize the private sector's expertise and business potential for a transition to more sustainable product patterns and consumption. (Hållbarhetscertifiering av turistdestinationer 2012.)

Nordic nature is an important reason for visiting among foreign tourists. Glaciers and fjords are some of the many natural phenomena that attract tourists to Norway. Volcanos, hot springs, highlands and other geological phenomena attract tourists to Island. Finland is known as the country with thousands of lakes and wilderness in Lapland, and in Sweden tourists visit the mountains, forests and nature's shores. (Hållbarhetscertifiering av turistdestinationer 2012) All the Nordic countries - Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland - have high competitiveness in the travel and tourism industry. Their primary strength lies in their business-friendly policies and, above all, their environmental rules. For example, Norway as the first country in Europe has adopted the National Geographic Society's principles for geotourism, and has thereby made a long-term commitment as a destination to eco and cultural tourism. The strict security rules, the high level of health and hygiene, good air and land connections, and a strong tourism infrastructure attract more and more tourists to the regions. (Cicion 2007.)

#### **4.2.1 Sweden**

Nature's best is a quality label that brings together the best natural arrangements in Sweden based on responsible experience tourism, where the organizer cares a little extra about nature, the neighbourhoods, the environment and also the visitors. Behind the label stands the Swedish Ecotourism Association as the principal, together with Visit Sweden, with the common goal of promoting eco-tourism in Sweden. Quality labelling should also actively contribute to improving the protection of unique natural and cultural values, and with strict environmental requirements, ecotourism's environmental impact must be minimized. Nature's Best was launched at the beginning of the UN International Ecotourism Year 2002. The new quality label of Swedish eco-tourism promptly attracted much interest among hundreds of tourism contractors around the country. Quality controls are ongoing and are largely based on customer reactions. (Svenska Turismföreningen 2018.)



FIGURE 5. The six principles for Nature's best. (Svenska Turismföreningen, 2018)

Visit Sweden is the communications company for Sweden. They promote Swedish destinations and experiences with the aim of increasing people's desire to travel there. They have received the assignment from the state and the Swedish visiting industry, and they have two clear focuses: to market the brand Sweden internationally and to promote Swedish destinations and

experiences abroad. The Swedish government has given Visit Sweden extra resources to increase people's awareness of Sweden as a natural destination in the global market. The increased effort started in 2015 and has been established in the Sustainable Nature and Eco-tourism program in rural areas. (Visit Sweden 2017.)

Visit Sweden's vision is that Sweden will be one of the three main sustainable natural destinations for the target group after 2019. To achieve this, Sweden's position in sustainable natural tourism will be strengthened, the target groups will be inspired and committed by Sweden as a sustainable nature destination and it will be easy for the target groups to plan and book nature experiences in Sweden. Many foreign visitors are fascinated by the Swedes' proximity to nature, and in Sweden tourists can devote themselves to nature experiences in the same way as the Swedes themselves. (Visit Sweden 2017.)

#### **4.2.2 Norway**

A dramatic and magnificent scenery stretches from beaches and rock formations to the south through large mountain areas in central Norway to the midnight sun at Nordkap. Norway has vast mountain and forest areas and vast expanses, which means that only about three percent of the surface is cultivable land. Norway has about 5.2 million inhabitants, of whom about 1.2 million live in and around the capital Oslo. (Nordiska rådet 2018.)

Norway is a country of natural beauty, glaciers, crystal clear fjords, mountains and dramatic waterfalls. Conserving the communities, landscapes and their way of life is vital for visitors and locals alike. The philosophy of Norway's is that preservation is everyone's responsibility. Enjoying the outdoors and nature is much considered a national pastime, and this is a reflection of the Norwegian attitude towards the use of wilderness and the conservation. The Norwegian mainland consists largely of protected areas and national parks. The Norwegian have access to the protected areas and wilderness, even in the vulnerable and sensitive areas. Back in history an age-old tradition was based on the principles of sustainability. Later on the Norwegians put those principles down in law. Even today, the tradition is still based on the lasting respect for the wilderness and nature that is widespread in Norway. (Visit Norway 2018.)

The wear and tear on both the nature and people have remarkably grown in the last years but the knowledge of eco-tourism and importance of nature have grown exceptionally in the last

decade. For the Norwegians to protect businesses, communities, landscapes and their nature, they had to take in to consideration: What the people of Norway appreciate experiencing today, they hope to preserve for future generations. It is this generation's responsibility to do everything possible for the generations to come so they can experience the same things as now. In Norway many companies follow the principles for sustainable, but to get a certification is difficult, it is an honor for the companies' to receive a certification. Companies need to demonstrate for years and years their lasting commitment to give the best possible knowledge to the guest, and commit to keep the negative impact of tourism and tourists to a minimum. Also, the companies and destinations need to continually work for improving their business practices and the connection with the local communities following the principles of sustainability (Visit Norway 2018.)

### **4.2.3 Iceland**

The island of Iceland is located, with its volcanos, warm springs and dramatic nature in the northern part of the Atlantic\*. The island is two and a half times as big as Denmark, but just over one percent of the country is cultivable. Most of the landscape consists of large lava areas and many glaciers. The country has only 338 349 inhabitants and more than half of them live in and around the capital Reykjavik. (Nordiska rådet, 2018) Iceland attracts great nature and outdoor adventure among volcanoes, glaciers and hot springs. Since 2010, the number of visitors has increased from 500,000 to over two million visitors per year in 2017. Tourism is today the largest industry and employs 25,000 people of the country's 337,000 inhabitants. Following the crisis in 2010, due to the ash cloud and other factors, tourism is a welcome addition to the country, but increased tourism also poses major challenges. (Reform Travel 2018.)

Iceland's first lady, Eliza Jean Reid, has recently been appointed UN Ambassador for Sustainable Tourism and the Global Objectives. Together with Inga Hlín Pálsdóttir from Promote Iceland, they participated in a workshop for the Swedish tourism industry, which highlighted the importance of sustainable tourism in the Icelandic tourism industry. Iceland has seen increased tourism in the recent years and today tourism is the most important industry for the country. It involves many opportunities but also major challenges. Issues they are wrestling with are much about the infrastructure, how to conserve nature and how to avoid overtourism. In order to safeguard Iceland's nature and cultural heritage, Iceland has launched several initiatives to teach and encourage its visitors to visit Iceland with respect. One example is "The Icelandic Pledge",

an 8-point declaration that travellers commit to respect when visiting the island. At present, around 30,000 of the over two million visitors have signed the promise. In order to counter overtourism, the country is also actively promoting Iceland as a year-round destination and introducing visitors to places less known than the most common attractions such as the Blue Lagoon, Þingvellir National Park and the Gullfoss waterfalls. (Reform Travel 2018)

Iceland is a country with sharp contrasts. With an abundance of mountains, volcanoes, glaciers, rivers, lakes and caves, it is said to be a paradise for the outdoors lover. It is also a very creative island with the writing and music being an integral part of life in the country and recently, several award-winning cooks have been on the island and offered menus based on local produce. Although Iceland as a destination emphasizes the importance of sustainability and it is a major part of the country's DNA, it does not mean that the country is one hundred percent sustainable or that all actors working in tourism are. They welcome the initiative and look forward to following developments. (Reform Travel 2018.)

Iceland tourism has skyrocketed in recent years, partly due to a currency cut and partly because several scenes of the tv series Game of Thrones have been recorded there. In 2010, altogether 490,000 tourists visited Iceland, and this year the estimated amount is 2.3 million. The country is now in 2018 considering raising taxes in the tourism sector and limiting the number of tourists to protect their natural heritage. A tax increase would mean an increase in the already expensive trip to the country. As an alternative to raising taxes, the coalition government is considering to require bus companies and tour operators to purchase a special license or raise the already existing fee in hotel rooms. If taxes were raised, the money would be used to build better infrastructure and protect the natural sights. (Holmberg-Dahl 2017.)

#### **4.2.4 Denmark**

Denmark is described as a densely populated and small country, when comparing to other Scandinavian countries, and Denmark has a strong farmed cultural landscape. The country has a population density of 126 citizens per square kilometre. With a coastline of 7500 square kilometres, the country has no wide range of natural areas, but only planted forest which covers 12% of the country. In addition, Denmark has not got the allemannsret which is found in the other Scandinavian countries, but all publicly and privately owned field, all beaches and natural areas are openly accessible, with some regulatory limits. In the context, Denmark differs from

other Scandinavian countries, and their ecotourism is slightly different. (Travel and Tour world 2018.) Allemannsret is a right for all people to travel over private land in the countryside, to temporarily stay there and, for example, pick berries, mushrooms and some other plants. The right follows demands for consideration and caution against nature and wildlife, against land-owners and against other people. (GeoNord 2018.)

If the traveller prefers eco certified hotels, organic food and sustainable transportation such as electric busses or cycling, then Denmark could be a good option. The Danish people care not only about their sustainable way of living but they also hold a world record when it comes to organic food, as they are the country that consumes the largest amount of organic food. Especially Copenhagen offers a wide range of organic food options and is a forerunner in this field. (Travel and Tour world 2018.)

Cleverly and thoughtfully planned public spaces, waterfronts, squares and parks make it possible to join in different activities for example picnics, ball games, swimming and sunbathing. In bigger cities like Aalborg, Aarhus and Copenhagen one can enjoy social events, performances and plays, and the cities ensure that these happenings can take place even in the smallest of corners in their cities. The easiest way for a tourist to get around the cities like locals is to rent a bike, which can be done at most hotels. The bike is a key accessory for the Danish people and cycling is an easy way to get around the narrow streets in the cities. (Travel and Tour world 2018.)

The Guardian reported in 2015 that Denmark is increasing their wind power by 3% and thus taking the leading position in the world within the field of wind power. Denmark gets 42% of their electricity from their wind turbines. Wind turbines in Western Denmark generate 55% of the country's electricity. In 2016 Denmark met all of their electricity demands from their renewables. In July 2016 Denmark met its own domestic power demand and they exported an amount of 40% of their power abroad. Denmark set a goal in 2016 of reaching the goal of producing half of its electricity with wind by 2050, and they are already halfway. (Matthews, 2016.)

## **5 RESEARCH BASED METHOD**

According to Kovalainen and Eriksson (2008, 3), to understand the particular characteristics of qualitative research and writing it is beneficial for the writer to think and write like a novelist. The writer can think of the writing process as a story: the story has to have a beginning, a start that sets the core for the upcoming writings. There are divided opinions about the credibility when writing a qualitative study. In order to write a credible qualitative study, the researcher need as the author of the research to build the scene in the story to help the reader understand the setting of where the data used to live.

### **5.1 Qualitative method**

Qualitative research is mostly described in comparison to the quantitative research. It is easy to compare Quantitative and qualitative research but hard to define them. To provide a reflective and critical perspective, qualitative research can be used, as this method provides a reliable view of the process of businesses and the social world of it. It is stated that an essential part for researchers is to recognize that there is a variety of different quantitative research procedures. (Eriksson Kovalainen 2008, 3-4.)

Qualitative research is not a research style tied to a certain discipline or just one kind of a way to explore. Qualitative studies are structured in three parts: theory based on previous studies on the subject and theories formulated on these, empirical data and the researcher's conclusions and thinking. Qualitative research is typically characterized by certain sorting methods such as interviews, letters, observation and consideration of the aspects to be studied. In addition, factors such as theoretical or arbitrary sampling, non-hypothesis and story histories are typical of qualitative study. (Saaranen-Kauppinen Puusniekka, 2006.)

### **5.2 The research process**

The theory of this Bachelor's thesis began in the autumn of 2017 and qualitative research was chosen as a research method on account of interviews being conducted. The topic was examined by collecting reliable and diverse sources as well as studying various books and articles

on the Internet. In August 2017, a question frame (Appendix 1 & 2) was created, and the companies were contacted. A list of fifteen different companies was given by the commissioner and the writer started to contact the companies. The strategy was to confirm fifteen interviews but unfortunately due to little interest by the company's and busy schedules the writer did not succeed. However for the purpose of the research six interviews was needed in order to have material to analyse. Six different companies were interested participating in the study and they were interviewed. In Ostrobothnia there are quite many outdoor companies so there was no problem finding them. However, entrepreneurs have a hectic and busy life during the merger process, so everyone did not have the time to schedule an interview.

The interviews were conducted between July and August 2017 in Pietarsaari and Ähtävä, which is located about 22 kilometres outside of Pietarsaari. All interviews were conducted face to face. The interviews were recorded so that the results could be documented in the research section. All interviewees were able to answer the questions easily, so discussions with the interviewees were a meaningful part of the process. The interviews lasted from twenty minutes to sixty minutes, and with many of the participant the discussion continued after the interview without and recorder. The length of the interviews was just right, because a time limit had to be withdrawn. After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed.

### **5.3 Validity and reliability of the study**

Validity and reliability measure how reliable a research is. Reliability in itself means the reliability of the study. Validity and reliability are the relative components in quantitative research, but they have also been used in qualitative terms slightly modified. Unreliability is caused by occasional disturbances and variation in the measurement event. Validity means the validity of the measurement, i.e. the extent to which the meter measures what is considered to be measured. It is necessary to illustrate the phenomenon that one wants to measure as openly as possible. The same inaccuracy is repeated when the same meter is used. (Saaranen-Kauppinen Puusniekka, 2006.)

There are different ways of dealing with both ethics and reliability in the field literature. In other traditions, research ethics will be taken into account when examining certain research-ethical provisions. It is agreed that the reliability of the study is a key issue for reporting on research.

At the same time it is sensible to show that we have many disagreements. (Tuomi Sarajärvi, 2017.)

The significance of theory in qualitative research is obvious and theory is therefore necessarily needed. The answer to the terms theory and theoretical meaning of the term is very problematic as the terms are used in many ways and refer to many phenomena (Tuomi, Sarajärvi, 2017).

## 6 THE RESULTS

This chapter describes the persons who have been interviewed for the thesis (6.1). The companies are shortly described with basic info about the companies'. In the following chapters one can find the results of the interviews, divided into three sections. In the first section company information is described (6.2), in the next section sustainability and eco-tourism is discussed (6.3) and in the third section the results of quality certification and company development is described (6.3)

### 6.1 The companies

The first company interviewed in the late August 2017 was Ess Nature, and the owner of the company is Mattias Kanckos. Ess Nature is a nature company offering diverse services in nature, nature tourism, and nature conservation and consulting. The company strives to provide its customers with high quality experiences especially in the Ähtvånjoki and surrounding areas. The owner and sole employee of Ess Nature is Mattias Kanckos, he was born in Ähtävä. Ähtävä is a small village on the plains of Ostrobothnia, where the journey to the forest and the river is short. Even as a child the owner spent much time in the forest and his interest in nature never faded, not even during his puberty and it has been growing all the time. His interest in nature was inspired by the interest of his parents, but especially by his grandmother, who took him out on numerous fishing and nature hikes. Biology studies were a natural choice for him after high school and military service, but life in a "big city" such as Turku was particularly difficult for a son of nature and after his master's degree in 2003, he immediately moved back to Ähtävä. (Kanckos, 2017.)

The company	Name of the interviewee, position	Date of the interview
Ess nature	Mattias Kanckos	23.08.2017
Gulf Stream Guiding	Trey Howard, owner	05.05.2017
Saaristomatkailu	Jorma Koivuniemi, owner	04.09.2017
Nanoq	Pertti Kronqvist, employee	05.09.2017
NatVenture	Camilla Sandström, owner	10.05.2017
Rosenlund Trädgård	Marika Kjellman, employee	11.09.2017

TABLE 1. Presenting the companies

The second interview was held with Howard. Their business was developed out of a very deep love for the nature and out-doors, the challenged and personal growth that it enables. The company's main owner Tray Howard is the main guide, and the other owner Pernilla Howard is his wife and she participates when possible. Pernilla Howard works as a teacher which also gave them the idea of offering school programs that offer classes for all ages, team building, hiking, regional history, orientation, local flora and fauna and more. They also offer work programs which have the same idea and structure as the school program, and all group sizes are welcome. Gulf Stream Guiding also offers recreational programs where they cooperate with an Alaveteli based company called Emmes retreat. They arrange package deals including hikes, yoga, kayaking and sauna, and the participants have the possibility to stay overnight in one of the tree houses at Emmes retreat. The company is based in Pietarsaari. (Howard, 2017.)

The next interviewee was Jorma Koivuniemi, who runs and is the sole owner of Saaristomat-kailu. The company's main focus lies on fishing experiences. The travels are directed to the beautiful archipelago and sea areas of Pietarsaari, Luoto and Kokkola. The customers explain their desires and the company and customer plan the trip together in order to get the best possible experience. Koivuniemi offers swimming, fly fishing, jogging, snorkelling, and even fishing with a professional fisherman's fishing gear, everything according to the customer's wishes. In the area it is possible to catch salmon, trout, pike and perch. The company is located in Pietarsaari. (Koivuniemi, 2017.)

The fourth interview was held in the beginning of September with Pertti Kronqvist who is a long time worker at Nanoq. At Nanoq, one can explore the habitants of the Arctic, the traditions and their cultures. One will also hear exciting stories of expeditions in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. In the museum area one can explore the buildings, all of which have their own stories. The founder and director of the museum, Pentti Kronqvist, was born in 1938. He spent his childhood in Pietarsaari in the area around Fäboda, in the same place where the museum is built. Even as a small boy he was fascinated by the icebergs and the ice springs of the Gulf of Bothnia. Over the years, Kronqvist has made several trips to Greenland to visit Eskimo friends from his travels. He has held exhibitions about the Thule Eskimos in Finland, Scandinavia, Germany, Italy and France. Kronqvist and the Nanoq Museum have won many honour awards and medals from different organizations. Among other things, he is a member of the Finnish Arctic Club and Finland-Greenland Association. (Kronqvist 2017.)

The fifth interview was held with Camilla Sandström, who is the driving spirit in a mid-sized company called NatVenture. Sandström is the one who works full time and develops all the company's services. Jesper Holmstedt works part-time as a helping hand when needed. NatVenture offers rentals of bikes, skates, tents and skis, and they also offer hikes, recreations and ski-tours. (NatVenture, 2017)

In the sixth interview Marika Kjellman was interviewed. Kjellman used to work for the Aspegrens foundation that runs Roselunds trädgård. Rosenlund's Trädgård is a historic and valuable place suited for today's stressed humans. The farmhouse hosts a high class lunch and reservation restaurant all year round, as well as dining and meeting rooms. The unique interior and courtyard environment offers a relaxing and peaceful atmosphere for all kind of events. Rosenlunds Trädgård is laid out in the style of a symmetrical garden from the Baroque era. The garden is known all around Finland and have received several awards. The area is open for everybody all year around. (Kjellman, 2017.)

## 6.2 Company information

In the first question that concentrated on what services the companies offer the answers varied slightly. Koivuniemi offers fishing trips and concentrates mostly on everything related fishing, and he also acts as a boat taxi during summer. Kanckos, Sandström and Howard all offer similar services: hiking, canoeing, biking, survival courses, cross country skiing and camping. Both Sandström and Howard are educated wilderness guides.

I am a wilderness guide so we offer survival courses, cooperation training, canoeing, winter tours, my wife and I strive to keep the services we offer as educational as possible. (Howard 2017.)

When asking why the participants started their company there could be seen a strong passion in every answer, and all the participants had the same answer of loving the nature. The third question aimed at finding out how long they have been active in the industry. The younger generation Sandström and Howard had started their companies in the last decade whereas the older generation has been active for over 20 years. The representative of The Rosenlund Trädgård had been working for one year within this field but had much experience from other fields of work. When asking how many employees the companies has, everyone's answer was

the same, one employee, and the employee is the owner of the company. Howard, Kanckos, Koivuniemi, Sandström have a partner owner that can help from time to time. When asking which season in their main season and when their opening hours, there was a variety of answers. Kjellman, and Kronkvist, both work for associations and, they are basically open all year around but both Nanoq and Rosenlund Trädgårds have their main seasons in summer. When asking if the company was the participant's main work, everyone answered quite similarly, as most of the participants worked full-time. However, Koivuniemi and Howard work part-time.

Avocation, the main work takes so much time that fishing will remain very much on a hobby basis, there is not enough time. (Koivuniemi 2017.)

Asking which their main target groups are, all of the participants thought the same, Pietarsaari is a small town so when work is offered one has to take it. Howard, Sandström and Kanckos concentrate much on school classes and other companies, often taking their customer for outdoor experiences in Ostrobothnia. The answers varied quite much when asking how many visitors the companies have on an average. Both Kronkvist and Kjellman found it hard to estimate how many visitors they have because of the high and low season and a rush of customers during their high season, but an estimation of 80-300 customers was given.

Over the past year, I have worked with at least 250 people, but it depends entirely on the fact that if we have school classes and the figures can rise rapidly. I would say 250-350 per year. (Howard 2017.)

### **6.3 Sustainability and ecotourism**

In the first question the interviewees were asked if the companies take into account the principles of sustainable tourism in their daily tasks. Half of the participants were very familiar and passionate with the subject, the other half was very much in the beginning of pursuing a more sustainable way of working but still was aware of the topic. In the next question the interviewees were asked about how the companies could be more sustainable in their daily work. Everyone was very aware of what changes they would prefer to do, and in the end it was all about costs and profitability. All the participants strive very much to keep the environment clean and tidy. There was clearly a desire to reduce plastic usage and many mentioned that it feels hypocritical to have such a big passion for wildlife and outdoor tourism and still use plastic forks

and plates when for example eating. All the participants agreed that they will strive to skip plastic and find a more sustainable solution.

There are small things that I could change, the first thing I think of is when you have food settings, then you usually use one-time plates and cutlery. This should change. (Kanckos 2017.)

All the participants knew something about ecotourism that was asked about in the third question, and the interviewees agreed on knowing something but not enough about the subject. So the answers for the question was very short. In the fourth question they were asked about the future within ecotourism, what challenges and obstacles there are and what kinds of possibilities and positive effects the participants could see. All the participants agreed that the future looks positive for ecotourism.

Unfortunately, I do not have much knowledge in the field but I am familiar with the word. Was for example recently in Costa Rica on an eco-tourism hike in the rainforest, the principle was to hike through the jungle but not on foot, we went zip-lining through to leave as little footprints as possible, this I thought was brilliant.. (Howard 2017.)

Certainly, we must stick with nature, because if we oppose it, it strikes back. The same goes for if you go on an expedition and you defy nature, then you go under pretty fast. We should live on the conditions of nature. (Kronqvist 2017.)

Kanckos (2017) stated that tourism is a sensitive industry in the sense that the industry needs people. However, I think it is more common for people to move around these days and to live or work in an area for a long time, not just on a short trip. Try out how life is elsewhere or even move to another country for some time. Jorma Koivuniemi (2017) agreed on the matter, and stated that the importance of ecotourism will grow, and if one takes a look at the great tourist destinations, local people do not like the amount of tourist coming and going every year. Things should be arranged so that there are as few environmental and local disadvantages as possible. Sandström (2017) stated that that ecotourism and environmental care will be more significant in the future, as travellers will see a change in nature and destinations and realize it is time to change.

#### **6.4 Quality certification and company development**

When asking if there was a need, plan or interest in certificating the company or product, the interviewees were worried about the costs and they had mixed feelings about the topic. Howard stated that for marketing reasons and to get a stamp for good and high quality services it would be very good, he strive to give as good quality services as possible every time we work. He and his wife takes pride in that. Kjellman and Sandström agreed that a certification is always good for the company, and it gives a sense of value and quality, something to be proud of.

In a way I have a need, but I have chosen for the moment not to get into this, because as it is now I am over worked. Should I invest in tourism even more, then I would need to hire a person more and it is very difficult to get the first few years to be profitable after hiring another person. It feels silly to say that you do not want to grow as a business, but I feel that I, as self-employed have so much freedom over my working hours. And that freedom is usually limited if another person is hired. (Kanckos 2017.)

There is currently no need, and if it were to be developed, it would be important to be cost-effective and sensible. I see no sense in developing a certificate that only costs a lot but no results are seen. (Koivuniemi 2017.)

Kronqvist stated that Nanoq already has a certification, which he in the end forgot to show to the writer because of the brilliant stories about his travels. There seemed to be interest in the topic but the discussion changed quickly so no clear answer was given. Asking if the participants could see any benefits or possibilities in certificating their company the participants agreed on that it would give value in a marketing sense. Kjellman commented that in Finland there is not a big interest in certifications but looking at for example Germany the interest is completely different, and she stated that Finland should follow. Koivuniemi said that it certainly is a marketing benefit and that it is a positive thing.

The tourism industry is very developed at this stage, there are many opportunities, but if we could have something that made us a bit special, I think this would be fantastic. Foreign tourists would definitely appreciate this and they would more easily find the company if the company had a certificate in this style. This would mean that I would then be part of a larger marketing plan where there would be several companies. It would clearly give a clear added value and possibly raise prices as well. (Howard 2017.)

Kanckos wondered if the locals would appreciate something like this. He agreed on that certification would give more value to the company but at this stage he would not proceed with a process like this. When asking if the participants saw any obstacles or challenges Howard had

a clever answer, he explained how it is to work as a wilderness guide with other wilderness guides. It is like herding cats, all of us are a bit selfish and getting everyone together under one roof can be difficult. They are quite independent and would like to work for themselves, but he felt that they have very good teamwork going on right now, better than ever before during his fifteen years in the industry. Kjellman stated that that costs could be an issue because of funding in the companies. Kronqvist, Sandström, Koivuniemi and Kanckos said that they cannot see any obstacles or challenges.

All the participants agreed when asking if there was interest in additional training in the field of eco-tourism, certifications, financial advice, marketing, counseling and supervision and sales. In the end it is about the money and time.

## 7 THE ANALYSIS

This chapter summarizes the results of the interviews. The aim was to find out whether there is interest in eco-certification and provide feedback for the commissioner on the results of the interviews. The tourism companies that were interviewed in Pietarsaari region are small scale businesses and the communities in the project area are smaller, making Ostrobothnia a more suitable place for small-scale alternative tourism than for mass tourism. The area Ostrobothnia has good potential to be an excellent nature tourism region since there are good opportunities in the area.

All of the companies interviewed have to some extent sustainable activity and take into account sustainable principles to some degree. Many of the participants had good ideas on how to change their principles to be more sustainable. Every one of the participants had quite a sustainable way of living and was aware of the wear and tear when taking customers out on adventures, for example which paths to choose when hiking and where it is okay to put up a tent. As a nature-based entrepreneur there already exists a certain respect for nature. As nature and the sea are very close by in Ostrobothnia, many have grown up knowing the importance of flora and fauna, the nature and ocean, and what kinds of assets they are and how much they have to give. Without a working eco system the world would not go around, and when conducting the interviews, the passion and respect the participants have for the places they visit and work in could be sensed.

The most concrete wishes and dreams concerned the load on nature, the wish of minimizing the wear and tear and how the participants can change more things in their daily working so that their behavior and actions would be respectful for the nature. When talking about nature tourism and eco-tourism it was noticed that the first thoughts when thinking about eco-tourism was the wear and tear on nature and their surroundings. There was a clear concern for what human behavior will do and how nature will look in ten years. Some of the participants mentioned that they prefer to buy fair-trade or organic products if possible, when others preferred to buy local products. With fair-trade and organic food, the buyer usually supports communities and people, not only the food. This is a good choice if one wants to eat cleaner and less sprayed fruits and vegetables. However, a downside with this can be too long transportation routes. Some of the participants mentioned that they rather shop locally and support the farmers and

sellers in their area. Often vegetables and fruits are less sprayed in Finland, but the variety of fruits grown in Finland is not as large as organic and fair-trade transported from abroad. Supporting entrepreneurs locally is beneficial, both for the local communities and for the local economy.

The interviewees were also asked about eco-tourism. The writer sensed a great interest in the subject and had some very interesting discussions about it with most of the participants. Most of the interviewees thought that an eco-certificate would be good for the company but in the end many of them did not feel the need to have one as their company is a small-scale company. Many stated that a certificate would make good marketing for the company but there was a concern about the cost and demands. Many said that they would probably think about it if the price was right and that the demands were not too high. Many say that a certificate would not give much value to their company and that their customers would not care if they had one or not, which the writer finds very interesting because of the interest shown in the subject and because many thought that eco-tourism will grow much more in the future.

When analyzing the material a pattern could be found in them, as one of the reasons for not being interested in a certificate could be that they do not see any benefits in it. The benefits with a certification in this region is too far-fetched and getting a certificate would create more work for the company. All of the companies that participated in the study are small-scale often with 1 or 2 people working full time or part-time and this concerned the participants.

There is a clear interest in the subject of eco-tourism and certification but the participants would need more information, how to do it, where to get info about certifications, eco-tourism and sustainable tourism. Based on the gathered material from the interviews it seems that the lack of information and knowledge showed a little hesitation in the participants. With more information and education there could be a possibility of grown interest. However, at the moment there is a lack of interest and it seems that at this point it is not necessary to create an eco-certificate.

## 8 CONCLUSION

The growth in the tourism sector has been greater than in other sectors in recent years. Despite a certain decline during a crisis, tourism is considered to be an industry that grows the most and creates the most jobs. Research on trends in the tourism industry points to the increased demand for unique experiences, with increasing importance on the tourist's own participation and learning. Local production and local culture will be more important and requirements for minimizing the negative impact of tourism on the environment and society will be greater. While increased tourism poses a risk of overexploitation of local natural values and local communities, there is a great potential for small communities to develop local work life based on local resources and local culture.

Sustainability certification is one of the tools for controlling the development. Through certifications, companies and communities communicate their sustainability efforts to customers and the public in a credible way, while the requirements for certification contribute to a reduction in negative impact of tourism on the environment and societies. The fact that the market for green travellers is perceived to be great, that the tourism industry sees opportunities for sustainable tourism and that the Nordic countries intend to invest in green growth means that sustainable tourism will form an important part of the plans for the future of the Nordic region. If one succeeds in creating a clear environmental profile, there are great growth opportunities for the entire tourism industry in the Nordic region.

The study was conducted using the qualitative research method, which was the best research method for this type of topic. For the study, representatives of six different outdoor companies were interviewed, and all interviews were conducted using a recorder. The goal was to conduct fifteen interviews with a variety of outdoor companies in the Pietarsaari region. This goal failed because of the busy timetables and the lack of interest in the subject among the companies'. The six interviews that were conducted gave much material for the analysis and result part, and discussions with the participants were rewarding and interesting. The aim was to present the results of the research as comprehensively as possible.

The thesis was commissioned by Kvarnen Samkommun in Kronoby and the contact person for the future nature and eco-tourism project was Carola Wiik who is the project leader. Kvarnen

Samkommun is an educational organization with three branches: folk high school, citizen institute and art school. The interviews were transcribed immediately after the interview ended, after which the material was incorporated into the work comprehensively and concisely. The thesis work proceeded slowly but surely, and the whole writing process lasted for about seven months. The subject was very interesting in the author's opinion, which is why the time spent on the work did not matter. The most interesting part in the thesis process was the meetings with the company representatives and everything the participants could teach.

In terms of reliability and validity of the thesis, these two concepts may imply certain difficulties in qualitative research. As a researcher in a qualitative study, the writer is both the measuring instrument and the interpreter of the result. Reliability and validity are two concepts that fit well when performing a quantitative survey. In a qualitative study actual measuring is not done, but the researcher pursues to describe a certain phenomenon. In this survey, everything was based on the participants' stories. It is on the material gathered from the interviews that the analysis was based. By evaluating if the author really answered them and by giving a picture of the participants companies, the author also get to know how reliable the work is. What can affect the validity of a qualitative survey is how well the writer, can give the reader a clear picture of the phenomenon through explanatory analysis and categorization.

For the project *Future Nature- and Eco-tourism*, this survey was the first part of the project. Using the material collected on nature tourism companies, the project workers will continue to work on the project. Based on the demonstrated interest in and the prerequisites for quality certification and different courses, the objective is to develop nature and eco-tourism in Ostrobothnia.

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## Framtidens Natur- och Ekoturism

### Intervju turismföretagare/Haastattelu matkailutoimijat

#### Företagsuppgifter/yritystietoa

- Vilka tjänster erbjuder ditt företag? [Mitä palveluja yrityksenne tarjoaa?](#)
- Varför blev du turismföretagare? [Miksi sinusta tuli matkailuyrittäjä?](#)
- Hur länge har du varit verksam inom branschen? [Miten kauan olet toiminut alalla?](#)
- Hur många anställda har ditt företag? Hur många på heltid/Hur många på deltid? [Montako -työntekijää sinulla on? Montako kokopäivätyöntekijää/osapäivätyöntekijää?](#)
- Fungerar ditt företag som huvudsyssla/bisyssla? [Onko yritystoimintasi päätoimista vai sivutoimista?](#)
- Vilka öppettider har du och vilken är verksamhetens huvudsäsong? [Mitkä ovat aukioloajat ja milloin on yritystoimintasi pääasiallinen sesonkiaika?](#)
- Vilka är dina viktigaste målgrupper? [Mitkä ovat ne tärkeimmät kohderyhmäsi?](#)
- Hur många besökare har ditt företag i medeltal? [Kuinka paljon vierailijoita yritykselläsi keskimäärin on?](#)

#### Hållbar turism och ekoturism/Kestävä matkailu ja ekomatkailu

- Har ditt företag verksamhet som beaktar principer för hållbar turism? Hur syns detta konkret i din verksamhet? (A4 med principer på hållbar turism visas vid behov) [Noudatetaanko yrityksessä kestävän matkailun periaatteita? Miten tämä näkyy yrityksesi toiminnassa? \(kestävän matkailun periaatteet lomakkeella, näytetään jos on tarve\)](#)
- Hur skulle din verksamhet kunna utvecklas att bli ännu mer hållbar? [Miten toimintasi voisi kehittää vielä kestävämmäksi?](#)
- Känner du till ekoturism? [Onko ekomatkailu sinulle tuttua?](#)
- Tror du att hållbar turism/ekoturism blir mer betydelsefullt i framtiden? Vilka möjligheter och positiva effekter kan du se? Vilka hinder, nackdelar, utmaningar finns? [Uskotko, että kestävä matkailu/ekomatkailu on yhä suuremmissa merkityksessä tulevaisuudessa? Mitä esteitä, haittoja, haasteita on? Minkälaisia mahdollisuuksia ja myönteisiä vaikutuksia näet?](#)

## Behov och önskemål om kvalitetscertifiering och företagsutveckling/Laatusertifioinnin ja yrityskehityksen tarpeet ja toiveet

- Har du behov av/planer på/intresse för att kvalitetscertifiera ditt företag/produkter?  
[Onko sinulla tarvetta/suunnitelmia/ mielenkiintoa yrityksesi/tuotteesi laatusertifioinnista?](#)
- Vilka möjligheter och positiva effekter kunde en kvalitets certifiering inom ekoturism ge ditt företag? [Mitä mahdollisuuksia ja myönteisiä vaikutuksia ekomatkailun laatusertifiointi voisi tuoda yrityksellesi?](#)
- Vilka utmaningar och hinder ser du i en ekocertifierings/kvalitetscertifieringprocess?  
[Mitä haasteita ja esteitä näet ekosertifointi/laatusertifointiprosessissa?](#)
- Skulle du vara intresseras av att gå tilläggsutbildning t.ex. kurser för att kunna fungera som ekoturismföretagare? [Olisitko kinostunut lisäkoulutuksesta esim. käymällä erilaisia kursseja, pystyväksesi toimimaan ekomatkaileijyrityksenä?](#)
- Kvalitetsutbildning inom ekoturism/hållbar turism/[Ekomatkailun/kestävän matkailun laatu](#)koulutus
- Företags finansieringsrådgivning/[yritystoiminnan rahoitusneuvontaa](#)
- Markanadsförnings- och försäljningsutbildning och rådgivning/handledning/[Markinointi-](#) ja myyntikoulutusta ja neuvontaa
- Annat, vad?/[Muuta, mitä?](#)

## **Principer för hållbar turism. Vi främjar hållbar turism. Vi samarbetar så, att..**

### **1. Vi stöder bevarandet av värdena i objekten och främjar skyddet av dem**

- Natur- och kulturvärdena är resans viktiga syfte.
- Vi informerar besökarna om objektets värde och skyddet av dem och uppmuntrar besökarna till att handla ansvarsfullt.
- Vi utvecklar tjänster och styr användningen enligt efterfrågan och objektets karaktär.
- Vi använder i huvudsak färdiga vandringleder och befintlig serviceutrustning.
- I byggandet beaktar vi också de lokala natur- och kulturvärdena.
- Turismen äventyrar inte natur- och kulturvärdena och vi förutser och förebygger skadliga verkningar.

### **2. Vi minimerar belastningen på miljön**

- Vi främjar möjligheterna att resa till objekten med allmänna kommunikationsmedel och utsläppsnålt.
- Vi förlänger besöken i turismområdet.
- Vi verkar energi- och material effektivt.
- Vi verkar som ett gott exempel i miljöfrågor.
- Vi gör det möjligt för besökarna att handla miljövänligt och uppmuntrar dem till det.

### **3. Vi stärker den lokala anknytningen**

- Den lokala kunskapen, forskningsresultatet, erfarenheterna och kulturen är utgångspunkterna för utbudet av upplevelser.
- Vi garanterar att objekten och tjänsterna är trygga för besökarna.
- Våra tjänster jämkar jämlikhet.
- Vi förbättrar besökarnas möjligheter att öka sina sociala, psykiska och fysiska välbefinnande.
- Vi främjar de lokala invånarnas rekreation och förbättrar området levnadsförhållanden.

## APPENDIX 2/2

**4. Vi främjar tillväxten av den lokala ekonomin och skapandet av arbetsplatser**

- Vi erbjuder besökarna tjänster som är högklassiga och bygger på objektets dragningskraft.
- Vi idkar aktivt samarbete och är samtidigt klart medvetna om de olika aktörernas roller och ansvar i vården av objektet och produktionen av tjänster.
- Vi erbjuder information om objektet och tjänsterna i förväg, i en lättfattlig och intressant form i olika mediekanaler.
- Vi sporrar turisterna till att stanna längre i turismområdet.

**5. Vi informerar tillsammans om objektets värden och tjänster**

- Vi förbinder oss till objektets värden och grundläggande besked.
- Vi informerar enhetligt och ansvarsfullt olika målgrupper både i hemlandet och verksamheten.
- Vi samlar respons från kunderna och aktörerna för att utveckla kundnöjdheten och verksamheten.
- Vi ordnar utbildnings- och samarbetsdagar mellan området aktörer.
- Vi sporrar aktörerna till att förbinda sig till dessa principer för den hållbara turismen.

## **Edistämme kestäväää matkailua. teemme tämän yhteistyössä siten, että..**

### **1. Tuemme kohteiden arvojen säilymistä ja edistämme niiden suojelua**

- Luonto- ja kulttuuriarvot ovat tärkeää matkan syy.
- Kerromme kävijöille kohteen arvoista ja niiden suojelusta ja kannustamme heitä toimimaan vastuullisesti.
- kehitämme palveluja ja ohjaamme käyttöä kysynnän ja kohteen luonteen mukaan.
- Käytämme pääsääntöisesti valmiita kulkureittejä ja olemassa olevaa palveluvarustusta.
- Rakentamisessa otamme huomioon myös paikalliset luonto- ja kulttuuriarvot.
- Matkailu ei vaaranna kohteen luonto- ja kulttuuriarvoja, ja haitallisia vaikutuksia ehkäisemme ennakoivasti.

### **2. Minimoimme ympäristön kuormitusta**

- Edistämme mahdollisuuksia matkustaa kohteelle julkisin kulkuvälinein ja vähäpäästöisesti.
- Kasvatamme viipymään matkailualueella.
- Toimimme energia- ja materiaalitehokkaasti.
- Toimimme hyvänä esimerkkinä ympäristöasioissa.
- Mahdollistamme ja kannustamme kävijöitä toimimaan ympäristöystävällisesti.

### **3. Vahvistamme paikallisuutta**

- Paikallinen tietämys, tutkimustieto, kokemukset ja kulttuuri ovat lähtökohta elämysten tarjonnassa.
- Opastus on laadukasta ja toimijat tuntevat hyvin alueen sekä paikalliset olot.
- Lisäämme kohteen arvostusta laadukkaasti tuotetulla matkailupalvelulla.
- Toimimme yhteistyössä ja tarjoamme paikallisille asukkaille sekä kävijöille mahdollisuuksia osallistua kohteen hoitoon ja kehittämiseen.

#### **4. Edistämme kohteiden tuottamaan hyvinvointia ja terveyttä**

- Kannustamme kävijöitä monipuolisiin, omatoimisiin ja ohjattuihin luonto- ja kulttuurielämyksiin.
- Varmistamme kohteiden ja palveluiden kävijäturvallisuuden.
- Palvelumme edistävät tasa-arvoa.
- Parannamme kävijöiden mahdollisuuksia lisätä sosiaalista, psyykkistä ja fyysistä hyvinvointiaan.
- edistämme paikalliseen asukkaiden virkistäytymistä ja parannamme alueen eli olosuhteita.

#### **5. Edistämme paikallistaloudellista kasvua ja työpaikkojen luomista**

- Tarjoamme kävijöille laadukkaita ja kohteen vetovoimalle rakentuvia palveluja.
- Teemme aktiivista yhteistyötä pitäen selvänä toimijoiden roolit ja vastuut kohteen hoidossa ja palveluiden tuottamisessa.
- Tarjoamme tietoa kohteista ja palveluista ennakkoon, helposti ja kiinnostavassa muodossa eri viestintäkanavissa.
- Innostamme matkailijoita viipymään pidempään matkailualueella.

#### **6. Viestimme yhdessä kohteen arvosta ja palveluista**

- Sitoudumme kohteen arvoihin ja perusviesteihin.
- Viestimme yhdenmukaisesti ja vastuullisesti eri kohderyhmille sekä kotimaassa että kansainvälisesti.
- Keräämme palautetta sidosryhmiltä asiakastyytyväisyyden sekä toiminnan kehittämiseksi.
- Järjestämme koulutus- ja yhteistyötilaisuuksia alueen toimijoiden kesken.
- kannustamme toimijoita sitoutumaan näihin kestävän matkailun periaatteisiin.