

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SKI RESORT OPERATIONS
Case Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

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The objective of this thesis project was to produce a sustainable travel development plan for the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy, as required by Sustainable Travel Finland certification and the Finnish Ski Area Association. The first research goal was to establish the knowledge base needed for the development plan and the sustainable development process. The second research goal of the thesis was to present the case company's willingness for sustainable development, as well as analyze the case company's existing level of sustainability and its development opportunities from the perspectives of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural sustainability. Additionally, the thesis project includes a sustainable action plan which defines the case company's next steps for sustainable business model innovation (work tasks, time frame, responsible people, targets, budget, reporting, and measures).

The research method used in this thesis project was a qualitative case study focusing on Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy. The base knowledge of the thesis consists of the Sustainable Travel Finland e-guide by Visit Finland, a sustainability handbook by The Finnish Ski Area Association, as well as literature regarding sustainability, sustainable travel development and sustainable business model innovation. Empirical data was collected through theme-centered qualitative interviews with the owners and four key employees of the case company.

The sustainable development plan presented in this thesis project helps Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy and other ski resorts, as more actors in the ski industry need a sustainable travel development plan to apply for Sustainable Travel Finland certification and recognition from The Finnish Ski Area Association. With the help of the sustainable travel development plan, the case company can truly transform its business model to a more sustainable one, and as a result, the case company can better consider the well-being of its environment, customers, staff, partners, and the local community.

Keywords sustainable development, ski resorts, corporate culture, sustainable tourism, business models

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Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli tuottaa tapausyritys Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy:lle kestävä matkailun kehityssuunnitelma. Opinnäytetyön ensimmäisenä tavoitteena oli taustoittaa kestävä matkailun kehityssuunnitelmaan vaadittavaa taustatietoa ja kehitysprosessia. Opinnäytetyön toisena tavoitteena oli selvittää tapausyrityksen kestävä kehityksen tavoitetila, nykytilanne ja hiihtokeskustoiminnan kehittämismahdollisuudet sosio-kulttuurisen, ekologisen sekä taloudellisen kestävyuden näkökulmista. Lisäksi opinnäytetyöhön sisältyy toimenpidesuunnitelma, jossa on määritelty yrityksen seuraavat askeleet kestävämmän liiketoiminnan kehittämiseksi. Toimenpidesuunnitelma sisältää toimenpiteet, niiden aikataulun, vastuuhenkilöt, tavoitteet, budjetin, raportointitavan ja mittarit.

Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortin kestävä matkailun kehittämistä tarkasteltiin tässä opinnäytetyössä laadullisen tapaustutkimuksen keinoin. Tutkimuksen tietoperustaan on koottu taustatietoa Visit Finlandin tuottamasta Sustainable Travel Finlandin e-oppaasta ja Suomen Hiihtokeskusyhdistyksen tuottamasta Vastuullisuusoppaasta. Lisäksi tietoperustassa on käsitelty kestävä matkailukehityksen ja kestävä liiketoimintamallin innovaation teoriaa. Opinnäytetyöhön kerättiin empiiristä materiaalia yrityksessä toimivien esimiesten ja yrityksen vakituiseen henkilökuntaan kuuluvien avainhenkilöiden teemahaastatteluin.

Opinnäytetyön kehityssuunnitelma hyödyttää Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy:tä sekä muita hiihtokeskuksia, sillä yhä useammat alan toimijat tarvitsevat kestävä matkailun kehityssuunnitelman voidakseen tavoitella Visit Finlandin Sustainable Travel Finland-merkkiä ja Suomen hiihtokeskusyhdistyksen palkintoja. Kestävä matkailun kehityssuunnitelman avulla tapausyrityksen liiketoimintamallia voidaan kehittää aidosti kestävämmäksi, ja sen tuloksena yritys voi ottaa ympäristön lisäksi entistä paremmin huomioon myös henkilökunnan, asiakkaiden, yhteistyökumppaneiden sekä paikallisen väestön hyvinvoinnin.

Avainsanat kestävä kehitys, hiihtokeskukset, yrityskulttuuri, kestävä matkailu, liiketoimintamallit

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FOREWORD

I began my master's degree in 2020, right when COVID-19 closed most of the world into their homes. Despite being stuck in my home in a remote village in the Arctic, I wanted to continue learning and advancing my skills after working for some years after my bachelor's degree. Having the possibility to study from home for the Lapland University of Applied Sciences degree has been an absolute privilege, and it has enabled me to learn more professional skills, think outside the box, and has given me the tools and inspiration to dream big. Bigger than I would normally dare to in my day-to-day work life as an entrepreneur. It feels surreal that the entirety of my master's studies was done remotely, as the pandemic did not allow any physical meetings with classmates or professors. I am grateful to still be in contact with many of my fellow students and to share this experience with them. I am grateful for the professors who have shared their knowledge with me, and who have given me feedback and therefore helped me finish this project.

I would like to thank my family for their help and support with this project, and most importantly for their patience as sometimes my progress had not been as fast as I would have wanted to, and they have carried my work tasks on top of theirs while I have taken time off to work on my own things. I am eternally thankful to my partner for his unconditional love and support every single day. Without him cheering me on, I would not have been able to believe in myself in finishing this MBA degree. I would like to also express my gratitude to my colleagues at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort for sharing their insights with me, so we can create a more sustainable future for the place we all love so much.

Let's all work for a more sustainable world, changing one little thing at a time.

ABBREVIATIONS

BMI	Business Model Innovation
CER	Corporate Environmental Responsibility
CR	Corporate Responsibility
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EU	European Union
HVO	Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil
SBMC	Sustainable Business Model Canvas
SHKY	Finnish Ski Area Association
STF	Sustainable Travel Finland
UN	United Nations
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization

1 INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become increasingly important for businesses in the 2020s, as customers increasingly expect sustainable services and governments work together to reach international policies to limit climate change. Climate crisis is a critical theme, especially in the Arctic region, which is heating up twice as fast compared to other parts of the world. Studies show that the annual mean temperature in Finland has already risen by $2,3^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 0,4^{\circ}\text{C}$ between 1847 and 2013. (Ruosteenoja, Jylhä & Kämäräinen, 2016) As a snowy environment is the basic requirement for winter tourism experiences and the ski industry, climate change has the potential to influence the industry significantly. It is argued that the winter tourism industry, and the ski industry specifically is considered as one of the most vulnerable industries affected by the changing climate and warmer winters. (Dawson & Scott, 2012)

The travel industry is estimated to cause approximately 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, which means the industry needs to comply with international and regional agreements for reducing carbon emissions (Visit Finland, 2019). Thus, it is evident that these requirements apply also to the case company. It is noted by The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), that sustainable tourism should use natural resources efficiently and tourism should take care of natural heritage and biodiversity. Sustainable tourism should also respect and contribute to the socio-cultural aspect of the local communities and traditions. A company doing sustainable tourism should also ensure good long-term operations from an economic perspective, by creating value for the stakeholders, employers, and the host community. (UNWTO, 2023) From this perspective, it is argued that also the ski resort carries a strong responsibility for operating in a sustainable manner, thus a sustainable travel development plan is necessary for ensuring systematic work towards more sustainable practices.

Considering the demand for sustainability for instance from environmental and political perspectives, it is evident that all businesses need to shift towards more future-proof and climate-friendly operations. This is true also for the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort, which is operating deep in the Arctic region. The case company's core business operations include alpine skiing and

snowboarding, ski school, equipment rental for different snow sports and restaurant services. It is clear, that climate change imposes a major threat to business operations, and it is thus important for the case company to be more future-proof by innovating their business model.

The case company operates in the snow sports and tourism industry, and some of the core partners are: a local tourism marketing agency Lapland North, the Finnish Ski Area Association and the Finnish government's Visit Finland tourism agency. All these partners are strongly encouraging their partnering companies to boost sustainability in their business operations, and sustainable partner companies are gaining increased visibility in marketing thus gaining an advantage in PR events. For instance, the Ski Area Association requires a sustainability handbook for any ski resort to be considered as eligible candidates for "Ski Resort of the Year", "Ski School of the Year" or "Nearby Resort of the Year" awards. Visit Finland has also launched the Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) certification programme for documenting companies' sustainability processes. Lapland North, consisting of multiple partner companies in the Inari – Utsjoki area, has set a goal to achieve a sustainable travel destination certificate from Visit Finland, which requires that a minimum of 50% of the member companies have the STF certificate. It is thus important for the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort to follow the examples set by the partners, aim for sustainable business practices, and help Lapland North reach the status of a sustainable travel destination.

1.1 Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy

This thesis project was made for the commissioning case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy. Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort, later in the text referred to as 'the case company' and 'the ski resort' is a ski resort located in Saariselkä, northern Finland. From its location well within the Arctic Circle, it is one of the northernmost ski resorts in the world. The ski resort was originally founded in 1969, and the first lift was established on fell Kaunispää in December 1970. (SHKY, 2020a) The ski resort has had many different owners over the years, and since 2020 it has been run by a local family with a ski background.

Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort operates in an environmentally sensitive area in Arctic Finland, and thus it is essential that the case company makes its operations more sustainable. (Kuščer & Dwyer 2019) According to Motiva (2010), the average ski day is 20 kWh of energy per person, which is the same as one day at a spa or the energy a refrigerator uses in two weeks. Considering that statistically 1,2 million Finns together spend 50 million ski days per year, the ski resorts arguably have lots of possibilities in decreasing the carbon footprint of the sport. (Motiva, 2010)

During the time of this thesis project in 2023, the ski resort had infrastructure on two fells, on fell Kaunispää and fell Lisakkipää and in the valley between them. The ski resort had 23 alpine skiing slopes, 15 of which were illuminated. The ski resort had 6 lifts, with a service capacity of 6500 people per hour. The different lift types included a 3-seater chairlift, three T-bar lifts, all of which ran from the valley to the top, as well as a button lift and a rope lift which were shorter lifts located at the beginners' practice area. (Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort, 2023)

Other infrastructure at the ski resort consisted of a Service Centre building, where a ski shop, equipment rental, storage lockers and ski school were located, a restaurant building Lieggâ Láávu with restaurant premises as well as staff accommodation, and Caravan Park services such as riverside sauna. Despite the name, the ski resort did not offer its own accommodation services for customers, but it cooperated with local hotels and other accommodation providers.

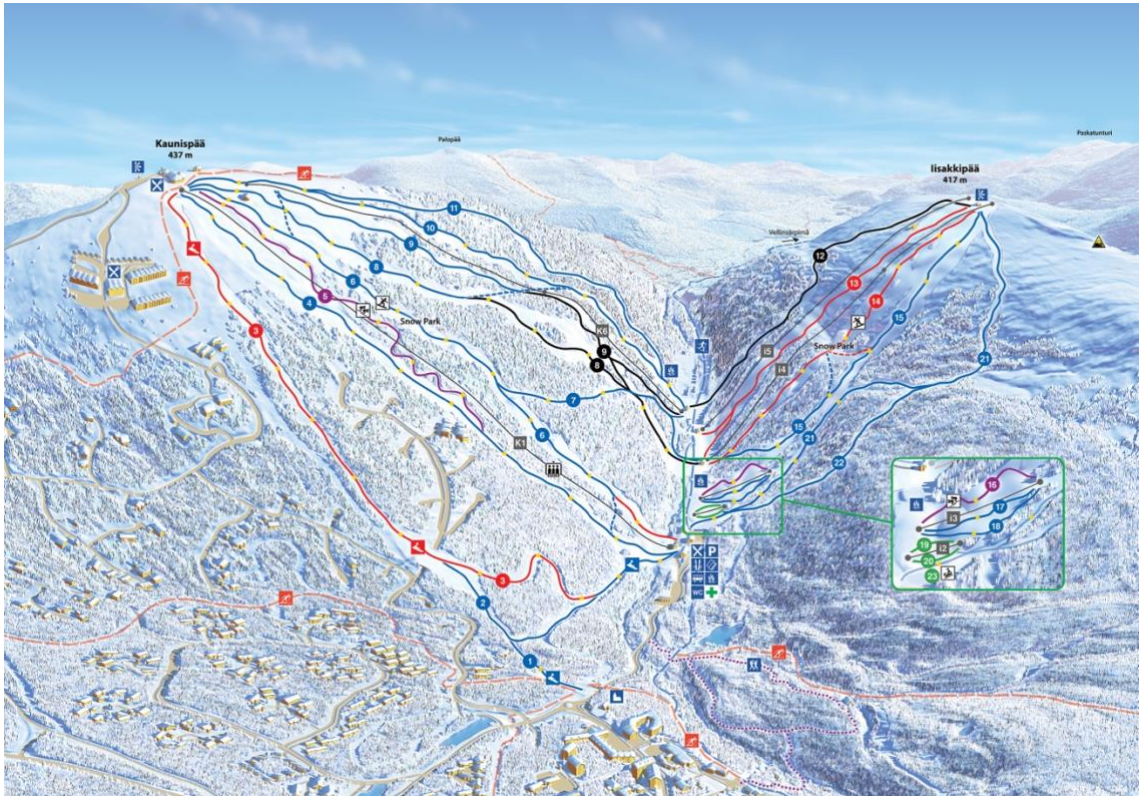


Photo 1. Piste map of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy (Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort, 2023)

At the time of writing this thesis, the company had on average 33 employees, 13 of whom work on a year-round basis. The ski resort had typically not been open during the summer during previous ownership and operations were strongly focused on the winter season, but with existing owners, the ski resort had also been operating during the summer season from June to late September to take care of the infrastructure and to offer year-round employment possibilities.

In the winter, Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's operational activities were focused on snow sports, therefore tasks such as making artificial snow and grooming the slopes were needed. Customers could do tobogganing, alpine skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, fat biking and cross-country skiing at the ski resort's area during the winter season, and all the premises apart from Caravan Park were available for their customers. During the summer the customer volume was significantly smaller, and the operations focused on running Caravan Park, and restaurant Lieggâ Láávu operated as a hybrid café and bike rental.

While there was a lack of accurate data on the ski resort's customer groups, the ski resort's customer segments were estimated to follow those of accommodation providers in the Saariselkä area. It is important to note that the customer segments varied greatly depending on the season. For instance, in July 2022 foreign tourists made 25,9% of the customers and the share of Finnish tourists was 74,1%, whereas in December 2022, foreign tourists made 88,1% of the customer base and only 11,9% were Finnish travelers. (Visitory, 2023)

Saariselkä Ski & Resort has faced challenges in its business environment since the ownership changed in April 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic made operations unpredictable during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 winter seasons due to travel restrictions and changing rules imposed on the hospitality industry. There was enormous uncertainty about which operations were able to be open, under what conditions, and whether it was possible to get enough staff to work due to the service industry staff shortage in Finland. However, the slopes were never closed by the authorities, and the restaurants were able to serve takeaway food, meaning the case company had to adapt their operations quickly to the changing rules. (Heikinmatti, Torikka & Vaara, 2021) While during COVID-19 there was a lot of fear regarding how tourism would bounce back, in February 2022 the operations faced another challenge – Russia's war in Ukraine and soaring energy and fuel prices. While the case company's revenue had grown annually, the operation costs had similarly increased significantly. It is argued that these two big crises have showcased that sustainability, safety and efficiency are not only important as company values but have also increasing economic importance.

1.2 Purpose of the study and research questions

The main purpose of this thesis project was to illustrate how a sustainable travel development plan could be created for the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort. This thesis project studied and developed the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's operations from the perspectives of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural sustainability to create a future-proof business model that created long-term value for the environment, the company, and all its shareholders.

As a concrete result of the thesis process, a preliminary version of a sustainable travel development plan was created as a form of an action plan for required steps for the case company's sustainability development. The findings of this thesis project and especially those in chapters 4 and 5 were directly used for Visit Finland's STF certification and submitted to SHKY as the case company's sustainability handbook. The plan and parts of this thesis project were to be used as a sustainability guide for the case company's management and staff training purpose.

The sustainable travel development plan, when implemented, was expected to make the company more sustainable in economic, environmental, and socio-cultural perspectives. As a result, the operations were expected to become more environmentally friendly, increase staff and customer satisfaction, as well as save the case company money through increased efficiency. It is noted that the plan created through the thesis project is merely the first stage of the development, and these benefits can be recorded only after the implementation of the plan after changes are made to the "business as usual" in place.

The thesis project aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: How can a sustainable travel development plan be developed for the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort?

RQ 2: What is the existing level of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's sustainable development and responsible business, and how can the case company's operations be developed from the perspectives of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability?

1.3 Scope and limitations

The content of this thesis project is largely based on the sustainability work requirements set by STF and SHKY. According to these institutions, a sustainable travel development plan should include: a situational analysis, and a systematic development plan which considers the case company's sustainability from economic, environmental, and socio-cultural perspectives, and specifies actions needed to reach sustainability targets defined by the case company. A

preliminary action plan is created as a part of the sustainable travel development plan. The action plan includes the following aspects of the case company's sustainability work: the measures, objectives, schedule, supervisors, budget, reporting, and metrics and indicators. (Visit Finland, 2019)

The sustainable travel development plan and the action plan focus on the issues that were seen as most critical by key staff member and owners, and the focus is on steps that were seen as doable, most acute and for which the case company has economic means to address. While there are nearly endless possibilities and solutions in the modern world, the thesis is limited by the need to choose alternatives that were seen as most realistic in the starting phase of the case company's sustainability work. It is also noted that the sustainable travel development plan is merely the first stage and framework for the case company's sustainability process, and there will never be a fully finished product, as the plan will need regular updates as time passes.

It is also noted that the thesis project is limited to the views of the case company's existing owners and key staff members, and no wider customer or staff questionnaires were made for this thesis project. This decision was done to simplify the initial steps of the case company's sustainability process. It is however noted that it might be beneficial for the case company to conduct customer and staff surveys regarding sustainability once the sustainability work has been kickstarted, to ensure more voices are heard when making decisions for the future.

1.4 Thesis structure

This part concludes the first chapter of the thesis, which has introduced the research problem, the case company, and the purpose and limitations of the study. The introduction is followed by chapter 2 that builds a knowledge base for the thesis project, presenting sustainability from the perspectives of economic, environmental, socio-cultural sustainability as well as introducing the reader to the aspects of sustainability requirements of the future, and examples of sustainability in ski resorts. The chapter 3 of this thesis project introduces the methodology used in the thesis.

These chapters are followed by chapter 4, where research results are introduced and analysed, leading to chapter 5 of the thesis project that presents a draft for a sustainable travel development action plan. The findings and suggestions of this thesis are concluded in chapter 6.

2 SUSTAINABILITY

The second chapter of the thesis presents a knowledge base for the creation of a sustainable travel plan for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort. The chapter discusses essential perspectives on sustainable tourism development, policies regarding sustainability and sustainable business model innovation.

Sustainable travel development planning for a ski resort requires a strong base of knowledge on sustainability, sustainable business, and sustainable business model innovation. It is important to be informed of learnings from previous research, future requirements set by lawmakers, as well as key industry publications, such as Visit Finland's e-Guide to Sustainable Travel (2019), Motiva's publication for energy efficient ski resorts (2010), and Finnish Ski Area Association's Sustainability Handbook (2020).

2.1 Sustainable tourism development

Sustainable tourism development is defined as "an activity that meets the needs of present society without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Visit Finland, 2019). According to Kajala (2012), the term sustainable tourism entails three perspectives: economic, social, and cultural responsibility by the companies and tourists. In her view (2012), tourism creates value for the local communities, and a requirement of sustainable tourism is that companies produce tourism services without harming the natural resource that attracts tourists to the destination. This does not include only the ecological aspect of resources, but also the socio-cultural resources. (Kajala, 2012) In summary, sustainable tourism considers the existing and future impacts of tourism from economic, environmental, and socio-cultural perspectives in a manner that the needs of tourists, tourism companies, destinations, nature, and local communities are considered and respected (SHKY 2020b; Visit Finland 2019). The main goal of sustainable tourism is to develop areas and destinations in a manner that makes the world a better place to visit and live (SHKY, 2020b).

According to Visit Finland (2019), at the start of sustainability work it is important for the companies to consider their existing level of sustainability and corporate

responsibility. It is stated that the sustainability work goes from bottom up of graph 2 presenting the five levels of corporate responsibility. In the initial level of CR, passive responsibility, the company does the bare minimum and nothing more than what is required by law. In the next level, reactive responsibility, the company is aiming for increased sustainability as a response to external pressures. It is likely that sustainability is not a central aspect of the company's strategies, but sustainability path is chosen to maintain their market position and meet the requirements of the company's different stakeholders. In the top three levels of CR, proactive corporate responsibility, the company approaches sustainability proactively, systematically, and in an innovative and creative manner. The top three levels of CR require strong willingness from company's management. As a result, proactive companies can create business models where sustainability and CR are the core of the company's strategies, and sustainability is integrated to all levels of business operations. (Visit Finland, 2019)



Graph 1. The five levels of corporate sustainability (Visit Finland, 2019)

2.1.1 Economic sustainability

The main idea of economic sustainability in tourism is that sustainable operations create a basis for long-term economic activities. This entails that an economically sustainable travel company brings benefits to all its stakeholders, both company owners and partners, creates stable employment possibilities in the area and gives fair pay for locals to earn a living. (Visit Finland, 2019) Sustainable tourism also contributes to poverty alleviation (UNWTO, 2023), this could be done for instance by using local services and products and therefore developing the area financially for instance through paying taxes. As argued by SHKY (2020b), tourism is sustainable when most of the income and value created by tourism operations stay in the local area, where the services are produced.

2.1.2 Environmental sustainability

Environmentally sustainable tourism uses environmental resources in an optimized manner and minimizes the environmental impacts of travel – by only taking what is needed, by preserving ecological processes and by conserving the natural biodiversity. (UNWTO 2023; Visit Finland 2019) Some examples of environmental impacts caused by ski resort operations include the use of energy and water, fossil fuels, erosion, emissions in land, water and air, light pollution from slope illumination, and waste (SHKY, 2020b). It is argued, that in nature areas, sustainable tourism is just a prerequisite for national park management, but rather an important long-term tool for nature conservation (Kajala, 2012).

2.1.3 Socio-cultural sustainability

Sustainable tourism development is not only a tool for nature conservation or creating sustainable economic stability, but sustainable tourism should also be sustainable from a socio-cultural perspective. This requires that the aim of sustainable tourism is to preserve all cultural heritages and create possibilities to develop it from one generation to another, as well as create equal rights and stable living possibilities for everyone visiting and living in the area. Socio-culturally sustainable tourism also supports local production and follows fair employment practices. (SHKY 2020b; UNWTO 2023) According to SHKY

(2020b), socio-cultural responsibility is visible in sustainable tourism through the following perspectives: traditions and local culture, fair partnerships, ethical business and accessibility, and social responsibility (open communication and welfare in the area).

Another term commonly used in connection to a company's socio-cultural sustainability is corporate social responsibility, which notes that companies are responsible for their impact on societies. According to European Commission (2023) the EU citizens expect companies to understand and prevent, manage, and mitigate negative impacts that their operations have on the society and environment. Through integration of social, environmental, ethical, consumer and human rights into their business operations and by following laws, a company can become more socially responsible. As a result, the operations are not only better from the socio-cultural perspective but can also be seen to be more innovative and lead to a more sustainable economy. (European Commission, 2023)

2.2 Policies regarding sustainability

When assessing sustainable travel development, it is important to note that in the modern world sustainability no longer is voluntary, but a necessary and mandatory value in business. There are political sustainability targets and requirements that apply also to the case company.

In Finland, the government has created a roadmap for circular economy for 2016-2025 (Sitra, 2016), which aims at making Finland a global leader in the circular economy by 2025. Circular economy's main target is to maximize circulation of different products, materials, and components so that they can be used for an extended period, thus minimizing waste. Finland's goal is that circular economy would create approximately three billion euros more value to the national economy by improving the competitiveness of Finland and its businesses and organizations, increasing resource efficiency and ecological sustainability. The circular economy is expected to also help Finland move towards a carbon neutral and waste-free society, reducing emissions and increasing wellbeing and people's awareness. (Sitra, 2016) Finnish government has also made ambitious

goals for cutting greenhouse gas emissions. The goal is to cut 60% off the emissions by 2030 and 80% by 2050 when compared to the levels in 1990. It is also noted that Finland should be carbon-neutral by 2035. (Ministry of the Environment, 2023)

Internationally, the Kyoto Protocol, United Nations Convention on Climate Change is the cornerstone of sustainable policies. The UN Convention on Climate Change is ratified by 198 countries internationally, and the main goal is to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system. (UNFCCC, 2023) The protocol also notes that the level is ought to be reached in a timeframe that does not jeopardize food production, or sustainable economic development.

The United Nations has also published a plan for sustainability action called Agenda 2030, which shall be followed by all countries and stakeholders in order to “shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path”. (UN, 2023b) The agenda includes 17 goals for sustainable development, presented in graph 3, and 169 targets.



Graph 2. United Nations sustainable development goals (UN, 2023a)

The European Union has sustainability targets which are binding and apply to Finland and the case company. European Union has the goal of becoming the world's first carbon neutral continent by 2050, and the requirement for union is to cut minimum 55% of the greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to the year 1990 levels. (Ministry of the Environment, 2023) It is noted that the policies in place are likely to change slightly after the thesis project is finished, as the EU is planning to add a target also for 2040, and the Finnish government's climate law can be updated by the new government elected in 2023. (Ministry of the Environment, 2023)

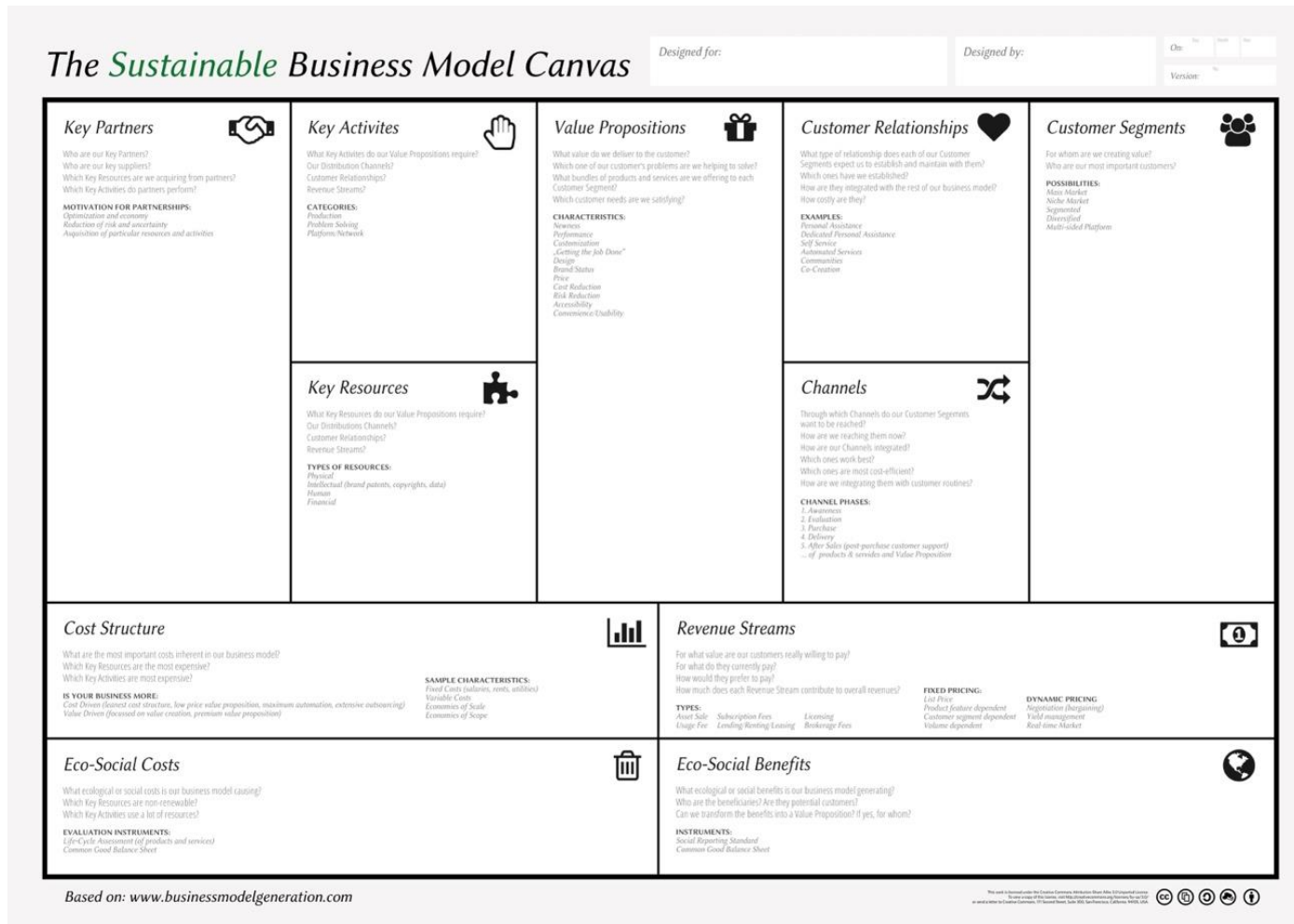
2.3 Sustainable business model innovation

Business model innovation is defined as a company's effort for making modifications, improvements, and replacements in different organizational elements of the company's existing business model (Ferlito & Faraci, 2021). The

core idea of sustainable business model innovation is that a company develops value propositions which create value for all stakeholders simultaneously, and in the special aspect of sustainability the company aims to increase positive impacts or reduce negative impacts of the operations for the environment and society (Baldassarre et al. 2017; Ferlito & Faraci 2021). This includes the company's customers, shareholders, suppliers, partners, society, and the environment in which the company operates. (Baldassarre et al. 2017) The aim of sustainable business model innovation is to integrate sustainability goals into the company's business models, which arguably increases the company's readiness for long-term sustainable development. It is argued that sustainable business model development has implications for all the company's activities, processes, and resources, meaning that it has the potential for more meaningful value propositions rather than only focusing on operational efficiency. (Baldassarre et al. 2017)

2.3.1 Sustainable innovation canvas

This thesis uses the Sustainable Business Model Canvas by Strategyzer (CASE, 2018) to present and summarize the case company's business model. The key to business model innovation with the business model canvas is describing and assessing the company's customer segments, value propositions, channels, customer relationships, revenue streams, key resources, key activities, key partnerships, cost structure and profit. The presentation in the business model canvas enables to view the details of how the company is creating value for the customers. (Strategyzer 2023a; Strategyzer 2023b) The sustainable business model canvas offers a holistic approach for assessing both economical, ecological, and socio-cultural consequences of the company's operations. As the aim for business model innovation with the sustainable business model canvas, company should aim at minimizing the negative consequences to environment and society and enhance the positive impacts. (CASE, 2018)



Graph 3. The Sustainable Business Model Canvas (CASE, 2018)

3 METHODOLOGY

The third chapter of the thesis focuses on the methodology selected for the thesis project. The chapter describes the way qualitative research is conducted, specifically how data is collected, validated, and analysed.

3.1 Research methods

This thesis project applied qualitative case study design in its methodology. Bell et al. (2019) note that a case study is research that is focused on forming a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. This is a commonly used method for studying organizations at a specific geographical location such as a workplace. Using the case study method enables researcher to form an extensive, in-depth understanding of the specific research subject. (Bell et al. 2019) As the thesis project has a commissioner, the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy, the qualitative case study method was selected to reach the research goals.

As in many other case studies, qualitative research methods are applied to collect useful empirical data for the case company's sustainable development purposes. Qualitative empirical research was conducted through theme-centered, structured interviews with the case company's owners and four key employees of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort. The goal of the theme-centered interviews was to form a deep overview of the case company from one specific theme: Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's level of sustainability, and the possibilities for sustainable development at different departments of the case company.

3.2 Data collection and validation

Data from case company's owners was collected through a joint interview with three owners together via Microsoft Teams. The interview was structured and focused on the company's strategy and bigger guidelines of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's sustainability work, for instance the principles of the sustainability work, willingness to develop the case company to become more sustainable,

sustainability targets, visions for future, and budgeting for the sustainability development work.

Interviews with four key employees were mainly done with Microsoft Teams, while one participant preferred to answer the questions through e-mail. At the time of research, there was no specified ski school manager in the ski resort due to the finished contract, so considering the researcher's background and experience in the case company's operations, she has added her insight into the ski school's operations in the thesis project. The question themes followed the structure of SBMC. Interview questions were structured beforehand, and the content was chosen to gain descriptions of each department's key partners, activities, resources, value propositions, customer relationships, customer segments, channels, cost structures, revenue streams, as well as eco-social costs and benefits (Strategyzer, 2023b). The interview questions are available in appendices 3 and 4 at the end of this thesis project.

To support the thesis research and enable accurate goal setting for the action plan, an e-mail questionnaire was sent to the company's administrative team to collect data on the case company's energy, water, oil, chemical and gasoline usage, as well as to determine key figures such as number of customers, employees, and the size of the case company's operating area. The e-mail questionnaire questions are presented in English and Finnish in appendix 1 and 2.

As the researcher is an owner and works at the case company, it is noted that the researcher has unrestricted access to much of the case company's internal information and business meetings, which an outsider researcher would normally not have. This deep personal knowledge of the case company has been used in forming background information for the thesis and plays a significant role in the sustainable development process.

The identity of participants is protected, and none of the participants' names are mentioned in the thesis, thus participants are referred to as "interviewee" or "owner" instead of the person's name. The online interviews were recorded in Teams, and the researcher saved the recordings in a password-protected cloud folder, to prevent any unauthorized access or usage of the data for any other

purposes. The research participants were informed of the interview questions beforehand, and the information sheet also included a short description of the research purposes and research questions of this thesis project.

It was stressed that participation in the qualitative interviews was voluntary, and there were no negative implications for any person deciding to or not to take part in the research. All answers were considered confidential, and the contents of the discussions were not shared to other uses than the thesis project. Thus, it is argued that the participants took the time for the interview because they were truly interested in helping develop the company's sustainability. The participants were either case company's owners or long-term employees, each of whom were experts of the case company's different departments: sales, restaurant, rental, and maintenance, and would thus have the most reliable insight for the project.

<i>Interviewees</i>	<i>Time and date</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Mode</i>
Interviewee 1 (Restaurant)	18.10.2023 09:08 UTC	1.06.07	Microsoft Teams
Interviewee 2 (Maintenance)	19.10.2023 07:22 UTC	50.59	Microsoft Teams
Interviewee 3 (Sales)	20.10.2023 09:13 UTC	53.43	Microsoft Teams
Interviewee 4 (Rental)	Questions sent 18.10.2023, replied 22.10.2023 11:53 UTC	Not applicable	E-mail
Owners (CEO, COO, Head of Finances)	22.10.2023 15:06 UTC	3.28.32	Microsoft Teams

Table 1. Interviews with Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy

3.3 Thematic analysis of data

As the objective of the thesis was to produce a sustainable development plan, the empirical data was analysed thematically to compare the case company's existing situation to the knowledge of the researcher and previous publications. The analysis follows the themes of structured interviews, which are drawn from the SBMC, SHKY's guide as well as the STF e-book. The data from the interviews were added to the SBMC to create a holistic idea of the case company's existing operations and the level of sustainability. As the themes in SBMC overlapped but were in a slightly different structure compared to the requirements from SHKY and STF, the data from interviews is discussed in a simpler structure following the three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, economic, and socio-cultural. An overview of the case company's existing business model is illustrated in the BMC (Graph 7). This thesis analysed the case company's existing situation and possible development opportunities from the perspectives of environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, and socio-cultural sustainability.

In the thematic analysis, the researcher combined her own knowledge of the case company's sustainability under each theme in chapter 4 with the data gained through empirical research and interviews with the owners and key staff members. Considering limited resources for a large project, only the aspects that the researcher found most relevant for the research purposes were included in the analysis and development project. Based on the thematic analysis, further development steps and a proposal for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's action plan are presented in chapter 5.

4 SUSTAINABILITY AT SAARISELKÄ SKI & SPORT RESORT

This chapter of the thesis project begins with a description of the case company's existing willingness and attitude towards sustainability work. This discussion is followed by an analysis of the case company's existing sustainability levels and its development opportunities.

Climate-friendliness and sustainable development were noted as important values for the company owners in the interview, and the case company had already applied various sustainable options in its operations. The owners argued that the lack of eco-certification by date had more to do with a lack of clear guidelines and resources to finish the certification process than with unsustainable business practices. The case company's sustainability work could be labelled to be between the reactive and proactive levels of the five levels of CR, as the beginning of sustainability work and certification was largely motivated by external pressures (Visit Finland, 2019). However, it is noted that the management had considered sustainability as one of the case company's core values and had already applied sustainable practices before they were required.

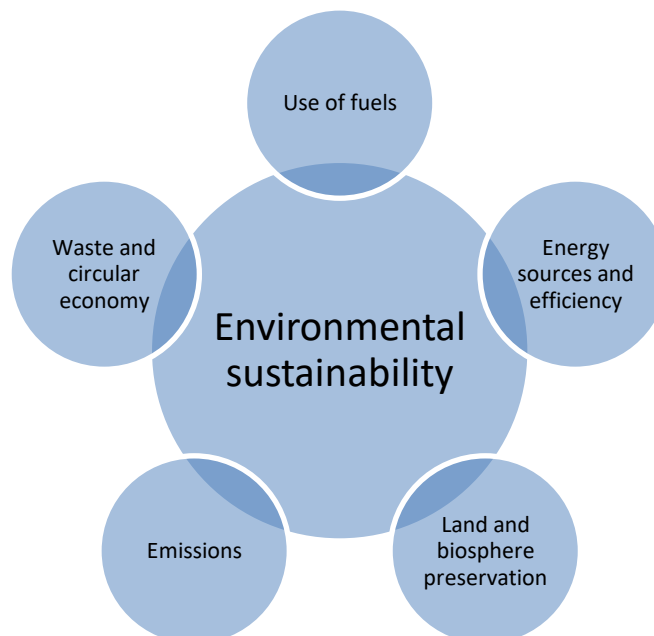


Graph 4. Sustainability goals timeline for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

During the thesis process, the case company set a target for reaching Green Key's Green Activities certificate as well as the STF certificate by the end of winter season 2023-2024. As for bigger sustainability targets, the company's strategy was more ambitious than the example set by the Finnish government or the EU and is aiming to reach carbon-neutral operations in 2030.

4.1 Environmental sustainability at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

To reach environmental sustainability, the case company would need to optimize its use of natural resources by causing least possible harm and by trying to maximize the benefits for the nature. (UNWTO 2023; Visit Finland 2019) According to Kuščer & Dwyer (2019), the special aspect of environmental sustainability in ski resorts requires that the company actively preserves biodiversity by prioritizing long-term ecological knowledge rather than short-term revenue, recycle its waste and water, increase energy efficiency, and use renewable energy. It is also argued that a sustainable ski resort uses environmental monitoring and audits. (Kuščer & Dwyer, 2019)



Graph 5. Factors in environmental sustainability of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

4.1.1 Emissions

Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's operations require various vehicles and machinery, including company's hybrid cars, two snow groomers, two snowmobiles, snow guns, lifts, a 4-wheeler, and electric fat bikes. These vehicles ran on various fuels and electricity, creating emissions in land and air. In the interviews, it was noted that oil and fuel could possibly leak into the nature from the machinery that is operating in the slopes, but that the risk was mitigated by regular maintenance of the machinery to minimize breakages.

At the time of the thesis project, the ski resort used biodiesel in its snow groomers. According to Neste (2023), the Neste MY Renewable Diesel is a hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) made from renewable materials and food industry's waste such as cooking oils and animal fats. The use of HVO was estimated to reduce up to 95% off the greenhouse gas emissions compared to other fossil fuels. However, not all vehicles were able to use this renewable fuel, so the case company should try to find more sustainable solutions for the other machinery. It is noted, however, that the case company had already made steps to minimize the use of vehicles running on fossil fuels through changes in the daily operations. While in the past all lift operators had used snowmobiles to move in the ski resort area, at the time of the thesis project the existing lift infrastructure was used more efficiently as those working at the chairlift used the lift to move to their workstations, and those working at nearby lifts either walked or used a fat bike. Only ski patrollers and the slope maintenance team had access to the snowmobiles, and they were used only when needed, for instance in first aid cases and emergency situations.

It was noted by interview participants that the case company's operations caused also indirect emissions in various ways. There were not only emissions from producing and transporting needed resources but as most tourists and staff arrived at the ski resort from other cities and countries, their travels to this remote location caused pollution. Public transportation was quite limited in the Saariselkä area, so many staff members commuted daily from their homes in their own cars. At the time of the interviews, there was no organized carpooling as many of the commuting staff members had varying working hours. However, it was noted by

a participant that some of the jobs allowed remote working, which had been a good way to save money and decrease emissions caused by travelling to work. The case company organized shared staff accommodation possibilities in Saariselkä, within walking distance from the workplace. Another source of emissions was work and education-related travel done by the case company's staff, and the case company had not given guidelines on whether the staff should choose sustainable forms of transportation or accommodation, or what the role of sustainable options was when making purchasing choices. The choices had been made based on the options with the most convenience. There was work that could be done by the case company to set a clear plan and guidelines for sustainability from these perspectives.

4.1.2 Impact on the biosphere

Land erosion was seen as another form of environmental damage caused by the case company's operations, and according to the interviewees, this had so far been mitigated mainly by making clear walking paths around the buildings in the summer and assigning the routes used by maintenance and slope workers to minimize damage to the vegetation. It was noted by the interviewees, that land erosion was not a significant problem during the winter season, when snow covers the land. The ski resort had not only done tasks to minimize land erosion but had in addition done landscaping on the areas that had previously been damaged by ski resort operations. It was one of the ski resort's goals to restore natural vegetation in the areas that had eroded to gravel, while simultaneously keeping the slopes free from trees to ensure customer safety.

One interviewee also noted that the ski resort used firewood for heating the restaurant and two cabins on the slopes. This did not only count as use of a natural resource, wood, but also caused emissions when the wood was burned. The researcher suggests, that while maintaining these functions, the case company could replace traditional wooden logs with for instance wood briquettes that are produced from wood waste or byproducts, sawdust and pressed with machinery into burnable briquettes. According to Schuster-Holz (2023), due to the homogeneity of the product, the briquettes could be a carbon-neutral option

which also causes less residual ash. It is argued that the briquettes are not only more sustainable but also produce up to 50% more heat than traditional logs.

4.1.3 Waste

Waste was one important issue brought up in the interviews, and the ski resort's operations caused various types of waste from oils to food and plastics. The interviewees noted that all oils, chemical waste, and batteries were recycled, as well as metal waste. Plastic, glass and aluminium bottles and cans belonging to the deposit refund system were recycled and sorted separately from other waste of the same materials. The ski resort sorted also biodegradable waste, cardboard, and paper, while the rest went into unsorted, burnable waste. An interviewee noted that recycling plastic waste had been problematic, as there had not been plastic recycling services available in the case company's remote area. Waste was collected at the ski resort's main buildings both inside and outside the following premises: the maintenance hall, Service Center, and restaurant Lieggâ Láávu. At the time of the interviews, there were limited possibilities for customers to sort their own trash at lift stations, which could be developed further to decrease the amount of unsorted trash, enhance the circular economy, and help reduce trash in nature. In the interview with the case company's owners, it was noted that the staff had been quite innovative with the use of resources, for instance, painting and reusing a water boiler as a freestyle park obstacle, and cable reels had gotten a new life as outside café tables. It was suggested that methods for internal recycling could be developed further.

It was noted by an interviewee, that the case company's office and administrative work was largely done digitally, and only the very essential materials such as opening hours or advertisement boards were printed. Otherwise, the offices are paper-free, and documents are shared in Microsoft Teams environment. The ski resort had attempted to digitalize slope maps and place larger slope map billboards on the bottom and top stations of the ski lifts, and paper maps were no longer given to the customer. According to the researcher's knowledge, there had been no negative feedback from customers, and the decision had decreased the amount of unnecessary paper waste at the ski resort significantly.

4.1.4 Purchases and the use of tools

Another aspect of environmental sustainability noted by the interviewees was the usage of resources and tools. As suggested by SHKY (2020b), a ski resort should consider the impact of its operations on the durability of used infrastructure. According to the interviewees, regular maintenance and care of tools and infrastructure were not only cost-efficient and environmentally friendly, as purchases lasted a longer time, but could also lead to higher customer satisfaction if the lifts were running smoothly without stops. Based on the data from interviews, a systematic plan for the maintenance of infrastructure and tools was the key to achieving more sustainable use of these physical resources.

One participant suggested, that at times sustainability was not taken into consideration when making key resource choices, as foreign staff members were not always informed of the differences between choices, and thus ended up making less sustainable choices perhaps more due to ignorance rather than on purpose. The participant called for more clear staff training in tasks relating to sustainability and purchases, to ensure systematic sustainability work and standards.

In the interview, the case company's owners discussed the case company's purchases from a sustainability perspective, and they noted that they had made efforts to prioritize sustainable and local products, but for instance, it had not been possible to apply this for all purchases. According to the knowledge of interviewees, there were no alpine ski and snowboard suppliers in Finland who could answer to the large demand of the case company, thus the case company partnered with Amer Sports and Nitro Snowboards, companies that they knew produced their products in Europe in a sustainable and ethical manner.

4.1.5 Energy

According to a report by Motiva (2010), the use of electricity is the biggest cause of energy consumption in ski resorts. The report estimated that approximately 65% of all energy goes to slope operations and 35% to other uses, for instance, service buildings. Out of the energy used in slope operations, snow-making accounts for as much as 50%, while lift operations take 40% and illumination

10%. The ski resort did not use certified renewable energy due to increases in the costs in 2022, although this was seen as a favourable option for the future by the case company owners.

Although snowmaking was a major cause of energy use, eliminating snowmaking was not seen as a viable solution. Due to climate change winters are expected to become shorter, and by the end of the century the number of snowy days is expected to decrease by 20-30% and the snow mass by 40-70%. (Ilmasto-opas, 2023) It is argued that the ski resort should focus on adapting to climate change and developing snowless activities, as well as finding more efficient and sustainable ways to do snowmaking. One of the options listed by Motiva (2010) was to make snow in optimal conditions when temperature goes below -6°C . Replacing old snow guns and automating the snowmaking systems could also help increase energy efficiency and cut costs. This far, the case company had already collected natural snow with snow fences to reduce the need for man-made snow and made snow only in temperatures below -5°C .

Since the case company had 15 illuminated slopes and several buildings, for instance, the aspect of light pollution needs to be considered (SHKY, 2020b). According to the interviewees, the use of energy and light pollution were minimized by switching off lights when they were not needed, and since the ski resort was closed in the evenings, light pollution was mostly not an issue to other travellers and the local population. The case company was not using LED lights on the slopes, and according to Motiva (2010) the energy use could be saved by for instance automating the control over slope lights or using LED illumination. The saving from an automated system is estimated to be approximately 5-20% per year, while the impact of using LED lights is even higher, approximately 50% per year. (Motiva, 2010)

It is argued by Motiva (2010), that many of the actions needed to reach energy efficiency do not cost anything to the company but are rather related to rethinking and changing the way things are done, for instance adjusting the operating hours can create savings without any investments.

4.2 Socio-cultural sustainability at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

This subchapter discusses Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's operations from the socio-cultural perspectives. Socio-cultural sustainability can be described as operations that protect cultural heritages, treat others equally and ethically, and create possibilities for the local population and tourists to live and visit the area safely for generations to come. It is argued that sustainable tourism companies should support local production and ensure good working conditions. (Kuščer & Dwyer 2019; SHKY 2020b; UNTWO 2023)



Graph 6. Factors in socio-cultural sustainability at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

4.2.1 Ethical and equal treatment

The case company's owners noted that equal treatment of staff was an important part of doing business, and that Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort wanted to be a leader as a sustainable employer as well. The staff were offered fair pay, and there was a bonus system in place to share profits with the company's staff. One of the owners noted, that since burn outs and work exhaustion were generally increasing problems in the modern working life, the case company wanted to take extremely good care of its employees and thus offered the most extensive private health care available for staff, including also dental and mental health services.

Staff were actively informed of these possibilities, and the working culture emphasized self-care and caring for others and asking for help when needed.

When asked about ethical and equal treatment of staff and customers, all interviewees agreed on the case company not treating anyone differently for instance based on their background, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. The interviewees also agreed that the case company was open to multicultural staff, and training materials were available in languages understood by staff members, more specifically both in Finnish and English. If there had been problems, every situation had been handled objectively. Another interviewee included the customer perspective, that while the restaurant offered for instance vegetarian and vegan meals as sustainable options catering to some dietary requirements, the product development had not specifically considered special requirements of different religious groups, such as Muslims or Jews.

4.2.2 Accessibility

When asked about the accessibility of the ski resort, it became clear that this aspect had not been largely taken into consideration in the ski resort when planning products and services, or the infrastructure that is in place. The ski resort did not have accessible toilets due to old infrastructure, nor for instance adaptive skiing equipment. While the ski resort had in the past offered a course for adaptive skiing for the instructors and organized two adaptive skiing events, there was room for improving the accessibility at the case company. According to an interviewee, the accessibility of website and digital channels had not been considered when designing content, and this could have lots of room for improvement.

4.2.3 Local culture and community

Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort was a family company owned and run by a local skier family with indigenous Inari Sámi background. The company's owners highly valued local traditions and culture. Creating value and possibilities for the local community was the essential reason why they started running the case company. The owners wanted to follow the principles of sustainable Sámi tourism (Sámediggi, 2018), to protect and preserve local culture also for generations to

come. The ski resort's owners noted that they did not wish to take advantage of Sámi roots but rather present parts of their cultural heritage in a respectful way. For instance, the ski resort's restaurant is called Lieggâ Láávu, which is Inari Sámi for a 'warm shelter'. Local art and culture were visible on the premises, and the ski resort had an ongoing project to develop its architecture to follow local traditions. Presenting Sámi culture was an important part of the staff orientation, to increase understanding and respect for the local nature and indigenous culture. The pre-season staff training days included visits to a reindeer farm, the Sámi museum Siida and the Sámi Parliament in Inari. The case company also supported Sámi culture and art by sponsoring the indigenous film festival Skábmagovat, which was one of the biggest events in the area.

Additionally, the case company had launched special offers, events, and activities for the local community. The owners noted that alpine skiing and snowboarding were expensive hobbies, and while many local children had also other hobbies such as volleyball or ice hockey in the winter, most families did not have the economic possibilities to pay for everything at once. The owners wanted to avoid a situation in which locals could not enjoy the local skiing possibilities. They noted that the costs of living in the Arctic are high, and especially since Russia's war on Ukraine and the energy crisis since 2022, the ski resort had tried to find ways to make skiing more accessible for the local population.

The ski resort offered a special lift season pass for locals, which included the added benefit of being able to use rental equipment free of charge. This created significant savings for local skiers and snowboarders who did not need to purchase their own equipment or replace growing children's equipment annually. The ski resort also participated with the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare by donating free-of-charge season passes, organized one to three free-of-charge ski days per season for locals, offered affordable all-inclusive ski days for local school groups, and organized free-of-charge Lumi Mafia -ski club for local children.

4.2.4 Communication

Communicating the company's sustainability practices is an essential part of sustainable business (Kuščer & Dwyer 2019; SHKY 2020b; Visit Finland 2019). It was noted by one interview participant, that while the ski resort's owners communicated the willingness to be sustainable and apply sustainability practices in the everyday operations, these values were not always present when making single everyday decisions and choices. It was noted by the participant, that the sustainability work could be more systematic, and guidelines could be communicated more clearly so the staff and department managers would know exactly how to act in their daily work. According to the owners, it was important for the case company that staff was involved and engaged in the sustainability work and even involved in planning the company's strategies. This was motivated by increased staff satisfaction and commitment to sustainable business practices.

Sustainable communication entails that accessibility is considered in communications, and the content presents different cultures, genders, age groups, LGBTQ+ minorities, and does not include exclusive language and expressions. The company should also clearly include information regarding for instance sustainability measures, local traditions and cultures in its marketing and communications. (SHKY 2020b; Visit Finland 2019) According to the interviewees, the company did communicate about the sustainability practices and local culture and national parks, but perhaps not to large enough extent. The ski resort owners were strict on not wanting to use language that could lead to greenwashing, as the ski resort still required various resources and caused emissions around the world directly and indirectly. The case company did not have sustainable communication plans or guidelines in place, so these were seen as some of the main development tasks for the case company.

4.3 Economic sustainability at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

Economically sustainable business entails that sustainable operations create possibilities for long-term economic activities, and when most of the income created by tourism stay in the local area where products and services are produced, therefore offering stable employment possibilities and regional

development. (SHKY 2020b, Visit Finland 2019, UNWTO 2023) All interviewed staff members agreed that the case company paid fair, living wages and ensured good working conditions in accordance with the collective work agreements in place in the hospitality sector, and they had never heard of cases where staff would have been treated unfairly due to their background.

4.3.1 Role in the local economy

Kuščer & Dwyer (2019) argue that to be economically sustainable, ski resorts need to actively employ locals, have local business connections, and activate local demand. They also argue that adapting to climate change is essential by operating in all four seasons, which is a tool for minimizing the seasonality of employment and income generation in the region. The case company was open in the summer season for the first time in 2019, and since then Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort had actively developed its year-round operations. As noted in the introduction chapter, the ski resort's operations were significantly larger in the winter when tourism focused on alpine skiing services, while in the summertime the operations focused on bike rentals, restaurant, and Caravan Park services. The development of summer activities had helped the case company to keep staff working in the summer months, and the ski resort was closed only from May to early June and from late September to November. According to the interview with owners, developing year-round services was an important part of the company's socio-cultural sustainability and they wanted to create more full-time jobs in the region.

According to the interviews, it could be seen that the case company collaborated with local companies with purchases and projects as much as the products and services were available. The case company used and always favoured local suppliers, the restaurant supplies were bought as locally as possible, and the ski resort worked with partners such as hotels and construction companies that employed local staff. Choosing local partners was important and according to the interviews, the ski resort wanted to contribute to the local economy and creation of jobs and services in the Inari-Saariselkä region. However, it was noted by interviewees that the case company did not have a clear guideline for purchasing

and partnerships, and eco-certifications were not a determining factor when choosing partners.

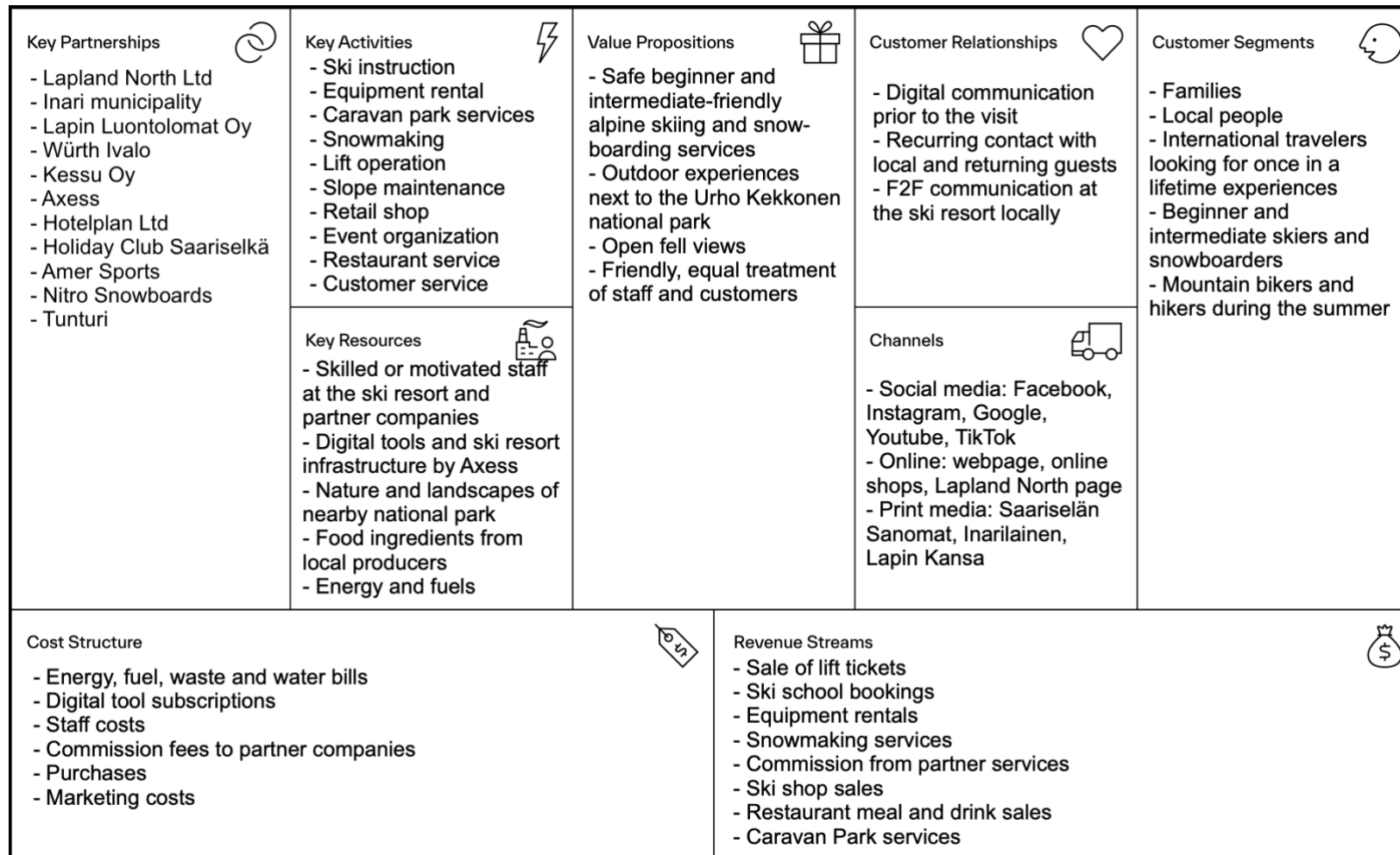
4.3.2 Partnerships

Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy was seen as a fair partner by the interviewees when it came to paying bills on time and respecting other companies. Partners were offered 15-20% commission on B2B sales to make the collaboration mutually beneficial, and all interviewees agreed that staff also directed customers to other local companies. It was noted by one participant, that as there were no other ski resort entrepreneurs in Saariselkä, it was easy for the ski resort to be seen as a partner instead of a competitor, and this made the ski resort a favourable business partner. As noted earlier in the introduction, despite its name the ski resort did not have its own accommodation and could arguably therefore maintain good collaborative relationships with all accommodation providers in the area.

The case company also collaborated with the tourism organization Lapland North with promoting tourism in the area. Sustainable tourism could be seen as a favourable source of income for the region compared to for instance mining projects, which were strongly opposed by the indigenous Sámi groups (Sámediggi, 2021). By developing and supporting sustainable tourism and local partners, the case company's owners felt they were supporting the local economy and helping protect the biodiversity and local cultures in the area.

4.4 Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy existing business model canvas

The case company's existing business model was summarized into a business model canvas tool on the following page, based on the data from theme-centered interviews and the researcher's own knowledge. Strategyzer (2023a) defines a business model canvas as a strategic tool for illustrating and describing a company's business model. It includes the company's key partners, key activities, key resources, value propositions, customer relationships, customer segments, as well as its cost structure and revenue streams.



Graph 7. Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy Business Model in 2023 based on BMC by Strategyzer (2023a)

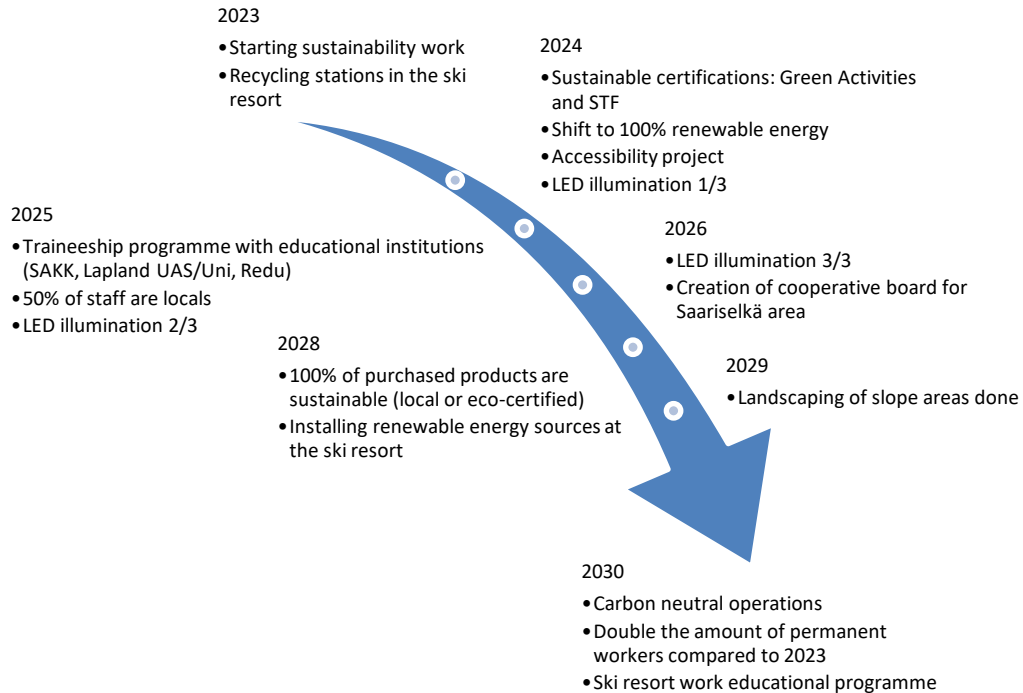
5 ACTIONS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE SKI RESORT OPERATIONS

This chapter of the thesis presents the author's concrete development ideas for the case company's shift towards more sustainable ski resort operations. The sustainable tourism development action plan is presented in a table format, followed by a sustainable communication plan and a plan for monitoring and measuring of results. The chapter finally presents a SBMC the case company should try to reach in its operations.

5.1 Sustainable action plan

To support the case company's sustainable tourism development, an action plan was constructed with the information drawn from literature in chapter 2 and the results of empirical data. The action plan consists of thematically constructed tables focusing on the perspectives of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability, listing focus points that needed to be worked on, work tasks that needed to be done, the targets, budget, and measures, as well as the people in charge of each task and deadlines for the tasks. The action plan was revised with the case company's owners to ensure its validity and feasibility. With the help of this thesis project, the case company's management would be ready to begin systematic sustainability work and make investments in sustainable and more efficient operations. According to SHKY (2020b), it was most beneficial to begin with three to five problems from each sustainability perspective, as not everything can be done simultaneously. It is noted that the action plan in this thesis project is not a final version nor valid indefinitely, as it should be assessed and updated regularly.

The following graph 8 was created to summarize the case company's strategic steps towards increased sustainability at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy.



Graph 8. Strategic steps for sustainability at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

5.1.1 Environmentally sustainable tourism development

Interviews with the case company's staff and owners, and data from related literature, showed that the main problems of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's environmental sustainability were related to the following themes: emissions, energy, waste, and land preservation. The analysis of interviews showed that while some things were already considered, the ski resort could do more for instance in terms of energy efficiency and securing climate-friendly energy sources, using fuels more sustainably, and increasing the amount of local and sustainable products when making purchases of key resources and services. Most of the waste had been sorted, but the lifespan of materials could be improved internally, and recycling could be improved in customer spaces. To solve these problems, development ideas were listed in the following table 1.

Focus point	Work task	Target	Budget	Measuring	Person in charge	Schedule
<i>Emissions</i>	Driving plan for snow groomers	10 % decrease in fuel usage	+ 4000 € saving	Usage hours of the snow groomer / slope area and ski days	Maintenance manager & Snow groomers	By the end of 2023
	Carpooling and transportation plan for staff	30 % of staff transportation is by Ski Bus or carpooling	Three full days of office team's salary	Monthly work trips per staff member driven in own car, based on questionnaire	HR	2024
	Increase sales of climate-friendly meals at restaurant	10% increase in the sale of vegan/vegetarian meals	Normal staff costs	Product sale % of total meal sales	Restaurant manager and head chef	2023-2024
	Increase the share of organic ingredients at restaurant	20% increase in the share of the use of organic products	Additional costs compensated in meal prices, no additional cost to the company	Organic items per year / all items per year	Head chef	2023-2024
<i>Energy</i>	Change to 100% ecological energy	Zero-emission energy consumption at the ski centre	7000 € / year	Checked each time a new electricity contract is made	CEO	Beginning of 2024
	Lights with motion detectors in customer & staff premises	20% saving in energy usage	40 € / lamp	Estimated based on kWh/opening hours	Maintenance manager	2024
	LED light investment	50% saving in energy usage	5000 € / slope (10 illuminated slopes)	Estimated based on kWh/opening hours	Maintenance manager	2024 - 2026

<i>Waste</i>	Snow fence construction and maintenance	5% saving in snowmaking costs	2000 €	Snowmaking costs per year	Maintenance manager	2024
	Building renewable energy sources at the ski resort	Production of solar and wind energy	Unsure	Measured by kWh per year	CEO & Maintenance manager	2028
	Reduce food waste with planning & use of food recycling app	30% decrease of bio-waste	Normal salary costs	Measured kg per year	Restaurant manager & Head chef	2023-2024
	Add recycling stations at lift bottom stations	30% decrease in unsorted waste	2200€	Measured kg per year	Maintenance manager	2023-2024
<i>Land preservation</i>	Internal recycling project	Extended use of resources internally between departments	Normal staffing costs	Re-use projects per season	Operations manager	2023-2024
	Replace traditional wood logs with wood briquettes	Carbon-neutral fireplaces in huts and restaurant	Approximately 20% increase in cost compared to normal firewood	Kg per year	Maintenance manager	2024
	Restore forests near ski slopes and in the valley	Plant 1500 trees annually	330 € + staff costs (pine trees á 0,22 €)	Number of planted trees per year	Slope manager	2024
	Pre-cut trees cut into logs	Use all cut tree resources in the resort	700 € + normal staffing costs	Wood logs in cubic metres	Operations manager	2024

Table 2. Action plan for environmental sustainability at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

5.1.2 Economically sustainable tourism development

To call business operations economically sustainable, the company needs to enable long-term economic activities in the area, create jobs and ensure most of the income stays in the local area, enhancing regional development. (SHKY 2020b, Visit Finland 2019, UNWTO 2023) In the case company, it is noted that the ski resort's aim was not to grow extensively, but rather ensure sustainable operations that benefit nature and the local community.

While the case company used as many locally produced products and services as possible, there was no defined plan or clear guidelines for purchases and partnerships. Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort was committed to making sustainable choices a priority in the future, since its partners' operations also influence the carbon footprint and sustainability level of the ski resort.

Due to the remote location and small population of Saariselkä, the case company was highly dependent on seasonal workers coming from other parts of Finland and internationally. There was no formal cooperation with local educational institutions to offer traineeships to students and offer employment possibilities for youth, which should be developed further to increase the number of local employees at the case company.

Based on these perspectives, the researcher listed suggestions for an action plan increasing the economic sustainability in the case company, presented in Table 3.

Focus point	Work task	Target	Budget	Measuring	Person in charge	Schedule
<i>Employment</i>	Create traineeship possibilities for local / regional educational institutions	2 trainees each season	Traineeship salary & normal staffing costs	Trainee workdays per year	Operational manager	2024
<i>Partnerships</i>	Increase collaboration with local and sustainable companies	20% increase in B2B sales	1000 € advertising and normal staffing fees	Sales (€) per year	Sales & Marketing manager	2024
	Saariselkä sustainable cooperation board	Create a mutually beneficial board and building mutual strategy and sustainability goals in Saariselkä village	Start with normal staffing costs	Success and interest measured in a partner questionnaire	CEO	Winter 2023 onwards
<i>Resources</i>	Increase amount of locally sourced & ecological products at Ski Shop	+ 20 % compared to 2023	Normal staffing costs	Share of local & ecological products from total of products	Rental manager	2024-2025
	Creation of purchasing plan and guidelines	30 % of purchased products and services are sustainable	Normal staffing costs	Share of local & ecological products from total of products	Sales & marketing manager	2024

Table 3. Actions for economic sustainability at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

5.1.3 Socio-culturally sustainable tourism development

Developing socio-culturally sustainable tourism is one of the key parts of the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy's operations. Socio-cultural sustainability focuses on the perspectives of local cultures and history, fair partnership, ethical and accessible business operations as well as corporate social responsibility (SHKY, 2020b).

The case company operates in Sámi area, and as the company's owners had Inari Sámi background, also the company respected the local culture in its operations and supported cultural events to aid continuity of the culture for future generations. Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort included a visit to Inari and Sámi culture locations in the staff orientation week to ensure those moving from other parts of the world were also aware of the cultural environment they live in. Since the case company had multiple foreign workers, the case company recognized a need for basic Finnish language and culture courses, which could be offered for the foreign staff members with lacking Finnish skills.

Saariselkä also wanted to develop alpine skiing possibilities of local population, and continue organizing local kids' ski club, which was free of charge for season pass holders. Locals were also offered a deal on season passes that included equipment rental, making skiing more affordable for those living in Inari, Sodankylä or Utsjoki municipalities. Another focus point was the struggle from old infrastructure that caused problems in the perspective of the case company's accessibility for those with special needs.

The ski resort claimed to be a fair partner and emphasized local partnerships. The case company owners noted that every single purchase and partnership choice made a difference in the local community. Therefore, the ski resort offered staff recreational days which included visits to partnering companies, so the staff members also knew more about their operations.

The key work tasks needed for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's socio-cultural sustainability development are presented in the table 4.

Focus point	Work task	Target	Budget	Measuring	Person in charge	Schedule
<i>Local activity possibilities</i>	Improving local kids' skiing possibilities by adding 10%	Increase the number of participants by 20% compared to 2023	3000 €	Number of children in the Lumi Mafia ski club	Ski school manager	Winter 2023-2024
<i>Accessibility</i>	Build a new accessible toilet and infrastructure, improve adaptive skiing tools	Increase accessibility of premises and ski slopes	30 000€	Measured in customer survey annually	Operations manager	Summer 2024
<i>Charity</i>	Arrange adaptive skiing event	Make alpine skiing possible for the local people with disabilities	2000 €	Number of participants in the day event	Ski school manager	Winter 2023-2024
	Gifting season passes to local charity	Make ski activities accessible for low-income families and children	2000 €	Number of gifted season passes per year	Sales & Marketing manager	Winter 2023-2024
	Charity donation for annually changing organization	Increase sustainable development and decrease poorness in the world	1000 €	Statistics of the charity organization's results	Sales & Marketing manager	Winter 2023-2024
<i>Local culture</i>	Sponsorship of Skábmagovat	Help preserve and increase knowledge of local cultural events	500 €	Measured in customer survey	Sales & Marketing manager	January 2024
	Siida and reindeer farm visit	Increase staff knowledge of local traditions and culture	1400 €	Measured in the annual staff survey	Operations manager	November 2023

	Finnish language and culture course (70 hours)	80% of foreign staff members take part	4300 €	Share of participants	Operations manager	Winter 2024-2025
<i>Sponsorship</i>	Staff activities with local partners	Increase staff satisfaction and knowledge of our partners	10 000€	Measured in staff survey	Operations manager	Winter 2023-2024
	Sponsorship of local athletes	Bring visibility to the ski resort and support professional skier and snowboarders	1500 €	Revised annually	Sales & Marketing manager	Winter 2023-2024
<i>Communication</i>	Creation of crisis / emergency communications plan	Increase efficiency of crisis communication	Normal staffing fees	Revised annually, assessed by internal estimation	Sales & Marketing manager and Operations manager	Prior to 2023-2024 winter season

Table 4. Actions for socio-cultural sustainability at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

5.2 Sustainable communication

An essential part of sustainability work is communicating the case company's operations considering the perspectives of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability. Sustainable communication takes into consideration the company's environment and is based on the values of the company. (SHKY, 2020b)

While systematic sustainability work was in the starting phase at the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort, the case company took sustainability into account from multiple perspectives. Sustainable communication had been included in the case company's staff training weeks and sustainability aspect was included in social media channels, but it was recognized that systematic efforts were needed to have more consistent and extensive communication regarding sustainability at the ski resort and in the surrounding areas.

Crisis communication plan would be created at the case company prior to winter 2023-2024 by the case company's management and it was thus not a part of this thesis project. The proposal for a sustainable communication development plan for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort is presented in the table 5.

Sustainability aspect	What is done, how?	Who we want to communicate this to?	How do we communicate this?	Responsibilities
<i>Resources</i>	Use of biodiesel in snow groomers	Local community, customers, staff	Information online, information boards and symbols at the ski resort, staff training materials	Sales & Marketing manager
	Use of lifts and bikes in the ski resort area instead of snowmobiles	Local community, customers, staff	Posters at the ski resort, social media photos and videos	Sales & Marketing manager
	Ski Bus – collective transportation possibility in Saariselkä area	Local community, customers, partners, staff	Information on the website, online shop, social media, staff training materials, posters at the ski resort	Sales & Marketing manager
<i>Local culture</i>	Sámi heritage of the company	Customers, staff, local community	Local art and culture visible at the ski resort, information, and stories of Sámi culture in product descriptions, at “About us” section of the website, staff materials, social media posts. Informative content that calls for respect.	Sales & Marketing manager
	Partnership with local events	Local community, customers, staff	Including main cultural events in the ski resort’s website event calendar, promotion on	Sales & Marketing manager

		social media channels and internal communication system		
<i>Equality</i>	Equal treatment of all people regardless of their ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, age, gender	Want to communicate this to all customers, partner network and staff	Statements on the website, inclusive photos, language neutral text on social media channels, symbols at premises	Sales & Marketing manager
	Zero tolerance towards hate speech or harassment	Want to communicate this to all customers and staff	Statements on websites, social media channels, staff training materials	Sales & Marketing manager
<i>Partners</i>	Local key partners with sustainable operations	Customers, staff, partner network	Mentions on the website, online shop, and staff training materials	Sales & Marketing manager
<i>Environmental work and landscaping</i>	Efforts to restore the slopes to their natural state and minimize erosion with marked trails	Local community, customers, staff, and partner network	Information online, social media channels, information board at the ski resort	Sales & Marketing manager

Table 5. Sustainable communication development plan for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort

5.3 Plan for monitoring sustainability

Simply setting tasks and targets for sustainable tourism development was not enough, thus the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort would need to also plan how they measure their level of sustainability process. Measuring is proposed to be done from four main perspectives: customers, staff, economy, and operations, as well as development.



Graph 9. Sustainability measuring at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy

To measure customer satisfaction and for instance the customer experiences of accessibility, the ski resort should conduct customer surveys after each summer and winter season. The case company should also continuously follow feedback given on online platforms such as Google, Meta, TripAdvisor and Viator. As many of the online platforms did not encourage customers to give in-depth feedback, the researcher recommended that the case company would create its own feedback form that would be promoted at the ski resort premises. During the season, the ski resort's sales team would make an overview report of the customer feedback monthly which would then be presented to the company's

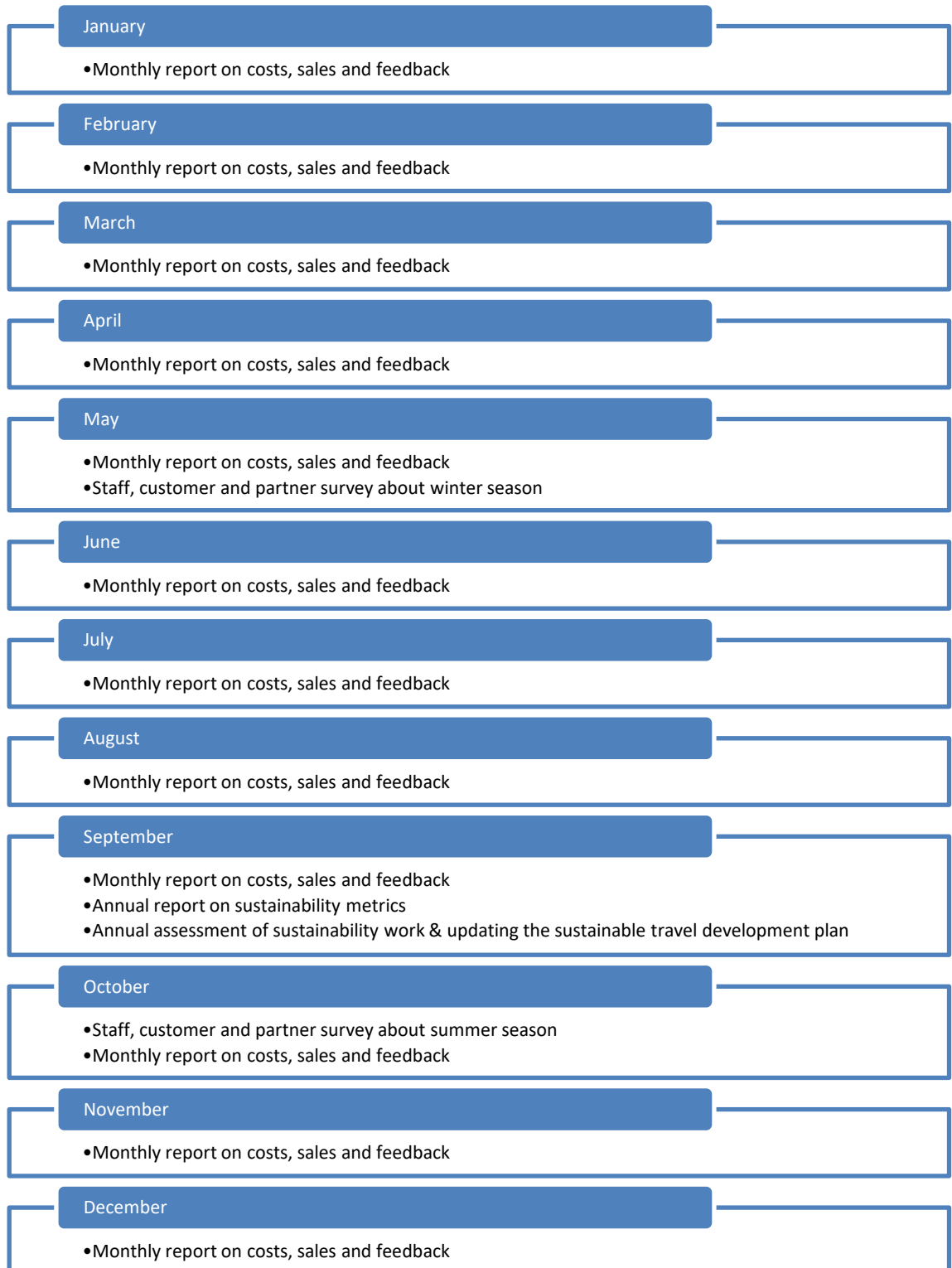
owners and team managers. This would ensure that problems are fixed in timely fashion and the chances of creating great customer experiences could be increased.

In addition to customer surveys and customer feedback, the ski resort was also interested in learning about the staff's opinions and ideas for development. Informal feedback would be collected from staff team and individual meetings, as well as staff surveys that would be conducted after each summer and winter season.

The sales team would also prepare a monthly report about the ski resort's costs and revenue streams, following the sales with local partners and other metrics listed in the action plan. The sales team would be expected to prepare and send a survey regarding experiences and sustainability to the case company's key partners every year.

To measure the level of sustainable development, the case company should also make annual reports of the waste levels, as well as energy and fuel consumption to determine whether the listed targets have been reached. The sustainable development plan should be assessed in depth annually to determine which tasks have been done and what should be developed further.










A preliminary schedule for annual sustainability measurements at the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy is presented in the following graph 10.



Graph 10. Annual schedule for sustainability measurements at Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy

5.4 Towards a more sustainable future

As one of the thesis project's aims was to study the case company's business model and make it more sustainable, a new, more sustainable business model for more sustainable ski resort operations was created. SBMC was used to present the sustainably innovated business model in a holistic way, restructuring the case company's targets for the sustainability in one graph including key partners, key activities, value propositions, customer segments, channels, resources, cost structures, revenue streams as well as eco-social costs and benefits of the operations. (CASE, 2018) It was noted, that this SBMC was focused on the possible future state of the case company and therefore did not represent the existing business model of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort. The SBMC is summarized in the following graph 11.

<p><i>Key Partners</i> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lapland North Ltd - Inari municipality - Lapin Luontolomat Oy - Wilderness Hotels - Visit Finland - Finnish Ski Area Association - Würth Ivalo - Kessu Oy - Axess - Hotelplan Ltd - Amer Sports - Finnish ski / snowboard equipment manufacturers: Peltonen, Karhu, PUSU, Ilahu 	<p><i>Key Activities</i> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ski instruction - Equipment rental - Caravan park services - Snowmaking - Lift operation - Slope maintenance - Retail shop - Event organization - Restaurant service - Customer service 	<p><i>Value Propositions</i> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe beginner and intermediate-friendly alpine skiing and snowboarding services - Outdoor experiences next to the Urho Kekkonen national park - Open fell views - Friendly, equal treatment of staff and customers - Sustainable operations - Accessible fun in the nature 	<p><i>Customer Relationships</i> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital communication prior to the visit - Recurring contact with local and returning guests - F2F communication at the ski resort locally - Gender neutral, accessible communication 	<p><i>Customer Segments</i> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Families - Local people - International travelers looking for once in a lifetime experiences - Beginner and intermediate skiers and snowboarders - Mountain bikers and hikers during the summer - LGBTQ+ people - Skiers and snowboarders with disabilities
<p><i>Cost Structure</i> </p> <p>Renewable energy, bio-fuel, waste and water bills, digital tool subscriptions, staff costs, commission fees to partner companies, purchases, marketing costs</p>	<p><i>Revenue Streams</i> </p> <p>Sale of lift tickets, ski school bookings, equipment rentals, snowmaking services, commission from partner services, ski shop sales, restaurant meal and drink sales, caravan park services</p>			
<p><i>Eco-Social Costs</i> </p> <p>Emissions from bio-fuels, gasoline, oils, waste, land erosion, energy consumption</p>	<p><i>Eco-Social Benefits</i> </p> <p>Local job creation, renewable energy production, landscaping and restoring damage by previous owners, preservation of local culture</p>			

Graph 11. Future sustainable business model canvas for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy based on the SBMC by CASE (2018)

6 CONCLUSIONS

Calls for more sustainable business practices are voiced increasingly as the modern world is beginning to experience the effects of changing climate. As many other ski resorts operating in vulnerable winter tourism industry in the Arctic, similarly, the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy decided to begin its journey towards more sustainable ski resort operations.

The objective of this thesis project was to create a sustainable development plan for the case company, according to the requirements set by STF programme and SHKY. To begin the development planning, it was necessary to determine how a sustainable travel development could be created. The key themes essential to the planning were determined through review of literature on sustainability, sustainable travel development, sustainable business model innovation, as well as study of the sustainability related policies made by the Finnish government and international institutions as EU and UN.

The next step of the research process was to examine the case company's existing level of sustainable development and responsible business from the perspectives of ecological, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability, as well as shed light on the development possibilities. The data was drawn from qualitative interviews with the case company's owners and key staff members, as well as the researcher's own personal experience from the case company's operations.

Thematic analysis of the case company's sustainability and business model showed that the biggest eco-social costs of the case company's operations include emissions from the use of fossil and biofuels, land erosion, waste, and energy consumption. The main eco-social benefits created by the case company include local job creation and support of the local economy through purchases of products and services, as well as restoring the natural areas from damage caused by previous owners, protection of local culture, and creating recreational possibilities for the local community. The different perspectives of sustainability have been taken into consideration on some levels, but systematic sustainability work was needed to develop more sustainable ski resort operations.

The thesis project presents a concrete sustainable action plan and steps needed for a more sustainable business model. The action plan lists proposed tasks, targets, measures, the budget and which staff members will be responsible for carrying out each development task. The sustainable action plan considers development from all three perspectives of sustainability, as well as sustainable communication and future vision of the company's business model.

This thesis project strongly relied on data from qualitative interviews with key employees and owners of the case company. The interviewees were chosen based on their perceived ability to deliver most accurate and useful data for the research purposes. Quantitative research methods such as online surveys directed at dozens or more people, with possibly less documented knowledge and experience of the case company's operations, would likely not have offered benefits for the initial phase of the sustainable development process. It is however noted that the following phases of sustainable development process will likely need data from the customer perspective and insight from the company's partners. In addition, the researcher's position as one of the case company's owners could be problematic for critical assessment of the case company, and an external researcher could have focused on different issues.

The results of the thesis project are specific to the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort and not possible to be applied in its entirety to sustainable development of other companies. However, the researcher argues that other ski resorts operating in similar natural and political environment can benefit and take ideas from the action plan created for Saariselkä. Success of reaching sustainable ski resort operations requires integrating sustainability thinking into every small detail and all levels of the operations, and it needs to be the core of thinking not only at the company leadership but also for staff members and key partners. As sustainable business minimizes costs and adds value to the environment, society, customers, and the company itself, there should be no question whether any ski resort should begin their sustainability journey today.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1. E-mail questionnaire for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's
Key figures (Finnish)
- Appendix 2. E-mail questionnaire for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's
Key figures (English)
- Appendix 3. Interview information and questions for staff (English)
- Appendix 4. Interview information and questions for staff (Finnish)
- Appendix 5. Management interview questions (Finnish)
- Appendix 6. Management interview questions (English)

Appendix 1. E-mail questionnaire for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy key figures
(Finnish)

SAARISELKÄ SKI & SPORT RESORT OY AVAINLUVUT

1. Paljonko Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortissa käytetään sähköä per kalenterivuosi? Paljonko sähkön hinta on ollut keskimääräisesti viimeisen kalenterivuoden aikana?
2. Paljonko Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortissa kulutetaan vettä per kalenterivuosi? Paljonko veden hinta on ollut keskimääräisesti viimeisen kalenterivuoden aikana?
3. Paljonko Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortissa kulutetaan fossiilisia polttoaineita per kalenterivuosi? Paljonko polttoaineiden hinta on ollut keskimääräisesti viimeisen kalenterivuoden aikana? Pyydän erittelemään tähän eri polttoaineet ja fossiiliset öljyt.
4. Paljonko Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortissa aiheutuu jätettä per kalenterivuosi? Paljonko jätehuollon hinta on ollut keskimääräisesti viimeisen kalenterivuoden aikana? Pyydän erittelemään tähän eri jätetyypit.
5. Paljonko Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortissa on ollut asiakkaita viimeisen kalenterivuoden aikana?
6. Mikä on Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortin arvioitu rinnepinta-ala?
7. Lumetus
 - a. Mikä on Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortin arvioitu lumetettava rinnepinta-ala?
 - b. Paljonko energiaa, vettä ja fossiilisia polttoaineita kuluu arviolta lumetukseen?
8. Hankinnat
 - a. Kuinka suuri osuus (%) Ski Shopin ja vuokraamon tuotteista on arviolta 1) paikallisia Inarin, Utsjoen tai Sodankylän alueelta 2) kotimaisia 3) vastuullisesti tuotettuja/luomua?
 - b. Kuinka suuri osuus (%) ravintola Lieggâ Láávun tuotteista on arviolta 1) paikallisia Inarin, Utsjoen tai Sodankylän alueelta 2) kotimaisia 3) vastuullisesti tuotettuja/luomua?

9. Henkilöstö

- a. Kuinka suuri osuus (%) Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortin henkilöstöstä on vakituisessa työsuhteessa?
- b. Kuinka suuri osuus (%) Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortin henkilöstöstä on 1) naisia 2) miehiä?
- c. Kuinka suuri osuus (%) Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortin henkilöstöstä on 1) paikallisia Inarin, Utsjoen tai Sodankylän alueelta, 2) suomalaisia, 3) EU-kansalaisia, 4) EU ulkopuolelta?

10. Kuinka suuri osuus (%) Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortin asiakkaista on 1) paikallisia Inarin, Utsjoen tai Sodankylän alueelta, 2) suomalaisia, 3) EU-kansalaisia, 4) EU ulkopuolelta?

Pyydän vastaukset tähän kyselyyn perjantaihin 20.10.2023 mennessä. Kiitos!

Appendix 2. Appendix 1. E-mail questionnaire for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy key figures (English)

SAARISELKÄ SKI & SPORT RESORT OY KEY FIGURES

1. How much electricity does Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort use per calendar year? How much has the electricity price been on average during the last calendar year?
2. How much water does Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort use per calendar year? How much has the water price been on average during the last calendar year?
3. How much non-renewable fuels does Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort use per calendar year? How much has the price of fossil fuels been on average during the last calendar year? Please specify all different types of fossil fuels.
4. How much waste is created by Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort per calendar year? How much has the price of waste been on average during the last calendar year? Please specify all different types of waste.
5. How many customers has Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort has in the last calendar year?
6. How big is Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's estimated slope area?
7. Snowmaking
 - a. How big is Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's estimated slope area that requires snowmaking?
 - b. Please estimate how much energy, water and fossil fuels are used to snowmaking.
8. Purchases
 - a. How big share (%) of Ski Shop and equipment rental's products are estimated to be 1) local from Inari, Utsjoki or Sodankylä municipalities 2) domestic 3) organic/sustainable?
 - b. How big share (%) of restaurant Lieggâ Láávu's products are estimated to be 1) local from Inari, Utsjoki or Sodankylä municipalities 2) domestic 3) organic/sustainable?

9. Staff

- c. How big share (%) of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's staff have a permanent work contract?
- d. How big share (%) of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's staff are 1) women 2) men?
- e. How big share (%) of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's staff are estimated to be 1) local from Inari, Utsjoki or Sodankylä municipalities 2) Finnish 3) EU citizens 4) from outside EU?

10. How big share (%) of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort's customers are estimated to be 1) local from Inari, Utsjoki or Sodankylä municipalities 2) Finnish 3) EU citizens 4) from outside EU?

I kindly ask for replies for this questionnaire latest on Friday 20 October 2023.

Thank you!

Appendix 3. Interview information and questions for staff (English)

The interviews will be referred to anonymously, and the identities of the research participants will not be presented in any part of the thesis. Answers from qualitative interviews will be referred to for instance “interviewee 1” instead of the person’s name. Any interview recordings or transcriptions will be saved in a password-protected cloud folder, to prevent any unauthorized access or usage of the data for any other purposes.

Participation in the qualitative and quantitative interviews and surveys is fully voluntary, and there will be no negative implications for any person deciding not to take part in the research.

The thesis will be done for Lapland University of Applied Sciences, and is a Master’s Thesis for a degree program in International Business Management.

The goal of the thesis is to find out how it will be possible to create a sustainable travel development plan for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort, and the thesis work will answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: How can a sustainable travel development plan be developed for the case company Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort?

RQ 2: What is the existing level of Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort’s sustainable development and responsible business from the ecological, economic, and socio-cultural aspects?

RQ 3: How can the case company’s operations be developed from the aspect of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural sustainability?

RQ 4: What are the proposed steps for the company to move towards more sustainable ski resort operations?

Key partners

1. Who are the key partners and suppliers in your department?
2. Which key resources are required from these key partners?

3. Are you part-taking in cooperation with other local or domestic partners and concerning organizations?
4. Do you advise customers to go to also other companies?
5. Do you cooperate with partners that operate with animals? If yes, are you aware if they have certification for responsible animal tourism (for instance green certificate)?
6. Do you know if other supplies have certifications?

Key activities

7. What are the main activities that your department performs?
8. How does your department engage staff & customers in creation of the activities?
9. Is there regular training for the staff to perform these activities?

Key resources

10. What key resources do the operations of your department require?
Physical/intellectual/human/financial
11. Is sustainability considered in your department when using or making purchases for key resources? (circular economy, purchasing used or borrowing, eco certifications, local and ethical products, products with longevity, are you taking care of the infra & tools)
12. Does your department take climate change into consideration in its operations? How?

Value propositions

13. What value does your department deliver to the customer?
14. Which customer's problems and needs is your department helping to solve?
15. Does your department protect and emphasize local culture, art, stories or cultural history and local customs in our products and service offerings or marketing?

16. How is customer and staff safety ensured in your department?
- a. Travel safety: is there action/preparation plan in case of illnesses or pandemic? How it's done if staff is ill, or if customers are ill?
 - b. How is product/food/activity safety ensured in your department?

Customer relationships

17. What type of relationships does each of our customer segments expect us to establish and maintain with them?
18. Does your department treat everyone equally and ethically regardless of their background?

Customer segments

19. Who are the main customers of your department?
20. Are accessible services considered in your department? Can everyone move around and use the services and products of your department, even if they have for instance physical, visual or audio impairment?
21. Are the products and services of your department accessible for different genders, age groups, physical aspects, cultures? LGBTQ+? Different religious groups for instance muslims or Jews?

Channels

22. Through which channels are we reaching customers in your department?
23. How well do these channels work in your opinion?
24. Are customers and staff in your department informed about sustainability? (e.g. carbon footprint, food, inclusivity, gender neutral language & visuals, diverse cultures and genders, same-sex couples LGBTQ+)

Cost structures

25. What kind of costs do the operations of your department create for the company?

26. Which key resources and activities are the most expensive?

Revenue streams

27. For what products and services do customers pay in your department?

28. In your view, for what would they be willing pay?

29. How would they prefer to pay?

Eco-social costs

30. What ecological or social harm does the operations of your department cause?

(e.g. use of electricity, water, non-renewable fuels & resources, waste, land erosion, less natural habitat, firewood, emissions in water, land and air, light pollution from unnecessary lights, emissions from transportation and other side-operations, emissions from choice of products/resources bought from someone else, noise pollution)

31. How are environmental damage minimized and natural resources used sustainably in your department?

Eco-social benefits

32. What kind of long-term eco-social benefits does your department create?

33. Does your department have year-round employment and local employees?

34. Does the company follow labor laws? Are staff treated ethically regarding the salary and equal treatment of staff members?

35. Are training materials available in languages that are understood by the staff members, and is the work environment open for multicultural staff?

36. Does your department participate in charity or are there possibilities for your department to organize some other activities for instance free of charge activity days for disadvantaged families?

Appendix 4. Interview information and questions for staff (Finnish)

Haastattelujen ennakotieto ja kysymykset henkilöstölle

Haastattelun osallistujien henkilötiedot suojataan siten, ettei haastateltavien identiteettiä paljasteta opinnäytetyössä, vaan heihin viitataan opinnäytetyössä anonyymisti esimerkiksi "haastateltava 1" henkilön nimen sijaan. Haastattelujen tallenteet ja litteroinnit tallennetaan salasanalla suojattuun kansioon Microsoftin pilvipalvelussa, jotta tutkijan lisäksi muilla ei ole pääsyä tiedostoihin.

Osallistuminen haastatteluun on täysin vapaaehtoista, eikä henkilöön kohdisteta minkäänlaista negatiivista vaikutusta, mikäli henkilö päättäisi olla osallistumasta haastatteluun. Opinnäytetyö on Lapin ammattikorkeakoulun ylemmän AMK tradenomikoulutuksen lopputyö kansainvälisen liiketalouden tutkintoon. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on selvittää, Kuinka Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy:lle voidaan luoda kestävän matkailun kehityssuunnitelma, ja opinnäytetyö vastaa seuraaviin tutkimuskysymyksiin:

TK 1: Kuinka Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortille voidaan luoda kestävän matkailun kehityssuunnitelma?

TK 2: Kuinka kestävää ja vastuullista Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortin liiketoiminta on nykyhetkellä ekologisen, sosiokulttuurisen ja taloudellisen vastuullisuuden näkökulmista?

TK 3: Kuinka Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortin liiketoimintaa voidaan kehittää ekologisen, sosiokulttuurisen ja taloudellisen vastuullisuuden näkökulmista?

TK 4: Mitkä ovat ehdotetut kehitystoimenpiteet, jotta Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort voi kehittää liiketoimintaansa vastuullisemmaksi?

Yhteistyökumppanit

1. Ketkä ovat osastosi tärkeimmät yhteistyökumppanit ja tavaroiden tai palveluiden toimittajat?
2. Mitkä ovat tärkeimmät resurssit, joita saadaan näiltä yhteistyökumppaneilta?

3. Tekeekö osastosi yhteistyötä alueellisesti muiden paikallisten tai valtakunnallisten yritysten ja organisaatioiden kanssa?
4. Neuvotko asiakkaita käyttämään myös muiden yrittäjien palveluita?
5. Tekeekö osastosi yhteistyötä yritysten kanssa, jotka toimivat eläinten kanssa? Jos kyllä, oletko tietoinen yhteistyökumppaneiden mahdollisista sertifikaateista vastuulliseen eläinmatkailuun liittyen (esimerkiksi green certificate)?
6. Oletko tietoinen muiden yhteistyökumppaneiden sertifikaateista?

Tärkeimmät toiminnot

7. Mitkä ovat osastosi tärkeimmät toiminnot ja tehtävät?
8. Kuinka osastosi huomioi ja aktivoi henkilöstöä ja asiakkaita osaston toimintojen luomiseksi ja kehittämiseksi?
9. Onko osastollasi säännöllistä koulutusta tärkeimpiin työtehtäviin?

Tärkeimmät resurssit

10. Mitä resursseja osastosi toiminnot vaativat? Nämä voivat olla esimerkiksi fyysisiä resursseja, henkilöresursseja tai taloudellisia resursseja.
11. Otetaanko vastuullisuus huomioon osastollasi, esimerkiksi hankintoja tehtäessä? (kiertotalous, ostot uutena tai käytettynä, resurssien lainaaminen, ekosertifikaatit, paikalliset ja eettiset tuotteet, pitkäkäyttöiset tuotteet, huolehditaanko infrasta ja työkaluista)
12. Ottaako osastosi ilmastonmuutoksen huomioon toiminnoissaan? Miten?

Arvon luominen

13. Millaista arvoa osastosi luo asiakkaille?
14. Mitä asiakkaiden ongelmia ja tarpeita osastosi pyrkii tyydyttämään?
15. Suojeleeko ja korostaako osastosi paikalliskulttuuria, taidetta, tarinoita tai kulttuurihistoriaa ja paikallisia tapoja tuotteissa, palveluissa ja markkinoinnissa?

16. Kuinka asiakkaiden ja henkilöstön turvallisuus on suojattu osastossasi?
- Turvallinen matkailu: onko osastolla toimintasuunnitelma henkilöstön tai matkailijoiden sairastumisten varalle?
 - Kuinka tuoteturvallisuus on varmistettu osastollasi?

Asiakassuhteet

17. Millaisia asiakassuhteita eri asiakasryhmät odottavat meidän luovan ja ylläpitävän heidän kanssaan?
18. Kohtelee osastosi muita ihmisiä tasavertaisesti ja eettisesti riippumatta heidän taustastaan?

Asiakasryhmät

19. Ketkä ovat osastosi tärkeimmät asiakkaat?
20. Onko esteettömyys otettu huomioon osastollasi? Voivatko kaikki liikkua ja käyttää palveluita ja tuotteita, vaikka heillä olisi jokin fyysinen este, tai vaikkapa näkö- tai kuulovamma?
21. Ovatko osastosi tuotteet ja palvelut saavutettavissa erilaisille ihmisryhmille, esimerkiksi eri sukupuolet, ikäryhmät, kulttuurit, LGBTQ+, tai uskonnollisille ryhmille?

Kanavat

22. Minkä kanavien kautta osastosi pyrkii saavuttamaan asiakkaat?
23. Kuinka hyvin nämä kanavat mielestäsi toimivat?
24. Ovatko asiakkaat ja henkilöstö tietoisia osastosi vastuullisuudesta? (esimerkiksi hiilijalanjälki, ruoka, esteettömyys, sukupuolineutraali kieli, kuvat, multikulttuurisuus, seksuaalivähemmistöt)

Kulut

25. Millaisia kuluja osastosi toiminnasta aiheutuu yritykselle?
26. Mitkä resurssit ja toiminnot ovat kalleimpia?

Tulot

27. Mistä tuotteista ja palveluista asiakkaat maksavat osastollasi?
28. Mistä tuotteista ja palveluista he olisivat mielestäsi valmiita maksamaan?
29. Kuinka asiakkaat haluavat mieluiten maksaa?

Ekososiaaliset kustannukset

30. Mitä harmia osastosi toiminnasta aiheutuu ympäristölle tai ihmisille?
(esimerkiksi päästöt, energiankulutus, vesi, uusiutumattomat resurssit, jäte, maan kuluminen, elinympäristön kaventuminen, valo- tai äänisaaste, sivutoiminnoista kuten kuljetuksista aiheutuvat päästöt ja jätteet)
31. Kuinka osastosi pyrkii minimoimaan ympäristöön kohdistuvia haittoja ja käyttämään luonnonvaroja vastuullisesti?

Ekososiaaliset hyödyt

32. Millaisia pitkäaikaisia ekososiaalisia hyötyjä osastosi toiminta luo?
33. Onko osastollasi ympärivuotisia ja paikallisia työntekijöitä?
34. Noudattaako yritys voimassa olevia työlakeja? Kohdellaanko henkilöstöä eettisesti ja tasavertaisesti esimerkiksi palkkauksessa?
35. Ovatko perehdytysmateriaalit henkilöstön ymmärtämillä kielillä, ja onko työympäristö avoin monikulttuuriselle henkilöstölle?
36. Osallistuuko osastosi hyväntekeväisyyteen, tai näetkö tälle mahdollisuuksia, esimerkiksi järjestää ilmaisia aktiviteetteja vähävaraisille perheille?

Appendix 5. Management interview questions (Finnish)

Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy johtoryhmän haastattelu vastuullisuudesta

1. Mikä on Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy:n tahtotila vastuulliseen liiketoimintaan ja kestävän matkailun kehitykseen?
2. Mitä kaikkea sosiokulttuurinen vastuullisuus tarkoittaa yrityksessänne?
3. Mitä kaikkea ekologinen vastuullisuus tarkoittaa yrityksessänne?
4. Mitä kaikkea taloudellinen vastuullisuus tarkoittaa yrityksessänne?
5. Mikä vastuullisuustyössä on tärkeää Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resortille, ja kuinka tärkeää se on? Millaisia haluamme olla, ja miten haluamme toimia?
6. Mihin Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy haluaa vastuullisuuden osalta sitoutua, ja miten se käytännössä näkyy?
7. Ohjaako jokin sertifikaatti tai ympäristötyökalu yrityksen toimintaa?
8. Mitä Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy haluaa saavuttaa vastuullisuustyöllä pitkällä tähtäimellä? (päämäärä on iso, strategisen tason tavoite, jonka toteutuminen on selvästi tulevaisuudessa)
9. Ovatko ympäristöasiat osana toiminnan suunnittelua? (esim. kierrätys, lajittelu, CO₂-päästöt, energiatehokkuus, luonnonvarojen säästäminen, eroosion hallinta)
10. Onko vastuullisuus- ja ympäristökriteerit käytössä hankintojen kilpailutuksessa?
11. Ovatko turvallisuusasiakirjat ja pelastussuunnitelmat kunnossa ja ajan tasalla?
12. Löytyykö Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy:stä kriisiviestintäsuunnitelma?

Appendix 6. Management interview questions (English)

Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy interview questions for management

1. What is Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy's ambition for responsible business and the development of sustainable tourism?
2. What does socio-cultural responsibility mean in your company?
3. What does ecological responsibility mean in your company?
4. What does financial responsibility mean in your company?
5. What is important in responsibility work for Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort, and how important is it? What do we want to be like, and how do we want to act?
6. What does Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy want to commit to in terms of responsibility, and how does it show up in practice?
7. Does a certificate or environmental tool guide the company's operations?
8. What does Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy want to achieve with responsibility work in the long term? (the goal is a big, strategic level goal, the realization of which is clearly in the future)
9. Are environmental issues part of the operational planning? (e.g. recycling, sorting, CO2 emissions, energy efficiency, conservation of natural resources, erosion control)
10. Are the responsibility and environmental criteria used in procurement tenders?
11. Are the safety documents and rescue plans in order and up to date?
12. Does Saariselkä Ski & Sport Resort Oy have a crisis communication plan?