



Satakunnan ammattikorkeakoulu
Satakunta University of Applied Sciences

SOFIA TIKKA

Ethical wildlife tourism in Thailand

Case: Ekomatkaajat

DEGREE PROGRAMME IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM
MANAGEMENT
2023

ABSTRACT

Tikka, Sofia: Ethical wildlife tourism in Thailand
Bachelor's thesis
Degree program international tourism management
October 2023
Number of pages: 48

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the current wildlife tourism practices in Thailand with respect to elephant encounters by assisting Finnish tourism operators in their efforts to raise awareness, promote ethical practices, and encourage responsible behaviour among tourists. The thesis was carried out as a commission for Ekomatkaajat.

In the theoretical part, zoos and elephant destinations are explored as examples of animal-related destinations. Furthermore, the discussion encompasses topics such as animal ethics, animal rights and responsible tourism, encompassing wildlife and volunteer tourism.

The research used a quantitative research method. The data was collected using an electronic questionnaire. The researcher published a link to the survey on social media, such as Facebook and private WhatsApp groups, after which some of her friends shared the link. The survey was open between 09.05.2023 and 10.06.2023 and a total of 61 responses were received. Since the number of respondents was small, the research results can only be considered indicative.

A large number of respondents also do not like to visit animal destinations due to ethical reasons, but they are ready to pay more if they know that the destination is ethical and supports animal welfare. There were conflicting opinions about the welfare of animals. The research revealed that travellers are interested in the welfare of animals in animal destinations and they want to make ethical and responsible choices when traveling.

Keywords: Ethical tourism, sustainability, wildlife tourism, elephants

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	4
2 COMMISSIONER.....	5
3 RESEARCH PLAN	6
3.1 Purpose and objectives	6
3.2 Usability and delimitations	7
4 WILDLIFE TOURISM	8
4.1 Introduction to wildlife tourism	8
4.2 Animal rights	11
4.3 Ethics in elephant tourism	14
5 VOLUNTEERS IN WILDLIFE TOURISM	17
5.1 Ethics of volunteer tourism	18
5.2 Impacts of volunteer tourism	20
5.3 Negative aspects of volunteer tourism	21
6 WILDLIFE TOURISM IN THAILAND	22
6.1 History of wildlife tourism in Thailand	24
6.2 Sustainable wildlife tourism	26
7 METHODOLOGY	29
7.1 Research method.....	29
7.2 Survey as a data collection method	30
7.3 Research process	31
8 RESULTS.....	33
8.1 Respondents background information	33
8.2 Wildlife tourism experiences	34
8.3 Animal rights	37
8.4 Animal welfare.....	38
9 SUMMARY AND DELIBERATION	39
9.1 Conclusion.....	39
9.2 Reliability and validity	40
9.3 Reflection	41
9.4 Feedback from commissioner	42
REFERENCES	44
APPENDICES.....	49

1 INTRODUCTION

Wildlife tourism and volunteer tourism have become increasingly popular in recent years, and there is growing awareness of the environmental impact of these activities. In this thesis, the author aims to explore the complex dynamics of the wildlife tourism industry and identify strategies to promote responsible and sustainable animal tourism. Wildlife tourism involves observing and interacting with wild animals in their natural habitats allowing visitors to see animals such as elephants, tiger, and monkeys up close. Volunteer programs allows tourists to participate in conservation efforts and animal welfare activities, with a focus on ethical treatment of animals in captivity and in the wild.

The aim of this thesis is to examine the current practises of wildlife tourism in Thailand with respect to elephant conservation, specifically from the perspective of Finnish tourism operators.

Wildlife tourism is more relevant and topical now than ever before. Numerous media platforms and researchers have spread its message and thus also wanted to make it more important.

The beginning of the thesis covers wildlife tourism, animals rights and, in particular why it is important and topical. Then it focuses on wildlife tourism, especially from the point of view of Thailand and elephants. The second paragraph focuses on volunteer tourism as a phenomenon, its larger effects, and carious projects available to volunteer tourists. Then followed by presentation of the research methodology, data collection and the results of the thesis. Ekomatkaajat, the commissioner of the thesis, can use the results of the thesis by creating blogs and social media post to raise awareness about the topic.

2 COMMISSIONER

Ekomatkaajat is Finland's only travel agency that organizes trips for travellers who are interested in endangered animals and nature conservation. Maria Oja-järvi is a tour operator and runs the company. She has worked in the tourism industry for over 20 years. She is currently a member of the responsible tourism team of the tourism association in Finland (SMAL). Through her actions, she strives to create positive experiences with tourists and teach about the protection of endangered animals. (Ekomatkaajat, n.d.-a.)

According to the Ekomatkaajat (n.d.-b) website traveller is able to volunteer in animal and nature conservation, such in destinations like Costa Rica, Thailand, Greece, and South Africa. Depending on the site, the work includes activities related to the protection of elephants and other endangered animals, cleaning the beaches, monitoring wildlife behaviour, and much more. Tasks vary according to the site, but everyone is committed to the same goals, such as responsibility and ethics and working on animal terms. During these trips travellers can help sea turtles, elephants, monk seals, whales, and dolphins. Additionally, in addition to working with the animals, the travellers also share information on reducing consumption, promoting the circular economy for disposable products, and avoiding certain items. "The benefits of the trip to animals and nature must be many times higher than the environmental damage it causes."

The mission of the company is to tell about the importance of protecting endangered animals and how each of us can help endangered animals by volunteering. Enthusiastic volunteers are needed to reach the aims to protect the animals. The future looks promising, as more and more travellers appreciate sustainable tourism and want to make environmentally conscious choices on their trips.

3 RESEARCH PLAN

3.1 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the current wildlife tourism practices in Thailand with respect to elephant encounters by assisting Finnish tourism operators in their efforts to raise awareness, promote ethical practices, and encourage responsible behaviour among tourists.

I aim to provide an overview of the current state of the welfare of elephants in Thailand including wildlife tourism and volunteer tourism. I will identify the economic, social, and environmental effects of tourism using elephants, and analyse their expected impacts on animal welfare, local communities, and the environment. In addition, I will explore the point of view of tourists, tour operators, and other stakeholders on animal welfare in tourism, and ethical issues surrounding animal tourism in Thailand concentrating on elephants. My study will also address issues of responsibility and ethics in wildlife tourism in Thailand. Finally, my study seeks to raise awareness about the importance of being responsible and ethical while traveling, and the role that tourists and tourism operators can play in promoting responsible and sustainable wildlife tourism practices.

My thesis will answer the research question: How can wildlife tourism operators effectively raise awareness and promote ethics to ensure tourists support responsible wildlife conservation? My thesis will also try to answer the sub-questions: How can wildlife tourism operators help tourists understand the importance of treating animals ethically and responsibly during their visits? What challenges do wildlife tourism operators face, and how can these challenges be effectively addressed for better ethical conservation efforts?

3.2 Usability and delimitations

This thesis could be useful for animal welfare organizations, and tourism companies who want to have better understanding about the negative effects of animal tourism in Thailand or in world in general and take action to protect wild animals. It could also be valuable for tourists who want to make more informed decisions about the types of animal attractions they visit. They will also learn more about the animal rights, about the effects of tourism and ethical tourism.

To delimit the research, it could focus on specific group of animals, such as elephants. The thesis delves into wildlife tourism and volunteer tourism, considering Thailand's tourism.

4 WILDLIFE TOURISM

Tourism that involves traveling to see animals is called wildlife tourism. It includes a variety of encounters, ranging from inactive viewing to feeding or touching the species being spotted. (UNWTO, n.d.) It can occur in a variety of environments, including captivity, semi-captivity, and the wild. The main issue with wildlife tourism and what makes it controversial is that animals are taken out of their natural habitat.

4.1 Introduction to wildlife tourism

Wildlife visitors are looking for a connection that will encourage them to investigate, no matter how briefly or for the duration of their trip. People can readily participate in a variety of activities, whether they are half-day or full-day experiences. There are also pursuits that last days to weeks if people are more ready to invest more time in them. Especially if others take part in the expedition activity, as then they might want to spend more time seeking to observe, for example safari activity. Safari has a long history of being associated with Africa but it can also be found in other parts of the world. (Newsome, 2005, pp. 3, Hingham, 2019, pp. 14.)

Concerning issues human related impacts on the natural world such as environmental degradation, ecological sustainability, and the loss of biological diversity. Animal welfare is an important steward of the environment and of the social landscapes in which they operate. Animal welfare issues are often related to sustainability. Improvements in both areas are views by many as good, progressive practices. Some of the biggest environmental problems of time are affecting not only for humans, but also other animals. The climate crisis is exposing animals to a variety of new threats, such as an increase in weather events, changes in food and water availability, and heightened disease risks. (Newsome, 2005, pp. 14.) Another issue with wildlife tourism is that people want to experience with the cool wildlife in real life, but they often do not bother

looking into the companies or making sure the company is responsible and takes good care of their animals. (Buckley, 2004.)

The influence of television documentaries has particularly shaped the way views of wildlife of people view wildlife. Many wildlife tourism stations are unique in their sensitivity and response to potential impacts. The potential impact situation is highly dependent on the type of tourism, with an emphasis on protection of tourist attraction and changes by tourism itself. Tourism helps preserve wildlife, natural landscapes, and cultures, but it can change landscapes and people and dilute traditional meaning. Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism in a natural environment. Involving local communities not only benefits local communities and the environments but also improves the quality of the tourism experience (Newsome, 2005, pp. 21, Buckley, 2004, pp. 4–13). Tourists visits to wildlife reserves can contribute to the protection and welfare of the animals, but certain practises by and of tourists may have negative effects. (Higginbottom, 2004.)

Animal welfare refers to one's own experience of mental and physical well-being. People have a duty to treat animals in ways that supports their welfare. The health, production and living conditions of an individual animals are important factors of their well-being. Animal behaviour is often a more useful and sensitive indicator of well-being. Behaviour can be divided into conservation functions, social behavioural needs, and personal characteristics. Animal welfare means how the animal's lives in the conditions in which it lives. An animal is in good welfare when it is healthy, comfortable, well fed, safe, able to express natural behaviour and does not suffer from unpleasant conditions such as pain, fear, and anxiety. (Broom and Carr, 2018.)

Animals used for tourism must be physically, mentally, and socially well in order to enjoy comprehensive well-being. Wildlife species living near the human population are most affected by human act. Animal welfare has recently become a topic of very serious. There are changes as public awareness grows that animal welfare can underline trade in animals. Animal welfare is rooted in social and cultural realities. Which included human behaviour, laws, rules, and

standards. Welfare is an animal characteristic and people have concerns about animal welfare and make ethical decisions, but there are social and scientific issues. Thailand's Infamous tiger temple is an example of where animals are abused of the benefit of tourists. (Broom & Carr, 2018, pp. 59 – 60, 71.) In the figure below (figure 4), we see eight different stakeholders that are important in tourism and what their most important tasks are.

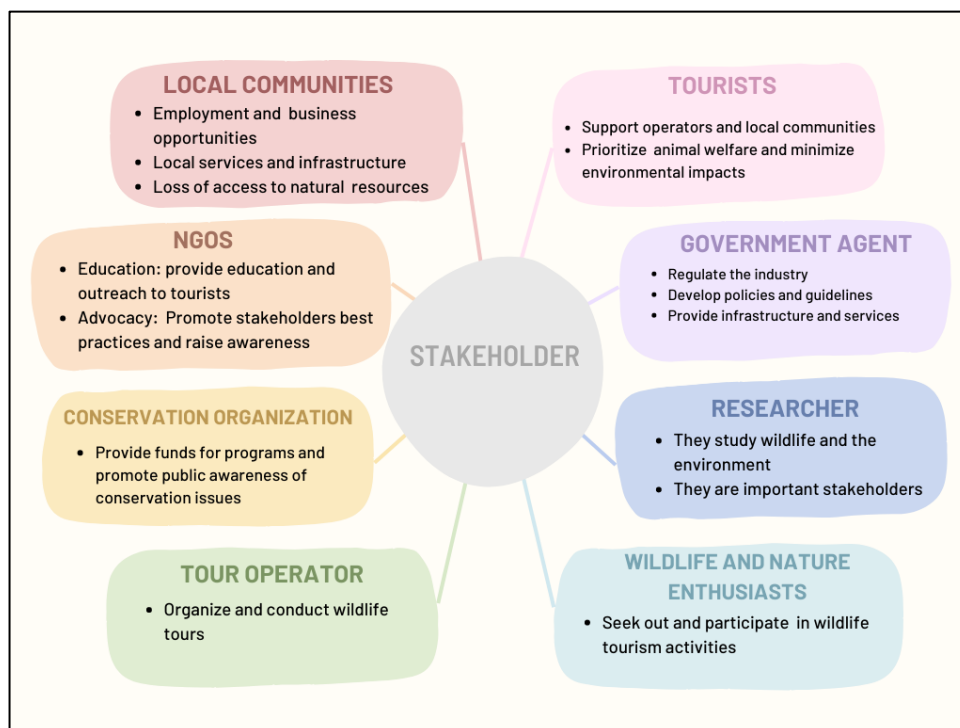


Figure 4, Stakeholders in wildlife tourism (Tikka, 2023)

Tour operators play a crucial role in wildlife tourism because they are in charge of arranging and marketing wildlife tours to customers. (UNWTO, 2014.) Local communities are an essential stakeholder in wildlife tourism. Through their contribution in the travel industry, local communities can profit from expanded financial open doors and further developed conservation efforts. (Begum, et al., 2014, pp. 318.) Local communities are a group of people with a common recognized interest in the resources. Visitors may see crafts being created, explore towns, witness animals with local guides, eat and drink locally, and much more. Local guides give visitors a greater knowledge of the place they are in. (Newsome, D., et al., 2005, pp. 116.) Conservation organizations work to educate tourists and local communities about the significance

of conservation and responsible tourism. The data that researchers gather is useful for understanding animal behaviour, population trends, habitat needs and threats. As an examples, Charles Darwin and Steve Irwin are known for their expertise in animal biology. Government agencies regulate and manage wildlife tourism. They strive to strike a balance between the requirements of visitors and local communities and the preservation of wildlife and their habitats. Tourists decide to participate in wildlife activities and their action affect wildlife and the environment and to choose environmentally friendly and sustainable tourism methods. NGOS (non-profit organizations) teach tourists and local communities about the importance of protection and mindful the travel industry practices. Like world wildlife fund (WWF) which is one of the top conservation organizations in the world. WWF works to protect threatened species and their natural habitats. They work with a variety of stakeholders, including local governments, communities, and the tourism sector. (WWF, n.d.) Success of wildlife tourism is dependent on the collaboration and cooperation of numerous stakeholders, including several stakeholders. (WTO, 2005.)

4.2 Animal rights

The animal's rights view tries to apply the moral principles that we all have about people to animals without enforcing basic protections for basic aspects of animals' natures. The majority of people do not worry about killing animals. However, they are more concerned about the animal's existence. (Dawkins, 2017.) Animals are more intelligent, empathetic, and sensitive than previously thought. The philosophy of animal rights holds that many or all animals have moral worth that is independent of their ability to interact with humans and what their most fundamental needs are. Animal liberation and animal protection are frequently used as synonymously with the term "animal rights." It alludes to the possibility that numerous animals have crucial privileges to be treated with deference as people. (Kumar & Raghavan, 2022, pp. 76–79.)

The goal of the animal rights movement is to establish a society in which the well-being of animals is regarded as a moral obligation and they are treated

with compassion as respect. It aims to end the exploitation, abuse, and cruelty of animals in agriculture, entertainment, and research. Animals should not be treated as simple assets to be utilized for human benefit, but instead as conscious animals with the option to live a life free from pain and suffering. (Bekoff, 2004.)

When the opportunity arises to interact with animals, which is an unforgettable experience for many travellers, animal welfare may be overlooked or forgotten. Likewise, many are not mindful of the indications of animal abuse. (McVeigh & Hakkarainen, 2015.) You can increase awareness by telling everybody the basic criteria for animal welfare. Different parties have begun to develop the standards that animal owners and animal welfare advocates should follow as the tourism industry has expanded. Additionally, a number of sites and organizations provide their customers with advice on how to travel to animal-friendly locations in an ethical manner, the warning signs that animals are not doing well, and which animal sites are unethical and should be avoided.

The five freedoms are well-known to the majority of people who have a basic understanding of animal welfare. As we can see from the figure 4.1 below. Freedom from thirst and hunger, freedom from discomfort, freedom from illness, injury, and pain. Freedom from fear and distress, and lastly to mention freedom to express normal behaviour. The framework of the five freedoms is essential for receiving assistance from the government. It is certain that animals are fed a diet that supports their physical and health by providing them with easy access to clean water. Various animals vary by the way they feel great, and with by counteraction and treatment that helps the animals assuming they have wound, etc. By having adequate space, suitable facilities, and individual animal companionship it indicates good welfare. (RSPCA, n.d.)

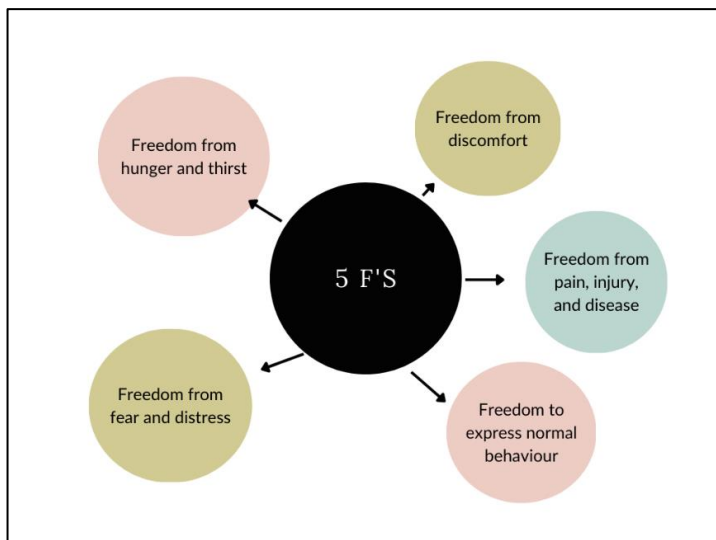


Figure 4.2 Five freedoms (RSPCA, n.d.)

The five domains and five freedoms structures contain similar five component. The five domains that can be found from figure 4.1.1., which go into greater depth about an animal's mental state and recognize that for every change in an animal's physical condition, there may also be a change in their subjective experience or emotion, which can have an impact on their welfare. (Abta, n.d.). It might help the idea that animal's emotional needs are just as important as their physical needs. In the below (figure 4.1.1) we can see five domains that show a method for assessing the government assistance of an individual or gathering of animals in a specific circumstance, with a strong mental well-being and positive experiences. In addition, the five domains enable us to think beyond the five freedoms and place an even higher emphasis on providing animals with opportunities to participate in or be exposed to activities that offer positive experiences. (Mellor, 2017.)

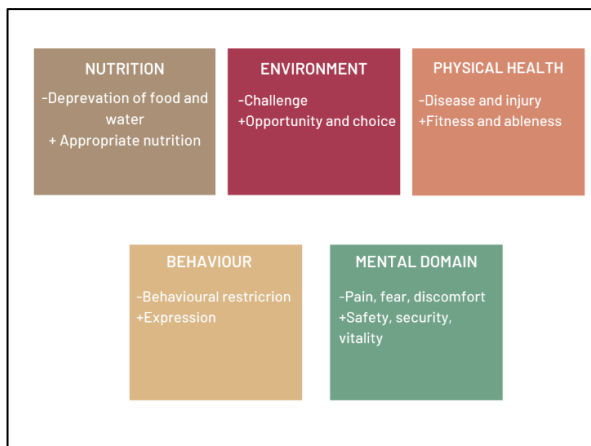


Figure 4.2.1 Five domain (Mellor 2017)

Legal rights are not the focus of animal rights. Rights that are guaranteed by law are known as legal rights. Moral rights are determined by personal ethics and experience, not necessarily by laws or regulations. In the view of animal rights, animals have intrinsic value and should not be subjected to certain actions, even if those actions are beneficial to humans or other animals. As a result, animals have moral rights that ought to be upheld regardless of the circumstances. Animal rights advocates argue, in its most extreme form, that animals ought to have the same rights as human. (Bekoff, 2004, pp. 419–438.)

4.3 Ethics in elephant tourism

Ethical tourism can have a significant role in supporting existing elephants if it follows principles that do not lead to the continuation of highly commercialized practices that lead to the welfare and conservation concerns mentioned above. Culture is always in flux, constantly evolving in response to time, environment, society, and economy changes (Laws, 2021, pp. 132). Ethical tourism is a form of responsible tourism. The principles of sustainable tourism aim to minimise the negative impacts of tourism, while maximising the positive impacts. Tourism takes full account of current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts and responds to the needs of tourists, industries, the environment, and host communities (Parker, 2010).

The presence of animals specific to a region is a part of the tourism product, and it frequently have a crucial role in tourism destination promotion. While wildlife use for tourism, recreation, and other purposes may benefit people, it is difficult to envision any benefits for wildlife specifically (Kapera, 2019). A farm that raises marine turtles the function of a tourist attraction such as one in Koh Phra Thong. The tourists can hold the turtles and even feed them during their visit. Sea turtles experience immense stress when being held, which may weaken their immune system and amplify their susceptibility to disease caused by bacterial infections. Millions of tourists who visit dolphinariums are often unaware of the cruelty and abuse that the dolphins have to endure to perform in the shows (Kapera, 2019).

The quality and quantity of food and water available to them is as important as it is for human members of the expedition. A travel company's animal welfare policy should ensure that no animal is overloaded. Humans have a responsibility to suspend our judgement on local people less fortunate than ourselves, understand their circumstances and economic pressures, be prepared to help where you can. Tourists are responsible for the welfare of animals involved in tourism. We can and have to make a difference. Difficult conversation is a small price to pay for the rewards of building a movement for more ethical treatment of animals in tourism. (Carr & Broom, 2018, pp. 144–146.)

In order to force the elephants to give in to the rides, baby elephants are first taken away from their mothers. The process of breaking their spirit begins through restraining them in small cages or trying them with wither ropes or chains so they can move only when they are allowed to do so. Sometimes other animals like bears are forced to wear costumes and perform circus tricks like riding a bike or balancing on a ball. The stress associated with such captive conditions can increase the susceptibility to disease caused by bacterial infections. (Carr & Broom, 2018, pp. 144 –146.)

As Broom & Carr (2018) have stated ethical elephant tourism is also important for conservation of wild elephants. When tourism attituded change and become a contributor rather than a consumer. Truly responsible elephant tourism

means observing wild elephants in their natural habitat in a way that does not adversely affect animals and ecosystems, or seeing elephants in it is one of safe observation of elephants that provides optimal welfare. In many places elephants are often kept on short leashes, isolated from other elephants and without the proper food or veterinary care they need. In a true elephant-friendly places, elephants are allowed to roam freely and interact with each other and are not used for rides, shows or tricks. Education on elephant welfare is part of the visitor experience (Laws, 2021, pp. 118–119).

How the animal is dealing with the circumstances in which it lives. According to world animal protection, wild animals should be left alone, because it is the only place where they can live full lives without suffering in captivity (world animal protection, n.d.-b, pp. 3). The degree to which wild animals' living conditions resemble their natural surroundings has a significant impact on their welfare in captivity (world animal protection n.d.-b, pp. 8). A wild animal that is kept in a confined space and is dependent on humans for all its needs is known as a captive animal. Animals who have been abused, injured, or sick, abandoned, orphaned, illegally held, or who are otherwise in need are given shelter and care at a captive wildlife facility.

The five freedoms (figure 4.2) and five domains (figure 4.2.1) help you with understanding on the off change that the elephants in the account are being dealt with well or not. The five freedoms let us know that elephants ought not be eager, uncomfortable, in pain, fear, or extremely agitated. In other hands the five domains glance at things like how healthy the elephants are, where they live, what they do, and how they feel. As a result, these models allow you to determine whether the elephants in the story are thriving or struggling. This encourages you to reflect more deeply on the ways in which we ought to look after real elephants and ensure that they lead happy lives, both in fiction and in the real world.

5 VOLUNTEERS IN WILDLIFE TOURISM

Volunteers belong to one of the groups of stakeholders, as the figure (figure 4) shows. They are the foundation of animal conservation activities. They voluntarily give their time and effort to assist important conservation programs. This paragraph focuses on what volunteer tourism means and what it contains. It is a fast-growing sector of the tourism industry. Voluntourism comes from the English word “voluntourism”, which consists of the words “volunteer”, and “tourism”. (Bezuhla et al., 2022.) Volunteer tourism is type of altruistic travel in which individuals choose to travel and perform voluntary work while also exploring their destination. By participating in a significant change, visitors can feel good about themselves. (Mustonen, 2007, Wearing, 2001.) The concepts also aim to raise funds for programmes who assist needy communities. (Wearing, 2001.) Voluntourism is a new way to travel that involves tourist going on missions to help with a specific project or going on vacation. It involves traveling to new locations, experiencing a different culture, and learning more about other people. One way to make sure your money and time are going to something you believe in is to volunteer with a group that has done research on the subject. (Caruana, 2017.)

Short-term volunteers can look for opportunities to learn about new cultures and places. When done right, volunteer tourism can be a life-altering experience. It is a way of helping in which people actively look for opportunities to help other people who are in need, make significant an ongoing commitments over long periods of time, often at a high cost to themselves. Additionally, it is the act of providing free labour for community service or non-profit support. Non-profit organizations and the community benefit from volunteer efforts. (Butler & Tomazos, 2009.)

In Thailand, the primary source of funding for the project is the fee paid by volunteers. (Volunteer world, n.d.) The project organizations would be unable to carry out their activities without volunteers, which would result in the loss of valuable conservation work as well as the salary of locals. Opportunities for

virtual volunteers help non-profit organizations expand their reach beyond their local communities and connect with new audiences. Volunteer programs can assist you with acquiring new information and draw in volunteers. Additionally, traveling is a privilege that comes with responsibility. Altruistic travel is about helping those in need to the fullest while still leading a modest and minimalist lifestyle. As businesses and grassroots organizations move towards more sustainable practices, sustainable/ecotourism and responsible volunteering are becoming more mainstream. (Caruana, 2017.)

5.1 Ethics of volunteer tourism

Volunteer tourism has become a popular way for people to do good deeds while traveling and learning about new cultures. However, it raises ethical questions about the commercialization of good deeds and the possibility of harming local communities unintentionally. (Lyon & wearing, 2008, pp. 78.) Volunteer the travel industry, otherwise called voluntourism, has filled in ubiquity as of late as a way for individuals to consolidate travel with social and natural activism. (Lyon & wearing, 2008, pp. 150–152.) However, there are several ethical issues with this kind of tourism. First, tourists pay a lot of money to participate in volunteer activities that may not have a long-term impact on the communities they serve, which means that volunteering often becomes a commodity. Additionally, voluntourism has the potential to cause unintended harm, such as the displacement of local workers or the disruption of traditional practices. Voluntourism can also, in some cases, reinforce existing power dynamics and raise negative stereotypes. (Wearing, 2001.)

To address these moral worries, tourists must cautiously investigate the associations they work with and guarantee that their aspirations line up with the requirements and needs of local communities. It is likewise vital to perceive the restrictions of transient humanitarian effort and to search out amazing open doors for more supported commitment with local communities. (Lyon, wearing, 2008.) Tourists can help alleviate some of the ethical concerns associated with this type of tourism by approaching voluntourism with humility and a

willingness to listen to and learn from local communities. While volunteer the travel industry can give significant open doors to people to add to social and natural causes, its ethical consequence makes thinking and require a basic assessment of power dynamics, social responsiveness, and long-term sustainability. (Mustonen, 2007.)

Volunteer tourism can be a useful way for people to get involved in social and environmental causes, but it is important to think critically about the ethical implications. Power dynamics are one of the main ethical concerns associated with volunteer tourism, as tourists may inadvertently raise harmful stereotypes or reinforce existing disparities. (Wearing, 2001.) Furthermore, voluntourism can some of the time focus on the necessities and wants of vacationers over the drawn-out manageability and self-assurance of nearby networks. Volunteers must approach their work with humility and cultural sensitivity in order to address ethical questions. This may include seeking actively feedback from local communities and learning about the history and context of the community they are working with. Individuals can ensure that their efforts have a positive impact on the communities they serve by taking a critical and thoughtful approach to volunteering. (Lyons & wearing, 2008.)

Some people argue that volunteer tourism is a form of neo-colonialism that raise dependency and inequality, while others see it as a valuable form of cross-cultural exchange that fosters empathy, understanding and social change. The ethics of volunteer tourism are highly contested. The ethics of volunteer tourism are complex and highly contested. (Wearing, 2001.) On the other hand, proponents of voluntourism content that in additions to making tangible contributions to social and environmental causes, it can provide valuable opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual learning. They emphasize the potential for tourists to use their privilege and resources to bring about positive change and gain a deeper understanding of the communities that live there. (Wen, 2019.) On the other hand, voluntourism argue that it can build up existing power elements and raise harmful stereotypes. They argue that volunteerism can bring up and that it can sometimes prioritize the wants and

needs of tourists over the long-term sustainability and self-determination of local communities. (Lyons & wearing, 2008.)

5.2 Impacts of volunteer tourism

Volunteers in the travel industry permits voyageurs to have a beneficial outcome on the networks they visit by adding to practical improvement undertaking or assisting with resolving social or natural issues. It might present a change to completely and meet new people by immersing themselves in the culture of the area. It is a life-changing experience that helps travellers learn new skills, broaden their horizons, and find meaning in their lives. (Volunteer world, n.d.)

Positively, volunteering can support environmental and social causes and provide communities with valuable resources. (Wearing, 2001.) Among other types of work, volunteers can help with construction projects, conservation efforts, and educational and healthcare initiatives. Through the purchase of goods and services or the creation of jobs, voluntourism can also benefit the local economy in some instances. Nonetheless, voluntourism can likewise adversely affect communities and environments. (Wen, 2019, pp. 81–94.) Volunteers may take over jobs that could be done by members of the community, which could result in the displacement of local workers. Additionally, if it involves unskilled or short-term work that conflicts with community priorities. (Guttentag, 2009, pp. 537–551.) Volunteering can also influence the environment in some cases, such as using up scarce resources or producing waste.

It is essential to approach voluntourism with a critical eye toward its potential to support long-term sustainability and community-led initiatives in order to mitigate these potential negative effects. This might necessitate careful planning and coordination with partners in the local community, as well as a willingness to pay attention to and learn from the needs and priorities of the communities where volunteerism is carried out. It is possible of volunteerism while

minimizing its potential negative effects by approaching it thoughtfully and responsibly. (Guttentag, 2009, pp. 537–551.)

Even though tourism can be beneficial, it is important to think about whether the volunteer's presence is beneficial to the community or harmful. Volunteer tourism will generally be present moment, which can restrict the effect of the worker's endeavours. (Lyons & wearing, 2008.) Sustainable development frequently necessitates ongoing efforts and long-term commitments. It might also bring up ethical questions about things like volunteer safety, cultural insensitivity, and exploitation. Volunteers may engage in activities that are unsafe or culturally insensitive, or some volunteer organization may charge astronomical fees or exploit volunteer's labour. (Wen, 2019.)

5.3 Negative aspects of volunteer tourism

The lack of sustainability in volunteer tourism is one of the main issues. Projects frequently concentrate on short-term efforts, which has a limited long-term impact and may be dependent on a constant stream of volunteers, which slows down local growth. (Tourism teacher, 2023.) Another concern is the efficacy of voluntary work. The impact of volunteer activities can be weakened by a lack of competence and a misalignment with community needs, raising concerns about the general efficacy of such initiatives. (Medium, 2019 & tourism teacher, 2023.) The local populace may feel denigrated and disempowered by perceptions of poverty, helplessness, or vulnerability, which perpetuate negative narratives.

According to the researchers Thevamanohar and Duck within the volunteer tourism sector, commercialization and profit-driven motivations have become common nowadays. Some groups have large placement fees, putting financial gain ahead of true community development and possibly taking advantage of weaker areas. Volunteers with limited cultural awareness may act disrespectfully or offensively. (Thevarmanohar & Duck, 2019.) Cultural education and sensitivity training are essential since cultural misunderstanding can lead to

conflict and unpleasant experiences for both volunteers and residents. (Medium, 2019.) When choosing volunteer programs, careful investigation and examination are required to make sure that moral standards are met. The industry may encourage responsible and beneficial practices by addressing issues with sustainability, efficacy, stereotypes, commercialization, cultural awareness, reliance, and ethical considerations. To ensure that volunteer tourism serves both volunteers and the communities it seeks to support, awareness of and action in these areas are essential.

6 WILDLIFE TOURISM IN THAILAND

In Thailand, tourist use captive elephants for a variety of purposes, including feeding, bathing, riding, and simply observing. There are between 6783 and 7483 elephants in Thailand, with 3783 in captivity and 3000 –3500 in the wild. (Bansiddhi et al, 2020). In recent years, the welfare of these elephants has been the subject of intense debate, leading to divergent viewpoints regarding the kinds of uses that are and are not appropriate. In order to guarantee healthy, long-lasting population, elephants held in captivity in Thailand need to be cared for by humans and managed in a way that meets their welfare requirements. The wildlife protection and protection act of 1992 defines Asian elephants as a protected species. Catching, killing, and harming elephants are restricted, and brings about punishment. (Higginbottom, 2004.)

There has been a lot of outrage and call for action in recent years over the poor treatment and welfare of animals used in wildlife tourism attractions. The media's coverage of animal cruelty has increased, as has public outrage on social media. A person's predominant worldview can have an impact on how animals are treated in tourism settings and how people and animals interact with one another (Flower et al., 2021). Ecocentrism and anthropocentrism, two common environmental worldviews are based on whether or not humans are at the centre of moral concern. According to an anthropocentric, or human-

centred worldview, nature and wildlife are commodities whose primary value is in their utility to humans. Western societies are dominated by this worldview, which holds that humans are the only truly superior species. In contrast, an ecocentric or life-centred worldview holds that all life, regardless of its relationships to humans, has intrinsic value. This point of view acknowledges that nature exists regardless of humanity and that humans are not superior to or distinct from other species. There are many factors that influence people's attitudes toward wildlife, such as their level of education and cultural differences (Flower et al., 2021).

Positive and negative word-of-mouth can have an impact on the activities offered at elephant tourism venues and other wildlife attractions. People may be more likely to participate in an activity if they share positive experiences with their friends and family or leave online reviews. When someone has a bad experience, the same holds true, despite the fact in this instance they may be able to persuade people not to take part in the activity. In general, people appear that tourists would rather visit places where elephants are allowed to behave naturally than those where elephants are made to entertain tourists. (East, et al., 2015.)

Kontogeorgopoulos (2009) would define wildlife tourism as "tourism undertaken to learn about wildlife or meet them". Individuals want cooperations with untamed life on account of the recuperative impacts of natural settings, social mentalities towards nature and untamed life, the physiological advantages of connection with animals (2009). Moralistic views complicate the human-centric qualities underpinning most untamed life in the travel industry, placing rather than the government assistance and freedoms of animals as living animals are similarly basic as significant as the necessities and wants of untamed life vacationers.

For wild elephants in Thailand, legislation that applies to them is wildlife legislation, and for captive elephants, on the other hand, it applies the domestic livestock. Despite the fact there are no readily accessible databases, it is possible to verify that as many as 75% of the adult elephants used for tourism

entertainment in Thailand were rescued from the wild (world animal protection, n.d.-b, pp. 15). World animal protection works for around the world and locally to safeguard animals and impact the choices individuals make to safeguard natural life. Animal destinations include, for example, zoos, tiger attractions, public aquariums, dolphinariums, circuses, safaris, animal theme parks and animal rides.

Zoos are popular tourist destinations around the world and have a significant impact on the tourism industry. They act as attraction factors of the destination and part of its properties of the object. The purpose of zoos is to provide visitors with free time recreation, increase information about animals and the environment, and encourage visitors to support animal and the environment. (Frost, 2011.) According to the animal welfare institution, the main purpose of dolphinariums is to entertain and the information they provide about the animals, such as the threats they face, is often limited. (Animal welfare institute, 2017.) Due to the great charm of elephants and the popularity of elephant tourism and especially elephant riding has created a large tourism industry in both Asia and Africa. (Fennell, 2012.) A counter with a tiger is an unforgettable experience for many travellers, and tiger tourism has been growing recently. Especially in Thailand, the popularity of tiger tourism has grown, and the number of captive tigers has increased, even though Tiger temple, which caused an uproar around the world, was closed in June 2016. (Tanakasempipat, 2016.)

6.1 History of wildlife tourism in Thailand

Elephants have been utilized by individuals in Thailand for more than 4000 years. They have been utilized in wars and as working animals and are perhaps of Thailand's most perceived public image. (Phang Nga elephant park, n.d.) In the past, the logging industry in Thailand was the primary use of captive wild animals. Until 2009, around 200 hostage wild elephants were utilized for signing in the city of Bangkok, until The Bangkok Metropolitan Organization prevailed with regards to prohibiting this activity. (Hingham, 2019.) Thai elephants were utilized as weapons in fighting from the fifteenth hundred years.

They were effective in battle due to their size and strength. Tanks and elephants were basically the same things, they were enormous foes, carrying soldiers, covered in armour and charging at speeds of about 25 kilometres per hour. Thai rulers and officers would ride elephants into fight against the Burmese, Khmer, and different adversaries. The mahouts and their elephants' sole source of income is tourism. (Domingo, 2019.)

Wild animal tourism plays a significant role in the Thai economy. Thailand's tourism industry contributes 10% of the country's GBD and attracts 38 million visitors annually. (Thepgumpanat, 2023.) World animal protection (2017) found that 40% of tourists still aspired to ride elephants. Even though elephant riding is still popular, its popularity is declining, which is a good thing. However, feeding the captured elephants would not be possible without the money brought in by tourists. (Volunteer world, n.d.) The travel industry model necessities to change, yet it additionally needs to exist in a structure to guarantee the elephants as of now living in bondage are dealt with. Tourists are increasingly choosing to visit elephant sanctuaries, which allow them to bath and feed the animals instead of riding them. However, these sanctuaries continue to have a high level of human elephant interaction and unnatural behaviour.

The WFFT rescue centre, which opened 2001, and covers 80 hectares is home to approximately 700 animals. These include 30 bears, several dozen elephants, gibbon species, macaques, lorises, langurs, wild cats, otters, birds, and reptiles. Most of the animals were taken from the illegal wildlife trade, the pet industry, the tourism, and entertainment industry. (Wildlife friends foundations, n.d.) Those that can be rehabilitated will be released back into the wild. The organization wants to make people aware of the consequences of their actions and convince them to alter their routines and outlook on life. At the rescue centre, tourists are given tours to educate them about the plight of the animals and encourage responsible ecotourism. (Wildlife friends foundation, n.d.)

In the tourism industry in Thailand, we see that a few elephants might not have sufficient food and water, live in uncomfortable circumstances without

legitimate safe house, experience the ill effects of wounds or sickness without therapy, and cannot do normal things like wander and accompany with different elephants. They might feel scared and stressed as a result. We need to make sure they have enough food, a safe place to stay, healthcare, and the opportunity to do things that make them happy, like spend time with other elephants, in order to improve the situation. Along these lines, we can regard their freedoms and work on their lives in the elephant industry.

6.2 Sustainable wildlife tourism

A sustainable tourism is one that has more positive effects than negative ones, especially on communities, the economy, and the environment. Tourism is truly sustainable and responsible should make places better for people to live in and visit. Ecotourism focuses more on educating tourists about nature and the environment and encouraging them to participate in conservation and cultural activities, whereas sustainable tourism focuses on creating travel opportunities with minimal impact and positive benefits for destination and their communities. (Wardle, 2021.)

Taking the 5 domains and 5 freedoms into account, it makes the operation ethical and sustainable. As figure (figure 4) shows, each stakeholder has their own roles and thus the factor that unites them is sustainability, which is reflected in everyone's roles.

Deeds were also required of responsibility. It is reflected in a day-to-day life as, for instance, current issues that business can address and attempt to resolve. Organizations can choose to assume liability if they feel that they ought to take care of business, but companies may not do anything. However, the non-acting demonstration is similarly as the entertainer. (Goodwin 2016, pp. 23-25.) In the tourism industry, this is also true. Everyone who participates in or has an impact on tourism is accountable for their actions and the results they produce. Every participant in responsible tourism needs to be accountable (Edelheim, Ilola and Björk, 2017, pp. 229.) The goals of responsible tourism

are to benefit the locals financially, improve working conditions, and involve the locals in decision-making (what is sustainable tourism, n.d.).

Ethical tourism means considering how one's travels affect the environments and local community. Ethical tourism aims to avoid participating in activities that support or contribute to negative ethical issues and is targeted not only at the industry but also at consumers. Around the world, the tourism industry is regarded as a significant contributor to socio-economic progress. As with everything connected to globalization, development has had both beneficial and negative effects on communities (Rose, 2019). Actually, a recent investigation carried out by world animal protection revealed that 75% of tourist attractions that focus on wildlife have negative effects on wildlife animals. (World animal protection, n.d.-a.)

Tourism considers all of its current and potential effects on the economy, society, and environment. Addressing the requirements of the industry, host communities, and the environment. In addition, it should raise tourists' awareness of sustainability issues and promote sustainable tourism practices while also ensuring that tourists have a meaningful experience and maintaining their level of satisfaction. (Green tourism, n.d.) According to world animal protection (2017) tourism industry shares responsibility for the ethical treatment of animals. To improve animal conditions, tourism business, organizations, authorities, representatives of the media, and individual tourists must cooperate. The tour operators are obligated to keep up their promises of ethical business practices, to instruct their employees on how to behave in a responsible manner, and to inform their customers about these practices. It is the obligation of the associations to figure out the weaknesses and suggests solutions, so everybody can settle on mindful decisions. (Buckley, 2004.)

Tourists are often unaware how stressed or tired the animals really are because abuse often takes place behind the scenes (world animal protection, n.d.-b, pp. 8). Despite their shorter lifespans in captivity, Asian elephants live up to 70 years. The international union considers Asian elephant to be in danger (IUCN, 2011). Elephants are among the world's most socially developed

mammals and organize their herds into a distinct hierarchy. In imprisonment the mahout takes on the prevailing job though applying command over the elephant. Mahouts are riders, trainers, or keepers of elephants. They come from ethnic groups that have kept elephants for generations. (Mahout elephant foundation, n.d.)

7 METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and data collection process. First, it will discuss the nature of quantitative research, and explain why a survey was chosen as a data collection method for this study and then the chapter will briefly discuss data collection plan. Book and internet sources are used in the material collection of the thesis.

7.1 Research method

For the success of the study, it is important that the researcher chooses a research problem that personally interests him or her. The study should seek objectivity, that it makes the research as universal and impartial as possible. (Vilkka, 2014.) Good research is a consistent and logically functional entity and therefore the choice of the right research method is important. The research method is selected according to the research problem, which considers the material used in the study and research techniques. Research methods are the data analysis method of the empirical research material that can be divided into qualitative and quantitative methods. (Heikkilä, 2014.)

A quantitative research method was chosen as the method of this study. The quantitative research method works well when the research material is collected through a questionnaire, systematic observation, or using statistics or other material. In particular, it is common to use questionnaires as a method when examining perceptions and attitudes. Surveys are generally quantitative studies that can apply statistical research methods. In the surveys, the questions are verbally asked, but the answers are expressed by numbers and therefore the materials in the surveys are generally consisting of quantity and numbers. (Vilkka, 2014). When conducting quantitative research, the source criticism of the researcher is important when choosing sources and materials for his or her research.

The survey was selected as a method of data collection for this thesis because in this wanted to seek a large crowd of people and study their opinions. Advantage is that the type of a form, the researcher cannot influence his or her own presence or essence, such as in an interview. Reliability, also add the fact that the questions are asked to all respondents in the same way, and for example sound weights do not affect questions and lead certain answers. In addition, the advantage of the survey is the flexibility of the time of response, whereby the respondent can choose the best time for themselves and thus consider their answers in peace. The weakness of the survey is that the respondent may misunderstand the question and cannot ask for clarification when answering. (Survey monkey, n.d.)

7.2 Survey as a data collection method

The survey is a way of collecting material where the form of the questions is standardized. Standard means that from all those responsible for the survey ask the same things, in the same order and in the same way. In the survey the respondents read the questions and answers it. Surveys are well established as a research method. The questionnaire is used when the observation unit is a person and issues of him or her, such as opinions, attitudes, characteristics, or behaviour. (McCombes, et al., 2019.)

In questionnaire the questions are drawn up of research goals and research problem/question from the bottom. (Bhandari, 2023.) The right design of the questions is important when designing the form, of poorly formed questions easily cause errors in the research results. If the answerer perceives the questions differently than the researcher have meant, the result is distorted. When designing a questionnaire, it is important to pay attention to the number of questions and to the length of the form. Too long form may easily collect negligible answers, or respondents may even not answer completely. (Vehkalahti, 2014.) In addition, the clarity and appearance of the form must be considered and ensure that the questions progress logically and consistently.

7.3 Research process

Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire. The questions of the questionnaire were chosen based on the objectives of the study and the research problem. In addition, they were designed to track as closely as possible the framework of the research and in such a way that the questions would measure what is wanted with them measure.

The questionnaire (appendix 1) was structured in such a way that, first the questionnaire surveyed the background information, such as age, and where people are from. After this, we asked which animal destination the respondents have visited, and which destinations they have been visit, and willingness to visit an animal destination during their trip and were asked whether the possibility of visiting an animal destination influences the choice of trip. Animal sites mentioned in the questionnaire were chosen for the form because they were thought to represent the most typical examples of animal destinations. Finally, the people opinions were investigated with the help of different claims. As answer options for the statements, a Likert scale was used to measure opinions from one extreme to the other with the answer options: strongly disagree, - disagree, - neither agree nor disagree, - agree, - strongly agree.

The last question (Question number 10) was divided into four different questions for clarity. The sections investigated respondents' views on animal rights in different categories. This area is significant because, as in the theoretical part (4.2 animal rights) states that animal rights are trying to apply the moral principles that we all have from human animals to animals without forcing the basic protection of animal nature.

After completing the survey, the researcher published a link to the survey on social media, such as Facebook and private WhatsApp groups, after which some of her friends shared the link. The exact number of responses to the survey is unknown, but a total of 61 responses were received. The number of responders fell short of the target, as the goal had been to receive at least one hundred responses. The survey was open between 09.05.2023 and 10.06.2023. The researcher waited for the responses throughout June, after

which she/he gathered the data together. Then they were carefully examined and studied so that the responses could be categorized into themes, which eased their reporting. Themes that came up were, how ethical activities in tourism could be taken into account with one's own choices and consideration of negative action in activities, where one of the places that appeared most often in the responses were various elephant sanctuaries.

8 RESULTS

8.1 Respondents background information

The age of the respondents was mainly between 18-40 years old. The figure 1 shows that, most of the respondents were 18-29 accounted for 62.7% of the total sample. Younger people have possibly travelled more and thus seen the good and bad sides of the industry, which can explain the age of the respondents. In the figure (figure 1) below shows the distribution of different age groups.

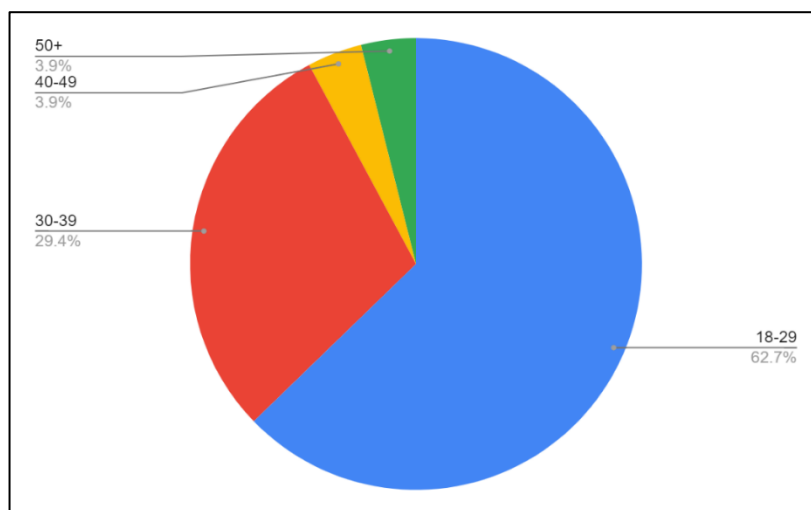


Figure 1. Age of respondents (n=61)

Most of the respondents is from Satakunta (35%), one of the regions in Finland. This is because most of the researcher's contacts were from Satakunta. As figure 2 shows, respondents were obtained from all over Finland (98%) and one from Spain. I would have liked more respondents from abroad. But I am pleased with the total number and the difference in the answers.

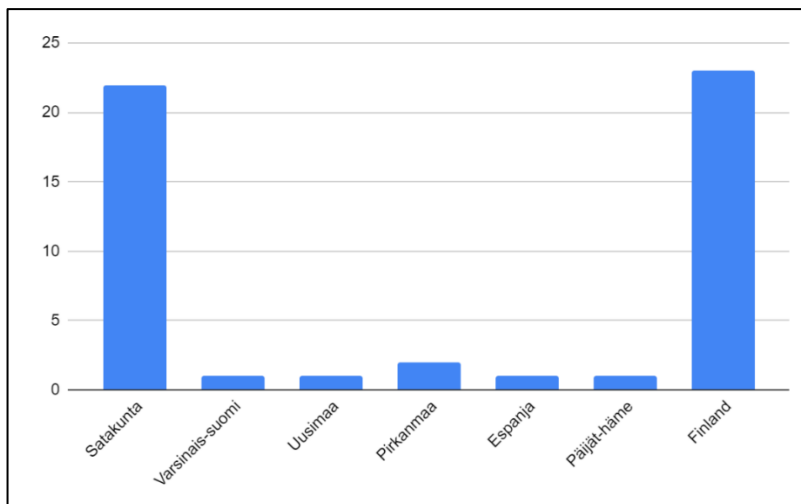


Figure 2. Where they live (n=61)

According to the results (figure 3), a significant percentage of respondents (74.5%) shows that most of respondents have been participated in wildlife tourism activities. However, only 54% have been in Thailand and the most common destination there was various elephant sanctuaries and zoos. One of the primary reasons for their enthusiastic response was a desire to support conservation efforts and enhanced wildlife experiences.

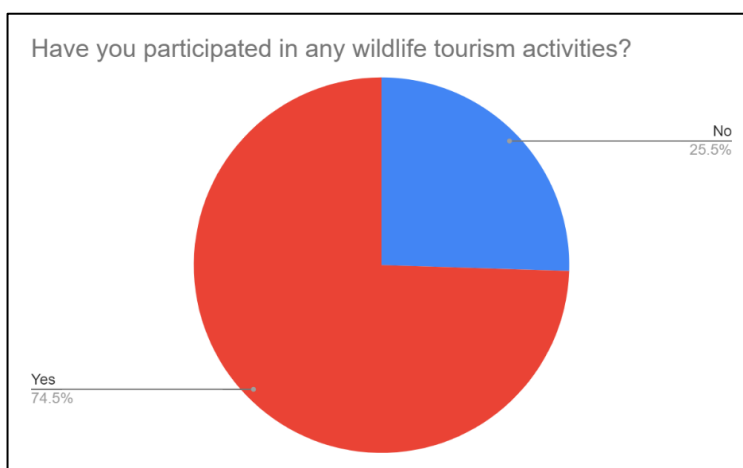


Figure 3. Have you participated in any wildlife tourism activities (n=61)

8.2 Wildlife tourism experiences

As the figure 4 shows respondents overall experiences with wildlife tourism. Evaluated on a scale from 1 (very good) to 4 (bad). The quantitative analysis of responses uncovered that a most part of people evaluated their experiences

positively with score 2, showing high satisfaction levels with wildlife tourism experiences. On the other hand, a smaller proportion of respondent gave ratings of 1 and 4, reflecting lower satisfaction levels. The figure (5) was evaluated on a scale from 1 (not likely) to 5 (extremely likely). Also, the result (figure 5) showed that most of the respondents was falling within the lower end of the scale (ratings of 1 or 2). While the highest rate was 2, some respondents still showed interest in engaging in wildlife tourism in the future. The results suggest an opportunity to address concerns and promote more appealing wildlife tourism experiences to encourage future participation.

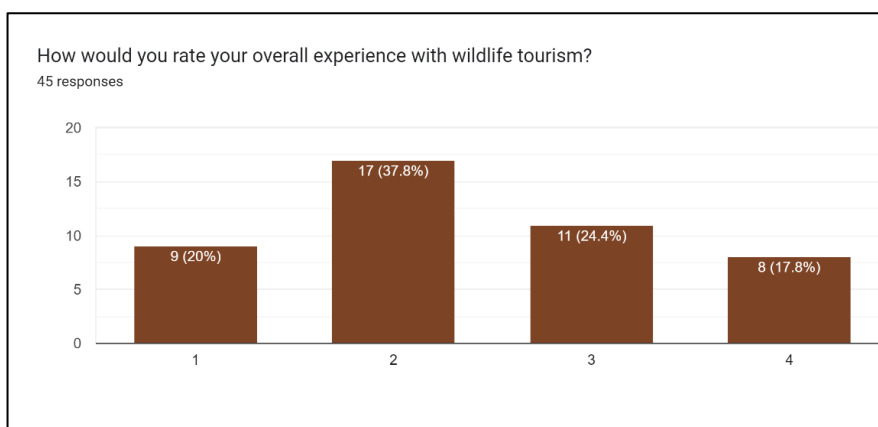


Figure 4. How would you rate your overall experience with wildlife tourism? (n=61)

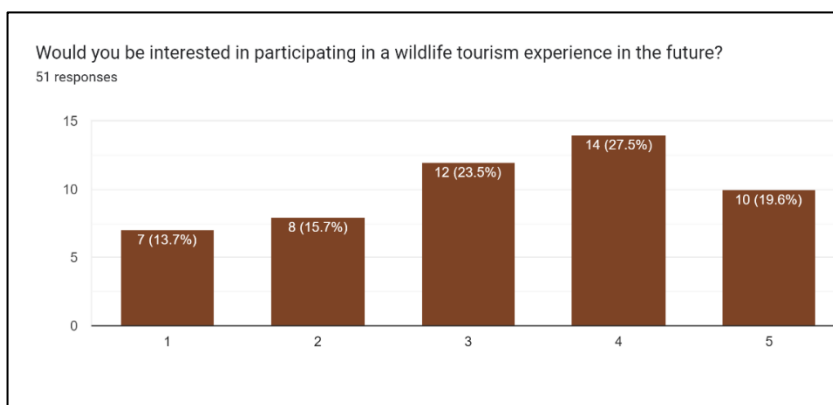


Figure 5. Would you be interesting in a wildlife tourism experience in the future? (n=61)

In the figure (figure 6) results showed that a larger part of respondents (94.1%) expressed a readiness to pay more for wildlife/volunteer tourism encounters assuming they were guaranteed of their obligation and moral practices. When

it comes to wildlife or volunteer tourism, this overwhelming positive response emphasizes the significance of ethical and responsible considerations in respondents decision-making. The results emphasize the potential for ethically and sustainably minded wildlife tourism offerings to attract a greater number of interested respondents and contribute to the industry's growth of responsible tourism practices.

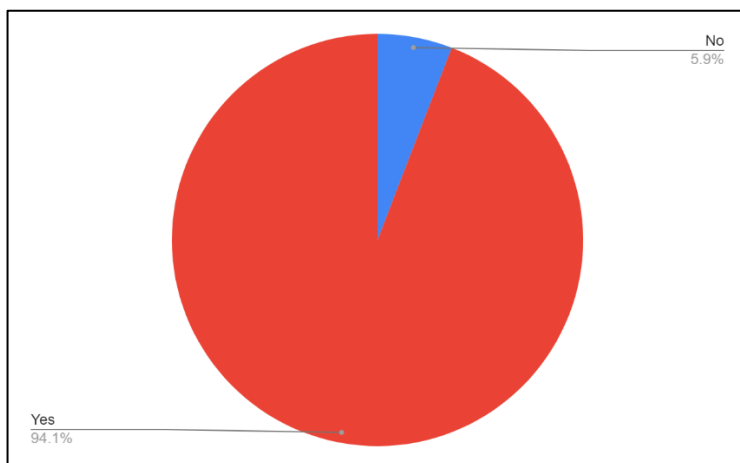


Figure 6. Would you be willing to pay more for wildlife/volunteer tourism experience if you knew they were responsible and ethical? (n=61)

Most of the respondents had visited an animal destination. 17% of respondents had not visited any of the places like sanctuaries, zoos, and aquariums. As can be seen in the table below (table 1), the majority (60%) of the respondents had visited the zoo and almost half (49%) of the respondents had visited the aquarium. 19% of the respondents had visited the animal sanctuary and only one respondent had visited the camel destination. 35% of the respondents had visited destinations that had snorkeling or diving experiences, only 10% had visited the safaris.

Animal sanctuary	19	37%
Rescue centers	6	12%
Camel rides	1	2%
Visiting animal shows	15	29%
Zoos	32	60%
Aquariums	25	49%
Snorkeling or diving	18	35%
Safari	5	10%
Organized walk or boat rides	1	2%

Nothing	9	17 %
----------------	---	------

Table 1. Animal experiences (n=61)

8.3 Animal rights

As tourists have become more concerned about the care and wellbeing of animals exploited for entertainment, animal rights have become a major issue in the context of wildlife tourism. Like the question (question 8, appendix) shows the ethical concerns surrounding the treatment of animal kept in cages or aquariums have sparked discussions, with an emphasis on providing the animals with acceptable habitats and attending to their basic requirements. The effect of certain activities, like elephant riding, on the welfare of animals and the stability of fragile reef ecosystems are being closely examined. It is crucial to address these problems if we want to promote ethical and responsible wildlife tourism. The question divides people into different scales as you can see in the figure (figure 7). The majority answered that they do not have opinion (33.3%), but the other part agreed that animals should have the same right or at least similar rights.

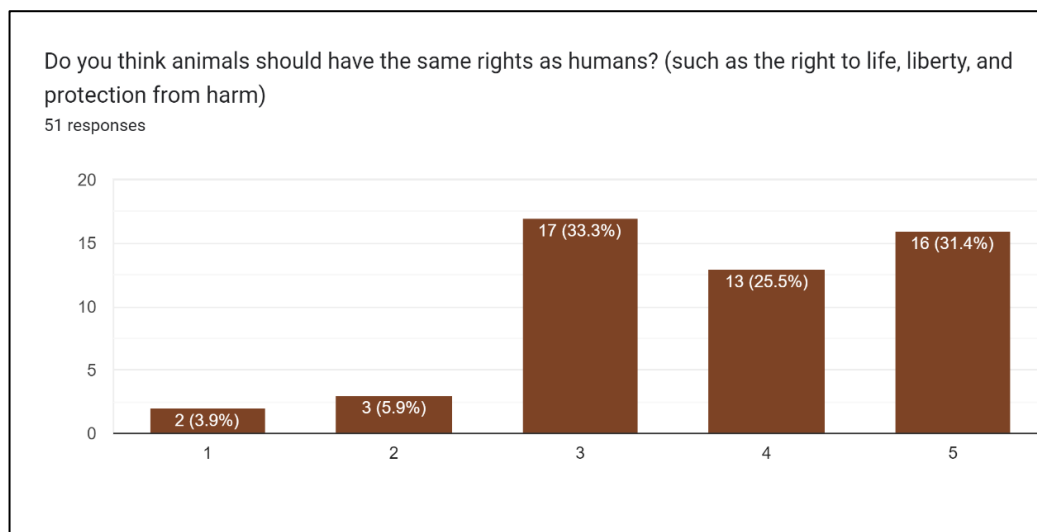


Figure 7. Animal rights (n=61)

8.4 Animal welfare

In the last question (table 2), multiple arguments were used to examine respondents' views on animal rights. Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree, agree, and strongly agree were all acceptable responses to the claims. People responses regarding the freedom from hunger and thirst are as follows: 0% strongly disagree, 7.8% disagree, 10% are neutral and 62.7% strongly agree. These results indicate a varying degree of support for the notion that animals should have access to adequate food and water to prevent hunger and thirst. A large number of respondents (58.8%) indicated agreement to varying degrees, highlighting how important it is to provide animals freedom from discomfort. A closer examination of their opinions is warranted in light of the significant 17.6% who expressed no opinion. There were a variety of responses, but many of them (62.7%) strongly agree that animals should not have to endure pain, harm, or sickness. The replies to distribution invites consideration of how society views and treats various aspects of animal care.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Animals should have freedom from hunger and thirst	0	4 (7.8%)	10 (13.7%)	7 (13.7%)	32 (62.7%)
Animals should have freedom from discomfort	0	3 (5.9%)	9 (17.6%)	7 (13.7%)	30 (58.8%)
Animals should have freedom from pain, injury, or disease	0	3 (5.9%)	8 (15.7%)	8 (15.7%)	32 (62.7%)
Animals should have the freedom to express normal behaviour, such as socializing with others of their own species	0	3 (5.9%)	8 (15.7%)	9 (17.6%)	31 (60.8%)
Animals should have freedom from fear and distress, such as avoiding stressful situations and environments	0	3 (5.9%)	9 (17.6%)	7 (13.7%)	32 (62.7%)

Table 2. Animal welfare (n=61)

9 SUMMARY AND DELIBERATION

This chapter examines the research results, draws conclusions from the results and maps the significance of the results. Finally, we consider the thesis process, such as the implementation of the work and the challenges and successes faces by the researcher during the process.

The research sought to answer the question “How can wildlife tourism operators effectively raise awareness and promote ethics to ensure tourists support responsible wildlife conservation?” The desired answers were collected in the survey, which helped answer the research question.

9.1 Conclusion

The research incorporated volunteer and ethical wildlife tourism, leading to discussions on animal rights in its conclusion. The findings demonstrated the need of string a balance between human engagement and conservation. Strong ethical standards and laws may be out in place to guarantee ethical and respectful interactions with animals. Raising awareness among visitors and volunteers and promoting a compassionate and sustainable attitude to wildlife preservation are essential for the success of ethical wildlife tourism.

Through the survey, we got a comprehensive answer to the above-mentioned question. Based on survey results (question 10), it is obvious that wildlife tourism providers may promote ethics and improve awareness through education programs, community involvement, and ethical standards. Tourists may better understand the significance of ethical animal treatment. For example, ethical conservation outcomes, resource, training, community involvement, and sustainability problems in wildlife volunteer programs should be addressed. In addition, engaging narratives and eye-catching pictures may have an effect that lasts and promote ethical conduct.

The mindset of the visitors and volunteers who take part in these activities is the real test of an ethical wildlife tourism venture. As young people take on this responsibility, their heightened awareness and sensitivity play a crucial part in preserving animal welfare. In short, this research confirms a simple message: “wildlife tourism thrives when there is a dedication to fostering peace and increasing awareness”. They can also provide expert naturalist-led guided tours to give visitors an understanding the significance of ethical interactions with wildlife and the surrounding ecosystems.

According to the respondents animal rights have emerged as a pressing worry in the context of wildlife tourism, as tourists increasingly question the treatment and welfare of animals used for entertainment purposes. Issues related to living conditions in cages of aquariums have raised ethical discussions, with an emphasis on providing animals with reasonable habitats and meeting their normal necessities. Tourists groups’ behaviour also plays a critical part, with worries about noise levels, habitat destruction. The negative consequences of overcrowding, pollution, animal exploitation, and the potential transmission of diseases are crucial considerations for the industry to address. In order to encourage responsible and ethical wildlife tourism practices, it is essential to address these issues.

In conclusion, a comprehensive and conscientious strategy is required to promote ethical, responsible, and respectful wildlife tourism. Right off the bat giving more than adequate space and opportunity to animals, both in the wild and in captivity. A commitment to their well-being requires ensuring that their living conditions closely resemble their natural environments. Besides, the execution of a powerful confirmation cycle can lay out rigid rules that advance the government assistance of animals and put shifty practices down.

9.2 Reliability and validity

This research cannot be considered totally reliable, but it is indicative regardless of the number of results. The aim was to get a large number of

respondents (at least 100 respondents) in order to generalize that the respondents represent all people who are interested in ethical tourism and thus the benefits of wildlife tourism and volunteer tourism. Since the number of respondents was small (61 respondents), the research results can only be considered indicative. A particularly large drop in respondents occurred in the middle part of the age range, between 40 and 50 years of age. This is due to the fact that the survey was shared through the researcher's own contacts, most of whom are around 20-30 years old. The reliability of this study is also weakened by the partial absence of open questions in the questionnaire.

Although the questions and statements were formulated as objectively as possible, they may have at least somewhat guided the respondent, who might otherwise not have thought about the matter. However, in the theory part, current domestic and international source that are considered to be reliable have been extensively used. The questions and answer options in the questionnaire are also clearly designed and the questionnaire has been tested couple of times before it is published. ChatGPT was used to help create research questions.

9.3 Reflection

At first, I thought of doing my work without a commissioner. However, I ended up taking a commissioner for my thesis, because that way my thesis seemed to have more meaning. Ekomatkaajat was a very good fit as a commissioner, because their goals specifically include promote volunteer tourism, responsible tourism and ethical choices, which animal destinations also count as a significant part. In addition, Ekomatkaajat has a lot of useful information related to some of the topics on the website.

I think, I did quite well in my thesis, considering that this is my first independent research. My topic is current, because it has been talked about a lot in recent years and the media constantly come across the topic. The goal of the thesis is presented and defined and justified in my opinion quite clearly. I found a lot

in the theory part both domestic and international sources, which are mainly current. In my opinion, the questionnaire was moderately successful, as the questions are well linked with the theory part. The questionnaire would probably have been more successful if there would have been more open questions and some questions would have been more clarified.

The biggest challenge in the thesis process was choosing the topic. Despite the broad topic, I think my thesis turned out to be quite coherent and the objectives of the research were mostly achieved. Doing the thesis as a whole was multi-phased, which included a lot of meaningful moments when writing and acquiring information, as well as moments when progressing in the thesis felt challenging. I did not have a specific schedule to do the thesis, excluding the time spent on survey when the survey was open. It would have made the process easier in some way or more difficult. Overall, I am satisfied with the end result.

After looking for sources and reading many articles and books. I also learned a lot more about the animal welfare and rights and how each activity can have both negative and positive effects. Every role is important and thus I think that every little thing has a purpose as well as this thesis in the end, even though I started researching the matter from a different perspective than many others would necessarily have. However, I believe that many others who are even slightly interested in the same topics will benefit from the existence of the thesis and thus the topic will gain more weight in the future.

9.4 Feedback from commissioner

The commissioner's feedback was provided by Ekomatkaajat Maria Ojajärvi. The feedback will first be written in Finnish, and after that roughly translated into English, keeping the message the same.

Hyvin käyty yleisesti läpi perusteita. Tässä oli paljon asiaa norsuista Thaimaassa, joka oli aiheena mielenkiintoinen, vaikkei tällä hetkellä liity meidän projekteihimme.

Well done generally through the basics. There was a lot of things about elephants in Thailand, which is of course interesting, even though it is not currently relating our projects.

Meidän kohteitamme ei ollut juuri nostettu esille. Kun työ kohdistui pääosin Thaimaahan olisi ollut helppo vertailla myös kohdettamme Thaimaassa. Ehkä tuoda jotain esiin kontrasteja, miten tälläinen pitkäkestoinen työ on alkanut tuottaa hedelmää ja miten se on muuttanut paikallisten asenteita.

Our destinations had not been very much highlighted. When the work was mainly focused on Thailand, it would have been easy to compare our destination in Thailand. Perhaps highlights some contrasts how such a long-term work has begun to produce fruit and how it has changed the attitudes of the locals.

Negatiivisia puolia vapaaehtoismatkailusta ja villieläinturismista on aina kiva lukea, koska ne ovat meille tärkeitä. Tässä mainitut negatiiviset seikat eivät selkeästi meidän kohteisiimme kohdistu, koska niissä otetaan hyvin paikallisyhteisön mukaan ja työtä tehdään pitkäkestoisesti. Lisäksi lähetämme infoa kulttuurituntemukseen liittyen pdf paketteina ja YouTube videoina.

Negative aspects of volunteering and wild animal tourism are always nice to read because they are important to us. The factors mentioned here are clearly not targeted at our destinations, as they are very well involved in the local community and long-lasting work. We also send information on cultural knowledge as PDF packages and YouTube videos

Eläinten oikeudet on aina hyvä nostaa esille ja vaikka ne meille ovatkin tuttuja, niin eivät liian monelle.

It is always a good idea to highlight animal rights, and although they are familiar to us, not many others.

REFERENCES

- Abta. (n.d.). Animal welfare requirements. Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://www.abta.com/sustainability/animal-welfare/abta-animal-welfare-guidelines-basic-welfare-requirements-and>
- Animal welfare Institute. (2017). Dispelling the arguments of captivity proponents. From <https://awionline.org/content/dispelling-arguments-captivity-proponents>
- Bansiddhi, P., Brown, J., & Thitaram, C. (2020). Welfare assessment and activities of captive elephants in Thailand. MDPI. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani10060919>
- Bekoff, M. (2004). Wild justify and fair play: cooperation, forgiveness, and morality in animals. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://doi.org/10.1007/sBIPH-004-0539-x>
- Bezuhla, L., Herasymenko, T., & Bieloborodova, M. (2022). Volunteering and volunteer tourism: challenges and realities. Green, blue and digital economy journal. <https://doi.org/10.30525/2661-5169/2022-2-1>
- Bhandari, P. (2021). Questionnaire. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/questionnaire/>
- Broom, D., & Carr, N. (2018). Tourism and Animal Welfare. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from <https://www-cabidigitallibrary-org.lillukka.samk.fi/doi/epdf/10.1079/9781786391858.0000>
- Buckley, R. (2004). The positive and negative impacts of ecotourism. Retrieved April 17, 2023
- Butler, R., & Tomazos, K. (2009). Volunteer tourism. Taylor and Francis online. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2009.10518904>
- Caruana, B. (2017). Why and how of altruistic travel. Retrieved April 11, 2023, from <https://thealtruistictraveller.com/blog/the-why-and-how-of-altruistic-travel-could-we-all-become-altruistic-travellers/>
- Dawkins, M. (2017). Animal welfare with and without consciousness. Journal of zoology. doi:10.1111/jzo.12434
- Domingo, Z. (2019). History and future of elephants in Thailand. Retrieved April 14, 2023, from <https://www.gviusa.com/blog/the-history-and-future-of-elephants-in-thailand/>
- East, R., Uncles, M., Romaniuk, J., & Lomax, W. (2015). Impact of positive and negative word of mouth. Australasian Marketing Journal. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ausmj.2015.12.003>

- Edelheim, J. & Ilola, H. (2017). Matkailututkimuksen avainkäsitteet. Lauda Lapland. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-310-952-0>
- Ekomatkaajat. (n.d.-a) Vastuullinen matkailu. Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://ekomatkaajat.fi/ekomatkaajat/>
- Ekomatkaajat. (n.d.-b). Vapaaehtoistyö ulkomailla. Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://ekomatkaajat.fi/>
- Fennel, D. (2012). Tourism and animal ethics.
- Flower, E., Burns, G., & Jones, D. (2021). How Tourist Preference and Satisfaction Can Contribute to Improved Welfare Standards at Elephant Tourism Venues in Thailand. MDPI. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani11041094>
- Frost, W. (2011). Zoos and tourism. From https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292651865_Zoos_and_tourism_Conservation_education_entertainment
- Green tourism. (n.d.) Sustainable tourism. Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <http://www.greentourism.eu/fi/Post/Name/SustainableTourism>
- Goodwin, H. (2016). Responsible tourism: Using tourism for sustainable development. Retrieved May 5, 2023, from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/samk/detail.action?docID=4721517>
- Guttentag, D. (2009). The possible negative impacts of volunteer tourism. Wiley Online Library. DOI: 10.1002/jtr.727
- Hakkarainen, H. & McVeigh, T. (2015). Eläimet viihdyttävät, mutta millä hinnalla. Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://www.reilumatkailu.fi/elaimet-viihdyttavat-mutta-milla-hinnalla/>
- Heikkilä, T. (2014). Kvantitatiivinen tutkimus. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <http://www.tilastollinentutkimus.fi/1.TUTKIMUSTUKI/KvantitatiivinenTutkimus.pdf>
- Hingham, R. (2019). Wildlife tourism. Retrieved April 17, 2023, from <https://wtcc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Reports/2019/Sustainable%20Growth-Economic%20Impact%20of%20Global%20Wildlife%20Tourism-Aug%202019.pdf>
- Higginbottom, K. (2004). Impacts, management, and planning. <https://sustain.pata.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/WildlifeTourism-impacts.pdf>
- Intrepid travel. (n.d.). Animal welfare. Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://www.intrepidtravel.com/eu/elephants-welfare>
- Indochina travel. (n.d.). Ethical elephant camps. Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://www.indochinatravel.com/asia-elephant-camps.html>

- Kontogeorgopoulos, N. (2009). Wildlife tourism. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13683500903042873>
- Kumar, N. & Raghavan, Y. (2022). Animal rights. IJEAST. <https://doi.org/10.33564/IJEAST.2022.v06i11.016>
- Laws, E. (2021). The elephant tourism business. CAB. Retrieved February 22, 2023, from <https://www-cabidigitallibrary-org.lilukka.samk.fi/doi/epdf/10.1079/9781789245868.0000>
- Logan, M. (2017). Freedom from hunger and thirst. Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://everylivingthing.ca/1-freedom-from-thirst-and-hunger/>
- Lyons, K.D, & Wearing, S.L. (2008). Volunteer tourism as alternative tourism. Retrieved April 17, 2023
- Mahout elephant foundation. (n.d.). Our story. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://www.mahouts.org/about>
- McCombes, S. (2019). Survey research. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/survey-research/>
- Muharto, M., Ulidam, N., & Jauhar, N. (2022). Sustainable volunteer tourism. Journal Alauddin. <https://doi.org/10.24252/minds>
- Medium. (2019). Does voluntourism do more harm than good? Retrieved July 16, 2023, from <https://medium.com/responsible-travel/does-voluntourism-do-more-harm-than-good-db9d0c9aedef>
- Mellor, D. (2017). Five domains model. Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5575572/>
- Mustonen, P. (2007). Volunteer tourism -Altruism or mere tourism. Retrieved April 17, 2023, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2007.9687038>
- Newsome, D., Dowling, R. K., Moore, S. A. (2005). Wildlife tourism. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/samk/reader.action?docID=235053>
- Ojajärvi, M. (2023). Ekomatkaajat. Personal communication 21.10.2023.
- Parker, J. V. (2010). Animal minds, animal souls, animal rights. UPA. Retrieved February 23, 2023, from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/samk/reader.action?docID=1037707>
- Phang Nga elephant park. (n.d.). Thai elephant history. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://phangngaelephantpark.com/thai-elephant-history/>
- Proyrungroj, R. (2022). Volunteering with elephants: Is it a way of moving towards global citizenship? European Journal of tourism research. <https://doi.org/10.54055/ejtr.v31i.2212>

Responsible travel. (n.d.). Animal welfare & tourism. Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://www.responsibletravel.com/copy/animal-welfare-issues-in-tourism>

Rose, G. (2019). The importance of ethical tourism. Retrieved April 11, 2023, from <https://jetsettimes.com/countries/thailand/chiang-mai/chiang-mai-ethical-traveler/the-importance-of-ethical-tourism/>

RSPCA. (2021). Five freedoms of animal welfare. Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-five-freedoms-of-animal-welfare/#references>

Survey monkey. (n.d.). Kyselytutkimus. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://fi.surveymonkey.com/mp/setting-survey-goal/>

Tanakasempipat, P. (2016). Thailand's tiger tourism expands despite raid on infamous tiger temple. From <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-thailand-tigers-idUS-KCN10Y0D5>

Thepgumpanat, P. (2023). Foreign tourists per year. Reuters. Retrieved April 17, 2023, from <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/thai-pm-sees-over-30-mln-foreign-tourists-this-year-spokesperson-2023-02-07/>

Thevamanohar, A. & Duck, B. (2019). Why voluntourism may be doing more harm than good. Retrieved July 16, 2023, from <https://www.hercampus.com/school/kcl/why-voluntourism-may-be-doing-more-harm-good/>

Tourism teacher. (2023). Negative aspects of volunteer tourism. Retrieved July 16, 2023, from <https://tourismteacher.com/negative-impacts-volunteer-tourism/>

UNWTO. (n.d.). Why wildlife. Retrieved April 17, 2023, from <https://www.unwto.org/asia/unwto-chimelong-why-wildlife>

Vilkka, H. (2014) Tutki ja mittaa. Tammi.

Vehkalahti, K. (2014). Kyselytutkimuksen mittarit ja menetelmät. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/305021/Kyselytutkimuksen-mittarit-ja-menetelmat-2019-Vehkalahti.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Volunteer world. (n.d.) Volunteers in Thailand. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://www.volunteerworld.com/en/volunteer-abroad/thailand>

Wardle, R. (2021). What is sustainable tourism? Retrieved April 15, 2023, from <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/what-is-sustainable-tourism>

Wildlife friends' foundation. (n.d.) About WFFT. Retrieved April 14, 2023, from <https://www.wfft.org/about-wfft/>

Wearing, S. (2001). Volunteer tourism. Cabi. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9780851995335.0000>

Wen, J. (2019). The Impact of Volunteer Tourism.
<https://doi.org/10.20472/SS.2019.8.1.007>

WTO. (2006). Implementation of the global code of ethics for tourism. Retrieved April 23, 2023.

World animal protection. (n.d.-a.). Checking out of cruelty. Retrieved April 11, 2023, from https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/sites/default/files/media/int_files/pdfs/checking_out_of_cruelty.pdf

World animal protection. (n.d.-b.). Wildlife on a tightrope Thailand. Retrieved April 12, 2023, from https://www.worldanimalprotection.org/sites/default/files/media/int_files/wildlife-on-a-tightrope-thailand.pdf

World tourism organization. (2014). Towards measuring the economic value of wildlife watching tourism. UNWTO. Retrieved April 23, 2023, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1882unwtowildlife-paper.pdf>

WWF. (n.d.) Their work. Retrieved September 09, 2023, from <https://www.worldwildlife.org/>

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Questionnaire

Ethical wildlife tourism in Thailand

This survey is part of the thesis for the university of applied sciences degree in tourism. The research is carried out as a commission for Ekomatkaajat. The aim of this survey is to examine the current practices of wildlife tourism, with respect to elephant conservation, specially from the perspective of Finnish tourism operators and identify strategies to promote responsible and sustainable animal tourism

Background information

1. Your age? *

- 18-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50+

2. Where do you live? *

Research questions

3. Have you participated in any wildlife tourism activities? *

Option yes/no

4. Have you participated in wildlife tourism activities in Thailand? *

Option yes/no

If yes, what types of activities have you participated (select all that apply) *

- Elephant rides
- Animal sanctuary

- Rescue centers
- Visiting animal shows
- Zoos
- Aquariums
- Snorkeling or diving
- Safari
- Other

5. How would you rate your overall experience with wildlife tourism?

Scale 1-Very good, 2-Good, 3-fair, 4-bad

6. Would you be interested in participating in a wildlife tourism experience in the future? *

Scale 1-5 Not likely to extremely likely

7. Would you be willing to pay more for wildlife tourism/volunteer tourism experience if you knew they were responsible and ethical? *

Option Yes/no/other

8. Have you observed any negative impacts or concerns associated with wildlife tourism activities? *

9. Have you participated in elephant tourism activities and what negative things have you identified in that activity?

10. What actions do you recommend for wildlife tourism activities to make it more ethical, responsible, and respectful towards animals? *

Linear scale

On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your level of agreement with the following statements related to categories of animal rights

(1 - Strongly disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neither agree nor disagree, 4 - Agree, 5 - Strongly agree)

Animals should have freedom from hunger and thirst*

Animals should have freedom from discomfort, such as inadequate housing or exposure to extreme temperatures*

Animals should have freedom from pain, injury, or disease*

Animals should have the freedom to express normal behaviour, such as socializing with others of their own species*

Animals should have freedom from fear and distress, such as avoiding stressful situations and environments*

Do you think animals should have the same rights as humans? (Such as the right to life, liberty, and protection from harm) *

Is there anything else that you would like to add or further thoughts that have not been addressed in this survey?