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# **Wildlife tourism and co-existence between humans and animals**

**A study of travelers' attitudes and worldviews**

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**Abstract**

The Earth is facing issues in co-existence between humans and animals. Anthropocentric practices, actions, attitudes and worldviews are causing increasing worry, especially in the case of wildlife tourism. The worry stems from human interference on non-human, non-domesticated animals specifically in the form of supporting unethical wildlife tourism attractions where the fair treatment of animals is poor or non-existent. Not only are animal welfare issues the topic of concern in terms of co-existence but so is the severe crisis of biodiversity loss leading to ecosystem extinction and worst-case scenario, the permanent disappearance of life on Earth, unless transformative change is implemented in every aspect of decision making by humans.

To understand such matters from the perspective of others, the attitudes and worldviews of travelers were studied and qualitative research was conducted. An extensive amount of secondary data in the form of books, journals, and articles were gathered to compose background information. Primary data was implemented with semi-structured interviews in which five respondents participated. Color coding and constant comparison were implemented as a method of analysis of the primary data.

With the division into three themes, the results of the semi-structured interviews were presented. The results indicated the complexity of categorizing one into a specific attitude or worldview but rather possessing a mixture of many. Education and awareness sharing were found crucial to enable co-existence, especially on behalf of the tourism industry. Based on the data gathered, both primary and secondary, vulnerable storytelling was presented as an option of transformative change to preserve biodiversity and enable humans and animals to co-exist on Earth.

**Keywords/tags (subjects)**

Wildlife tourism, human-animal relationship, anthropocentric worldview, ecocentric worldview, ecofeminism, co-existence, biodiversity loss

**Miscellaneous (Confidential information)**

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# 1 Introduction

Earth is a planet unlike any other with just the right conditions to enable life and a home to billions of living beings. Throughout the years of existence, life on Earth has evolved with changes in ecosystems, which are a mixture of different living organisms such as bacteria, plants, and animals as well as non-living elements such as air, water, and soil, creating different environments on Earth. (Science Learning Hub, n.d.) Changes in one ecosystem affect the other, making them profoundly interlinked. Humans are a part of this interconnection making us a part of nature. However, that is not how most of the human population considers themselves, which causes a complex relationship between humans and other living creatures, especially animals. That is, the majority of humans consider themselves in the dominance of nature and animals. This type of ideology can also be known as an anthropocentric worldview.

The severe issue of the anthropocentric worldview occurs when it impacts the changes in ecosystems negatively, which is the unfortunate state the Earth is in right now. That is, human interference is putting more and more pressure on and even resulting in the disappearance of living organisms and entire ecosystems, causing the loss of variety of life on Earth, commonly known as, biodiversity loss. This phenomenon, in the worst-case scenario, can cause the entire existence of life in all its forms to disappear from Earth. However, opposing worldviews and ideologies called the ecocentric worldview and ecofeminism support the interconnectedness and joint dependence between all living creatures to keep life on Earth blooming. The division of the human population into these worldviews is modified by factors such as cultural background, education, upbringing, interests, and experiences and therefore, forming humans to have different attitudes toward nature and animals.

Tourism is one of the utmost examples of human interference with the natural world and thus one of the major reasons that creates a complex and rather problematic nature of human-animal relationships. One of the most distinct examples of this is wildlife tourism. High demand for meaningful experiences and a deeper connection to nature and self, alongside economic benefits to local communities and conservation, are what keep the wildlife tourism industry blooming and on a constant upsurge in the global markets. (Moorhouse et al., 2015) However, as ideal as it sounds to all parties involved, the reality in many cases is the opposite. The exchange for human benefit in many wildlife tourism attractions is productizing animals and using them as labor. The

brutality of it all is, that the animals do not get to go home after the workday, have occupational health, or any rights for that matter. Instead, they have been taken away from their natural habitat, are physically abused to perform in unnatural ways, and forced to breed to meet the tourism demand.

WWF (2022) announced a decline as massive as 69% in wildlife populations on a global scale between 1970 and 2018 in their recent Living Planet Report, making Earth face a severe crisis of biodiversity loss. Moreover, the report gives prominence to the shift from setting goals and targets to values and rights both on a bureaucratic and individual level. It emphasizes, that transformative change is required for a sustainable future for the planet. That is, the change should be immersed in humans' everyday lives, in the ways they consume, produce, and govern as well as in what they choose to finance. Moreover, the change should contribute to the co-existence between humans and animals and therefore, preserve biodiversity. The injustice of animals in many wildlife tourism locations combined with the worry whether a tolerant state between humans and animals can be reached in the crisis of biodiversity loss, made the author decide the research topic to focus on wildlife tourism and co-existence. The aim of the research will be introduced in the following chapter.

## **2 The aim of this thesis**

The aim of this thesis is to understand what kind of attitude travelers have toward wildlife tourism as well as their views on the co-existence between humans and animals. Due to a lot of concerning and questionable wildlife tourism locations in the world, the author wanted to investigate how similar travel lovers as herself view their relationship to animals and what kind of wildlife tourism experiences they have had. The current crisis of biodiversity loss faced on Earth triggered the author to conclude the research to the travelers' views on co-existence between humans and animals and therefrom explore the options of transformative change to preserve biodiversity. The deep motivation for the author to choose these topics was due to herself being a travel lover but also understanding the vital position of the natural world as the essence of life and therefore, valuing sustainable and fair conditions for all living beings on Earth. To reach the aim of this study, the author conducted qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews. The main research questions this thesis seeks answers to are the following:

RQ 1: What kind of attitude do travelers have toward wildlife tourism?

RQ 2: How do travelers view co-existence between humans and animals?

### **3 Theoretical framework**

This chapter will go through the key terms valid for understanding the topic of the study, those being human-animal relationship, anthropocentric worldview, ecocentric worldview, ecofeminism, wildlife tourism and co-existence. The definition of biodiversity and its loss will be opened up due to its importance in relation to co-existence and the bigger picture of this research.

#### **3.1 Human-animal relationship**

For as long as can be remembered, animals have been a part of human life in various forms such as the source of food, material for fashion, entertainment, companionship, and transportation. As Birke & Hockenull (2012) describe it, the relationships between humans and animals range from easy to uneasy co-existence and from killing to unity. This suggests a rather complex overview of the matter. Newsome et al. (2005) state, that understanding human-animal relationships is crucial in determining how humans' perceptions are formed toward animals and how those perceptions impact actions and feelings. When contemplating the very first interactions humans have with animals, the interest is taught already at a young age in ways such as having pets or visiting zoos and farms, rooting a fascination with animals on a rather large spectrum. The nature of this fascination is modified by different experiences, interests, educational and cultural backgrounds and therefrom, a certain type of view toward animals is formed.

In 1978, a survey conducted in the US by Stephen Kellert, examined people's views toward animals with the help of different orientations or attitudes. More specifically, from ten attitudes, five were the most significant in dividing the population. Firstly, a neutralistic attitude included people who mostly avoided animals and had little knowledge or interest in them whereas those with a humanistic attitude had deep emotional connections to animals, however, mostly to domesticated pets. Furthermore, people with a moralistic attitude considered animals as equal to humans and

understood how they should be treated. Especially the treatment of animals in captivity is a unitive concern among this group of people, much like people with the ecological or conservationist attitude having concerns towards the environment and ecosystems as a whole. Finally, a utilitarian attitude lacks all the characteristics of the previously mentioned attitudes and finds animals as a resource for humans to benefit from. (Kellert, 1978 as cited in Bulbeck, 2004)

Bulbeck (2004) suggests that the humanistic attitude is the most common, meaning that humans treat animals with love and care. However, his perception is, that it goes beyond domesticated pets. That is, people with such emotional connection to animals are more likely to touch and feed wild animals especially if they are cute and fluffy, making them likely to participate in activities that allow them to do so. Furthermore, people with moralistic and conservationist attitudes have knowledge about animals from scientific journals rather than fictional movies and books and are likely to be a part of the greater good in speaking for animal rights and preserving biodiversity. Ergo, those with neutralistic and utilitarian attitudes do not have much, if at all care in the matter. Moreover, these latter attitudes are common within the average Euro-American society that puts culture over nature. That is, animals are the “others” that are not considered equal to humans. (Hurn, 2012) This is also known as the anthropocentric worldview, which seems to be in a dominant role in today’s capitalist society, although strong counteraction can be recognized.

### **3.1.1 Anthropocentric and ecocentric worldview**

To date, several studies have investigated the meaning of being a human, also known as, anthropology. Going far back to the early 1900s, anthropology has been regarded as the study of “otherness” meaning people outside the “normal” civilization. The emphasis on “others” back then was put on indigenous peoples. However, this type of orientation of differentiating humans has become disproportionate the more the world has evolved, leading the focus of such an orientation to shift to animals. Furthermore, the mentioned, “normal” civilization has been characterized, as previously indicated, as a Euro-American white male dominant civilization, in other words, known as “Western”. (Hurn, 2012) Therefore, very commonly can anthropocentric thinking be referred to as Western thinking.

Due to the post-humanist ideation that humans are animals too, alternative approaches to thinking have been introduced. That is, where an anthropocentric worldview places humans in the

dominance of non-human animals, considering them as part of Earth's resources to use as wished, an alternative approach called ecocentric worldview places all living beings as equal and jointly dependent on each other. The ecocentric worldview emphasizes the importance of biodiversity and acknowledges the fact that Earth has limited resources to exploit. (Newsome et al., 2005) The ecocentric worldview has gained more and more attention in academic literature, especially in topics regarding animal justice issues, alongside another approach opposing the conservative Western ideology called ecofeminism, which takes the equality of all living beings to a far deeper level.

### **3.1.2 Ecofeminism**

Us and them. Men and women. Subject and object. Humans and animals. All of these comparisons support the earlier mentioned anthropocentric differentiating of the "normal and the others". It demonstrates the power relations with the first one describing masculine and the latter feminine characteristics. (Plumwood, 1993; Warren 1995 as cited in Grimwood et al., 2018) Where feminism as an ideology highlights the equality of men and women, ecofeminism takes it to a level of ethics of care. The meaning of ethics of care can be traced back to 1982 when it was first introduced as a model that focused on empathy, sustaining relationships, and caring for others. (Gilligan, 1982 as cited in Grimwood et al., 2018) The minor difference between the two alternative approaches opposing anthropocentrism is that where ecocentrism pinpoints the reasoning of morality in human-animal relationships as a larger concept, ecofeminism focuses highly on the unique individuality of all living species on Earth and considers them all worthy of care, well-being, respect, and freedom. (Grimwood et al., 2018) Moreover, to roughly categorize the previously discussed attitudes to these larger worldviews and ideologies, neutralistic, utilitarian and humanistic attitudes, despite the latter's attitude of love and care seem to possess anthropocentric characteristics due to finding humans superior to animals. Furthermore, the moralistic attitude could fall under the ecocentric worldview, whereas ecofeminism can be considered as a mixture of humanistic and conservationist attitudes.

## **3.2 Wildlife**

Before being able to understand wildlife tourism, it is crucial to know what is meant by the word "wildlife". Hunter (1990) points out that wildlife is a concept often understood dissimilarly between game animals, non-domesticated vertebrates, invertebrates, and plants. For example,



some researchers define it as a combination of all, and some pin the emphasis only on game animals as originally discovered as early as 1913. (Hunter, 1990 as cited in Newsome et al., 2005) For the focus of this research, wildlife refers solely to non-domesticated vertebrates due to them most often being the focus of wildlife tourism attractions. Despite such confinement, the author recognizes the importance of all species involved in ecosystems, including plants, to keep biodiversity and therefore life on Earth blooming.

### **3.2.1 Wildlife tourism**

The natural world also known by the general term “nature” includes all things not created by humans, such as wildlife. In terms of tourism, wildlife has a diverse relation to different nature tourism activities. For instance, as Newsome et al. (2005) point out, in adventure tourism nature is the place to do tourism activities and where wildlife can be observed as a secondary matter. Conversely, nature-based tourism sees nature as the primary purpose of tourism, and eco-tourism places nature as the element to protect through tourism activities. The two latter dimensions of tourism are often considered overlapping, almost synonymous, where wildlife can be the very reason for tourism. In addition to these different nature tourism activities, there are different interactions that determine what type of wildlife tourism specifically is in question. These interactions include consumptive wildlife tourism from which the most common example would be hunting, and non-consumptive wildlife tourism which refers to captive and semi-captive settings such as zoos and sanctuaries as well as observing wildlife in the wild, for example in safaris. Subsequently, wildlife tourism can be defined as tourism that is practiced via different nature tourism activities and can include various interactions such as killing, feeding, and photographing. (Newsome et al., 2005)

Wildlife tourism is growing in demand in the global markets and is not expected to cease anytime soon in the future. When examining the nature of wildlife tourists, there are different characteristics that determine the desire to participate in tourism activities with animal encounters involved. As suggested by von Essen et al. (2020) those often participating in such activities are ones living in urban, modern societies seeking unique experiences outside of their everyday norms. Furthermore, some wildlife tourists wish to have a close connection to the natural world which makes them discover themselves on a deeper emotional level through the exotic unknown whereas some want to be a part of the greater good and have a positive impact by seeking to learn about the conservation of different species. (Dou & Day, 2020) It seems, that

what unites all wildlife tourists together, is the desire for meaningful, even once-in-a-lifetime experiences that will never be forgotten.

As the demand for animal encounters grows so does the range of tourism products created around the world. Not only then is the tourists' desire accommodated but so are the economic benefits that wildlife tourism yields. That is, wildlife tourism provides great opportunities for local people as well as for conservation efforts to protect species. (Moorhouse et al., 2015) In addition to this, wildlife tourism plays a crucial role in educating tourists on the latter. As stated by Shani & Pizam (2010) especially zoos and aquariums play an important role in conservation and environmental education, since the further urbanization goes, the more alienated people become of the natural world and the challenges faced, making these facilities crucial in sharing important knowledge. Nonetheless, these facilities are also a target of heavy criticism due to holding the wildlife in captivity. However, it can be argued that a far bigger issue is those facilities that feed the problem rather than do their best to be a part of the solution, as many zoos do. That is, despite the great positive impacts that wildlife tourism has, there is a flip side to the coin of pure monetary opportunities and anthropocentric ways of treating wildlife for human prosperity.

### **3.3 Animal welfare concerns in captive wildlife tourism settings**

Tourists' experience in many captive wildlife tourism settings comes from the labor of the animals. That is, the animals are used as a vehicle of transportation, package carriers, entertainers, educators, and objects for tourists to watch. This is the nature of the highly popular elephant tourism in Thailand where meaningful experiences are created for tourists in ways such as bathing, riding, and feeding the elephants. However, what is often beyond tourists' eyes is the everyday lives of these elephants. That is, they are taken away from their natural habitat, their natural behaviors are hindered and forced breeding is practiced purely for profit-oriented purposes to meet tourism demands. It is important to note, that animals are living beings and they too feel pain, have emotions, and can be traumatized. Therefore, this type of treatment affects their psychological, emotional, and behavioral well-being and overall quality of life. (Grimwood et al., 2018)

In research conducted by Grimwood et al. (2018), captive elephant welfare was studied by interviewing a group of volunteer tourists, that have served in elephant rehabilitation centers in

Thailand. The study reported two different challenges that were argued to stand in the way of improving the elephant tourism industry, the first one being the so-called “bucket list mentality”. This can be explained as the tourists' desire to participate in “must do” activities such as riding elephants in Thailand, just to tick it off their bucket list. It was described by a few of the interviewees, that tourists with such a mentality are not aware of or concerned to question the ethics of such activity. Furthermore, one of the interviewees had mentioned the welfare issues of riding elephants to the tourists visiting the center, which made them upset about finding out and ended up complaining about her to the company after participating in the activity anyway. The volunteer (interviewee) was then told by the company that she was not allowed to tell such information to the tourists, which describes the foundation of the second challenge the industry is facing. That is the production of elephant tourism in Thailand and more specifically, “invisible production”. Simply, that means that the welfare violations of the elephants are kept hidden to ensure a feasible profit. Industry operators, marketers, and even governments often represent these facilities as wildlife sanctuaries or rescue centers, conveying the idea that they have the animals' best interests in mind when truly, they do not. (Grimwood et al., 2018) Such representation is also known as greenwashing, which can be considered problematic not only for the sake of spreading false information but also for those facilities that are trying to rehabilitate elephants and other wild animals from harmful conditions.

Similarly to elephant tourism in Thailand, a number of studies have begun to examine the questionable tourism experiences provided across South Africa, only in this case, the wild animals in question are lion cubs. The nature of such wildlife tourism is that these lion cubs are held in commercial farming facilities, where tourists can participate in a broad selection of experiences such as picking up the cubs, stroking them, bottle feeding them, and taking selfies with them. (Wilson & Phillips, 2021) Despite, that these facilities are claimed to be rehabilitation centers, much like the elephant sanctuaries in Thailand, Chorney et al. (2022) suggest that the cubs are indeed part of breeding programs and therefore condemned to trophy hunting activities, exotic pet trade, or other ambiguous business.

In terms of welfare concerns regarding the cubs, Chorney et al. (2022) noticed many in their study by analyzing tourists' videos taken from such facilities that were posted on YouTube. The top concerns recognized in these videos were related to the cubs' incapability to choose their

environment, and social groups, and whether to withdraw from human interaction or not. Additionally, poor breeding practices and overall care for the cubs were absent. Some of the more specific concerns were for example the cubs being separated from their mothers and exposed to tourism activities as young as one day old as well as being kept awake during the daytime which, by being nocturnal animals, is lions' time for rest. Furthermore, the consequences of such welfare neglect cause detrimental impacts on the cubs' health including stress, anxiety, fear, weakened immune systems, and trauma to name a few.

The elephant and lion industries are just a few examples of the questionable wildlife tourism practices in the world. To demonstrate the issue more, Carder et al. (2018) address the multilevel problematic nature of popular photo prop tourism where captive wildlife is used to provide photo souvenirs for tourists to take from their meaningful experiences and share on social media. This specific tourism activity has been seen to be popular in the case of brown-throated three-toed sloths in Latin America. In their study, Carder et al. (2018) investigated how the sloths were treated in these selfie tourism activities and what kind of behavioral impact it had on them. The results of the study seemed to be rather similar to those that Grimwood et al. (2018) and Chorney et al. (2022) reported in their studies. That is, the results found incorrect handling of the sloths such as holding them only by their claws or otherwise manipulative handling of their limbs and heads. Behaviors such as self-hold, claw clasp, and limb stretch were considered as possible indicators of stress and anxiety, even fear. Additionally, the sloths were grabbing their handlers, suggesting they were uncomfortable being passed down from one person to another.

The rising trend of selfie tourism with different wild animals is encouraging illegal animal trading to meet the tourism demand around the world. An example of this is in the case of slow lorises that are being illegally traded in Asia for selfie tourism. These animals are captured, and their teeth are clipped to make them less sharp, which restrains them from being able to survive in the wild anymore and consequently suitable as tourism objects. Such exile of individual animals from their natural habitat to meet the tourism demand can severely impact the population numbers of specific species and the longer selfie tourism is a popular activity, the worse the situation can get in terms of biodiversity. (Carder et al., 2018) This suggest that the problem is not only about animal injustice anymore but a matter of ecosystem harassment and feeding the crisis of biodiversity loss.

Together these studies provide important insights into the nature of many unethical wildlife tourism attractions. It can be recognized, that the ability of humans to touch animals and be in close interaction with them is one of the primary causes of welfare issues that cause stress, injury, or even the death of individual animals involved. Furthermore, the existence of education and knowledge in such facilities is obscured making it challenging for tourists to improve their judgment, however, in some cases, such judgment seems to be nonexistent even with the choice given. Grimwood et al. (2018) argue that the outlook on well-being in the majority of English academic literature supports the anthropocentric worldview of considering merely from the human point of view, more specifically on the individual level. However, it is important to note that the well-being of humankind both on individual and community levels originates from a much larger scope. That is, if the wellness of other living beings and entire ecosystems is ignored, there is not much space left for human wellness, to begin with.

### **3.4 Co-existence between humans and animals**

Before learning about co-existence, it is firstly important to understand why it is an ever-rising topic in the academic literature today and that is due to biodiversity and more specifically, its loss. To simply understand the concept of biodiversity, WWF (2022) defines it as “The variety of life and the interactions between living things at all levels on land, in water, and in the sea and air — genes, populations, species, and ecosystems” (p.16). Similarly, Rajasekharan (2015) defines biodiversity as the biological wealth of life and its evolution throughout millions of years. Together these definitions give an understanding of what it means concretely and predominantly. Furthermore, it can be often misunderstood that biodiversity refers only to the natural world and that humans are separated from it. However, as the ancient Indian concepts reveal, humans are considered a part of nature and more specifically essential in managing and sustaining the co-existence between the living and non-living. (Rajasekharan, 2015) This suggests, that there is a substantial responsibility for humankind to determine whether or not the variety of life on Earth will bloom or decay.

Unfortunately, the current state of the variety of life on Earth is decaying. In other words, known as biodiversity loss. When one species becomes endangered or extinct there is a treadmill effect on other ecosystems and worst-case scenario, terminal consequences to humans. (Hurn, 2012) That is, species of animals and plants, and therefore entire ecosystems are disappearing, causing

our planet's ability to enable life, slowly to become impossible. To demonstrate the issue more clearly, the recent Living Planet report declares a 69% decline in wildlife populations in the entire world between 1970 and 2018. Thus, the issue at hand is not new, but rather severe due to the fast pace of critical changes. The primary reason for biodiversity loss and its quick decline is human population growth leading to urbanization, and therefore, changes in land use, harming flora and fauna. However, it is expected that climate change will overrule the position unless properly limited. (WWF, 2022)

The issue of biodiversity loss does not only stem from the major drivers caused by the human population's totality but also the worldviews, actions, attitudes, and priorities on an individual level. As Lovejoy (1988) states, conserving biodiversity is on all of us in one way or another. Equivalently, WWF (2022) articulates the obligation rather than the option to act towards a sustainable future by everyone, despite the levels of power. That is, transformative change is required to be embedded in the ways humans live which can be considered as a wide spectrum of factors such as production and consumption habits, the things humans choose to financially support as well as governing regulations. More specifically, such transformative change should diminish the currently existing inequalities and injustices which requires identifying more value and rights-based approaches. Furthermore, there needs to be a shift from purely monetary focused economy to one that acknowledges well-being in all its forms, and which is aware of the deficiency of natural resources on Earth.

Considering the problematic relationships between humans and animals based on many unethical wildlife tourism practices discovered earlier, one major aspect where transformative change should be seen is in the way humans and animals co-exist on this planet. There are different understandings of the word co-existence in academic literature. As Fiasco & Massarella (2022), mention in their study of co-existence between humans and wildlife, when talking about co-existence, it should focus on finding a tolerant state between humans and animals. Other apprehensions about co-existence have been made by describing it as minimizing negative impacts and maximizing positive impacts between humans and animals through for example education and ecotourism. Both of these conceptions suggest that the focus should be on finding an achievable balance between the two rather than aiming for a state of living in full harmony, which could be considered more complex if not even impossible. To achieve such tolerant state,

humans need to recognize themselves as part of nature, not as an opposing factor. That could be accomplished by a transformative change in worldviews, attitudes, actions and priorities.

## **4 Method**

As already discovered, the aim of this thesis is to understand travelers' attitudes toward wildlife tourism and their views on co-existence between humans and animals after which the author will observe the options for transformative change to preserve biodiversity. The following chapter will explain how this aim is reached by the suitability and reasoning of the method, data collection, data analysis, and the target group chosen.

### **4.1 Qualitative research**

Choosing a method is challenging yet one of the most crucial parts of writing a thesis. More specifically, choosing a method suitable for the topic in question is where the challenge may arise. One way to help map out and finally choose the ideal research method is by gathering information on the topic chosen. Not only will this develop own ideas further but also see what type of research methods others have used when studying a similar topic. (Bryman 2012) In the case of this thesis, the author took the approach of going through different articles while figuring out the method suitable. After a great scope of reviewing, the decision to do qualitative research was made. To reason the choice, a few methodology concepts will be opened. Firstly, the difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods can be simply explained as seeking answers in either analytical or numerical form, the latter being the most known characteristic of quantitative research. Another characteristic of quantitative research is its way of observing the chosen topic with a more specific and narrower approach whereas qualitative research reasons the topic on a much wider scale. (Brannen & Brannen, 1995) The latter was found more suitable for this thesis.

To demonstrate further, epistemological- and ontological positions apply in this research. The former term can be explained as the focus on studying the topic in question via the interpretation of individuals and the latter by interacting with the individuals rather than examining the topic in a separate manner. (Bryman, 2012) Moreover, having studied the topic on her own via a large body of literature, the author wanted to deepen her knowledge by studying how others perceived it.

That is, the author based the understanding of the attitudes and worldviews of the individuals participating in the research on their perspectives on the topic and created a comprehensive understanding of a larger phenomenon by linking the perspectives to the supporting theory, also known as secondary data. Therefore, the reasoning for the decision to do qualitative research was rather abductive.

## **4.2 Data collection**

The data collection was conducted in two ways, the first of which was the collection of secondary data. Secondary data can be described as the data that already exists on the topic of interest, for instance, different books, articles, and journals. This data is often used for the theoretical framework of the thesis as supportive knowledge and as a foundation to which further data will be linked to. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) For this thesis, the secondary data was collected from various books, articles, and journals that extensively described human-animal relationships, wildlife tourism, and co-existence. These topics were crucial in understanding the totality of the research. The second type of data is called the primary data, which is the origin of the research. The information in primary data is gathered by the researcher and is nonexistent until then. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) As Bryman (2012) states, interviews and participant observation are the two most common methods of primary data collection. The former method was found most suitable for the purpose of this thesis and the data collection was implemented by semi-structured interviews.

### **4.2.1 Semi-structured interviews and target group**

Before conducting the interviews, the author pondered whether to study the attitudes of travelers who had not visited any wildlife tourism attractions or those who had experience with them. A conclusion to experience-based research was made due to the interest in knowing if possible animal welfare issues were visible and also whether the respondents' attitudes had changed from the time of the visit to the present day. From seven potential respondents, five were chosen for the interviews. The existing information that the author had about the five respondents was that each of them had wildlife tourism experiences. The unity of the five people visiting in captive/semi-captive settings impacted the confinement of the chosen respondents due to wildlife tourism in such settings having more potential for welfare issues to be recognized than in free-roaming settings. Therefore, the target group of the respondents can be categorized as a group of



travel lovers, between the ages of 22-30. Furthermore, the interviews were all conducted via Teams call due to the different locations that the respondents and the author were at, and the time period of conduct was during the second week of May 2023.

As the thesis is investigating travelers' attitudes toward wildlife tourism and their views on the co-existence between humans and animals, the author wanted to gain genuine perspectives. Therefore, the research needed to be done by utilizing a somewhat flexible approach. (Bryman, 2012) That is, instead of forming precise and structured questions and imposing the participants on the topic in a detailed manner, the author gave room for open discussion and potential further questioning and kept the questions general rather than too specified. Moreover, since the author is studying the attitudes of the travelers towards the chosen topic, the ability to answer everything in their own words was emphasized. This way, the author considered easing the pressure of having to answer "correctly". Despite the flexibility approach, the author had prepared an interview guide to divide questions into themes. Therefore, the interviews would allow open discussion but also a red thread to come back to. The interview guide was divided into three themes and can be found in the appendix at the very end of this thesis.

### **4.3 Analysis of data**

Bryman (2012) highlights that the essence of data analysis is that the "raw" data needs to be managed in some way to make sense of it. He differentiates the data analysis between quantitative and qualitative as the former having clear set of rules on how to analyze and the latter as a more complex matter with no such boundaries. There are different strategies on how to analyze qualitative data, and Bryman (2012) introduces four main ones which are analytic induction, grounded theory, thematic analysis, and narrative analysis.

Firstly, analytic induction is one where the researcher seeks data on the phenomena studied to the point where no more inconsistency is found for the hypothesis made. This means, that during the data collection, there may be a lot of back and forth with the collection with either redefining or reformulating the hypothesis which in the latter means simply to proceed with the data collection. Grounded theory on the other hand is recognized as the most used framework which includes a wide range of tools such as coding, theoretical sampling, and constant comparison. Moving on, thematic analysis is not considered as a separate approach to data analysis but rather

as one that occurs in all of them one way or another. For example, creating themes is often referred to as coding and vice versa. Lastly, a narrative data analysis gathers respondents' stories of themselves in reflection on the phenomena studied. (Bryman, 2012)

For the purpose of this thesis, the most suitable way for data analysis was found to be the mixture of coding and constant comparison which as previously mentioned are a part of grounded theory and also have characteristics of thematic analysis. That is, as the interviews for this research were accomplished via Teams, the author was able to record and transcribe the interviews after which she familiarized herself with them by seeking different themes by color coding to categorize the main results. The color codes were used to find similarities, differences, and suitable quotations in the answers. The results were presented with constant comparison.

## **5 Results**

This research studies the attitudes of travelers toward wildlife tourism as well as their views on co-existence between humans and animals from which the author will observe options for transformative change to preserve biodiversity. In order to achieve the aim, the author found it important to understand the respondents' relationship to nature and animals, wildlife tourism experiences, and thoughts on co-existence. Thus, the results of the semi-structured interviews will be presented in three main themes similar to how they were divided in the interview guide. Altogether five people were interviewed and instead of numbering the respondents, a more personal touch was implemented and each of them was anonymously presented with made-up names which are: Matilda, Lily, Annika, Luke, and Hanna. The interview guide is available in the appendix at the end of this research for further understanding of what type of questions were asked in each theme. It is suggested to familiarize the questions of each theme before learning the results.

### **5.1 Relationship with nature and animals**

Between the five respondents, a wide variety of relationships towards nature was recognized from neutral to deep and narrow to extensive. The majority of the respondents described nature as a relaxing and enjoyable place to spend time, with Hanna diving deeper. She described nature as extremely interesting, inspiring, esthetically beautiful, and a relaxing force that improves well-

being. She also indicated nature as a place to escape from day-to-day life and emphasized nature as the essence of all life on Earth: *“Without nature, there would not be life.”* (Hanna) Moreover, the healing factor of nature was acknowledged by Annika as well. More specifically, as she began to observe nature from the viewpoint of mental well-being after moving to Finland from her home country, Annika instantly found a newborn connection to nature and became curious to discover it more.

Similar findings were discovered with respondents’ relationship towards animals, although much of the closeness was directed to pets and more specifically highlighting their cuteness, especially by Matilda and Lily. However, such thought had a limit towards bugs on Lily’s behalf with her mentioning being unsure to even classify them as animals. Annika and Luke mentioned liking animals but not having that deep of a connection with them. Hanna on the other hand talked more extensively about her interest in all species such as ants and fish as well as the importance of their role on Earth. *“For example, I feel like many people think that bees are not important, or that they are annoying and disgusting like other ants, but they all have an important purpose on this Earth.”* (Hanna) Despite the differences in relationships, the uniting factor for all of the respondents was the general appreciation and respect towards nature and animals. *“I really believe it all comes down to respecting the planet and all living things.”* (Luke)

## **5.2 Wildlife tourism experiences**

In terms of wildlife tourism experiences, all of the respondents had gone to zoos multiple times. All in all, the experiences in the zoos had been pleasant on a general level and for most of the respondents, the experience occurred when they were children. *“All exotic animals for a child are like WOW to see.”* (Annika) Furthermore, the adjective *“cute”* came up multiple times when Lily described the animals, she saw in the zoos she had visited. Korkeasaari zoo in Finland was especially described as a positive experience by both Lily and Hanna who out of all the respondents were the only ones who had visited there. Hanna specified that she knew already in advance that one of the main goals of Korkeasaari Zoo was to protect endangered species and make sure they do not end up extinct, therefore she has felt comfortable visiting there multiple times.

Despite the overall experiences being pleasant in the zoos for all respondents, quite a few questionable situations in terms of animal treatment were noticed by all the other respondents except Lily. Matilda expressed her strong emotions of sadness and anxiety seeing the animals being held in tight spaces in a zoo in Germany. Specifically, what stayed on her mind was the number of elephants sharing a rather small space which consequently made them very stationary. Annika, Luke, and Hanna mentioned similar observations of tight spaces and the animals not moving around in the zoos they had visited. Luke and Hanna considered such stationary behavior stemming from the animals not being happy. Another questionable occasion that Luke remembered experiencing from one of the zoos he visited as a child, was when the zookeepers of that specific zoo were trying to make the alligators more entertaining for the tourists. Apparently, they were trying to get a reaction out of the alligators by poking them or trying to give them food. *"If the same would happen now, I would not appreciate it and I would not feel entertained."* (Luke)

In the other zoos she visited, Hanna had paid close attention to animal behavior. *"The conditions seemed ascetic"*, Hanna said when she described the dark, narrow, and tight spaces that the animals stayed in at Kitee Zoo in Finland. Hanna also noticed that in that zoo she barely saw any staff around which she also considered as a sign of poor treatment. On the contrary, at the big predator center in Kuusamo where Hanna had also visited, the staff members were taking good care of the animals and it shined through that they truly cared for them. *"The relationship seemed very deep and strong which seemed lovely but could also be problematic for the animals to be so human-friendly and pet-like."* (Hanna) Such opposite experiences made Hanna ponder the number of impacts leading to bad living conditions for animals in captivity. A few that she mentioned were for example the lack of knowledge regarding what is good for the animals and the lack of resources to grant good spaces for them. She thought that these could have been the reasons for the big predator center in Kuusamo being shut down completely a few years after her visit.

Out of the five respondents, four had visited other wildlife tourism locations in addition to zoos. Similarly to the zoos, these other experiences were also a mixture of positive and negative in terms of animal treatment. Starting off with the negative, Annika described her experience visiting a circus in Russia as: *"just awful."* She specified, that even though she was a child at the time, it was obvious that the animals were forced to perform for the sake of human entertainment. She described how during the performances, the animals were hit, and consequently, their skins were

wounded. Additionally, the animals seemed very skinny and tiny. *"They shouldn't look like that."* (Annika) Continuing to the positive, Annika and Luke shared similar experiences at a monkey forest, however, Annika had visited one in the Philippines and Luke in Indonesia. Despite the differences in location, the experience had been more or less the same and most importantly positive. *"The animals are not captive at all, they are there for their own will and not just for some guys earning a lot of money."* (Luke) The only interaction that was allowed in the monkey forest was observation. However, Annika brought up how the rules had changed, since when her mom had been at that exact place several years prior, tourists were allowed to touch the monkeys and have photoshoots with them. Lastly, Lily had been to an aquarium and a few petting zoos which to the latter Hanna had also visited multiple times with her children. In these locations, touching and feeding the animals was allowed and both Lily and Hanna did so. The experiences were both positive and no maltreatment of animals had occurred.

In conjunction with asking about wildlife tourism experiences the author found it important to know the respondents' motivation to visit such locations, whether they would visit any type of wildlife tourism location again, and if so, what aspects they would take into consideration in choosing the location. On behalf of all respondents, the motivation to visit wildlife tourism locations thus far had been either their parents' decision or the respondents' own interest in seeing exotic animals. Interestingly, Matilda pointed out that her motivation to visit a zoo for the second time in Germany was only due to receiving a free ticket.

Moreover, the willingness to participate in wildlife tourism again was rather similar between all five respondents. That is, they would all prefer going to places where the animals are wild and free rather than being held in captivity. However, three out of five respondents would participate in captive wildlife tourism if the goal of the attraction was to improve the well-being of the animals. *"If I'm buying a ticket to see the animals, is it just going to some big corporation or is the money going to the wellbeing of the animals?"* (Matilda) Luke and Annika were the only ones who said they would not want to support wildlife tourism where animals have specifically been captured for tourism purposes. Luke reasoned it by not knowing what information to trust due to a lot of greenwashing out there in the industry. Annika simply just found it wrongful.

### 5.3 Co-existence

In addition to studying travelers' attitudes towards wildlife tourism, the author wanted to link the study to a bigger problem faced on Earth today which is biodiversity loss. Therefore, this last theme goes through travelers' views on the co-existence between humans and animals. Later on in the discussion chapter, the author observes options of transformative change to preserve biodiversity, based on the respondents' answers.

After finding out about their own relationship with animals, the author wanted to hear the respondents' thoughts on their perception of human-animal relationships in general in the world. The answers varied massively between the respondents. Matilda and Luke expressed clearly that the relationship depends purely on humans and can be currently described as unfortunate for the animals. *"There are a lot of not-so-kind people out there."* (Matilda) Luke's thoughts were that human's main goal is to earn more money and that is why poor captive wildlife tourism facilities exist. *"As long as there's more money to earn, humans will do whatever to earn it."* (Luke) Lily and Annika on the other hand categorized the types of relationships different people have with animals. Lily stated that there are those who care for animals and have a fairly neutral relationship with them and opposingly there are those who hunt them. She also emphasized location, culture, and the upbringing by parents impacting heavily on the relationship to be one or the other.

Furthermore, Annika divided the different relationships between the younger and older generations. That is, the younger generation is trying to connect with the natural world more and take care of it whereas the older generation supports hunting, taking photos with exotic animals, and other unjust behavior. *"The older generation is still kind of in the past where the influence on animals by humans was uncertain since there was not as much research done."* (Annika) Hanna's response differed from the others quite extensively, although similar thoughts were brought up about human dominance in the relationship. She described humans and animals as being in symbiosis. She specified that all living creatures have a place on Earth. Personally, she does not think humans need animals for food and that humankind can survive perfectly with alternative options. Hanna also pointed out how urbanization has modified the relationship between humans and animals. She described how multiple species have had to adapt or even change to manage in urban environments making thus, a lot of urban species exist. *"I think humans should respect other species as well and not just take over the planet only thinking about themselves."* (Hanna)

Regarding co-existence, all of the respondents believed it was possible if humans were willing to put enough effort into enabling it and if it was seen as important enough to do so. *“There would not be animals on Earth if they didn’t have a function so for humans to live it’s a basic understanding for animals to live as well.”* (Luke) When asked about the role of wildlife tourism in enabling co-existence, all of the respondents had similar views on the tourism organizers' position in it. That is, the tourism experience should be mostly about informing and educating tourists about animals and how to enable a sustainable future with them. *“For example, when tourists see a fox in the zoo, which is quite an urban animal nowadays, there could be information on how to live with the fox in the same environment.”* (Hanna) Moreover, Annika said that humans should detach themselves from actions that have a poor influence on animals. She believes that wildlife tourism should focus more on observing animals in their natural habitat and that tourists should not support captive wildlife tourism. *“If we won’t bring our money to those places, they would not exist.”* (Annika) Interestingly, Annika stated that artificial intelligence zoos where people can put glasses on and virtually go to for example Antarctica to see and learn about penguins, could be the solution for the co-existence between humans and animals in wildlife tourism.

Keeping oneself thoroughly informed of the ethicality of wildlife tourism locations and therefore informing the people close to you and sharing awareness of it, was significant in Luke’s opinion when asked about individual tourists’ role in enabling co-existence between humans and animals. Similar thoughts were raised by the other respondents as well. Hanna mentioned that tourists should not support irresponsible wildlife tourism, feed animals without knowing if it was allowed or not, and make sure to bother them as little as possible. The latter she specified by saying that animals should be given the space they need and in the case of encountering a new species, humans should avoid rushing to the scene and instead observe from a distance. *“Quite basic things in my opinion.”* (Hanna) Furthermore, the admiration towards those individuals who voice their opinions loudly by protesting injustice such as animal welfare issues was brought up by Luke and Lily.

Lastly, the author wanted to hear pieces of advice to the rest of the world in enabling co-existence between humans and animals from each respondent. Starting off with Hanna, she had quite a few points to mention. Firstly, she wished for cautious city planning. She specified, that it is important to make sure that new buildings are not built in areas that are known to have a lot of wildlife, or if

a must, alternative living areas for the animals should be taken into consideration and provided for them. She emphasized the importance of protecting biodiversity in areas where urbanization has taken over. *“For example, by leaving enough park areas around or small meadows to the yards for bees and butterflies.”* (Hanna) She believed that cities can do a lot to enable co-existence between humans and animals and that an individual cannot really impact as much. However, from the individual point of view, Hanna discussed the role of recycling. *“I consider it very good and exemplary in Finland but not so much in a lot of places in the world where the trash is all in one trash can or barely even in a trash can.”* (Hanna) Additionally, she had a very strong opinion on letting pets, especially cats, roam around freely. *“It can be very harmful for other species out there such as birds, so keep your pets inside or on a leash.”* (Hanna) Furthermore, Hanna emphasized the importance of obeying the law and doing research and from that, spreading the knowledge to others to understand the importance of a sustainable lifestyle. She concluded in a realization: *“Now when I think about it, an individual can do quite a lot to enable co-existence between humans and animals.”* (Hanna)

The other respondents' advice will be shared in quotations.

*“Recycle your litter because nature is very important to animals and also donate money (if possible) to organizations that support the welfare of animals and nature.”* (Matilda)

*“Don't hunt endangered animals.”* (Lily)

*“Eliminate trashing because it is bad for the oceans and has detrimental impacts on marine animals and don't pollute our world because it influences badly on everyone.”* (Annika)

*“Think before you act and understand that we need animals to survive.”* (Luke)

## 6 Discussion

This chapter will first go through the ethicality and reliability of this study after which it will discuss the main results in reflection on the theory, answer the research questions, and observe the options for transformative change to preserve biodiversity and enable co-existence. The chapter



concludes to the conclusions of the study and the development ideas for further studies regarding wildlife tourism and the co-existence between humans and animals.

## **6.1 Ethicality and reliability**

In terms of the reliability and validity of the secondary data used in this thesis, all of the information for the theoretical base was found through JAMK library. Any odd-looking articles with a limited amount of information for citing and overall origin were eliminated. While choosing the data, the author paid close attention to the validity of the chosen topic and aimed to have information mostly from sources dated within recent years.

Moving on to the reliability and validity of the research method chosen, it is beneficial to understand what qualitative research is often criticized for. Bryman (2012) argues that there are four common examples, the first one being, that qualitative research is often criticized as being too subjective. Such criticism often stems from the idea that the researcher is close with those interviewed and has their own rather heterogeneous views on what is important. Additionally, in the case of semi-structured interviews, the possibility to change the direction of the interviews and the overall diminished presence of structure can imply that the researcher concentrates on a desired matter found more important than any other equally significant. This aspect supports the difficulty of replication. Furthermore, Bryman (2012) also identified problems in the generalization of the results. He argues that a small number of interviewees cannot represent a larger population and more importantly, when the interviewees have not been selected properly which leads to the last point of lack of transparency. That is, the difficulty in identifying whether the researcher actually did as they told.

As Merriam & Tisdell (2015) claim, it is natural human nature to have somewhat of an opinion on different topics but especially in the case of doing research and choosing the topic of interest. She emphasizes that instead of the researcher trying to ignore their bias, it is more important to identify it and clarify how it could possibly manipulate the research. That is, in the case of this specific topic the author has fairly strong opinions about, and in such case, a potential instance can be losing the tone of objectivity. However, own opinions of the author were not mentioned to the respondents. Nevertheless, the topic chosen for a thesis is usually one that the author is interested in, therefore it can be assumed that the respondents acknowledge on some level where

the author stands. That being the case in this research, the author acknowledged the unbiased approach needed to be taken in forming the questions and in conducting the interviews since the aim was to get as genuine results as possible. No agreement on answers or leading questions were asked and the respondents were encouraged to answer each question in their own words and to the best of their abilities without any proposition to right or wrong.

The ethicality of the interviews was implemented by asking permission to record the interviews from each respondent beforehand and explaining what their answers were to be used for. Additionally, the author highlighted the fact that each and every recording would be destroyed after the thesis was completed. The results were presented with made-up names of the respondents for the sake of their anonymity.

## 6.2 Discussion of the main results

As the theoretical background of this study has already revealed, there are five categories to which people's attitudes can be divided into, those being neutralistic, humanistic, moralistic, conservationist and utilitarian attitude. In addition to these five attitudes, the human-animal relationship by individuals can be also examined on a larger scale and that is, by their worldviews which this study has learned about anthropocentrism, ecocentrism, and ecofeminism. While writing down the results of the respondents' answers to the interview questions a division into these five attitudes and larger worldviews started to form. However, the author realized that the division is not so clear but rather a mixture of attitudes and worldviews were formed on the case of each respondent. The main results for the RQ 1 are first presented by showcasing and dividing the respondents' attitudes and worldviews in a table after which they will be discussed more in depth.

RQ 1: What kind of attitude do travelers have toward wildlife tourism?

RESPONDENT	ATTITUDE	WORLDVIEW
Matilda	Humanistic, moralistic	Anthropocentric, ecocentric

<b>Lily</b>	Humanistic, moralistic	Anthropocentric, ecocentric
<b>Annika</b>	Neutralistic, moralistic	Anthropocentric, ecocentric
<b>Luke</b>	Neutralistic, moralistic	Anthropocentric, ecocentric
<b>Hanna</b>	Humanistic, moralistic, conservationist	Anthropocentric, ecocentric

As seen in the table above, a mixture of attitudes and worldviews were found among the group of respondents of this study. However, none of them clearly falls into one specific category but rather contain pieces of many. The uniting attitude of all respondents was the moralistic one, meaning that they consider animals as equal to humans and find the questionable treatment of animals and captive settings worrying. This attitude can also explain their willingness to visit wildlife tourism locations with free-roaming animals rather than those with animals held in captivity, in the future. The moralistic attitude makes all the respondents look at the world from an ecocentric point of view considering all living beings jointly dependent on each other. However, the other attitudes suggest that all of the respondents also acquire characteristics of the anthropocentric worldview. The author pondered it being due to anthropocentric practices and perspectives being so rooted in society as a whole today making it difficult to find people that are not affected by it.

The attitudes which in this case support anthropocentrism are neutralistic and humanistic attitudes although they can also fall into ecocentrism and in the case of humanistic attitude, ecofeminism. As the theory revealed, neutralistic attitude means that one has zero or little interest in animals. In the case of Luke and Annika the focus seemed to be on the latter. The attitude showed for example by neither of them having a strong connection to animals in general. During their wildlife tourism experiences, both of them only cared to observe the animals, and no strong desire to get closer to them was noticed. Despite having only a little care for animals, the moralistic attitude was strong in both Annika and Luke when they saw maltreatment of the

animals in the wildlife tourism locations they visited. Furthermore, the humanistic attitude of deep emotional connection to animals showed most in Lily who showed her love and care towards animals with her strong emotions throughout the interview and described animals as being very cute multiple times. Lily and Hanna both have touched animals in wildlife tourism locations which supports the humanistic attitude exceeding the love and care from pets to other animals as well. However, the moralistic attitude seemed to limit them if touching the animals would be forbidden.

Moreover, the conservationist attitude of caring for the environment and ecosystems was recognizable in Hanna with her relationship to nature and animals which then reflected in her attitude towards wildlife tourism. For example, she felt comfortable visiting a zoo that aims to protect endangered species which proved her to think further about the consequences of her actions. In terms of ecofeminism, there were instances where it could have been revealed in this study by some of the respondents, especially by Hanna having characteristics of the conservationist attitude and caring for all species for the sake of life on Earth. However, none of the respondents' experiences in the wildlife tourism locations they visited were lengthy enough to have the possibility to go as far as truly caring for individual species. This could have possibly been the case if the respondents had for example volunteered in a wildlife sanctuary or worked in some research program that studies animals more closely for longer periods of time.

RQ 2: How do travelers view co-existence between humans and animals?

As learned from the secondary data, the ancient Indian concepts as well as today's academic literature notice the same error in the mindset of many when it comes to co-existence. That is, humans do not recognize them as part of nature but rather as separate, more intelligent creatures. Having such a mindset can make it difficult to realize the impacts that the current biodiversity loss has on Earth and the vital position of humans to make sure nothing irreversible happens. However, there is hope and that hope has urgently been presented by WWF (2022) in the Living Planet Report which revealed, the vitality of co-existence through transformative change in the worldviews, actions, attitudes, and priorities of humans. The report specifically highlighted the importance of all parties to step up despite the level of power. In other words, every single human being needs to take action to preserve life on Earth.

The views of the respondents on co-existence between humans and animals seemed overall positive. All of them agreed that co-existence is achievable, but only if found important enough. In terms of wildlife tourism, education about animals and how to live in harmony with them, were found crucial by all the respondents in order to spread the knowledge and awareness of co-existence. The importance of sharing awareness came up on an individual level as well by protesting against the injustice of the wrongful treatment of animals or by simply informing about the matter to family and friends. Moreover, while sharing their advice for the rest of the world in terms of achieving co-existence, interestingly the answers differed from protecting endangered animals to recycling, meaning that the spectrum is huge and one can positively impact co-existence from the comfort of their own home.

As the respondents talked about co-existence the author noticed the change in their own actions and priorities. It was visible for example by not wanting to financially support captive wildlife tourism anymore or only doing so if guaranteed information about the ethicality of the location was received. This suggests that there has been a change in their attitudes toward wildlife tourism and a positive shift in worldviews from the time of visiting the wildlife tourism locations to the day of the interviews. The author is aware that the interview gave the respondents the opportunity to think more in-depth about the matters than they probably would have otherwise but also realized, that could have been the transformative change for them. Could being vulnerable and sharing personal stories of own experiences be the transformative change needed to enable co-existence and preserve biodiversity? This thought grew stronger for the author when observing the journey of thought in Hanna's case when she went from not believing an individual can do much about co-existence to realizing how much an individual can actually do.

As the WWF (2022) emphasizes in the recent edition of the Living Planet Report, transformative change is needed to be seen in production, consumerism, governing and the things chosen to finance by everyone including individuals. The author's personal view is that there is still a far greater need for those, that can make a larger impact, such as the tourism industry, to step up in order to make individuals step up. That is, education and awareness sharing, suggested as important by the respondents, should come from a place of vulnerable storytelling. Vulnerability is talked about now more than ever. It is the key to creating a connection with an audience, a space for empathy and understanding. However, a lot of the discussion on vulnerability is related to the

fear of it. People are afraid to show their true selves, emotions, pain, and weakness. Therefore, those willing to share vulnerability are seen as admirable, and thus, a trustworthy connection can be achieved. (Fragias, 2023)

In the case of animal welfare issues and co-existence between humans and animals, they should be sold to tourists through vulnerable storytelling. That way, a trustworthy relationship between the tourism organizers and tourists can be accomplished, a far greater connection built, and hopefully a solution to these problems created. In fact, selling those issues should impact tourists' emotions as strongly and be as easy as selling a ticket to that unethical elephant sanctuary in Thailand, commercial farming facilities for lion cubs in South Africa, and selfie tourism experiences with sloths in Latin America. Therefore, vulnerable storytelling could be considered as an option for transformative change that is needed to grant welfare for animals and make humans see themselves as part of nature to enable co-existence and therefore preserve biodiversity.

### **6.3 Conclusions and development ideas**

With the worries of human interference with animals in ways such as supporting unethical wildlife tourism, trafficking animals for entertainment purposes, and the disturbance on the natural world as a whole causing biodiversity loss, the aim of this thesis was to understand the attitudes and worldviews that similar travel lovers like the author herself have towards wildlife tourism as well as their views on the co-existence between humans and animals. With that, the author was able to explore options for transformative change to enable that co-existence and to preserve biodiversity. To reach the aim, the author first studied the topics of human-animal relationship, wildlife tourism, and co-existence via secondary sources such as books, journals and other academic sources. By studying the topics as such from the secondary data, the author was not only able to understand the concepts related to the topics but also form an extensive theoretical base from them. That is, the theoretical base revealed the complex nature of human-animal relationship and how it is formed in the case of individuals and thus create different attitudes and worldviews. Furthermore, with the help of different case examples of various unethical wildlife tourism locations with slight comparison to ethical wildlife tourism locations, the author learned the pros and cons of wildlife tourism. Lastly, the chapters of co-existence and biodiversity loss gave an understanding of the major matters at stake caused by human interference, in addition to what is needed to enable life to bloom on Earth for as long as possible.

The author then furthered her knowledge with primary data by conducting qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews in which five travelers, all of whom had experiences in captive or semi-captive wildlife tourism locations, participated. Furthermore, the analysis of the primary data collected was done via color coding and constant comparison was utilized to report the results. The results of this study were presented in three themes: Relationship with nature and animals, wildlife tourism experiences, and co-existence. These themes not only helped to divide and thus present the results in a cohesive way but also played a crucial role as an interview guide while conducting the semi-structured interviews. Moreover, fluency in reporting the results was also implemented by giving the respondents made-up names. This gave an ambiance of a more personal touch to the answers rather than differentiating the respondents by numbers.

This study concludes that travelers have a mixture of attitudes toward wildlife tourism which include neutralistic, humanistic, moralistic, and in the case of one respondent, conservationist attitudes. Despite the mixture of attitudes, each of the respondents shared the moralistic one, meaning that they all consider animals and humans as equal. Furthermore, the study also revealed that the respondents had both anthropocentric and ecocentric worldviews from which the ecocentric seemed to be the prominent one and the anthropocentric mostly due to the impact of society. Furthermore, the ecofeminist worldview that the author studied in the secondary data ended up not being recognizable in any of the respondents' cases. Moreover, the respondents' views on co-existence between humans and animals were overall positive and mostly hopeful. Education and awareness sharing were found most impactful in enabling co-existence. More specifically education and awareness sharing should focus on the tourism industry since being one of the biggest industries in the world, it is in a key position to have a larger impact.

A shift in the respondents' own attitudes and worldviews was recognizable which the author pondered due to them being able to reflect on their previous experiences including close encounters with wild animals and to share those experiences freely and in a vulnerable way. Therefore, when exploring the options for transformative change, the author could not help but think about the power of vulnerable storytelling to solve animal welfare issues, co-existence between humans and animals and to preserve biodiversity. Humans admire vulnerability but are also afraid to show it and therefore that is exactly what is needed from greater influencers as a form of transformative change. Therefore, the tourism industry should encourage education and

awareness sharing through vulnerable storytelling for humans to open their eyes to the interconnectedness of all living beings on Earth. Vulnerable storytelling should focus on shifting from conservative anthropocentrism to change-seeking ecocentrism and ecofeminism, supporting the welfare of animals and ecosystems and most importantly, finding balance between humans and animals and the natural world as a whole.

This study was only a scratch of the surface to understand the large spectrum of issues related to the topics which means that more research is needed, and more voices raised about animal welfare issues and co-existence between humans and animals as well as biodiversity loss. As this research ended up having people with fairly similar attitudes and views on the topics, it did not reveal opposites which looking back at it now, would have made it more interesting. Therefore, further research could focus on finding more variety in people by using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. That is, conducting a survey to find more variation in thoughts after which a selection of a more heterogeneous group to interviews would be made. This way, there could be a higher chance of getting people with all the attitudes and worldviews learned about in this study, if not more. Another, area where more research is needed is onsite of different wildlife tourism locations. Such research could give more insight into what level of education is provided for tourists or if it is provided at all. Furthermore, research focused on comparing the education provided in questionable wildlife tourism locations and zoos or safaris that focus on protecting the animals and biodiversity, could bring out major revelations to what is being told to tourists. With these development ideas, a study similar to this would get more depth to it. However, talking is better than not talking, and in terms of these issues, they need to be talked about now more than ever.

Similarly to the respondents sharing words of wisdom with the rest of the world to preserve biodiversity and enable co-existence between humans and animals, the author wanted to do the same. The quote chosen has opened the author's eyes to how dependent humans actually are on the natural world and how there is no space for our species to continue behaving in a dominant manner.

“People need the Earth, but the Earth does not need people” – (Miller 2004 in Newsome et al. 2005)





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## Appendices

### Appendix 1.

Interview guide for semi-structured interview

#### **RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE AND ANIMALS**

1. How would you describe your relationship with nature? How about animals?
2. What aspects do you think shaped your relationship with nature as such? How about animals?

#### **WILDLIFE TOURISM EXPERIENCES**

1. What kind of wildlife tourism have you participated in and where?
2. How did that experience make you feel?
3. What motivated you to participate in wildlife tourism?
4. What kind of interaction did you have with the animals? How were the animals treated? How did they seem to you?
5. Would you participate in wildlife tourism again? If not, why? If yes, what factors would you take into consideration in choosing the type of wildlife tourism you would participate in?

#### **CO-EXISTENCE**

1. In your own words, how would you describe the relationship between humans and animals in general?
2. Do you think humans and animals can co-exist on Earth? If not, why? If yes, how?

#### **IF THE ANSWER WAS NO, FURTHER QUESTIONS WERE NOT NEEDED**

#### **IF THE ANSWER WAS YES (this was the case with all respondents)**

3. What do you think wildlife tourism industry can do to enable co-existence between humans and animals?
4. What can you as a tourist do to enable co-existence between humans and animals?
5. What advice would you give to others in this world to enable co-existence between humans and animals?