

ARCTIC LUXURY TRAVEL
Circumpolar Arctic Luxury Experience

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli kehittää arktisen luksuksen konsepti ja suunnitella ainutlaatuinen pohjoiset napamaat kattava arktinen matkailuelämys. Kahdeksan erilaista kohdetta kahdeksassa arktisessa maassa kattavan matkailuelämyksen ideana oli laajentaa Luxury Action Oy:n palvelutarjontaa ja lisätä sen arvoa. Myös arktisen matkailun kohdemarkkinat selvitettiin.

Tässä laadullisessa tutkimuksessa tiedonlähteinä käytettiin alan kirjallisuuden lisäksi suoraa havainnointia, haastatteluita ja sisältöanalyysiä. Jokaisesta arktisesta maasta valikoitui yksi kohde, joka soveltui ennalta määriteltyihin yksityisen luksusmatkailun kriteereihin. Kohteita mitattiin vertaavalla ja yhteistoiminnallisella esikuva-analyysillä, joka auttoi erottamaan kohteet toisistaan sekä löytämään jokaisesta kohteesta ainutlaatuisimmat elämykset. Havainnointi tapahtui arktisten maiden kohdevierailujen aikana. Arktisen yksityismatkailun asiantuntijoita haastateltiin sekä syvällisen kokemuseräisen ymmärryksen saavuttamiseksi että sisältöanalyysin tekemistä varten. Havainnointien ja haastatteluiden tuloksia hyödynnettiin esikuva-analyysissä, ja niiden pohjalta luotiin arktisen luksuksen konsepti ja ainutlaatuinen napamaat kattava matkailuelämystuote.

Ilmastonmuutos muokkaa nopeasti elämää arktisilla alueilla ja vaikuttaa näiden alueiden tulevaisuuteen. Kestävä kehitys sekä puhtaan luonnon ja erämaan säilyttäminen ovat eilinehtoja kaikelle kehitykselle arktisilla alueilla. Arktisen luksuksen suurimmat vetovoimatekijät ovat omavaraisuus, luonnonmukaisuus, villin erämaan tuntu ja alkuperäiskansat.

Tutkimus selvitti että ekomatkailu, seikkailumatkailu ja kulttuurimatkailu ovat Arktisen alueen kasvavia matkailumarkkinoita. Alkuperäismatkailu, ekomatkailu ja aktiivimatkailu ovat soveliaimmat kohdemarkkinat arktiselle luksukselle. Tämä opinnäytetyö sisälsi suosituksia arktisen luksuksen matkailukonseptin käyttöönotoksi ja perusteluja kestävän kehityksen tärkeydestä. Salassapidollisista syistä kehittämäni matkailuelämystuotetta ei ole kokonaisuudessaan esitelty tässä opinnäytetyössä. Myöskään haastateltavien nimiä ei ole julkaistu samasta syystä.

Avainsanat: Arktinen luksus, kestävä kehitys, yksityismatkailu, arktinen alue, alkuperäiskansat, ekomatkailu, holistinen toimintatapa

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The objective of this thesis was to develop the concept of Arctic luxury and to design a unique circumpolar Arctic luxury experience. The purpose of developing the circumpolar Arctic luxury experience, covering eight distinctively different destinations in eight Arctic countries, was to add extension and value to Luxury Action's product offering. The thesis also intended to define suitable market niches for Arctic luxury.

A number of qualitative research methods were used in this thesis, including secondary data collection, participant observation, interviews, and content analysis. The eight Arctic countries were examined against pre-determined criteria for a private luxury traveller, and a suitable destination in each country was introduced. Collaborative and comparative benchmarking process was then carried out to compare and measure the destinations, and to find the most unique elements in each destination. Participant observation was conducted during field trips to the Arctic destinations. Experts in luxury travel in the Arctic were interviewed for empirical data and the outcome of the interviews and observations used in further benchmarking and content analysis, and eventually developing the concept of Arctic luxury and circumpolar Arctic luxury experience.

The study revealed the main appeal of the Arctic luxury is its self-sufficiency, untouched nature, feeling of wilderness, and presence of wildlife and indigenous people. Climate change is rapidly shaping the state and the future of the Arctic. Sustainable development and protecting Arctic environment is the key for any activities carried out in the Arctic.

The study discovered that ecotourism, adventure tourism and culture tourism were growing markets in the Arctic, and it was concluded that active tourism, indigenous tourism, and ecotourism are suitable markets for Arctic luxury. Further recommendations on sustainable development in the Arctic and for adapting Arctic luxury were made. Due to confidentiality reasons only the base for the itinerary content is introduced in this thesis instead of the full itinerary, and no interviewees are named.

Key words: Arctic luxury, sustainable development, private travel, Arctic region, indigenous people, ecotourism, holistic approach

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FOREWORD

I recall many moments that have greatly contributed to this piece of work. I remember standing sturdily on my snowshoes on a remote hill on the Norwegian coast, overlooking the Arctic Ocean. I recall the moment when a humpback whale navigated just front of our vessel on Ilulissat Icefjord in Greenland. Or the frozen night camping in Lapland, when the majestic Northern Lights danced in the sky all night long. I will never forget that sunny glacier front location when I experienced my first polar bear sighting. All those moments I lived so vividly, knowing I was where I belonged: in the Arctic wilderness.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Janne Honkanen, the founder of Luxury Action, for giving me a high-five when I introduced him the topic for this thesis. His excitement for the topic of this thesis always pushed me to go for that extra mile, and dig deeper when I felt my research was taking me nowhere. In addition I wish to send my utmost thanks to my supervisors Teija Tekoniemi-Selkälä and Outi Kähkönen from the Lapland University of Applied Sciences for never losing their faith on me, not even when I lost it myself. This truly encouraged me to keep on going in high spirits. Lastly I wish to thank my darling husband Teun for bearing with me the past few months, and by taking care of the daily routines allowing me to 'go with the flow', as he put it.

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BEAC	Barents Euro-Arctic Council
BRIC	Brazil, Russia, India & China
DMC	Destination Management Company
HNWI	High net-worth individual
ILTM	International Luxury Travel Market
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

1 INTRODUCTION

Tourists are in a constant lookout for new destinations, especially the well-travelled, confident, independent and adventurous allocentrics who enjoy exploring new cultures and have higher income (Youell 1998). Tour operators, in return, are looking to create new experiences and innovative ways to introduce destinations to increasingly demanding travellers (Honkanen 2016; Maher et al. 2014). In addition to scientists, there are individual, curious travellers willing to travel to places that have not been visited by many tourists before. While most of the world is becoming rather discovered, there is one destination that does not offer only a lot of opportunities, but also places that very few have wandered: the Arctic. (Honkanen 2016.)

Throughout the times, experts have defined the Arctic by using many different indicators, including permafrost, isotherm, treeline, temperature, culture, and even political interest (Arctic World 2016; Kankaanpää 2008; Heikkilä & Laukkanen 2013). In this study the geographical definition of the Arctic is used: the polar region between the North Pole and the Arctic Circle (Swaney 1999), or in other words, the area between true north 90° and latitude 66° north. The Arctic is a home to a vast wilderness, and offers a great range of varying landscape from treeless tundra to thick taiga forest, from permafrost covered rocky lands to white beaches, and from glaciers to rugged mountain peaks (Swaney 1999). The main appeal of the Arctic is this feel of wilderness, the unspoilt scenery (Johnston 1995; Nuttall 2002; Saarinen & Hall 2010) and feel of tranquillity (Kankaanpää 2008). The vast, untouched land provides ideal grounds for tourism niches that are growing markets: ecotourism, adventure tourism and culture tourism (Hall & Johnston 1995; Stonehouse & Snyder 2010).

The Arctic has a lot at stake. According to the nature and wildlife protection organisation WWF, if the Arctic goes, so goes the planet (Robert 2015). The Arctic hosts an enormous number of species ranging from big mammals to fragile flowers. The life of many species, like salmon, is threatened due to illegal fishing and overfishing, while many other species are victims of by-catching. Existence should, however, be secured and sustained for the future

generations, as the life of the people living in the Arctic and beyond depends on these species. The Arctic is also the main source of information for climate change. The fragile flora of the Arctic is surprisingly rich, with many species found nowhere else. (WWF 2016.)

Considering the Arctic region's plentiful wildlife, stunning landscapes, unique nature and the global importance for the wellbeing and state of the Earth, people have started to include the Arctic countries in their 'must visit' checklist. Consequently the number of travellers to the countries of the Arctic has increased notably (UNEP 2007; Maher et al. 2014; Hall & Saarinen 2010). This study introduced Arctic tourism to date.

The commissioner for this thesis is my employer Luxury Action, a Finland-based incoming tour operator. Luxury Action caters for individual travellers wishing to experience Nordic countries and European Arctic regions privately. The company takes care of all travel requirements except for commercial flights. The services provided are highly customised and based on individual needs and desires. (Luxury Action 2016a.) The study was carried out keeping the target group of the commissioner in mind: a conscious individual with sufficient disposable income to allow him or her to explore the Arctic privately. When describing the people engaging with luxury travel, the word traveller is used instead of tourist. Private luxury travellers tend to distinguish themselves as travellers choosing their own paths instead of tourists following the others (Honkanen 2016). Similarly the word travel is used instead of tourism when the topics of luxury travel and private travel are discussed. A high-end individual who travels privately with a local guide instead of participating in fixed group travel options is in this research referred to as a private traveller. Since Luxury Action solely operates in the niche markets of luxury travel and private travel (Luxury Action 2016a), this study briefly explained these concepts.

The Arctic region and luxury travel formed the theoretical background for this research. This thesis studied the growing trends of ecotourism, adventure tourism and culture tourism, and their feasibility in the Arctic, and made recommendations for the market niches for Arctic luxury. The wellbeing of the Arctic, its people, and nature, was given significant recognition. The research

examined the Arctic countries in order to suggest distinctively different destinations within the Arctic. The objectives were to construct a unique circumpolar Arctic luxury experience for Luxury Action and to develop the concept of Arctic luxury.

The research approach for this thesis was qualitative. Secondary data was largely collected from the national statistics bureaus, Arctic associations, destination guidebooks, tourism boards, and other industry literature. In primary data collection the following methods were used: participant observation, expert interviews and content analysis. The data was then processed on comparative and collaborative benchmarking analysis.

Certain limitations for this study existed. The statistical reporting in eight Arctic countries does not match with the definition of the Arctic (Hall & Johnston 1995), which affected comparison. Only the Arctic destinations above the Arctic Circle with existing infrastructure for private luxury tourism could be considered. Due to confidentiality reasons the interviews could not be recorded. Further limitations are explained in the chapter 'limitations'.

Based on the benchmarking process and the expert interviews, in addition to content analysis and participant observation, I made design recommendations for a unique circumpolar Arctic luxury experience covering eight distinctively different destinations in eight Arctic countries and introduced a concept of Arctic luxury for general travel industry.

2 THE ARCTIC AS OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FOR TOURISM

2.1 Arctic Region

The Arctic region has many definitions. Swaney (1999, 13) states that few agree on where the Arctic ends, and points out that a common delimiter is the Arctic Circle, a latitude above which the sun does not set on the longest day of the year. According to Arctic Info, the encyclopedia for Arctic (2016), also countries that cannot be defined as Arctic, have expressed interest in claiming some of the region. The reason for such high interest in the Arctic is the natural oil and gas reserves in the region. The Arctic Council, an intergovernmental forum promoting and protecting the Arctic was established in 1982, declared that the Arctic countries are the eight countries located on the Arctic Circle: Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark (Greenland), Iceland, Canada, USA (Alaska) and Russia (Arctic Council 2016).

The Arctic has many definitions, as illustrated in Figure 1. The 66° north latitude defines the region according to the sun height: above this latitude the sun does not set on the summer solstice, nor does it rise on the winter solstice. Permafrost describes the Arctic as the region where the ground does not thaw in two consequent years. The treeline definition qualifies mainly the treeless areas in the Arctic. Temperature specifies the Arctic as a region where the mean temperature in any month does not rise above +10°C, or alternatively so-called July 10-isotherm where the mean temperature of the warmest month, July, is below +10°C. (Mettiäinen 2015; Kankaanpää 2008; Swaney 1999.)

Furthermore, the Arctic region is in literature often split in high Arctic, low Arctic and subarctic. The climate and the vegetation divide the Arctic in these three zones (Mettiäinen 2015; Barents Watch 2016; Heikkilä & Laukkanen 2013). In this study the Arctic Circle is used as the delimiter and the entire region above the Arctic Circle is referred to as the Arctic.

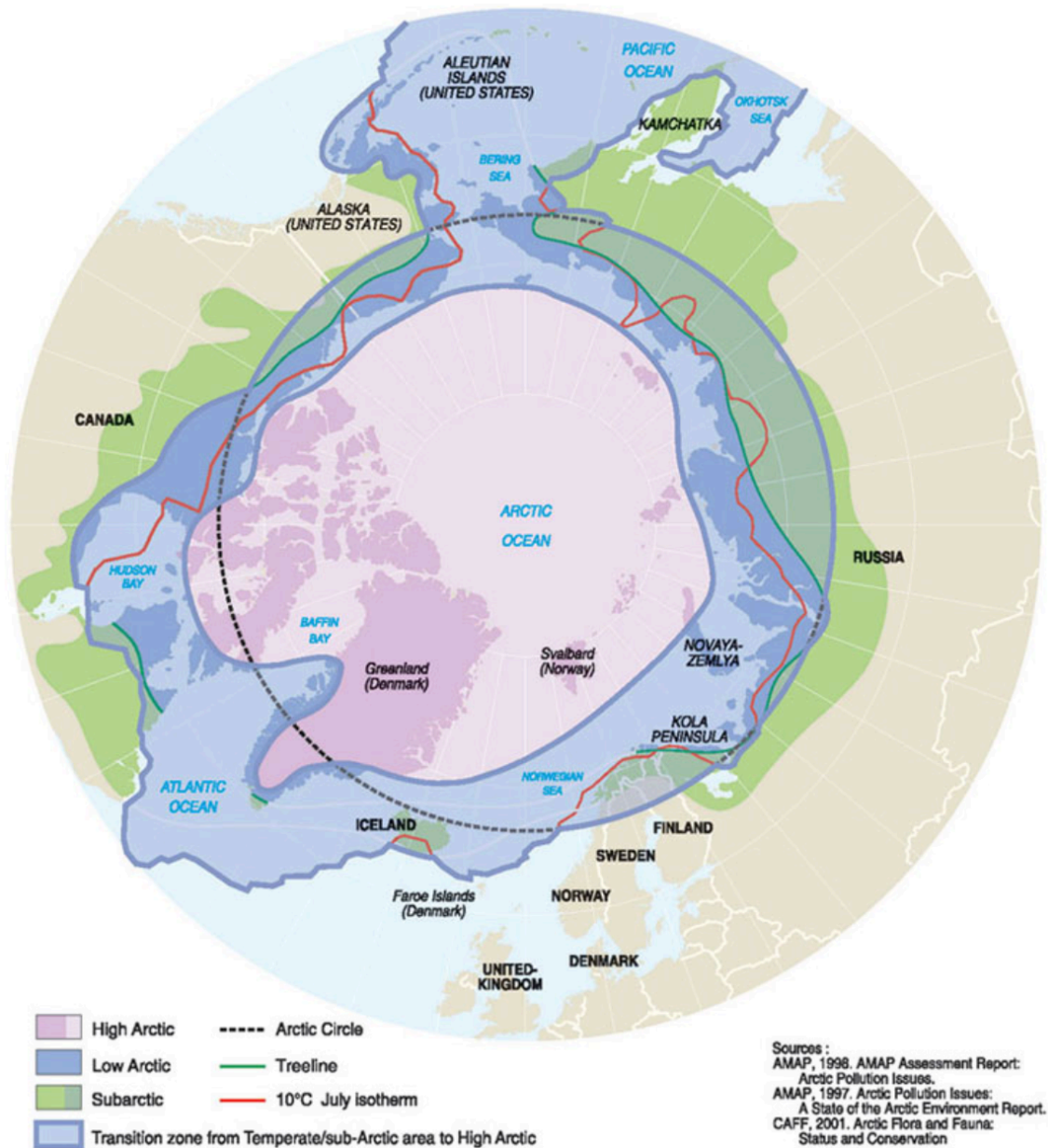


Figure 1: The Definitions of the Arctic (Mettiäinen 2015)

The people inhabiting this immense but sparsely populated region are separated by thousands of miles, yet they share the same challenges that the harsh Arctic climate brings along. However, the indigenous people living in the region have made a livelihood out of the plentiful Arctic resources by reindeer herding, hunting and fishing for thousands of years. Their life, culture, and wellbeing depend on the Arctic nature (Kankaanpää 2008). Yet their lifestyle has been threatened by the modern world: industrialisation, and later the changes in climate, have put pressure on the survival of these cultures (Arctic Centre 2014). The wellbeing of indigenous people of the Arctic and the survival of their culture is taken seriously: six organisations representing indigenous

people have a status at the Arctic Council and a part of the forum's mission is to protect the culture and lives of the indigenous people in the Arctic (Arctic Council 2016).

While the indigenous people, wildlife and the environment in the Arctic are faced by a number of threats mainly from the outside world, at the same time there are opportunities that the public's increasing interest in the Arctic has created. Arctic countries have already recognised the economic possibilities and jobs that the tourism industry creates. Sustainable, green tourism is becoming more common in the Arctic: ecological products with cultural and natural content are now found in all Arctic countries, employing local population, while the tourists are advised on the environmental aspect via many communication channels (Hall & Johnston 1995; Stance 2012).

2.2 Arctic Tourism

2.2.1 Arctic Tourism Development

Historically the Arctic region attracted mainly trophy hunters, anglers, scientists and explorers (Stance 2012). Tourism to the Arctic region began only some 200 years ago and first grew slowly, until in the late 1800s the steam ships and later railways made the Arctic accessible for mass tourism. Today all the Arctic countries receive thousands of visitors annually (Stonehouse & Snyder 2010), and the interest in the Arctic regions is ever increasing (Stonehouse & Snyder 2010; Heikkilä & Laukkanen 2013; Kankaanpää 2008; Hall & Saarinen 2010).

Improving road access, motorised vehicles and scheduled flight connections have made the Arctic accessible for individual travellers in the past decades, while earlier entering the region by land required long trekking (Stonehouse & Snyder 2010). Even though the Arctic as a tourism destination is construed as a remote place that is hard to access, the tourism industry is nowadays present in all eight Arctic countries around the year. Although Arctic tourism is highly seasonable and dependent on the nature and the weather (Maher et al. 2014),

it provides livelihood to many people in the Arctic, including the indigenous people living in the Arctic. (Vesterinen 2015.)

Due to relatively long travel distances, high costs and somewhat extreme weather conditions, the Arctic is not a destination for all. Additionally, the perception of the Arctic as a freezing place stops some people from discovering the Arctic (Honkanen 2016). Additionally, the shortening winters will affect tourism in the Arctic, where most of the products are based on snow and ice (Mettiäinen 2015). Nevertheless, today Arctic tourism brings a livelihood to many, and even mass tourism is found in the Arctic ski resorts (Mettiäinen 2015). Furthermore, the climate change is expected to boost Arctic tourism in the future, as people are wishing to experience the destination before it is gone (Maher et al. 2014; Mettiäinen 2015).

Mass tourism seems to be regarded as a threat to many pristine tourism destinations. When asking the interviewee from Iceland if there was anything he'd like to protect in Iceland, he answered 'the whole of Iceland except the capital'. According to him, mass tourism poses threats to vulnerable nature, but private travellers who are accompanied by a local guide, respect the destination and the sites they visit in an entirely different manner. He may not be alone with his thoughts. The tourism industry in Iceland has grown rapidly, experiencing an unprecedented 30% increase in 2015 (Iceland Monitor 2016), leaving the country to decide whether it is time to focus on stressing quantity or take more sustainable approach and develop the quality of the industry (Maher et al. 2014).

The tourism development in the Arctic is not a smooth process. The Arctic does not receive increasing interest only from the travellers, but due to the plentiful natural resources and great transportation channels, the Arctic region has a major political and economic importance globally (Ympäristöministeriö 2007). Its location is strategically important for military purposes, and the natural resources have attracted traditional industries, both causing pollution in the fragile Arctic environment (Nuttall 2002).

The presence of military bases, traditional industries and political associations has an impact on tourism development in the Arctic (UNEP 2007). A number of circumpolar associations and councils have been established to monitor and regulate the sustainable development of the Arctic. However this is not an easy task, as the actions responsible for the pollution and natural disasters are military practises, industrialisation and using natural resources for energy. These actions are all intended to positively contribute to the wellbeing, economic growth and safety of the nation. Therefore it is evident that the members of such councils have different interests in the Arctic, and it has been a complicated mission to establish circumpolar agreements between the member countries. (Ympäristöministeriö 2007.) Today the tourism industry in the Arctic countries is governed by the eight Arctic nations, all welcoming tourism as an industry with potential to grow the economic wellbeing of the Arctic regions (Stonehouse & Snyder 2010).

While the Arctic used to be a destination for an exclusive few, the number of travellers to the region is growing. An increasing number of travellers regrettably also poses a danger to the Arctic environment. (Gelter 2011, 227 - 250.) Disrespect of natural environment, improper waste management, erosion of fragile plant cover and tourism establishments are some of the factors that may have a severe negative impact on the environment. The promotional material covering Arctic tourism destinations have emphasised these issues, encouraging travellers to act responsibly (Johnston 1995). At the same time, wildlife series and nature documentaries on Arctic climate awareness have encouraged travellers to visit Arctic destinations (Hall & Johnston 1995), and in general the Arctic region is attracting more interest than ever before, turning polar regions into the latest tourism destination (Hall & Saarinen 2010).

It is hard to deny, that climate change is affecting the tourism industry in the Arctic. The Arctic ecosystem is sensitive to temperature change and the warmer temperatures directly impact on the wildlife, nature and indigenous people relying on the cold temperatures (Nuttall 2002). If the Arctic waters keep warming up, the fish and consequently the birds will change migration routes. This will continue affecting mammals and people living in the Arctic. Nuttall

(2002) points out that the consequences are disastrous to many smaller communities in the Arctic that rely on traditional livelihoods such as hunting, herding, trapping and fishing. Maher et al (2014) conclude that iceless waters in the Arctic may predict further possibilities to develop cruise tourism, and my guide in Svalbard suggested the same.

Hall and Saarinen (2010) list a number of factors that hinder the tourism development in the Arctic: climate change, landscape and species loss, increasing interest in energy resources and minerals, social changes in indigenous societies, and geopolitics. While this thesis does not intend to offer a solution for these issues, nor discuss the ethics of travel to the Arctic, this study aims to suggest how private travel could actually positively impact on the destinations and their wellbeing.

2.2.2 Niche Tourism in the Arctic

The main tourism attraction in the Arctic is the feel of wilderness, plentiful wildlife including iconic animals such as whales, bears and seals, the presence of indigenous people, and characteristic nature inclusive of icebergs, glaciers and vast tundra. The Arctic wilderness and untouched nature appeals to a number of tourism markets, especially to ecotourism, adventure tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism and fishing and hunting tourism, and each of the markets are growing. (Stonehouse & Snyder 2010; Hall & Johnston 1995.)

The growing importance of green and ecological values has not gone unnoticed in political level. For instance the national tourism boards in Sweden (Visit Sweden 2016b) and Norway (Visit Norway 2016) are actively promoting ecotourism and Finland's Prime Minister's Office (2013) states that nature tourism is the fastest growing tourism market globally, and listed elements such as sustainable development and environmental considerations in its strategy for the Arctic Region

Hunting and fishing are not only recreational activities in the Arctic, but an essential part of the way of life for the local population in most of the Arctic

countries. Nature tourists enjoy experiencing the beauty and solitude of untouched nature, observe natural wildlife and engage in non-motorised outdoor pursuits such as trekking and rafting. Adventure tourists seeking for exhilaration and sense of personal achievement by challenging oneself. Culture tourists are interested in getting close to the local cultural traditions and appreciate interacting with the local population (Stonehouse & Snyder 2010.) In turn, ecotourists are interested in adding educational and environmental awareness in their destination experience (Hall & Johnston 1995) but also include traits from all of the above tourism markets (TIES 2016).

The climate change is discussed to be the most significant threat to the Arctic tourism destinations (Hall 2010, 42 - 63; Dawson, Stewart & Scott 2010, 89 - 100). The impacts of the climate change are visible especially in the Arctic, where the change has taken place double the speed comparing to the rest of the world (Hall & Saarinen 2010; Nuttall 2002; Kankaanpää 2008). During my observation trip in Svalbard, I came to experience we were not able to visit the old Russian mining town Pyramiden in one day, because the sea ice no longer froze en-route to Pyramiden. I asked my guide if this was a new phenomenon. The guide explained to me how the climate change has forced them to re-route and re-design tourism products, 'The climate change is happening here and now' he emphasised pointing at the iceless shores of Svalbard on the map.

Global warming, perhaps controversially, attracts more tourists. According to Stonehouse & Snyder (2010) especially nature tourists are travelling to the Arctic after endangered species such as polar bears and whales, and the interest in guided but rather expensive wildlife watching tours is increasing. Nature tourism is the fastest growing tourism market today (Prime Minister's Office 2013). People in modern societies are somewhat alienated from nature (Grenier 2004; Honkanen 2016).

The environment, nevertheless, is the key for the Arctic tourism. The Arctic region symbolises great wilderness, remoteness, extreme conditions and environmental vulnerability (Gelter 2011). Meanwhile, according to Mettiäinen

(2015) adventure tourism is *in* the environment, wildlife tourism *about* the environment and ecotourism *for* the environment.

According to the TIES (2016) ecotourism can be defined as ‘responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education’. Conservation of wildlife and nature, respect to the local way of life and understanding of the native people are not the only factors important to ecotourists: they also regard highly the possibility to travel responsibly and learn about the destination and to respect it and interpret its nature (WWF 2016; Environmental Programmes 2012; TIES 2016).

Nuttall (2002) argues that sustainably developed adventure tourism and ecotourism could well guarantee income for the smaller Arctic communities through tourism. The increasing interest in wilderness and indigenous people’s culture has led to the emergence of locally owned companies, and provided indigenous people more control over the tourism development (Nuttall 2002).

Considering the strong presence of wildlife, natural attractions, and indigenous people in the Arctic, and the plentiful possibilities for adventure, the Arctic is a destination for adventure tourism, ecotourism, wildlife tourism, culture tourism and nature tourism.

2.3 Arctic Tourism Destinations

2.3.1 Selection Criteria for Arctic Tourism Destinations

The eight Arctic countries cannot be considered fully Arctic, as the entire country does not lie in the polar region above the Arctic Circle. In fact, the administrative centres, situated in capital cities, are all located below the Arctic Circle. (Heikkilä & Laukkanen 2013.) In this research, only the Arctic area within each country has been examined. In addition, for each Arctic area within the country, a specific destination was selected.

Each destination has been selected keeping the target audience in mind: a private individual, a conscious, well-travelled and educated traveller who requires a relatively effortless access to the destination. Moreover, the destination needed to have an existing infrastructure to cater for a discerning traveller: comfortable accommodation and facilities with impeccable hospitality. The destination also had to offer an educational aspect for a traveller wishing to increase his level of awareness, as well as a variety of unique natural attractions and experiences exclusive to the specific destination. Finally, the destination must bring a feel-good factor to the traveller; to let the traveller to participate in a traditional activity or learn to know the people indigenous to the area. These are all important aspects for private luxury travellers (Honkanen 2016).

A part of the criteria is the experiences available in the destination. The main appeal of the Arctic, regardless of the type of tourism one engages with, is the feel of wilderness and the vast, unspoilt landscape (Johnston 1995, 27 - 40). In this paper the landscape and wilderness are discussed as a primary attraction. However, numerous elements in the destination attract travellers and affect the decision-making when choosing the best-suited destination in the Arctic. Such attractions can, for instance, be wildlife observation, snowmobiling, landscape photography, culinary delights, water sports, or scenic trekking routes. These elements that add value to the primary attraction are in this research referred as secondary attractions.

2.3.2 Kola Peninsula, Russia

Arctic Russia expands all the way from Alaska, the US, to Europe where it borders Finnish and Norwegian Lapland (Swaney 1999). Russian Arctic is not a well-known tourist destination for a good reason. The Soviet Union sealed off the Arctic from international visitors during the Cold War. The Russian government only opened the region for tourism in 1991 when the iron curtain collapsed. However, the complicated bureaucracy and the state's unwillingness to grant entries to the Arctic Islands for tourism purposes, have made the visits in the region nearly impossible. In addition, the lack of infrastructure has ceased

nearly all attempts to develop individual travel to the region. (Umbreit 2009). Nevertheless, the Russian Federation has made attempts to develop its northern territory into a tourism destination, and Arctic Russia holds a great future potential (Stonehouse & Snyder 2010; Hall & Saarinen 2010).

Currently the only region in the Russian Arctic with somewhat developed tourism infrastructure and existing accessibility is Kola Peninsula in Murmansk Oblast. For this reason, Kola Peninsula has been selected for this research, even though destinations such as Franz Josef Land or Yakutia (Sakha Republik) would be of great interest due to their unique location as well as landscape, flora and fauna.

Kola Peninsula is located north from the Arctic Circle, in northern-west Russia, bordering with Finland and Norway. The region is considered to be part of Lapland, and is connected to both Barents Sea and White Sea. The original inhabitants in the area were Sami reindeer herders, trappers and pomors, people living from fish. (Swaney 1999.) While the number of Sami people has remained relatively intact, the population in the area has increased rapidly, outnumbering the Sami population: the proportion of Sami people was 20% of the entire population in 1897, while the same number of Sami people now represent only 0,2% of the population (Ruotsala 2014).

Based on the map comparisons from several sources (Google 2016) some sources draw the western border towards east away from Finland and Norway. Since the peninsula covers Murmansk Oblast nearly entirely, many figures in this study are for Murmansk instead of Kola Peninsula.

The rapid growth of the population has many reasons that have shaped the state of Kola Peninsula in Murmansk oblast. In 1915, when the building of the Murmanskaya railway started, 70,000 people were hired for the project, multiplying the local population that previously had mainly engaged with traditional industries such as fishing and reindeer husbandry. The industrialisation brought a high number of people to the region after newly

established jobs in iron, nickel and copper mining industries. (Chinarova, Kushel & Khropov 2004.)

The region is also very rich in minerals, and defined even as a geological treasure (BEAC 2016). However, poor management of the industrial sites and continuous bombing during 2nd World War lead to natural and architectural disasters in the area. Consequently Nikel, once a booming mining city, is now one of the saddest locations on earth (Swaney 1999). Additionally, the oblast has the world's largest concentration of nuclear power facilities (Trubkina), which gives the region a more industrial character comparing to other Arctic regions. The region is also crucial for chemical industry and strategic for military purposes, and as a result heavily polluted and partly even contaminated. Regrettably the problems caused by poor industrial safety and waste management remain unsolved. (Nuttall 2002.)

Kola Peninsula played an important role in the war as a Soviet's defence line, and sadly 70% of the buildings were destroyed. After the war, heavy efforts for reconstructions were taken and the peace came with second wave of industrialisation, bringing new jobs and people in the region. (Chinarova, Kushel & Khropov 2004.) In 2012 the population for Murmansk city was 305,000 and the entire oblast 787,800 (BEAC 2016). The heavy growth in population that started with the first wave of industrialisation, continued all the way until the 1990s when the population in Russian Arctic went into decline due to recession. From all of Arctic Russia, the growth was heaviest in Murmansk city, going from 9000 people in 1926 to 470,000 people in 1989. (Heleniak 2013.)

Interestingly, the rapid growth of the population means that a very small portion of the population in Kola Peninsula in fact has deep roots in the region, especially in the urban regions. The population cannot be homogenous either, as the immigrants to the region came not only from all over Russia and from different Russian ethnic minorities, but also from neighbouring countries (Chinarova, Kushel & Khropov 2004) making the current population diversified.

Fishing is one of the primary industries in Murmansk Oblast, in addition to metal, mining and ship repair (BEAC 2016). Regardless of the rapid decline in population due to increasing unemployment since the 90s, Murmansk is still the largest city and urban area within the entire Arctic (Swaney 1999). The city, that was only founded in 1916 with a couple of thousands inhabitants, have gone through a major change in 100 years, from Russian periphery to a one of the most developed, urban regions in Russia (Heleniak 2013).

The nature in Kola Peninsula, regardless of natural disasters, urbanisation, a recent history as a warfront, has remained largely pristine. In fact nearly 80% of the peninsula is forest, varying from lichen pine forest to tundra zones (Chinarova, Kushel & Khropov 2004). Kola Peninsula's vast taiga forests, tundra, seaside, rivers, numerous lakes and mountains provide fantastic possibilities for outdoor pursuits. Fishing is not only important element in the local economy, but also the main recreational activity (Konttinen 2008). The current culinary trend, interest in healthy, fresh, and local produce, is also forecasting growing interest in plentiful fishing opportunities in Murmansk (Hanssen 2013, 17-21) and recreational fishing in the region can be expected to be a growing market.

Other secondary attractions in the region include snowmobiling, white-water rafting, hiking and trekking (Maher et al. 2014), and the peninsula is ideal for wildlife photography, hunting, trekking mountaineering, and all kind of skiing (Konttinen 2008). Since the prices especially for downhill skiing are lower comparing to European ski resorts, efforts are made to improve the skiing opportunities (Trubkina). The seas are suitable for divers, and the large wild mammals in the area include beluga (white whale), brown bear, elk and reindeer (Konttinen 2008) as well as 4X4 safaris and rail journeys (Kola Travel 2016).

Official tourism numbers for Russia are not available, but according to an estimate the Arctic Russia receives roughly 500,000 visitors annually, and Murmansk Oblast is estimated to receive higher number of visitors due to its

location as a starting point to the Arctic and fairly developed product (Maher et al. 2014).

2.3.3 Inari, Finland

Finnish Lapland covers approximately third of the entire Finland, and nearly the entire area lie above the Arctic Circle. Inari in the northern part Lapland of Finnish Lapland borders both Norwegian and Russian Lapland. Inari is the centre of Sami culture in Finland (Siida 2016), making the region highly interesting destination. The Sami culture has a strong presence in Inari, and Inari is the only municipality in Finland with 3 other official languages in addition to Finnish; Inari Sami, Skolt Sami and Northern Sami. The main industries in today's Inari are forestry, reindeer husbandry and tourism (Inarin kunta 2015).

Inari is the largest municipality in Finland but one of the most sparsely populated, having on average only 0,45 people living per km² (Väestörekisterikeskus VRK 2015), the municipality's population totalling under 7,000 people (Tilastokeskus 2016). Inari is home to one of the largest lakes of Finland, also called Inari. The most notable urban areas are Inari, Saariselkä and Ivalo, where the region's only airport is located, also called Ivalo.

Inari was originally inhabited by Sami, the indigenous people of Lapland. The eldest findings of human activity in Inari regions are estimated to be some 9000 years old (Ojanlatva 2006; Metsähallitus 2016), and eldest Sami settlements in Inari track back 4500 years (Metsähallitus 2016). However it was not until in the late 17th century that the world heard about Inari, as the word about gold being found in Finnish soil spread the world. In 1870s a number of gold diggers made their way to the rivers of Inari region, and Finland experienced its first gold rush. (Visit Finland 2016).

Inari offers wide landscapes of untouched taiga forest, treeless felltops, rugged lakes and open swampland. There are untamed nature preserves, heath and freely flowing rivers. Reindeer is a common sight in Inari, but also elks are spotted regularly, while Arctic fox, brown bear and wolverine and rarer visitors.

Inari is also home to many large gamebirds, popular targets among hunters. (Luxury Action 2016b.)

The region is home to Finland's largest national parks: Lemmenjoki and Urho Kekkonen National Parks. The expansive wilderness areas provide fantastic opportunities for nature tourism in terms of hiking, mountain biking, canoeing and kayaking.

Inari region welcomed 136.487 international tourists in 2015, which equals to 13,3% of all foreign travellers in Finnish Lapland in the same time period. If December numbers are excluded, one nationality did not strike out in particular, but majority of the tourists came from Japan (6%), Germany (5%), Switzerland and Sweden (both 3%). However when December's Christmas tourists are included, the UK travellers stand out counting to 10% of all international overnight stays. (Lapinliitto 2016.) It would be easy to draw a conclusion that the region attracts tourists from relatively close European countries. However since Japan is one of the leading market in the region, and the number of Chinese, Indian and Brazilian travellers is rapidly increasing (Lapinliitto 2016), the statistics cannot solely be explained by the close proximity.

The Northern Lights viewing, snowmobile safaris and husky rides are the most common secondary attractions in Inari region, but reindeer and Sami culture based experiences are becoming as common. Typical to Inari is what originally made the region famous: gold panning. Other activities include snowcat safaris, fishing in numerous rivers and lakes, and ice driving. Historically important sites, such as Ukonsaari, and Sami attractions are prominent part of Inari experience. (Luxury Action 2016a.)

2.3.4 Lapland, Sweden

Lapland in Swedish, or Swedish Lapland in English, is a province in the northernmost Sweden and part of Norrbotten and Västerbotten counties. The region borders Norway on the west and Finland in the Northeast. The natural border between Sweden and Finland is formed by the rivers descending from

lake Kilpisjärvi, and by Scandinavian Alps separating Sweden from Norway. Approximately half of the region is located above the Arctic Circle in Norrbotten's county (Visit Sweden 2016a.), forming the destination this research focuses in Swedish Arctic.

Sami, the indigenous people of Lapland, have occupied Lapland for thousands of years, and has a strong presence in Swedish Lapland still today. Most municipalities in the region have recognized Sami as the minority language. Initially, Swedish Lapland remained as the land of Nomanic Sami people. Moreover, especially Finns inhabited the region, and in fact Finnish culture and Sami culture lived side-by-side in northern Sweden. In addition to Sami language, Finnish language is still commonly spoken in Kiruna, the northernmost municipality in Swedish Lapland. The region was largely uninhabited wilderness, until ore was found under the ground of Kiruna. As a result, the first mining settlers arrived in the early 17th century, including the first Swedish arrivals in 1647 when the first mine was opened. (Lingren 2013.) Today Kiruna is home to the world's largest underground iron ore mine (LKAB 2016).

Mining industry led to the rise of Kiruna. The railway was built and jobs created, making Kiruna attractive and accessible place to relocate (Stance 1999; LKAB 2016). However the extensive mining has its consequences. The ground underneath the city has started to crack, and is expected to collapse in the near future. The city is currently in a process of being moved three kilometres to east. (Mauno 2015; the Guardian 2015.)

Today the population of Lapland in Norrbotten is nearly 56,000 (Statistics Sweden 2013) and the largest city is Kiruna, located in the municipality carrying the same name, and where one third of the county's population lives. In addition to mining, other primary industries are space physics and tourism, Kiruna receiving 40% of all tourism arrivals in Norrbotten county. Another notable industry is car testing as Swedish Lapland provides ideal location for testing international car brands in harsh Arctic conditions. (Lingren 2013.) Car testing

has also opened doors for recreational ice driving for tourists (Luxury Action 2016a).

Lapland is largely covered by forests, mountains, mires, grassland, lakes and rivers. The region has a number of national parks, including Abisko National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Area, Laponia Nature and Heritage Reserve. The great mammals in the area include elk, brown bear, wolf, wolverine, lynx, arctic fox and otter. There are a number of small towns and villages dotted around the province, but only a small portion of the land is cultivated or can be seen as urban. Yet the country provides a great road and railway network, and has a number of airports, thus making the access to the region relatively easy. (Stance 1999.)

In Norrbotten county 30% of the tourists were international travellers, and the number of travellers to the region is increasing. In addition to physical attractions in the region, the appeal for the travellers to Norrbotten is to experience exotic culture and nature (Länsstyrelserna 2013). According to overnight statistics, from the total guest nights in 2013 Norway, Germany, Finland and the UK were the largest international source markets. Japanese was the most notable non-European nationalities in Swedish Lapland. (SCB 2013 as cited in Swedish Lapland Tourism Board 2015.)

Swedish Lapland is the home to many globally recognized attractions in Sweden. IceHotel, world's first commercial accommodation structure entirely built on ice carved from Lake Jukkasjärvi, is located to Kiruna. The Aurora Sky Station, world famous location for Northern Lights spotting, can be found in Abisko near Norwegian border. In addition to Abisko, Björkliden and Riksgränsen are some of the best international ski resorts in Sweden, all located to Swedish Lapland. Kebnekaisa, Sweden's highest mountain, is situated in Swedish wilderness near Nikkaluokta. This mountainous region, popular for somewhat extreme hiking, is also the home to glaciers. (Swedish Lapland 2016.)

2.3.5 Svalbard, Norway

A great part of Norway lays above the Arctic Circle, including entire counties of Troms and Finnmark in Norwegian Lapland, as well as smaller Arctic Islands and archipelagos (Swaney 1999). For this research Svalbard archipelago is selected, due to its highly interesting location between the mainland Europe and the North Pole (Swaney 1999), in addition to the fantastic opportunities for tourism product development (Viken 2006, 128-141).

Svalbard has been under the sovereignty of Norway since 1925. However the archipelago and its main island Spitsbergen was founded already some 1000 years ago by Vikings. First Scandinavian and Baltic trappers settled in Svalbard late 18th century, with focus mainly on Polar bears and Arctic foxes. The first winterings were catastrophic and it took a century until overwintering of trappers became common, even if still only among those with adventurous mind and love for wilderness. In early 20th century hunting polar bears became a popular adventure, bringing seasonal hunters to Svalbard in additions to seasoned trappers. Professional hunting remained popular until 1973 when the Polar bears became globally protected. (Stance 2012.) Trappers' presence, nevertheless, still lives strong in Svalbard. There are shops, restaurants and lodging carrying the name Trapper, and even books have been written about the most famous trappers, in addition to trapper's lifestyle being important element in exhibitions and museums about life in Arctic (Visit Svalbard 2016).

According to the Statistics Norway (2015), the population of the Svalbard archipelago is around 2700 and majority of the residents live in Longyearbyen that is the largest settlement as well as the administrative centre of Svalbard, and the world's northernmost town. Svalbard does not have indigenous people, but approximately 65% of the people residing in the islands are Norwegian, followed by residents from some 40 nationalities, including people from Ukraine, Russia, Sweden and Thailand. (SSB 2015.)

Mining is the main industry and employer while research and tourism are growing importance in the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. Early 1990s the

Norwegian Parliament committed to increasing the number of tourists to Svalbard. The figures of arriving visitors have steadily increased ever since, and some 60,000-65,000 tourists visit the island every year, and about half of the tourists arrive on cruise ships. (Miljøstatus 2013.) During the summer season, the peak months from June to August, the accommodation in the island is virtually fully-booked. Therefore new ways to spread the tourists to other seasons have been introduced. According to Trude Pettersen in Barents Observer (2012), online site offering news from the Barents and the Arctic regions, 78% of the tourists visiting Svalbard are from Norwegian mainland, followed by Swedish (16%), British (16%), Danish (13%) and German (9%). It seems relatively easy to speculate that the relatively close proximity and existing flight connections explain the statistics.

In 1995 the Norwegian government set an ambitious goal to make 'Svalbard the best managed Wilderness area in the world', and a set of strict regulations to minimise the human impact came into effect. However, this has led to debate whether the rules, that for instance entirely forbid visits to a number of historical sites, have the expected impact from the environmental point of view. As it seems, the state regulations mainly affect tourists, as strict rules forbid the visits to many cultural heritage sites, while there's very little affect on the oil, marine and mining industries that are usually having higher negative impact on the wilderness environment. (Umbreit 2009; Stance 2012.) Stance (2012) also states, that even before the government set the full ban to the sites, regulations existed preventing wear and tear. The damage to the sites was not caused by majority of tourists, but the minority that violated the existing rules. According to him, prohibiting all entries to culturally interested areas affect only people who would have not caused damage in the first place, while the regulations are not protecting the sites from those violating the rules.

The main secondary attractions in Svalbard include snowmobiling, husky sledding, kayaking, wildlife watching, and Northern Lights viewing (Svalbard Booking 2016; Spitsbergen Travel 2016) Svalbard has, however, a lot more to offer. Svalbard's natural attractions, like glaciers, ice caves, icebergs, rugged landscape, wildlife, bird sanctuaries, and surprisingly rich flora deserves to be

mentioned. From the archipelago 65% is protected including a number of sites regarded as cultural heritage. The landscape in Svalbard varies from steep, icy mountain peaks to open tundra plains (Stance 2012.), giving the scenery radical contrasts. Topped with permafrost and seasonal temperature changings colouring the landscape, the destination is a heaven for anyone interested in glaciology (Honkanen 2016), or simply wishing to experience how the nature and seasons shape the landscape and the life in the Arctic (Luxury Action 2016b).

Speaking with the local Arctic guides in Svalbard during my site inspection, polar bears remain the key attraction for Svalbard. Even that these gigantic mammals are nowadays internationally protected, are they still seriously threatened by the consequences of the climate change (Polar Bears International 2016). Other wildlife in Svalbard includes Arctic fox, Svalbard reindeer, seals, walrus, and various whales, in addition to numerous birds (Umbreit 2009).

2.3.6 Nordurland, Iceland

Iceland, the northern island nation located between North Atlantic and Arctic Ocean, is known as a country of fire and ice, and the country's natural attractions offer a unique contrast: waterfalls, glaciers, volcanoes, geysers, lava fields and highlands (Visit Iceland 2016).

Iceland was first visited by the Celtic monks, and soon followed Norsemen, the first settlers to Iceland in 860s. The population of Iceland, descending from Scandinavians, grew steadily, but was affected by volcanic eruptions, plague and mass migration to North America. The republic of Iceland was finally formed in 1944 after the country being under Danish rule, and the population increased even more rapidly, growing from 100,000 people in 1926 to 200,000 in 1968. Today's population in Iceland is 330,000 people from which 90% are considered as Icelandic. (Islandstofa 2016b.)

Iceland's economy has gone through turbulences in the past decade, especially after the collapse of its relatively large banking industry. Currently the island nation's main industries in addition to various services are manufacturing (especially marine resources) and fisheries. (Islandstofa 2016a.) The tourism industry in Iceland is booming; the total number of foreign overnight stays in Iceland was 4.4 million in 2014, the country experiencing a major growth of 25% comparing to the previous year (Statistics Iceland 2014).

Even though that Iceland is considered as an Arctic destination, in fact only the northernmost islands belonging to Iceland are located on or above the Arctic Circle: Grimsey and Kolbeinsey (Swaney 1999). Kolbeinsey is literally just a rock poking out of the ocean, and Grimsey with a population of 100 people and much greater bird colonies (Norlandair 2016) is hardly a major attraction either, even that the island has the basic services to cater visitors. Therefore, an exception has been made related to the criteria, and for Iceland this paper will introduce Nordurland, the northernmost region of Iceland, including Grimsey and Kolbeinsey, as the destination for Iceland.

The region Nordurland in English is referred as the North Iceland (Visit North Iceland 2016). The population of Nordurland is 36,000 people, and the main urban settlement is Akureyri with 18,000 inhabitants. Akureyri is the second largest city in Iceland after the capital Reykjavik in the south, and is home to international Akureyri airport. The nature in Nordurland goes with Iceland's image as the country of hot and cold: hot springs, craters, geothermal nature baths, waterfalls and lava fields. From the total number of international tourist to Iceland 14% visited Nordurland. The majority of the visitors came from Germany (50%), the US (27%), France (25%) and the UK (24%). (Statistics Iceland 2014.)

Husavik in Nordurland is seen as the whale watching capital of Iceland. Iconic puffins, dolphins, plentiful birds, and seals are all native to Nordurland, making marine mammal and bird watching common secondary attractions in Nordurland. Other activities available in the region include ice climbing, cave exploring, horse riding and geothermal baths. (Visit North Iceland 2015.)

2.3.7 Arctic Circle, Greenland, Denmark

Greenland is an autonomous country but counted as part of Denmark alongside Faroe Islands. The island of Greenland is the largest in the world, and lies between Svalbard and Canadian high Arctic Archipelago. From the total population of 57,000 people, 88% are Inuit, indigenous people of Greenland. The remaining population is mainly Danish and Icelandic. (Ympäristöministeriö 2007). The capital of Greenland is Nuuk, situated below the Arctic Circle in southwest of Greenland. Most of the inhabitants of Greenland are dotted around the coast, as the inner land lies beneath thick cover of ice, making inner Greenland a hostile area. (Swaney 1999.)

Thule, facing Canada in the most northwest region of Greenland, provided a passage to Greenland for the earliest settlers that arrived from Canada some 4-5000 years ago. These Inuit people, who brought the Thule culture to Greenland, are the ancestors of the island's Inuit population. Later Norse settlers found a home in Greenland, and Viking ruins are still to be found on the island. However the Vikings did not stay permanently, but retreated around 1500AD. Hence the Inuit remained as the only population in the island for a long period up until 16th century, when the religious and scientific expeditions and later whalers started to arrive to Greenland. (Visit Greenland 2016.) Today, Inuit people living in the larger settlements have adapted modern ways of life living alongside Danes, while the indigenous population residing further in the north still live by the traditional means (Air Greenland 2016).

Greenland is the home for the world's largest national park, named as Man and the Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. Most of the park lies under an ice cap, but the region is also home to wildlife typical for Greenland: walrus, seals, whales, muskoxen, polar bears, caribou, Arctic wolves, foxes and hare. Greenland is largely covered by ice sheet or treeless tundra. Colourful but delicate flora, bushes and berries give a great contrast to vast ice caps that dominate the landscape. (Visit Greenland 2016.) The diversified nature of the island has for long attracted a number of professional botanists, biologists, geologists and

other Arctic researchers to visit the country for scientific purposes (Swaney 1999).

Only two towns in Greenland are connected via road access, while the rest of the island is reached either by air, sea, skis, dog sleds, foot or snowmobile. The main airport of Greenland is located to Kangerlussuaq, connecting Greenland to Denmark with regular flights. The larger towns of Greenland are connected by regularly scheduled flights, but most of the remote towns have only a weekly or seasonal route by helicopter. (Air Greenland 2016.) Especially helicopter routes are often heavily affected by the weather (Swaney 1999). In the southwest coast of Greenland it is possible to travel by sea as well, as the route is operated by a regular ferry route (Arctic Umiaq Line 2016). However the route does not continue further north from Ilulissat, as Greenland's northernmost ice-free port is located to Sisimiut (Swaney 1999). The facilities at the ferries are basic and the journeys long, although the passing scenery is worth witnessing (Arctic Umiaq Line 2016).

Main industries in Greenland are fishery, energy and minerals, tourism, hunting, and agriculture. Tourism has been on focus for the past two decades, and the annual number of arrivals has multiplied from 3,500 to 35,000 in the past 20 years. The government of Greenland recognises the challenge with the increasing number of visitors to the island where the main attraction is its exotic, unspoiled nature. While tourism economically plays an increasingly important role, the growth of visitors to Greenland should be sustainable and focus given on environmental awareness. (Naalakkersuisut 2016).

November and December are the quietest time for tourists in Greenland, the arrivals by air in Kangerlussuaq plummeting to a few thousand monthly visitors from the peak month of July with 10,000 arrivals. The majority of the land-based tourists (cruise tourism excluded) to Greenland come from Scandinavia (42,2%), Western Europe (24,7%) and the US (15,3%). The most common activities among visitors in Greenland are guided sailing, sightseeing, hiking, dog sledding, glacier hiking, interaction with the locals, air sightseeing and gastronomic experiences. (Visit Greenland 2013.)

For this research, an interesting destination could have been Qaanaaq in Thule district, close to Canada. The population of 625 Inuit residing in Qaanaaq still live from traditional hunting, polar bears and sea mammals providing the livelihood here. However, due to limited facilities and experiences available in the area, the destination Arctic Circle in western Greenland has been selected instead. Arctic Circle offers fairly effortless access and experience possibilities beyond imagination. The settlements located within the destination Arctic Circle are Kangerlussuaq, Maniitsoq and Sisimiut, with total population of approximately 8000 people (Air Greenland 2016).

Greenland Tourism statistics (2016) define 31% of the international visitors to destination Arctic Circle as 'Globerotters'; well travelled people seeking for new knowledge about the world, real connection with the destination and its people, and who appreciate independent travel with quality guides. This is followed by 16% of the visitors falling under the category 'Nature Lovers' who are motivated to travel by the natural scenery and do not shy away from physical effort should this be the way to get closer to the nature. Comparable figures on the national level for Greenland are 26% and 16%. (Greenland Tourism Statistics 2016.)

Secondary attractions in destination Arctic Circle are endless. Kangerlussuaq provides direct access to the Ice Cap, and overnight excursions on the vast ice sheet are possible. Also an annual Polar Circle Marathon is arranged here. In addition, the town is home to many husky dogs and some 4,000 muskoxen living in the surrounding tundra and the settlement is even home to a 18 hole golf course thanks to the former US military base that occupied Kangerlussuaq up until 1992 (WOGAC 2016). Sisimiut, Greenland's second largest town, holds annual Arctic Circle Race, the world's toughest ski race. Maniitsoq is home to anglers, but offers also a perfect place for heli-skiing and kayaking. Due to rich local wildlife, spotting a whale can almost be guaranteed here in the summer months. (Air Greenland 2016.) In the summer there's access by foot from Kangerlussuaq to Sisimiut, while in the wintertime this 160km journey can be taken on skis or a snowmobile. Sisimiut, also offer cultural attractions such as Taseralik culture house.

2.3.8 Nunavut, Canada

The history of Arctic Canada goes back thousands of years. The Inuits moving from Alaska inhabited the northern Canada, including Arctic Archipelago, 4,000 – 8,000 years ago, while the first signs of habitation in the Northern Territories tracks back to more than 10,000 years, when Athapaskans, indigenous people of North America, are told to have arrived to Canada. The Vikings were the first Europeans in the northern Canada, however they did not stay permanently hence their influence did not remain in the culture. After Vikings, many European adventurers passed the region while searching in vein the Northwest passage to Pacific, but it was not until in 1906 that famous Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen navigated the passage successfully. (Swaney 1999.)

The passing explorers started the whale and fur trade with the local Inuit population in Yukon, followed by missionaries who built infrastructure to the Canadian Arctic, such as schools and churches. Canada peacefully claimed the land in 1870, and it was not until 1896 that the region gained public's interest as gold was found in Klondike. The gold rush increased the local population and further infrastructure was rapidly needed. After the gold run out in Yukon, Canadian government's interest shifted towards Northwest Territories in Arctic Canada, where minerals, radium, oil and later again gold were found, now growing the population in Yellowknife, making the place the capital of then Northwest Territories, an area that at this stage still included Nunavut. (Swaney 1999.)

The Inuit population in Canada suffered of the social changes taking place in Canada in 1900s. This led to long debate whether the Inuit should be given an own territory. In 1999 Nunavut, the homeland for the Inuit people was officially created. (Swaney 1999.)

Nunavut's prominent feature, alongside its indigenous Inuit population, is the vast Arctic Archipelago made up of dozens of islands. The capital of Nunavut is Iqaluit located on the Baffin Island. With a population of only 37,000 people

(Nunavut 2016) in a region similar in size with Greenland, the territory is sparsely inhabited and the world's northernmost populated place. Tundra covers nearly all Nunavut, and the vegetation including berries, lichens, Arctic Willows, moss and grassland. Nunavut is also home to glaciers, fjords, icebergs and the highest mountain Barbeau Peak reaches to 2616m. Typical wildlife in Nunavut includes polar bears, whales, seals caribou, elk and muskoxen. (Explore Nunavut 2016.)

Nunavut is rich in minerals, and mining plays a major role in its economy. Fisheries, traditional harvesting and tourism and are other important industries. (Nunavut 2016). Approximately 30,500 people visited Nunavut in 2013 and the main attractions were wildlife, various national parks and visiting the Heritage River (Maher et al 2014; Nunavut 2012). The most visited destination is Qikiqtaaluk. Majority of the travellers to Nunavut are Canadians, international leisure travellers representing only 9% of the tourists in 2011. (Nunavut 2012.) Nunavut is receiving only approximately 6% of all tourists visiting Canadian Arctic. Underlying reasons for the inadequate spread of the visitors is lack of road infrastructure, local product, marketing, and skilled workforce. (Maher et al 2014.)

Nunavut is the only region in the Arctic where trophy hunting of big mammals such as polar and brown bears is legal (Nunavut 2012), but the reports show sport hunting is on decline while ecotourism is rising (Belik 2013 as cited in Maher et al 2014). Culture tourism, fishing and hunting, and adventure tourism are most significant tourism markets in Nunavut. In addition to cultural experiences, other secondary attractions include hiking, kayaking, wildlife viewing, skiing, hunting and fishing (Nunavut 2012.)

2.3.9 Alaska, USA

The first people to Alaska arrived 23 – 25,000 years ago via the Bering Land Bridge from what we nowadays know as Siberia. The Inuit people followed approximately 15,000 years later. Today's indigenous Alaskans descent thus

not only from Inuit but also the Athapaskans, Aleuts, and a number of coastal tribes. (Swaney 1999.)

A number of European explorers found a new home in the shores of Alaska, but it was not until the rather brutal Russian fur traders arrived that caused trouble with the indigenous people, and violently taking the power over Alaska. However as the fur industry declined and wars stroke, Alaska became less meaningful for Russia and the area was seen worthless and sold for a nominal fee to the US in 1867. At this point the sparsely populated Alaska was seen as pure hinterland. Afterwards new wealth was found in Alaska: whales, salmon, gold and oil, and the population grew fast, Juneau was named as the capital of Alaska, and immigrants soon outnumbering the indigenous people of Alaska. (Swaney 1999.)

Later during 2nd world war Japan attacked Alaska, US military was opened in Alaska with prominent presence building further road networks and airfields. In 1964 the shores of southern Alaska were hit by an earthquake destroying many of the towns. However these tragic occasions were followed by a long-term economic boom in Alaska, allowing the state to bloom. Nevertheless the oil prices eventually plummeted, and as a nail in the coffin oilship Exxon Valdez struck a rock and spilled 11 million gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound, managing to save only a small portion of the oil and contaminating 790km of the shore. (Swaney 1999.) Still years alter the local fishermen were trying to come to terms with the economic loss caused by the accident that caused probably one of the most horrid environmental disaster in human history (Stonehouse & Snyder 2010).

The main industries in Alaska include, perhaps not surprisingly, oil and gas but also forestry, mining and seafood industries, and gradually tourism. While the revenues from tourism are not yet significant, tourism is playing an increasingly important role in the society as a job provider. (Maher et al 2014.) In 2014 - 2015 circa two million people visited Alaska, from which nearly half was cruise tourism. The tourism is highly seasonal with focus on the summer period. The

number of arrivals to Alaska has been fairly static the past 10 years. (McDowell Group 2015)

Alaska is the US's least densely populated state. Country's highest mountain Denali is located to southcentral Alaska. Mountains, over 5000 glaciers and icecaps, volcanoes, islands, lakes, flat boglands, spruce forests and wild taiga (Swaney 1999) all characterise Alaska. Alaska's wilderness is home to grizzly bear, caribou, salmon, elk and wolves. Marine Mammals include polar bears and a number of whales. The capital city is Juneau located to Southeast Alaska. However the most populated city is Anchorage, situated in South-central Alaska.

The brief history of Alaska revealed that the people migrating to Alaska settled down in the south of Alaska. The interior remains mostly inhabited wilderness, and the sparsely populated coast in the north is home to crude oil companies. The main attractions in Alaska are all located in the southern part of the state, the North coast (North Slope) largely remaining inaccessible, flat, harsh and hostile. (Swaney 1999.) Therefore an exception was made to introduce the entire state of Alaska as a destination, including the southern part that lies entirely below the Arctic Circle.

The tourism in Alaska is generally nature-based, with focus on secondary attractions such as wildlife viewing, fishing and hunting, flight-seeing, cruising and hiking (Travel Alaska 2016). Alaska's Arctic has tried to gain from the tourism industry, but the non-existent infrastructure hampers the attempts severely. However the sea ice is expected to shrink in the north, hence the region will probably become more accessible by sea. (Maher et al. 2014.)

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

3.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research method was used carrying out this research. Qualitative research is a profound study on motivation and attitudes, and the aim is not to provide statistics as the case can be with the secondary data (Marcouse et al. 2003, 22-27). Taylor-Powell & Renner (2003) argue that qualitative data consists of words and observation instead of numbers. In contrast to quantitative research, qualitative approach does not translate data into mathematics but filters and analyses the data, and as with all data, interpretation is required to gain understanding and order (Taylor-Powell & Renner 2003).

The qualitative research methods used for this study were divided in secondary and primary data collection. Secondary data was collected from the Internet and literature. The primary data was collected via interviews and participant observations. A further content analysis was constructed based on the interviews. Additionally collaborative and comparative benchmarking analysis was carried out based on the primary and secondary data collections. This has been illustrated in Figure 2.

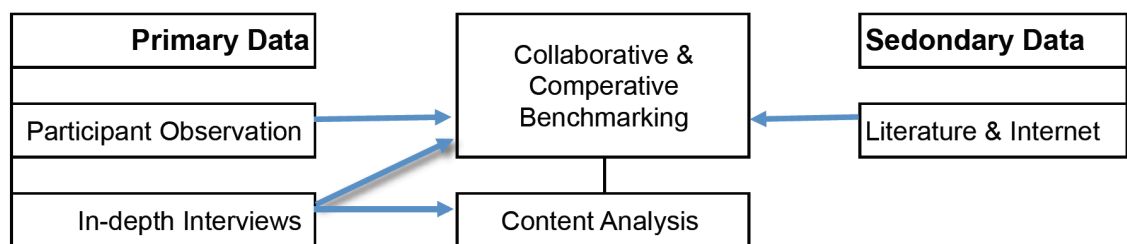


Figure 2: Data Collection and Analyses Process

3.2 Data Collection and Theoretical Background

Secondary data is information that is already collected and available in a variety of sources, such as literature, films, and Internet (Marcouse et al. 2003, 22-27.). The secondary research in this study involved collecting information on the

Arctic, Arctic tourism and the Arctic tourism destinations from the Internet and industry literature. The outcome was presented in the chapter 'The Arctic as Operational Environment for Tourism' that formed the theoretical background for this study. Additionally secondary data was partly presented chapter 'Arctic Luxury Travel', as luxury travel forms other part of the theoretical background.

The process of gathering relevant secondary data is also called as obtaining background data, and usually further research is required (Marcouse et al. 2003, 22-27.). The process of collecting data directly from relevant people is known as primary research. The methods of collecting such information include observation and in-depth interviews (Marcouse et al. 2003, 22-27.), both of which are employed in this study to support the secondary research.

3.3 Benchmarking Analysis

3.3.1 Collaborative and Comparative Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a management tool to help improving performance by comparing and measuring specific aspects, and the aim is to identify the best practices or achievements (Marcouse 2003, 363-367). According to Marcouse et al. (2003), as long as the activity or process is measurable, it can be benchmarked. The principle of benchmarking is to identify points of comparison, against with everything is compared. Benchmarking can be used as a tool to compete, collaborate and compare. Traditionally, competitive benchmarking was about measuring own performance against competitors and the results used in competitive analysis. However benchmarking has evolved since, and the processes of collaborative and comparative approaches introduced. (Ettorchi-Tardy, Levif & Michel 2012.)

Collaborative benchmarking is about sharing the knowledge on the indicator being measured, shifting benchmarking from quantitative approach to qualitative approach. Comparative benchmarking gives focus on comparing similar elements in different areas. The benefit of comparative benchmarking is that competitive factor is diminished and the aspect for learning is articulated. In

both options the benchmarking process is based on voluntary collaboration of the participants. (Ettorchi-Tardy, Levif & Michel 2012.)

3.3.2 Benchmarking Process

This thesis was methodically working on each of the eight Arctic countries located on the Arctic Circle, assessing a meaningful destination in each country. Attention, in addition to history and current state of the tourism in the destination, was paid to unique local attractions, wildlife, current tourism product, indigenous people, and cultural aspects in each destination. By using the collaborative and comparative benchmarking methods, the information was then gathered on figures. The collaborative process included data from the interviews and participant observation, while comparative process involved the secondary data from the chapter 'Arctic Tourism Destinations'. Both benchmarking processes were mixed in order to gather as accurate data as possible for a meaningful comparison and measurement.

Comparative and collaborative benchmarking processes were employed to illustrate the differences and similarities in each destination in order to identify the most unique experiences in each Arctic destination. The idea of these figures is to demonstrate and measure each destination's competitiveness in the key elements for the growing tourism niches of culture tourism, adventure tourism, and nature tourism. In addition, the key attractions in the Arctic, including wildlife observations, feel of wilderness and Arctic phenomena of the Northern Lights and midnight sun are similarly measured and compared in illustrative figures.

The elements illustrated in the figures were measured by rating each element from zero to five, zero meaning non-existent feasibility and five equalling to high feasibility. Figure 3 illustrates the measuring system. Each element was given points keeping a number of variables in mind: for instance Inari cannot be given high points as a brown bear viewing destination, even though brown bears are spotted in Inari, because the bears are rarely spotted and there is no organised brown bear viewing activities available.

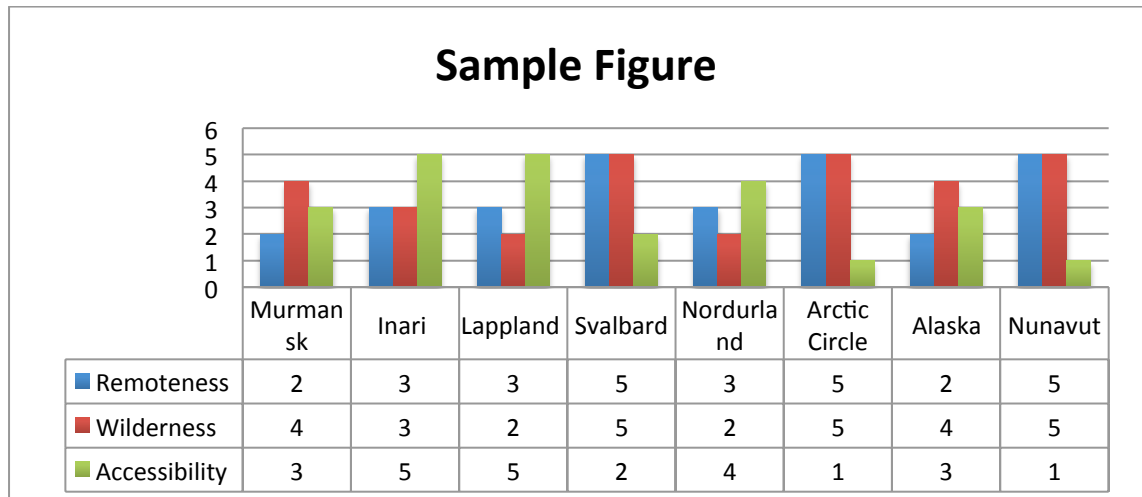


Figure 3: Sample Figure on Feasibility Measuring System

3.4 Interviews

3.4.1 Semi-Structured and Unstructured Interviews

According to the definition offered by Merriam-Webster dictionary (2015), empirical means something based on observation or experience. To find empirical evidence based on the genuine Arctic destination experience, a number of experts working within the luxury travel niche in the Arctic countries, in this study herewith called as luxury travel actors, have been interviewed to give further insight into the Arctic destinations. Both semi-structured and unstructured interviews were carried out. The content of the interviews was then used in benchmarking and content analyses, developing the concept of Arctic luxury, and to develop a unique circumpolar Arctic luxury experience.

3.4.2 Interview Process

During site inspection trips, and also via emails and phone calls, a number of interviews with the actors in the Arctic luxury travel industry were carried out. In total two people were interviewed from Finland, one from Sweden, one from Norway, three from Russia, two from Canada, and one from the US. Even though the topic and the purpose of this study were extremely well received and created excitement and positive feelings among the participating luxury travel actors, the reality is that in the end not all actors responded. For this reason, no

empirical data other than my own observations has been included from Greenland.

Due to confidentiality reasons the interviewees and the companies they represented were not named but described here as 'Luxury Travel Actors (LTA)' with corresponding number and the country represented. The idea was to gather qualitative data in the form of empirical destination evidence. Therefore I strongly encouraged the actors to provide me with 'top of the mind' information, in order to hear their genuine thoughts on each of the topics.

The interviews served a number of purposes. Firstly, the aim of the interviews was to find unique elements, including educational aspects, for the circumpolar Arctic luxury experience. Secondly, the idea was to find empirical evidence for the content analysis and to support the benchmarking analysis. Thirdly, the interviews intended to shed light on the areas needing worldwide protection, in order to develop a sustainable circumpolar Arctic luxury experience. Additionally, the responses were aimed to assist in developing the concept of Arctic Luxury. Lastly, the objective was to find evidence to define the target group for Arctic luxury. The interviews covered six questions in total, and each question and the results are discussed methodically.

3.5 Content Analysis

Beck, Campbell & Shrives (2010) explains that content analysis is a method to study a broad range of textual material, whereas relevant text is then extracted and selected data analysed. According to Stempler (2012) content analysis is a systematic technique of analysing textual data. The main benefit of this approach is to reduce the amount of data into content categories. One of the techniques is the frequency count, where one of the assumptions is that repeated words or phrases indicate importance. The content of the interviews was examined, and the frequency of the words used to describe Arctic destinations was calculated, and the words collected in a word cloud.

3.6 Participant Observation

According to Taylor-Powell and Steele (1996), observation also offers a possibility to document aspects without having to rely on people's willingness to respond to questions, and is especially useful method e.g. when looking for direct information, when the physical evidence, like environmental features, is available, or the topic of the study is behaviour. In the past few months I have made field trips to a number of Arctic destinations. During these trips I met people working within the tourism industry in the Arctic and travellers visiting the Arctic destinations, and in general experienced the Arctic and the location's feasibility as an Arctic tourism destination. The participant observation during these inspection trips has been used as a research method in this study.

3.7 Limitations

Certain limitations for this study existed. The definition of the Arctic set the fourth limitation, as nearly all products and destinations below the Arctic Circle have been excluded, even if they would have matched with the destination criteria otherwise. Some other characteristic destinations, such as Qaanaaq in Greenland or Yakutia in Arctic Russia, are both situated above the Arctic Circle in geographically fascinating locations. However these destinations had to be excluded due to limited access and activity opportunities in the destinations. Similarly some exceptions had to be made and destinations partially below the Arctic Circle are included: in Alaska very little tourism infrastructure was found above the Arctic Circle, and the main island of Iceland lies entirely below the Arctic Circle. Additionally, as the target group is private high-end travellers, only the destinations with existing infrastructure such as airfields and comfortable lodging are considered.

Secondly, it must be noted that it is not possible to give exact figures for the number of travellers visiting Arctic regions in each country. The statistical reporting in eight Arctic countries does not match with the definition of Arctic and the countries have different methods in collecting data (Hall & Johnston 1995). To break the Arctic countries into Arctic destinations does not make the work any easier, as the statistics are usually based on a region within

administrative boundaries, not on the geographical definition on Arctic. For this reason the use of statistical data in this study is minimal.

Thirdly, it was not always possible to find comparable or relevant data due to linguistic issues. This was the case especially with the Russian Arctic. The fourth limitation concerns the target group for this study. As the commissioner does not focus on group or cruise travel with fixed departures, these markets were excluded from this research. Additionally, considering the needs of luxury travellers, only the Arctic destinations with existing infrastructure for private luxury travel were considered.

Also during the interviews with the people from the Arctic travel industry some limitations were faced. The topic of this research received an overwhelmingly positive reaction, and it was encouraging to realise that the project was welcomed with such a strong support and interest. However the interviews got easily side-tracked and became hours of long, intensive planning meetings, where also confidential information was shared. Therefore I quickly realised that recording the interviews was not an option: the presence of a recording device even hindered the discussions.

Lastly, for a personal reason sport hunting has been excluded from any recommendations and conclusions in this study. Hunting is important for the ecological balance in Arctic countries, common hobby among the people in the Arctic, provide traditional livelihood to the indigenous people, and game is essential part for Arctic cuisine. However, the author of this thesis feels that promoting hunting in the Arctic is controversial and attracts wrong kind of tourists. The line between hunting for living and hunting for a trophy is fine.

4 COMPARISON OF ARCTIC TOURISM DESTINATIONS

4.1 Destination Luxury Travel Actors

4.1.1 Unlocking Arctic Uniqueness

The interviews were started with the intension of understanding the uniqueness of the destination. The first question aimed to unlock the unique elements in the Arctic destination as experienced by a local. The questions *'What is unique to your destination, comparing to the other countries located in the Arctic?'* and *'Imagine that this is your moment to create awareness. What would you like to tell the world about your destination?'* were asked. The first question was also aimed to provide further content for the benchmarking analysis and content analysis, and the latter question intended to bring out the education aspect of the destination.

All LTAs felt strongly their destination was unique comparing to the other Arctic countries and destinations. For instance LTA1 (Finland) described the location of Inari between east and west as unique, and appreciated the everyman's rights that people, including travellers, enjoyed in the destination. Further he explained the destination was safe and had the cleanest air and nature.

LTA6 (Norway) mentioned an interesting unique factor: the non-existent culture.

'The fact it has no indigenous population, everybody and nobody is a local. This has an interesting effect on the wildlife as the animals have not evolved being hunted so they remain calm or just curious around human presence'.

Similarly, LTA5 (Iceland) described the country as Europe's youngest settlement and continued that the country's history can be tracked down day by day from the very moment the first person entered Iceland: 'the only recorded history of no man's land come from Iceland'. This has made the culture in Iceland very unique according to LTA5 (Iceland). Perhaps for this reason LTA4 (Iceland) described Icelanders as storytellers. While Iceland is perhaps a relatively young island, LTA6 (Norway) continued:

'Svalbard is a very old island at 620,000,000 years, this has allowed every type of rock to form on the island and from valley to valley it is a constantly changing landscape'.

According to LTA5, people should be aware of the fact that Iceland is not affected by harsh winter like the other Arctic destinations, even though people perceive Iceland differently. He explained:

'Iceland is perceived as the land of ice and snow, while Iceland in fact has volcanic soil, and the country is run by geothermal and hydro energies'.

LTA3 (Sweden) considered accessibility making Lappland different from other Arctic countries. 'Think of Alaska, from New York you are quicker here in the wilderness or Kiruna than in Alaska!'. Further he explained that while Kiruna airport is modern with several daily flights, one is out in the unspoilt wilderness within minutes. While wilderness and nature were the key attractions, he also listed strong culture and long history as the unique characters in the destination. However LTA3 continues that global warming puts the Arctic under threat:

'if we do not have winter, and these protected areas, we do not have our business here. In the Arctic you need to be so careful with the environment'.

According to LTA10 (Russia) the biggest population of Atlantic salmon makes Kola Peninsula unique. Additionally he described the peninsula as the complete wilderness, and due to lack of roads some places can only be reached by helicopter. Yet you can find luxury level amenities and even WiFi in the Russian wilderness. LTA11 (Russia) adds that the salmon in the region can weight up to 20 to 25 kilos. However, at the same time salmon in some areas is protected and must always be released, but regrettably there are poachers ignoring the rule.

LTA12 (Russia) believes that Kirovsk's location, surrounded by Khibiny Mountains, is unique comparing to the other Arctic destinations. He explains that since the mountains are not very high, they offer activities for all ages and

level of fitness. In addition he tells the place has the best snow conditions and the season is longer than anywhere else. While the destination requires further development, he believes the world should be aware of the fantastic snow conditions in the destination:

‘The opportunity to use snow almost all year around, it can be found almost nowhere anymore, we have the earliest snow, and if we had the guests, we could keep the ski resorts open until the beginning of June... If we had this opportunity, we would also have the latest snow in the world’.

Another unique character, according to him, is the contrast of total wilderness and the presence of industrial disaster in Kola Peninsula.

For LTA8 (Canada) the plentiful wildlife makes Nunavut unique Arctic destination:

‘As one of the world’s most pristine ecosystem, Nunavut is home to half the world’s population of polar bears, millions of birds, hundreds of thousands of caribou, tens of thousands of musk-ox, walrus, whales and much more. You will find wildlife close to every community. The Territorial and National Parks, Bird and Wildlife Sanctuaries offer incredible viewing opportunities’.

Regardless of the high number of wildlife species, LTA8 would like to make the world aware of the low number of people in the region, making it truly pristine:

‘Nunavut’s entire population, an estimated 29,500 people, would fill barely half the seats of a modern stadium. Nunavut is space, lots of it, pristine, barren, rugged oftentimes, a spiritual experience!’.

LTA9 (USA) explains that what makes Alaska unique, is the combination of wilderness and accessibility. While the destination has more wilderness than Scandinavian countries, it is much more accessible than Russia and Canada that also are homes to great wilderness. In addition she tells how in small communities in Alaska people still live the way of life of trappers and hunters, disconnected from the modern society. However what she would like to make people aware of is the friendliness of the local population in Alaska, as well as the variety of nature-based experiences.

The interviews have described well how different the Arctic destinations are. While one celebrates accessibility, another is unique for its remoteness. What the actors wanted to make the world aware of, were the people in the Arctic, and the untouched wilderness, pristine nature. I was in fact quite astonished that not one actor mentioned achievements of the people or remarkable milestones in the history. In the Arctic, for the people in the travel industry, it seems to be all about the nature and the people, and any potential threat affecting the future livelihoods of the locals or the environment, was given immediate attention.

4.1.2 Protecting the Arctic

As previously discussed, educational element is important for the private luxury travellers. In addition, as sustainable development is the key in the Arctic due to region's fragility, this thesis is studying the importance of taking sustainability into consideration for the product development of the circumpolar Arctic luxury experiences. Therefore the following question was discussed: *Is there something specific to your destination that needs worldwide protection?*

LTA9 (USA) did not think for a second before she replied 'nature definitely. It's the nature' and shed light into sustainable development plans concerning building plans for infrastructure and oil industry. Similarly LT3 (Sweden) responded nature and explained how other industries in Lapland, such as windmill parks and mining should be developed in harmony with the nature. Again LTA2 (Finland) concluded that the entire nature needs protection: 'if the nature goes, so goes our jobs, and everything' and LTA1 (Finland) was worried how mining affects nature. Additionally LTA8 (Canada) considered nature, telling how 'the expanse of pristine land is vast but remains very fragile to human intervention'. Additionally he regarded Nunavut's renowned Inuit culture as a topic of protection.

LTA12 (Russia) listed the entire mountain of Khibiny under protection. He explained how Kola Peninsula is home to some 800 minerals, and if the mining is started again in Khibiny, this will be the end for tourism industry.

'There are 800 types of different minerals that come from the Khibiny mountain, and the mining companies actually pay more taxes than tourism industry. So of course if the mining company find deposits, tourism is not priority, like a few years ago when they found apatite phosphate deposits, they wanted to start mining again. But finally the deposits were not that big, it did not happen. If they would start digging there, the whole Khibiny Massif and tourism would be over. So the mountain needs protection'.

LTA4 (Iceland) took the protection even further from LTA12, wanting to protect entire Iceland excluding the capital. He explained how the country has many UNESCO sites, but also fragile natural areas that should not be visited without local guides, and continued he'd allow only private travellers to Iceland if it was up to him.

LTA10 (Russia) wanted to protect the last remaining untouched tundra of Europe, found in Kola Peninsula. According to him the tundra makes the place unique, and it should be protected from pollution and remain untouched. LTA11 (Russia) was concerned over salmon, and wanted to protect Atlantic salmon from pollution and poachers. LTA6 (Norway) would list Polar bears, whales, birdlife and glaciers under even further protection in Svalbard, while LTA1 (Finland) and LTA7 (Canada) were calling after careful logging. LTA1 (Finland) also listed Sami culture under protection.

The discussion in regarding to areas needing worldwide protection was perhaps the easiest of all questions. Nature was the most common element listed for protection, in addition to wildlife and indigenous culture. From the responses the message came across strongly, how deeply the actors care for their country and their people.

4.1.3 Luxury in the Arctic

This thesis also aims to define the concept of Arctic luxury. In order to receive information on how luxury is perceived in different Arctic destinations, the actors were asked '*How would you go defining the luxury in your destination?*'. This

question was perhaps the most challenging one, as the interviewees by return asked me '*what is luxury?*' or as LTA9 (USA) put it: 'It depends on what you are looking for, luxury can be coffee by the camp fire'.

LTA1 (Finland) felt the luxury in Finland is the clean air, safety and nature providing all one needs to survive. LTA6 (Norway) explained the luxury in Svalbard is its raw wilderness, being disconnected, the authenticity, and the extreme conditions in the destination. According to LTA5 (Iceland) luxury in Nordurland is being 'compact destination with unique, natural wonders'. LTA5 (Sweden) regarded privacy as luxury. He explained how Lappland is authentic, provides privacy and makes people feel exclusive, and how they can have the experience all to themselves without needing to share it with others.

LTA10 (Russia) listed the high level of hospitality, amenities, number of professional personnel working for the exclusive clients and the remote location as luxury in his location in Kola Peninsula. Similarly LTA11 (Russia) mentioned how the feeling of middle of nowhere is luxury, all that is left for the guests is to enjoy their time. LTA 12 (Russia) felt that luxury in Kola Peninsula is in infant's shoes. However he mentioned the safety of the destination is seen as luxury, and travellers have started looking for safe destinations. He also informed that infrastructure to meet the needs of high-end travellers are being developed. Nevertheless, eventually he considered close proximity to wilderness as luxury:

'Luxury is that only 10 minutes from the town you can find yourself in the complete wilderness with untouched nature, with real nice piece of northern tundra and mountains'.

The attempt to define luxury in the destination revealed that the concept of luxury was unclear. Some of the actors were asking me a further explanation what I meant by luxury. However the idea was to leave this for the actors to define. Eventually, luxury was explained with factors like authenticity, safety, and privacy. Remoteness, the close presence of untouched nature, and wilderness were considered as pure luxury.

4.1.4 Luxury Travellers in the Arctic

This paper intends to determinate the most suitable target group for Arctic luxury. Therefore a question in regards to current tourists in the destination was included in the interview, by asking the interviewees *'Who are your typical guests?'*

I was enthralled by the personal touch the actors gave to their clients:

[My guests are] friendly, nice people, who leave as my best friends. I have taken them for a dinner to my mother in law, so nice they are!' (LTA4, Iceland).

Similarly LTA11 (Russia) explained 'Lots of my guests are my old friends who keep coming back every year'. LTA11 was not the only one mentioned the guests returning. Also LTA1 (Finland) and LTA 3 (Sweden) mentioned returning clients.

LTA1 (Finland) told his guests have experienced commercial luxury, and in the Arctic they seek for 'new luxury', to experience something authentic. LTA3 (Sweden) told that his guests have travelled the world, but the Arctic has now started appearing on their bucket list. LTA10 (Russia) and LTA11 (Russia) told their clients are fishing enthusiastic, and come for a lifetime experience. Also LTA8 (Canada) informed how their clients have been saving for a long time for their trip of a lifetime. However LTA8's clients are seeking for exceptional cultural experience, and expect authentic meeting with the indigenous people. LTA9 (USA) told the nature, especially the wilderness, is the main attraction, but also everything culture related. However she mentioned the cities in her destination are not attractive, but it's the culture found in the small communities. LTA12 (Russia) described his clients as families with kids who are attracted by the snow related activities.

Luxury Travel Actors give their guests personal attention and learn to know them well. The clients are looking for authentic, in-depth destination experiences related to nature, local culture, and adventure. While the clients

seem to visit the Arctic for a once in a lifetime experience and investment, after all they tend to return.

4.1.5 Describing the Arctic

Lastly, the interviewees were asked to describe their own environment: '*In random, impulsive, words, please describe your destination*'. The outcome is aimed to add value and content for the content analysis and benchmarking analysis on the following chapters. However the opportunity to describe one's own operational environment lead to actual destination portrays in some cases.

LTA9 (USA) described Alaska as something nature and culture related. While she felt Alaska is more accessible comparing to other destinations, she also described how impossible the vast marshlands are to roam. LTA4 (Iceland) described Nordurland as the mecca for horseback riding and whale watching. LTA12 (Russia) told about the surrounding Khibiny mountains in Kirovsk, and how even the sun looks different there in front of the mountains. He also told how the clients were astonished by the winter sun:

'In the winter, when the sun returns, the clients are amazed by the sun. They can see it, but it does not warm you. Because it brings light but no warmth'

With his enthusiasm LTA11 (Russia) got even myself interested in sustainable adventure fishing in Kola Peninsula:

'Huge fish, [they put up a] good fight. Strong, aggressive takes....you'll catch a fish of your life, probably a good chance to catch a real... crocodile'.

Meanwhile, LTA8's (Canada) description on her destination was almost poetic: 'Nunavut is hospitality and solidarity – you can't help it, nature rules and brings out the best of humanity'. Similarly LTA6 (Norway) felt that Svalbard is 'a unique slice of the arctic with a condensed geological dream, housing some of the worlds most incredible wildlife and nature'.

The word count shows how nature stood out as the most commonly used word to describe the Arctic. Nature was followed by mountain, unique, wilderness, wildlife, fishing, salmon, and untouched. Other frequently used words included authentic, Northern Lights, roadless, beautiful, accessible, culture and clean.

As nature, wilderness and wildlife are key attractions in the Arctic, the results were not surprising. However it was interesting to realise the high frequency for the words accessible and roadless, as these are somewhat contradicting words. This may however be explained from the content of the interviews, as accessibility is seen as one of the competitive advantages for some of the Arctic destinations, while being 'roadless destination' is a unique character for some other destinations.

4.2 Benchmarking the Arctic Destinations

4.2.1 Destination's Feasibility for Arctic Phenomena

The phenomena of the Northern Lights and the midnight sun are common in every Arctic destination. Therefore this study takes in the consideration the possibilities for viewing the phenomena. For instance, the study on the Northern Lights also consider the accessibility and possibilities to enjoy the destination during polar nights, and similarly the study on midnight sun taken into account the opportunities to enjoy summer time in the destination and the length of the midnight sun period.

Nordurland and Inari stand out as outstanding destinations for the Northern Lights, while Svalbard and Nunavut appear as ideal destinations to enjoy the midnight sun (Figure 4). This also corresponds with my own observations and the interviews: 'in Iceland there's nothing to obstruct the visibility for the Northern Lights' (LTA4).

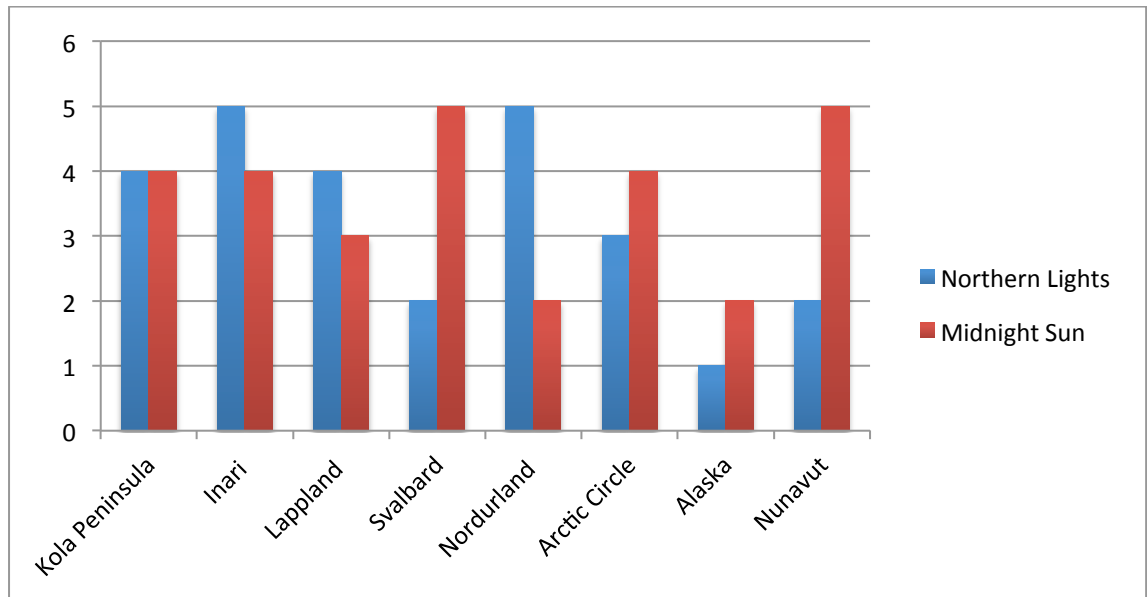


Figure 4: The Feasibility of Arctic Destinations for the Northern Lights and the Midnight Sun Experience

It should be noted that the third Arctic phenomenon, Fata Morgana, was excluded from this measurement. Fata Morgana is an illusion that appears in the Polar regions when distant features appear in focus due to clear and pure air, making the depth perception impossible (Swaney 1999). Swaney continues that the mirage gives two-dimensional look for the Arctic remoteness and creates illusions in the horizon that are caused by the reflections of water, ice and snow, and temperature changes. The phenomenon was not included as there is no official data on its occurrence and could therefore not be measured.

4.2.2 Destination's Feasibility for Culture Tourism

Cultural tourism focuses on history, culture and lifestyle of the native people. Indigenous tourism is a subset of cultural tourism, where the focus is shifted from native people to indigenous people of the country. According to the study on cultural and historical attractiveness of the destination in terms of indigenous people and history of the country, especially Nunavut and Alaska stand out as destinations with major product for cultural tourism product (Figure 5): There's so much history and indigenous culture in Alaska, all these dances and traditions' (LTA 9). Also Greenland stood out as a destination for indigenous tourism, taking that 88% of the local population are Inuit.

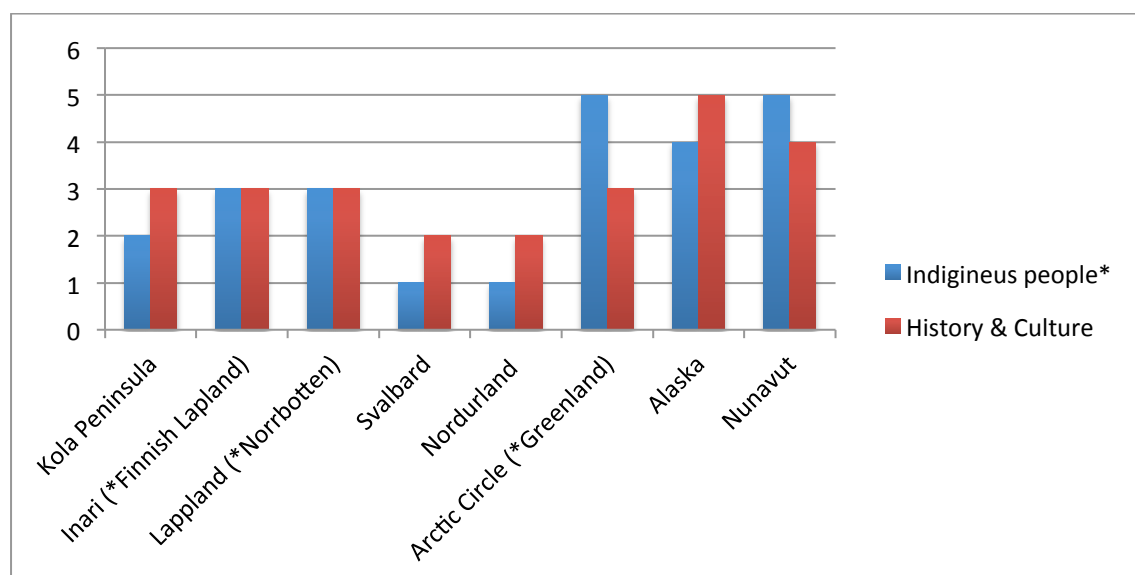


Figure 5: The Feasibility of the Destinations for Culture Tourism, Measured in Terms of indigenous People, History and Culture of the Destinations

4.2.3 Destination's Feasibility for Adventure Tourism

The Arctic provides diverse possibilities for outdoors recreation. Figure 6 lists some of the typical activities available in the Arctic countries. Here the measuring system lightly varies: zero means no or very little possibility for a specific activity, and two means a possibility to take the activity to a adventurous level. Alaska and Kola Peninsula appear as destinations for adventure travel due to numerous possibilities for active outdoor recreation. However it should also be taken into consideration that both destinations are vast which partly explains the high number of available activities. Nevertheless in these destinations it is easy to take many activities to the adventurous level. Additionally Inari and Lappland provide a great base for adventure travel: 'using the everyman's rights, you can go snowmobiling or fishing pretty much anywhere' (LTA1, Finland). It should be mentioned that the study did not explore the destination's feasibility for extreme tourism.

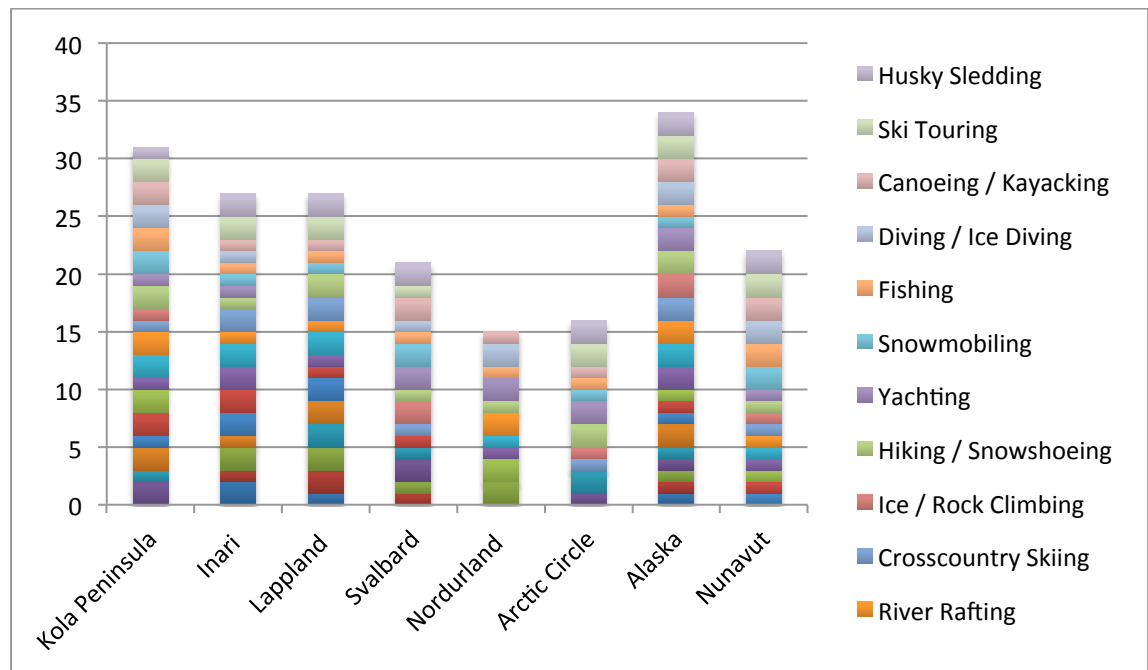


Figure 6: The Feasibility of the Destination for Adventure Travel

4.2.4 Destination's Feasibility for Nature Tourism

For nature tourist the nature itself is the primary focus, including observation of the wildlife in natural habitat. The Figure 8 lists typical natural attractions in the Arctic landscape. The Figure 8 illustrates, that the Arctic destinations are fairly equal for nature tourism in terms of landscape and flora. It is crucial to note, that the Arctic's main appeal, vast, rugged Arctic landscape, is available especially in Svalbard and Greenland. However in these destinations the landscape does not vary as much as for instance in Lappland or Alaska. In the study on natural attractions my own observations were played an important role. For instance in Greenland I learnt how the few roads they had remained in a relatively good condition because of the permafrost. In Svalbard I was stunned by the endless rows of mountains and the different shapes they took. In Lappland I was impressed by the changing landscape after leaving the treeline behind.

In the study on the destination's feasibility for Nature tourism the following measuring system was employed: zero means no or very little possibility to witness a specific natural attraction, and two means a great possibility for the natural attraction.

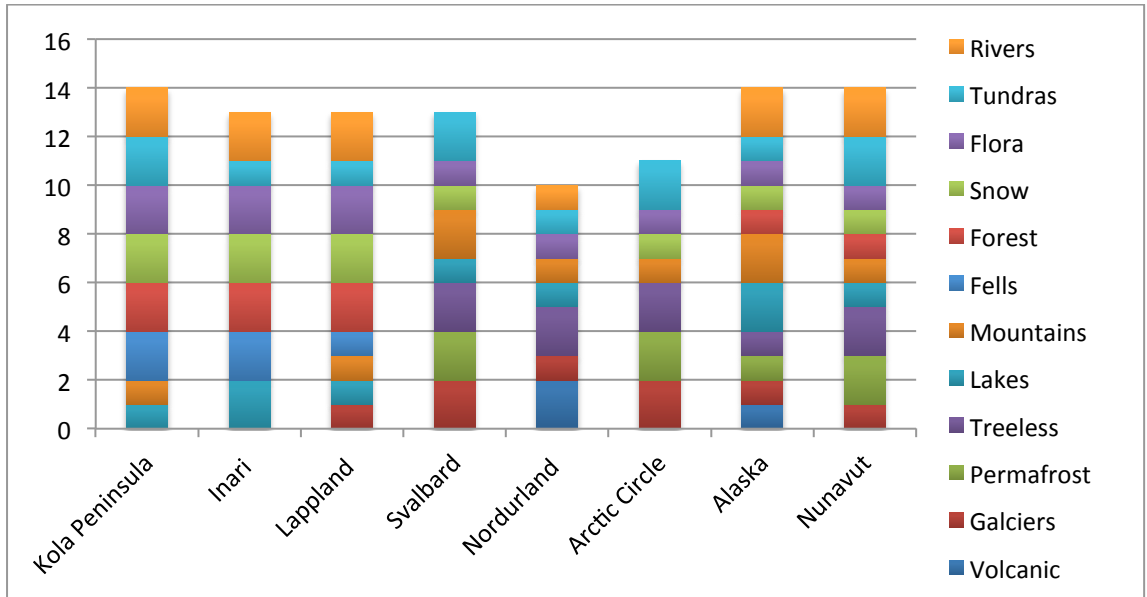


Figure 7: The Feasibility of the Destination for Landscape Observation

The Arctic is home to sumptuous number of wildlife species. Many of these have become endangered due to overhunting, diminishing habitat caused by the heavy industries, or climate change. The Figure 8 lists the most iconic species in the Arctic. The figure shows that both Alaska and Nunavut are ideal locations for wildlife viewing. Also Arctic Circle and Svalbard stand out: the wildlife here is limited to a fewer species but according to my observations, in these destinations hunting is heavily restricted and animals easier to spot due to lack of fear for the human presence.

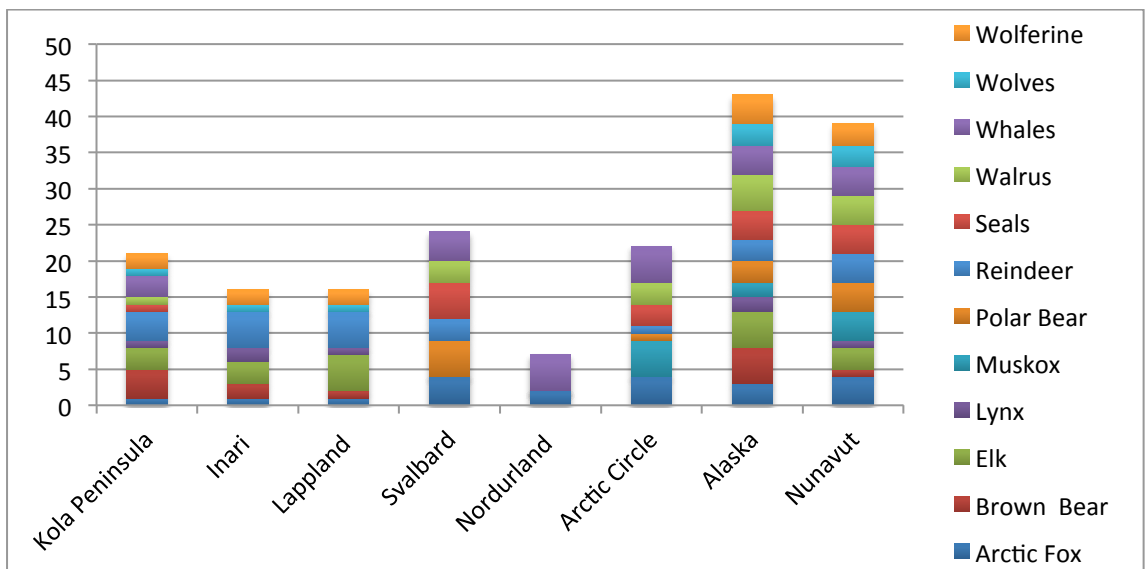


Figure 8: The Feasibility of the Arctic Destinations for Wildlife Observation

4.2.5 Destination's feel of Wilderness and Remoteness Versus Accessibility

As previously cited, one of the main appeals of the Arctic is the feel of wilderness, and the Arctic is considered as something remote. Figure 9 measures the remoteness, accessibility and wilderness of the Arctic destinations. The study is based on the interviews, actual accessibility, observations and perceptions from the guidebooks. It should be reminded that while all Arctic destinations are remote, and wilderness is present in all Arctic destinations, this study compares the destinations with each other. Svalbard, Arctic Circle and Nunavut are the destinations with the greatest wilderness, and also the most remote: Greenland and Svalbard are islands, while Nunavut largely consists of Arctic Archipelago. European Arctic, including Nordurland, Inari and Lapland, are easier to access, while Kola Peninsula and Nordurland offers a balance: remote but accessible wilderness. However it should be noted that perceptions are not always based on actual facts, and the study was also hindered by the size of some destinations. For instance in Alaska and Kola Peninsula some parts of the destinations are easily accessed by many methods, while other parts remain nearly inaccessible.

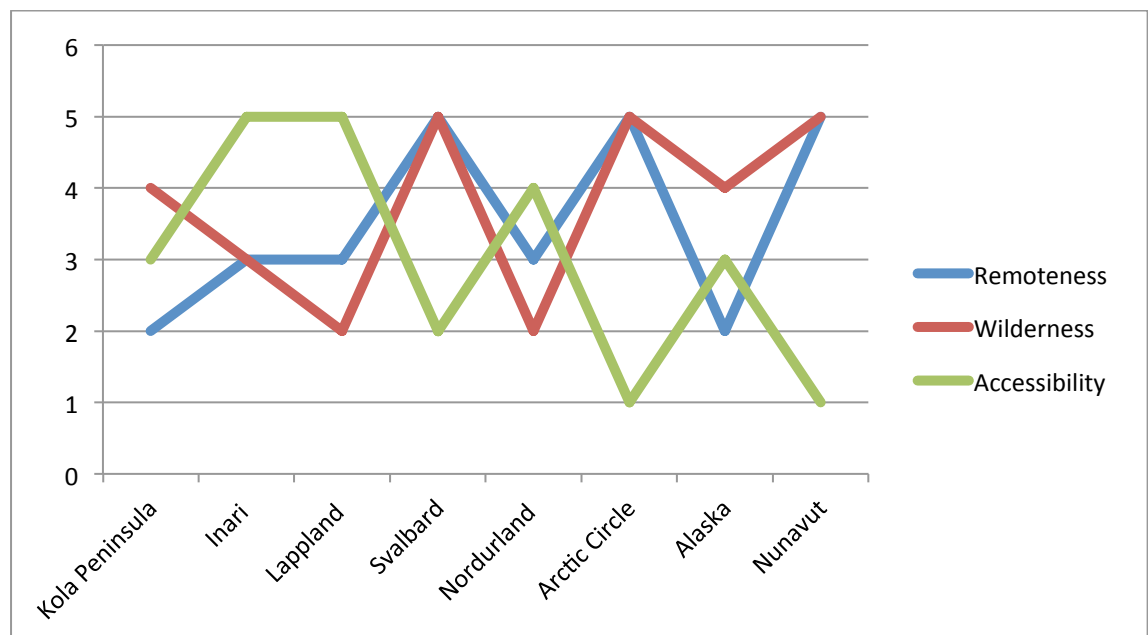


Figure 9: The Wilderness and Remoteness Appearance of the Destination Including Actual Accessibility

4.2.6 Conclusion of the Benchmarking Analysis

While many similar elements are found in all of the eight Arctic destinations, one destination may indicate low feasibility for a specific experience, while another Arctic destination may be ideal for the same experience. Table 1 summarises the feasibility of the Arctic destination for the experiences processed in this benchmarking analysis. Low indicates low feasibility and similarly high illustrates high feasibility for the specific element.

Table 1: Benchmarking Summary of the Destination Feasibility

	Kola Peninsula	Inari	Lapland	Svalbard
Destination's Feasibility for the Northern Lights Observation	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	LOW
Destination's Feasibility for the Midnight Sun Onbervation	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	HIGH
Destination's Feasibility for Indigenous Tourism	LOW	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	LOW
Destination's Feasibility for Culture Tourism	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	LOW
Destination's Feasibility for Adventure Tourism	HIGH	HIGH	AVERAGE	AVERAGE
Destination's Feasibility for the Landscape Observation	HIGH	AVERAGE	HIGH	AVERAGE
Destination's Feasibility for the Wildlife Observation	AVERAGE	LOW	LOW	HIGH
Destination's Feel of Wilderness and Remoteness	AVERAGE	LOW	LOW	HIGH
Destination's Manmade Character	LOW	HIGH	HIGH	AVERAGE
	Nordurland	Arctic Circle	Alaska	Nunavut
Destination's Feasibility for the Northern Lights Observation	HIGH	AVERAGE	LOW	LOW
Destination's Feasibility for the Midnight Sun Onbervation	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Destination's Feasibility for Indigenous Tourism	LOW	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Destination's Feasibility for Culture Tourism	LOW	AVERAGE	HIGH	HIGH
Destination's Feasibility for Adventure Tourism	LOW	LOW	HIGH	AVERAGE
Destination's Feasibility for the Landscape Observation	LOW	LOW	HIGH	HIGH
Destination's Feasibility for the Wildlife Observation	LOW	AVERAGE	HIGH	HIGH
Destination's Feel of Wilderness and Remoteness	AVERAGE	HIGH	AVERAGE	HIGH
Destination's Manmade Character	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	AVERAGE	AVERAGE

Kola Peninsula is not only an ideal destination for fishing, but according to the benchmarking study Kola Peninsula has a great potential for an adventure tourism destination. Meanwhile Lapland in Sweden is a destination easy to access and convenient for nature tourism.

Inari is an accessible location for the Northern Lights experience and adventure tourism. Nordurland is another accessible destination for the Northern Lights, while the scenery found in Inari differs completely from that of Nordurland: Nordurland has treeless highlands with volcanoes and glaciers, while Inari is covered in forests and lakes offering home to many wildlife species. In addition to Inari and Kola Peninsula, also Alaska comes out as adventure tourism destination.

Svalbard stands out as a remote wilderness destination for the midnight sun, similarly to Nunavut. Both destinations offer good opportunities for polar bear spotting and snowmobiling, however more wildlife species are found in Nunavut. Additionally, with 84% Inuit population Nunavut is suitable for culture tourism. Also Alaska sticks out as ideal culture tourism destination with such a long human history, and Arctic Circle with the highest percentage of indigenous people of all Arctic destinations. Arctic Circle also has a very remote appeal like Svalbard and Nunavut.

However while carrying out my research on the Arctic destinations, I came across with many unique manmade characters each destination offered. It appears, that the residents in most destinations have created very innovative tourism products. In addition the presence of scientific stations make the destination appealing in terms of the education aspect. By counting products such as creative accommodation (glass igloo, Icehotel), sustainable mining (gold panning and amethyst mines), science and research stations, local cuisine and gastronomy, characteristic architecture and design, indigenous museums, history of the explorers and Arctic heroes, and extreme races, Figure 10 was formulated by giving one point for each character. Figure 10 shows that Lapland stand out with a unique manmade character, followed by Inari and Nunavut.

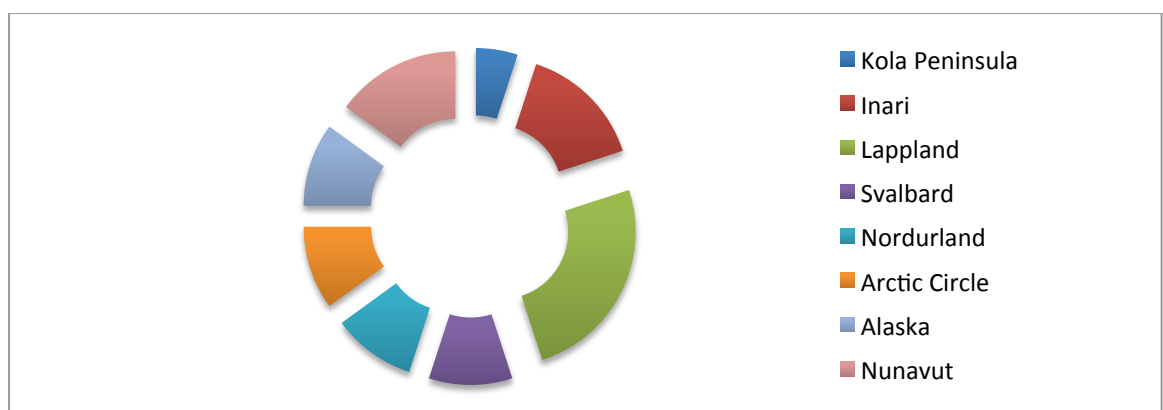


Figure 10: Unique Manmade Character in the Arctic Destinations

The benchmarking study concludes that the Arctic destinations indeed have all ingredients for the growing markets of nature tourism, adventure tourism, ecotourism and culture tourism.

5 ARCTIC LUXURY TRAVEL

5.1 Luxury Travel

Luxury Travel in its traditional sense takes our minds to marble baths and golden water taps. However as the travel industry evolves and redefines itself, so does luxury travel niche. Just like any traveller, luxury travellers have started to look for overall experiences instead of golden details, as the below surveys results reveal.

Johnston (2013) lets some of the known industry figures define luxury travel in his article '10 definitions of luxury travel from within the industry'. In this article Gareth Harding, Sales Director at The Cruise Line Ltd describes luxury travel to be travelling without the pressure of time. Robert Kenyon, the owner of First Cabin Travel Corporation believes that a luxury traveller enjoys having the flexibility to decide how much time he wishes to spend at one particular site. Lorne Blyth, Director of Flavours of Italy Ltd, points out that luxury is to have the time to enjoy the surrounding landscapes. 'Time' is the most commonly described element of luxury travel, as well as exclusivity. (Johnston 2013.) Nearly all experts mentioned that today's luxury traveller is looking for a direct access to the destination and its people, while private services ensure the time is spent on experiencing the destination instead of queuing or sharing the space or view with other travellers.

Similarly Nyssa (2013) takes an attempt to define luxury travel in her article 'What is luxury travel?' by letting industry experts define the concept. Authenticity goes hand-in-hand with luxury travel according to all respondents. Creating authentic experiences is the core of luxury travel according to JoAnna, founder of For the Intolerants. Christine Gray, Editor-in-Chief at Luxury Travel Magazine takes it a bit further and points out that authentic experiences are in fact the essence of luxury travel.

At the same time, the global leisure travel trade shows focusing on luxury travel professionals have grown vigorously. International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM)

has expanded its event portfolio from two yearly shows in 2011 to six annual trade shows in 2016 (Mayle 2016), and Beyond Media, the organiser of Pure Life Experiences have grown from one show in 2012 into three annual shows today (Pure Life Experiences 2013). Luxury Travel Mart (LTM) has grown from one show to four annual events attracting CIS market (Smirnova 2016). InVoyage, specialising in luxury events and meetings industry, and Luxperience, Australia's first luxury travel show, both were launched in 2012 (de Beer 2016). In addition, more recently established Connections Luxury and Private Leisure Forums are both arranging a few annual travel trade shows, both organisers focusing on luxury travel industry professionals (Luxury Action 2016a).

Simultaneously, the number of travel agencies and tour operators specialised in luxury travel seem to have increased: ILTM 2015 was attended by over 1500 selected luxury travel buyers, comparing to 1250 buyers in 2012 (Mayle 2016). Traveller Made, a network of luxury travel designers and providers with focus on European market, was founded in 2012. In four years the network has grown to nearly 200 travel agents, 61 DMC partners and 436 hotel partners (Traveller Made 2016). Travel agents are playing an important role for luxury travellers, who are using the services of these intermediaries more than other segments (Theobald, 2005, 291).

It seems that luxury travel industry is growing and doing well despite of the economic climate. Theobald (2011, 524) lists three reasons for the growing demand of luxury travel experiences: the rise of middle class, as well as HNWIs, from BRIC countries, the increasing number of empty nesters with notable disposable income, and the growing number of people inheriting property owning elder generation. The rise of BRIC countries is evident in Finnish Lapland too: alone in Rovaniemi the number of Chinese, Indian and Brazilian overnight stays increased respectively 34,7%, 47,5% and 17,3% (Lapin Liitto 2016).

ILTM (Mayle 2016) surveyed luxury travel professionals on what is luxury today. Time was the most common answer; on their vacation people are looking for

elements they do not have in every day life. Hence, it comes as no surprise that for a wealthy individual luxury travel is no longer about golden taps and marble baths: these have become every-day necessities that money can buy, unlike time.

Similarly, one's necessity item can be a luxury item for somebody else. For instance, in Helsinki metropolitan area and in other larger cities in Finland, car ownership is considerably lower comparing to areas of dispersed settlement (Soisalon-Soininen 2013). Therefore in Helsinki having two cars per household may be seen as luxury, while in Lapland where the distances are great and public transport nearly non-existent, owning of two cars per household is found a necessity.

From the traditional, classic luxury travel, where one indulges in five star hotel comfort and world-class hospitality in a flashy way, the world is shifting into more authentic way to interpret luxury travel (Honkanen 2016). The trend indicates, that luxury travellers are looking to combine luxury with natural settings. Jaw-dropping beauty of nature, privacy, discretion and high-standard service are elements the new luxury travellers are seeking for. Arctic region, and especially the luxury lodge market will benefit from this trend significantly. (Theobald 2005.)

Luxury travel does not have one universally accepted definition, as even industry experts rely on surveys and other industry professionals when attempting to define the term luxury travel. However based on the above review, luxury travel is an authentic, holistic destination experience without worry of the time, and requires high level of amenities and impeccable hospitality.

5.2 Private Travel

Private travel is closely associated with luxury travel, even that private travel does not necessary require luxurious facilities. Similarly to a luxury traveller, a private traveller expects high standards and individual service, and seeks deep connection with the destination and authentic experiences. However unlike a

luxury traveller, who may well attend a fixed 10-day luxury cruise among a hundred other travellers, or participate in guided group sightseeing in a first class vehicle, a private traveller travels alone with his / her travel companion(s) if any. Private travel involves private services and hospitality, such as private chauffeur, guide, chef, butler, housekeeper, maid or a nanny, or may require an entire hotel for private use. People engaging with private travel often travel by their own private jets, and do not participate in fixed group departures. Thus, it is understandable that private travel is often confused with luxury travel: private travel requires similar, or higher, funds to cover the travel expenses. Due to a high number of destination personnel working for a private traveller, the travel expenses are usually considerably high, especially in the countries where personnel costs are high. (Honkanen 2016.)

Private travel does not steer away from the crowds simply because private travellers do not wish to associate with other people. Usually it is valuing the time, which makes a private traveller to choose to travel privately. Private travelling provides an opportunity to enjoy an attraction without needing to queue or share the view with others. It is also a way to receive the full attention from the people visited. Private travel, like luxury travel, is about experiencing authentic places and meeting people local to the destination. Private experience, for instance a visit to a local reindeer herder, gives the traveller an opportunity to engage with the herder in a different level, as the host does not need to share the attention with other visitors. (Honkanen 2016.)

5.3 Towards Arctic Luxury

5.3.1 Luxury Action

Luxury Action is a DMC based in Rovaniemi, Finland. This incoming travel company provides exclusive off-the-beaten track travel experiences in Nordic countries with focus on the Arctic region.

Janne Honkanen founded the company in 2009. Since then Honkanen has proved to be an individual whose efforts have directly influenced the

development of the experiential travel movement in Finland. His enthusiasm, innovative mind and never-ending curiosity have made Luxury Action what it is today: a creator of entirely new travel experiences. (Luxury Action 2016a.)

Nature and local cuisine play an important role in everything Luxury Action creates. However, the idea is to create a story that forms the basis for a memorable, unique destination experience. Travelling, in its deepest meaning, for Luxury Action means exploring another country, cuisine and culture, and connecting with the destination and its people. (Luxury Action 2016b.)

For nearly a decade, Luxury Action has been arranging experiential travel in Arctic region, and the aim is to bring together all the elements of Arctic culture for the guests: the people, the food, the traditions, the wilderness, and the Arctic way of life (Luxury Action 2016b).

The wellbeing of environment and its people is an important aspect for Luxury Action's travellers, and so it is for the company. Honkanen regards himself as a responsible ambassador for Arctic life. It is his passionate intention to develop a charity that takes account of indigenous people, especially their language and culture in the Arctic, and of Arctic wildlife and nature. For this reason a charitable causes play an important role in this research. Arctic has rich culture, wildlife, flora and stunning natural landscapes. Luxury Action's philosophy is to provide their guests with the opportunity to familiarise themselves and to get involved with the destination, and to have a minimum (negative) impact on that destination while contributing to its wellbeing and that of self. (Luxury Action 2016b.)

Luxury Action's clientele consist of relatively wealthy, well-educated and well-travelled individuals, who are in a constant search of new experiences. Typical clients are from English speaking countries, mainly parents in their 40s with two children, or empty-nesters in their 60s. Even that the traditional winter activities such as Northern Lights chasing and snowmobiling are not getting any less popular, the clients are increasingly looking for new ways to experience the destination. The expectations of nearly all clients are high, and it is Luxury

Action's mission to fulfil unspoken wishes and let the destination to touch every sense of the traveller. (Luxury Action 2016a; Honkanen 2016.)

Luxury Action is a growth company that expects the increasing interest in Arctic region to contribute in rising number of travellers to Finnish Lapland among other Arctic destinations. The company aims to have a proactive attitude towards this potential. (Honkanen 2016.)

5.3.2 Arctic Luxury

The need to define Arctic luxury came from my experience with the commissioner. Here in the Arctic we provide luxury that is very different from luxury in traditional sense. However without clear definition, it has been challenging to explain, sell, or package this luxury. Arctic luxury needed to be defined and developed into a concept.

As Arctic countries have become more accessible, an increasing number of travellers wishes to experience the relatively untouched nature, exotic wildlife and naturally beautiful settings: the midnight sun, polar nights, glaciers, freely flowing rivers, the Northern Lights, whales, polar bears, herds of reindeer, autumn colours, to mention a few (Honkanen 2016). In addition to untouched natural settings, what makes the Arctic different is the existence of indigenous people. The continuous human habitation in most parts of the Arctic makes the region culturally appealing. Despite of the past when the Arctic's indigenous people and their human rights were mistreated, by today in many Arctic countries they have achieved better political and economic independence (Hall & Johnston 1995.) which has let the indigenous communities thrive. The fact that humans have made a living in the harsh climate, fascinates many travellers (Honkanen 2016).

In the Arctic the feel of adventure is physically present. During my observation trips, I paid attention to the items the wilderness and survival guides had packed along, and travellers' reactions to them. The fact that the guides packed items such as satellite phones, emergency beacons, the GPS, maps, rifles, flare

guns, trauma and hypothermia kits, charging stations, a generator box, kerosene, oil, dry food, stoves, burners and ratchets, truly impressed the travellers, and there were no jokes made when learning to use the listed items in case of an emergency. The preparation was a great part of Arctic adventure ahead, and put the travellers on an instant survival mood: 'Suddenly the comfort of the hotel bed has less meaning, but making it there' (Private Traveller 1).

Many travellers mentioned, after experiencing Arctic luxury, that being able to live from the unpolluted land or simply just having clean air and nature around is plainly luxury: 'Do you Finns realise what luxury you are living in?' (Private Traveller 2). Arctic luxury is not about cramming up as many activities in a short period of time as possible, but more about how to engage in these activities in their real environment: 'I wish to experience herding the reindeer, not a reindeer sleigh ride' (Private Traveller 3).

The Arctic region, thanks to the numerous preserved national parks and nature reserves, are of interest for travellers seeking for 'green' experiences. The importance of ecotourism, adventure tourism and cultural tourism are growing, and therefore the number of travellers to the Arctic continues to increase. (Hall & Johnston 1995.) The possibilities for all three categories in the Arctic are sumptuous. However, what makes luxury travel challenging to develop in the Arctic is the lack of infrastructure. The absence of luxury hotels may stop traditional luxury travellers from engaging with Arctic luxury. The local operators in the Arctic are struggling with issues related to missing road connections, or finding funding for plans to develop remote areas (Pogodaev 2016).

While the Arctic is not dotted with traditional luxury hotels, spas and Michelin-starred restaurants, the region offers private, spacious, high-standard villas, chalets and lodges with ultimate discretion and tailored services. Especially Finnish Lapland is ahead of others in this market, and a number of celebrities and HNWI's have found their ideal luxury escape in Finnish Lapland with ultimate privacy. (Honkanen 2016.)

Currently the luxury travel in the Arctic greatly relies on cruises, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, many parts of the Arctic are accessed only by the sea, hence cruising is a natural option for those wishing to explore the Arctic archipelago and coast to greater extent. Additionally, as the required facilities, such as luxury hotels, do not exist, the solution has been to stay onboard the cruise ships in luxurious suites. Quark Expeditions, a tour operator specialised in Polar expeditions, arranges annually a 75 day Arctic circumnavigation tour on the luxuriously equipped Kapitan Khlebnikov ice breaker (Quark Expeditions 2016). Silversea, the leading luxury cruise organiser, offers expeditions to Iceland, Greenland and Svalbard on luxury cruise ships (Silversea 2016). Poseidon Expeditions provides cruises to Russian high Arctic on M/v Sea Spirit, a ship with luxury hotel kind amenities (Poseidon Expeditions 2016).

However not all travellers, like those of Luxury Action's, are interested in cruises for two major reasons. First of all, being on a ship gives the traveller less connection with the actual destination: one can see the destination, but not physically feel it (Honkanen 2016). Moreover, luxury travellers prefer private experiences, not those shared with fellow passengers onboard. The UK based tour operators VeryFirstTo and Private Jet Tours have combined their forces and created a private jet itinerary taking small groups of passengers to the Arctic as well as to the Antarctic. The tour is first of its kind, and will commence in January 2017 (VeryFirstTo 2016). Even though travelling with Private Jet Tours gives passengers the access to physical land, the travel still takes place in groups and has a fixed departure date, which is not what the target clientele for this paper is looking for.

Land-based private luxury travel in the Arctic still seems to be in infant shoes. There seems to be a demand for a product that is not on the market, and sometimes a permanent product is not an option due to seasonality or harsh weather conditions in the Arctic. The tremendous potential that comes with the increasing appeal to Arctic destinations, have made the local incoming tour operators to think out of the box. When the infrastructure does not exist, the locals in the Arctic have become relatively creative. Luxury Action (2016a) offers lavishly furnished luxury tents with private chefs in any given remote

location. Arctic Watch Wilderness Lodge (2016) on Somerset Island in Canadian Arctic provides temporary accommodation solutions for the summer season in a tent kind of structure with hotel like amenities and services. In Svalbard, LTA6 (Norway) arranges overnight expeditions in the wilderness, accommodating guests in tents with luxury sleeping bags and reindeer skin mattresses, while an onsite chef prepares the meals that are served in heated tents. Icehotel in Sweden now has ice suites with private saunas (Icehotel 2016).

In April 2016 Luxury Action published the book '8 Arctic Seasons' in the North Pole. The experiences available in the Arctic are introduced alongside the culinary experiences with focus on local, seasonal produce. The response has been positive, and many have commented on the importance of knowing what is on your plate, and where it comes from (Luxury Action 2016a). Having the forests growing food is a major part of Arctic luxury (Honkanen 2016). Consequently foraging is a rapidly growing market in the Nordics, region even referred to as the hot destination for the culinary travellers (Whole Journeys 2015).

A quick Google search on 'Arctic luxury' revealed that mainly images on luxury cruise ships and luxurious winter clothing have been tagged with words 'Arctic' and 'luxury', while the interviews with the luxury travel actors showed how the industry people see the surrounding environment as luxury: pristine nature, unspoilt wilderness, and the presence of local population. Especially the authenticity and the lack of human involvement were interpreted as luxury. The possibility to access the inaccessible, to reach remoteness, to hear the silence, to experience the solitude, and to discover the middle of nowhere, were all mentioned as luxury experiences in the Arctic.

As per the word cloud, the key word for the Arctic was nature, and nearly all other words described the elements in Arctic nature, such as mountain, wilderness, wildlife, salmon and untouched. The third most frequently used word was unique. Further the interviews explained that the activities common for local population in the Arctic, such as fishing and foraging, are popular

among the luxury travellers. Additionally, practices common in the Arctic, such as transfers by huskies, reindeer or snowmobiles where other methods of transport are not available, have become an attraction. The people inhabiting the Arctic from the early times have become a genuine point of interest.

Moreover, as this study examined, since the civilisation reached the northern corners of the Arctic much later than the rest of the world, the lifestyle of the Arctic people has remained largely unchanged. Nature has traditionally provided the home and food in the Arctic, and the Arctic people demonstrate significant respect and care for their environment.

Meeting the people in the Arctic, experiencing their self-sufficient way of life in the natural habitat, witnessing wildlife and untouched nature, learning to respect the environment as the source of life, breathing clean air, and participating in foraging, are what defines Arctic luxury. However the elements cannot be extracted as separate 'safaris', but Arctic luxury is about an authentic, comprehensive destination experience lived with all senses.

6 CIRCUMPOLAR ARCTIC LUXURY EXPERIENCE

6.1 Target Group for Arctic Luxury

As this thesis has examined, the main attractions in the Arctic are the feeling of wilderness and remoteness, the unique landscape and wildlife, untouched nature and the lack of human touch, the fragility of the region, the presence of indigenous people, and the opportunities for outdoor pursuits. The study has further concluded, that the tourism niche markets suitable for the Arctic are ecotourism, nature tourism, culture tourism and adventure tourism.

Even that Arctic wildlife is one of the main attractions in the Arctic it is not recommendable for Arctic luxury to focus on wildlife tourism. The wildlife tourism niche is often related to ecotourism and conservation in general (Right Tourism 2012; Liu 2013) and can be seen as having aspects of adventure tourism as well as the viewing takes place in the natural habitat of the wildlife. However, wildlife tourism can have severe negative impacts. During my observation trips I learnt how tourism can negatively impact on wildlife. In Lappland I learnt how the use of helicopters is the easiest way to spot elks and reindeer herds in the wilderness but can lead the reindeer cows to miscarriage during calving time. In Svalbard I heard how careless protection has led to deaths of polar bears that could have been avoided by using local, professional guides. Therefore I suggest for Arctic luxury the focus should not be on wildlife tourism, but the chance encounters with wildlife should be adding value to the overall experience.

For culture tourism the main attraction is the host community's culture. More recently, indigenous tourism has emerged as an important element in Arctic tourism (Maher et al. 2014). Indigenous tourism directly involves indigenous people, and making their culture a destination focus (UNBC 2016). Taking that the main attraction of the indigenous tourism is to experience the host community's aboriginal culture, meet the local people and learn about the lifestyle by participating into it, it fits better for Arctic luxury, as it lets the traveller to participate and experience the culture instead of witnessing it. Instead of

offering activities related to high culture and popular culture, the Arctic luxury experiences should focus on authentic encounters with indigenous and local people.

In nature tourism the main motivation is to observe and appreciate the surrounding nature. However, Granier (2004) argues that the interest in nature, in fact, has little to do with the travellers' love for nature, but that nature and wilderness are ways to describe authenticity and seek for a break from modern, everyday life. On the other hand, ecotourism is about travel to natural areas to understand the cultural and natural history of the host environment without harming, and endorsing the economic growth of the local community that supports the conservation of the natural resources (Youell 1998). Ecotourism is the invisible interpreter on sustainability between nature, host community, company, and traveller. Therefore it can be suggested that ecotourism is a more viable target market for Arctic luxury instead of somewhat superficial nature tourism.

Adventure tourism includes participating physical activities in remote places with some risk factor (Granier 2004). However adventure tourism does not consider the destination other than its ability to provide adventure. This conflicts with Arctic luxury's objective to provide comprehensive destination experience. Alternatively, active tourism philosophy combines adventure, ecotourism and cultural aspects. This ecological niche aims to have a low impact on the destination and provide high quality experiences. Active tourism has three purposes. Recreation aims to distract the traveller from the daily routines. Education provides an opportunity to learn about the host culture and way of living. Benefit focuses on promoting the destination's sustainable development. (Active Tourism 2002.)

According to Active Tourism (2002) partaking in physical and mental activities is important and the purpose of active tourism is to promote healthy mind and body. Active tourism is also opposite to passive tourism; instead of passive observation, it encourages to participation. Taking into consideration the

definition of the active tourism, it can be concluded that active tourism is a better fit for the Arctic luxury market than adventure tourism.

6.2 Sustainability and Arctic Luxury

Arctic luxury travellers are keen on using locally produced products and services offered by the locals (Honkanen 2016), providing a perfect match for the growing demand and emerging supply. Ecological sustainability is about taking environmental issues into consideration in all actions taken. The actions in the environment should not exceed the tolerance of the surrounding nature. The potential impacts on biodiversity or climate change should be studied and an effective waste management system employed. (Mettiäinen 2015.)

Cultural sustainability instructs to respect local and indigenous peoples. It teaches people on how to respect the socio-cultural authenticity of the host community, their values and cultural heritage. The approach creates understanding and tolerance between the host communities and the travellers. (Mettiäinen 2015.) According to Mettiäinen (2015) sustainable Arctic tourism does not leave a lasting trace in the destination.

This study argues that a lasting trace can be beneficial to the destination and the traveller, as well as the company and the other stakeholders. By employing cultural and ecological sustainability into Arctic luxury, the wellbeing of the private luxury traveller increases. The traveller experiences the destination, its people and the surrounding environment in an authentic way, without causing damage. This will leave a trace in the traveller, who will undergo holistic destination experience, and carry a strong post experience long after leaving the destination. This trace will ideally have the power to make the traveller to return to the Arctic destination, or alternatively to recommend the destination to another traveller. The trace that the traveller carries will continue to bring private travellers to the Arctic destinations. The trace that is left to the company and to the environment will continue to improve the destination experience.

When a sustainable approach is employed, all efforts are taken to enhance the travellers' destination experience. Arctic luxury travel companies should ideally

provide their travellers with experiences that demonstrate environmental sustainability and cultural sensitivity, and the companies in the Arctic operating environment should include this in their ethical code of conduct.

6.3 Holistic Approach to Product Development

The tourism product design process is interrelated to the rest of the world, and should consider customer practices, local practices and business practices, as the Figure 11 illustrates. Therefore it is advisable to look beyond the known boundaries of the familiar zone and familiarise oneself with the global operating environment as a holistic approach to product development suggests. (García-Rosell et al. 2015.)



Figure 11: Product Development in Tourism Co-Creation (LUC Tourism 2015)

Companies employing the holistic approach use it as a practise to collect and analyse past, present and future information. The aim is to identify key design drivers and knowledge required to create new markets and / or products. According to García-Rosell et al. (2015) traditionally there are three different starting points to service development: product-oriented approach, customer-oriented approach and co-creation approach. Instead on focusing on the needs of the client, the company, or on the product itself, the operating environment should be seen as an alternative starting point for product development. This

will enhance the company's capability to take a proactive attitude towards future chances.

Product development is strongly attached to its operating environment. A holistic approach to designing tourism products and services sees the operating environment as the starting point, and thrives from the interaction between the product, customer and company, where the customer includes all stakeholders and product is the place for encounters. Tourism services are not seen as unrelated products, but interrelated destination experiences co-created with service providers, customers, locals and other stakeholders. Social, cultural, natural, sensorial, and manmade elements play a crucial role in the co-creation process. (García-Rosell et al. 2015.)

Holistic approach lists different stages for the comprehensive travel experience: pre-experience, onsite experience, peak experience and post experience. The pre-experience starts from the 'zero moment of truth', the experience the customer has on the destination before the travel. Onsite experience starts from the moment of arrival, while the peak experience is the actual reason for the journey. Post experience is the way the customer lives the journey after returning home. (MTI 2015.)

Many tourism companies regrettably focus on the peak experience only. This is a fragile focus in the operating environment such as the Arctic, where many experiences and activities are weather dependent. For instance, if the entire journey is built on the observation of the midnight sun, and it happens to be cloudy during the entire duration of the onsite experience, the customer is highly likely to return home with a negative experience. However, if supporting experiences have successfully been built in the itinerary, the importance of the peak experience weakens and supporting experiences may compensate for the peak experience or even become peak experiences.

This paper proposes employing a holistic approach to product development where a number of secondary attractions, or supporting experiences, are built around the peak experience.

6.4 Circumpolar Arctic Luxury Experience

Although the Arctic countries deal with somewhat similar weather conditions, landscape and remoteness, this study has revealed that each Arctic country has its distinctive character. This is crucially important when creating a multi-stop itinerary that intends to offer very different experiences in each destination.

To create a unique, circumpolar Arctic luxury travel experience, the holistic approach was followed. The product development process included observation of, and listening to the customers, partners, and other stakeholders in the operating environment. The commissioner's current operating boundaries were exceeded, and the research covered the entire Arctic as the operating environment. The primary appeal to the Arctic was examined and ideal destinations for the private luxury travellers selected based on pre-determined criteria. Finally the destinations were studied using a variety of data sources, and the secondary attractions in the Arctic destinations explored.

Based on this approach, a base for the circumpolar Arctic luxury experience was created. It should be noted that experiences in the arctic vary strongly by the season. The base lists the recommendations for the peak summer and winter experiences in each destination, as well as the secondary attractions as support to the peak experience.

The Arctic destinations were then divided in three Arctic experience regions: Lapland, the Arctic Islands and the Arctic North America. Moving from one destination to another within these Arctic experience regions is relatively straightforward. The recommendations have been collected in Table 2, 3 and 4 respectively. In the 'Peak Experience' column the first experience is the peak summer experience, and the second option is the peak winter experience. These are the experiencing that 'happen' while participating in secondary attractions.

Table 2: Recommendations for Peak Experiences and Secondary Attractions in Circumpolar Arctic Luxury Experience in Lapland

Destination	Peak Experience	Secondary Attraction
Kola Peninsula, Russia		
	Salmon fishing Skiing	<p>Visit in the Snow Village with the local designer</p> <p>Overnight camp in the home of brown bears</p> <p>Witnessing industrial disaster and learning about the local industry now and then</p> <p>Experiencing Pomor culture with the local fishermen</p> <p>Cooking traditional soups with the local chef</p> <p>Mountain trekking</p> <p>Tundra landscape</p> <p>Diving in the Barents Sea / White Sea</p> <p>Beluga Whale spotting during scuba diving</p> <p>Visit to Amethyst Mine including digging and learning about the mineral industry</p>

Destination	Peak Experience	Secondary Attraction
Inari, Finland		
	Foraging Northern Lights	<p>Meeting with the Sami people and learning about their culture</p> <p>Participating in making traditional handicrafts</p> <p>Learning about Ancient Sami and Nordic mythology</p> <p>Ice driving: what have made Finns successful race drivers</p> <p>Wilderness camp and learning the traditional survival skills</p> <p>Night in a glass igloo</p> <p>Gold panning in roadless, geological panning site</p> <p>Ice fishing including learning to cook the catch</p> <p>Ice swimming including learning to make the hole in the ice</p> <p>Preparing sauna and understanding its position in the culture</p> <p>World War II hike in the national park and local war history</p> <p>Participating in reindeer husbandry</p>

Destination	Peak Experience	Secondary Attraction
Lapland, Sweden		
	Hiking IceHotel	<p>Elk spotting in the taiga forest</p> <p>Fine dining culinary experiences with a local chef</p> <p>Reaching Kebnekaise, Sweden's highest mountain</p> <p>Aurora Sky Station</p> <p>Husky Sledding with the local husky musher</p> <p>Hiking on King's Trail and learning about history of Arctic Sweden</p> <p>Visiting ore mine and learning how mining industry revolutionized the life here and how it affects the life of the locals</p> <p>Ice climbing on frozen waterfalls</p> <p>Abisko National Park</p> <p>Ice sculpting with a local designer</p>

Table 3: Recommendations for Peak Experiences and Secondary Attractions in Circumpolar Arctic Luxury Experience in the Arctic Islands

Destination	Peak Experience	Secondary Attraction
Svalbard, Norway		
	Midnight Sun Polar Bears	Snowmobiling, using the snowmobile as the mode of transport Wildlife photography Glaciers and learning about glaciology Experiencing the absence of culture in Longyearbyen Learning about trapper's history Glacier climbing Kayaking Ice caves World Sea Vault

Destination	Peak Experience	Secondary Attraction
Nordurland, Iceland		
	Horseback Riding Sagas	Birdlife Whale Watching Experiencing geothermal pools and learning about geology and how Iceland was formed Flight-Seeing Visit to Grimsey Island and experiencing how is the life on a small remote island in the Arctic Ocean ATV tours Jeep Tours Visiting waterfalls and learning about sustainable energy Visiting fishing villages and learning the secrets of Icelandic cooking

Destination	Peak Experience	Secondary Attraction
Arctic Circle, Greenland (Denmark)		
	Ice Cap Trekking Ice Cap Skiing	Ski touring, using the skis as the mode of transport Muskox spotting while trekking in the highlands Golf in one of the northernmost golf courses or sample ice golf on the ice sheet Sea angling and learning to cook from the local fish Heli-Skiing Experience treeless destination and how to manage without wood Learn about local flora and how fragile the Arctic soil is Husky mushing with Inuit

Table 4: Recommendations for Peak Experiences and Secondary Attractions in Circumpolar Arctic Luxury Experience in the Arctic North America

Destination	Peak Experience	Secondary Attraction
Nunavut, Canada		
	Inuit culture Wildlife Viewing	Experience sea planes as the mode of transport Snowshoeing Canoeing Travel on Heritage River and learn how the river impacts on the life in Nunavut Yachting Igloo building and learning about surviving in the snow Hot air ballooning Cliffs

Destination	Peak Experience	Secondary Attraction
Alaska, the US		
	History Culture	Wildlife viewing during overnight trek Experiencing Eskimo culture and participating in cultural activities American Indian culture and participating in cultural activities Mountains including the highest mountain in the US Mountain biking River rafting and learning to build your own raft Lakes and wild water swimming Marine life including visits to industrial sites and learning how the industry affects the marine life Ziplines

As it can be seen on Tables 2, 3 and 4, the experiences included in the itinerary focus on the features found on the word cloud: nature, mountains, wildlife, wilderness, fishing, authentic, Northern Lights, roadless, accessible, culture, and clean air. Many destinations offer unique products and experiences available nowhere else, and these are included in the itinerary, or a commonly available activity in the Arctic has been turned into comprehensive, authentic experience. Also the results of the benchmarking process are visible: experiences in Kola Peninsula are based on adventure and varying landscape and in Inari on completely different kind of adventures. Lapland experience includes a number of manmade unique characters and Svalbard observing wildlife and the remote wilderness. In Nordurland the focus is on experiences available nowhere else in the Arctic, in Arctic Circle on indigenous peoples and the feel of remoteness. Alaska offers high cultural content and Nunavut provides wildlife and Arctic landscape.

The needs of ecotourism, active tourism and indigenous tourism have carefully been considered. The itinerary provides the possibility to meet the locals and participating in their way of life, and learning about the life in the Arctic environment in general. Every day the programme offers a possibility to witness wildlife, experience the wilderness and untouched nature, admire Arctic landscape, and feel the adventure. The expedition will take guests on the industrial sites to witness how the traditional, heavy industries affect the life in the Arctic, in good and bad. The experience will make a traveller to realise what the global consequences are, if the arctic is gone, and what can be done from grass-root level to global political decision making, to save the Arctic. Finally, the journey lets the traveller to breath clean air, and perhaps witness the phenomenon of Fata Morgana while the air in the Arctic is still clear and pure.

The experience itself can also be divided in three steps in case of time –or other- constrains. However Kola Peninsula was selected to be the starting point for the circumpolar Arctic luxury experience due to its location: it allows one to travel from east to west and visit the countries in sensible order along the route, as illustrated in image 12.



Figure 12: The Map of the Arctic Tourism Destinations for the Circumpolar Arctic Luxury Experience (Nordic Blue 2016)

7 CONCLUSION

This thesis was accomplished in a few intensive months during spring 2016. However the actual process has taken for several years. In fact I completed my studies, excluding the thesis, in 2008 when I was supposed to graduate. Since then, the thesis has been a skeleton in my closet, a ghost leaving me feeling incomplete. For a diligent person like myself the skeleton has not been an easy topic to discuss about, and the closet remained long shut. However, a lot has happened since 2008. I built a career, brought up a pre-schooler, travelled the world and got married, and most recently, moved to where my heart is: the Arctic. The feeling to complete what was once left in the closet grew stronger. While the days grew longer outside, I started the spring cleaning process. It was time to open that closet and deal with the skeleton.

Two objectives were set for this study. The first objective was to develop the concept of Arctic luxury for the travel industry. Another objective was to design a unique circumpolar Arctic luxury travel experience for Luxury Action, the commissioner of this thesis. The study also aimed to define the potential niche markets for Arctic luxury. The research approach was qualitative. A number of research methods were utilised, including participant observation, interviews, and content analysis. The eight Arctic countries were examined. Based on the pre-determined criteria a region within each country was introduced as an ideal luxury travel destination for a private traveller. Collaborative and comparative benchmarking process was carried out to compare and measure the destinations to find the most unique elements in each destination. The analyses provided the information required for a deeper understanding of the Arctic as an operating environment for tourism.

Arctic luxury can be defined as a holistic destination experience where the main appeal is the nature as the source of life. Unlike nature tourism where the focus is on nature observation, Arctic luxury stresses the nature's importance for providing traditional livelihoods in the Arctic. Aim is to experience the destination with all senses and challenge one's body and mind. Meeting the people in the Arctic, experiencing untouched wilderness, witnessing wildlife in

their natural habitat, breathing clean air, realising the lack of human involvement, hearing the silence, and learning about foraging, are among elements that define Arctic luxury and challenge one's mind. The elements of Arctic luxury that challenge one's body are the possibility to access the inaccessible, to reach remoteness, the presence of indigenous people and participating in their way of life, to experience the solitude, and to discover the middle of nowhere.

Arctic people demonstrate significant respect and care for their environment, and following this sample Arctic luxury takes into consideration the wellbeing of the destination and its people. Arctic luxury educates all stakeholders of the importance of sustainable development in the Arctic, and welcomes the traveller to experience the Arctic way of life by participation. Arctic luxury is about authenticity and active involvement. This study concluded that ecotourism, active tourism and indigenous tourism are the most suitable market niches for Arctic luxury. These markets seek a deep connection with the destination and its people, and demonstrate the importance of sustainability and preservation of the host environment and its culture. Additionally Arctic luxury supports charities with focus on conservation of the Arctic.

The aim of the circumpolar experience is to introduce unique elements and experiences in each Arctic country and showcase how different experiences are available in the Arctic. The study concluded that the focus in any Arctic destination should not be on one peak experience, but the itinerary included a number of secondary attractions built around the peak experience. The itinerary takes the travellers for a holistic Arctic destination experience from east to west, providing travellers with pure Arctic luxury. This educational expedition aims to showcase the Arctic as it is and make the traveller to realise what are the global consequences if the Arctic is gone. The journey welcomes the travellers to join saving the Arctic from the grass-root level to the global political decision-making. Finally, the experience lets the traveller to breath clean air, and perhaps witness the phenomenon of Fata Morgana while the air in the Arctic is still clear and pure.

Both objectives of this thesis, developing the concept of Arctic luxury and circumpolar Arctic luxury experience, were achieved. The commissioner has been pleased with the project. In fact, the process has already resulted in actual bookings in a region where Luxury Action did not previously operate in directly. In addition, further market penetration plans have been initiated, new partnerships established, and the co-operation with existing partners has deepened. Arctic luxury has created a mutual ground for the people operating in the Arctic environment.

During this project a number of people working in Arctic tourism industry were interviewed, and the outcome is partially based on the interviews. Therefore the reliability of these interviews is considered. It was not an easy task to find the right people to be interviewed, taking into account the vastness of the Arctic extending across eight countries. Luxury travel to the Arctic is also a relatively new phenomenon. Some of the interviewees were current partners of the commissioner while others were recommended by the partners. All interviewees work either directly or indirectly with private or luxury travel in the Arctic, and are very familiar with the destination they represent. Therefore I trust the results of the interviews are valid. I also considered if my position as a representative of a luxury travel company, instead of student, affected the interviews. I believe that my position had a positive impact, as the interviews quickly became passionate, and extensive, and created feeling of togetherness. The ceaseless care and love the interviewees showed for their people, guests, and the environment was contagious. Some interviewees took the opportunity as a chance to speak out, which made me to feel gaining the responsibility as a voice of the Arctic. This led me to work harder, bearing a responsibility with honour, not with burden.

The Arctic is a complex operational environment for tourism. The region extends over eight countries with different interests in the Arctic. The Arctic is home to many heavy industries that do not correlate with the perception of Arctic as a wild place that lacks human involvement. The presence of military bases and nuclear power facilities, and the exploit of natural resources by forestry, fishery, oil, gas, and mining industries, has led to marine pollution, nuclear and military testing, dumping of nuclear and military waste, heavy metal

contamination, acid rains, species loss, and unmanaged littering. In some cases the impact has been irreversible. Regardless, in the light of economic benefit harmful actions continue taking place. Moreover, the climate change is happening in the Arctic twice the speed of the rest of the world, and the consequences are already affecting daily life in the Arctic.

It is incomprehensible that the people, nature, and wildlife in the remote Arctic regions far away from the industrialisation are the first to suffer from the climate change and are affected by the impacts of heavy industries. This study predicted ecotourism and nature tourism to grow importance in the Arctic, and revealed how green, cultural, and ecological values are becoming more important. Absurdly, while the growth of tourism industry and the need for ecological tourism products have been welcomed and acknowledged by the Arctic countries, there still seems to be a value conflict between heavy industries and tourism. If the favouring of capital-intensive heavy industries continues, the survival of the Arctic appeal can be questioned. Consequently the possibilities to implement Arctic luxury disappeared, and Arctic region's prospects for conserving the environment and improving the welfare of local people via tourism, weakened. This together with the speed of the climate change could result the Arctic having a future for dark tourism.

These scenarios serve as the opening for the discussion on the ecological balance and sustainability of the existing industries in the Arctic. Prime Minister's Office in Finland has defined Finland's role in the Arctic region, with emphasis on Arctic expertise, sustainable development, environmental considerations, and International cooperation. I challenge Finland to stand true in this role, take a leading role in this discussion, and lead by example. I summon the tourism bodies in Arctic countries to exchange information and work as a frontier instead of competing destinations. I question the main media in Finland that continuously celebrates unusually warm climate, and recall their responsibility to create awareness on climate change. Climate change is a topic that cannot be ignored in any level and the governments in the Arctic should work as an alliance and react strongly on any comments made whereas the impacts have been downplayed and belittled. In a local level the tourism

companies should seek ways to adapt ecotourism approach and realise that being ecological is a competitive advantage.

While I am relatively content with the outcome of this thesis, I wish I had included climate change as part of the theoretical background study. Everything in the Arctic came back to this topic, making me to realise the importance of sustainable development. I have recognised a number of steps that serve as the theme for future development of the Arctic luxury concept. Building the perception and visualising Arctic luxury with words and images is the first step, and here I would like to see the commissioner to take an active role. Co-creating a manual on Arctic luxury with the stakeholders in the operating environment works as the second step. An educational programme on Arctic luxury for international travel agencies should be considered, emphasising the global importance of conserving and protecting the Arctic. Arctic luxury is to be considered in the market as a holistic destination experience instead of a loose product or activity. The ones selling or promoting Arctic luxury should be seen as the spokesmen for the Arctic environment, people, and nature. Going further, Arctic luxury should be positioned as a catalyst for the sustainable development in the Arctic and Arctic luxury certification considered. However, beforehand a discussion with the national tourism boards in the Arctic should be initiated. Some of them already promote indigenous tourism and ecotourism and recognise the ecological and economic benefits of the sustainable tourism development. Promoting Arctic luxury could be a natural continuum.

The topic for this thesis derived from my passion and deep interest in the Arctic, and my personal purpose was to deepen my understanding of the Arctic. After initial struggle, once the final topic cleared in my mind I was fully immersed in the study. I lost the track of time or the spring outside, I felt happy, productive, and in control: I was experiencing the flow. While my purpose of acquiring a deeper understanding on the Arctic was accomplished, I came to realise how much the state of the Arctic affects us all on the planet. The more I learnt about the region and its global importance, the more I realised how much there was to learn. This set a clear future goal for my development both personally and career-wise. The Arctic is my calling.

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