



The role of local business in ecotourism in Central Finland

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Abstract

Thesis focuses on role of local business in ecotourism in Central Finland. The research's motive is to investigate and explore role local businesses and companies in supporting and promoting ecotourism in the region. The study examines the viewpoints of nearby company owners and other stakeholders using a qualitative approach that includes the interviews. Ecotourism has draws attention to problems like resource scarcity, competition, and environmental effects, lack of work force, Selling and marketing weakest point but if properly and sustainably managed, ecotourism can offer considerable prospects for regional enterprises in Central Finland. The study focuses on several aspects of ecotourism, including ethical behavior, environmental preservation, participation of the local population, and economic growth. Interviews with eco-tourism business owners, and travel companies were done as part of the qualitative research approach was utilized.

Conclusions part explain on the role of local business/companies in supporting ecotourism in Central Finland. Businesses that cater ecotourism have been seen to use sustainable methods like recycling, reusing energy, and cutting waste. This lowers the operating expenses of industries, increasing their profitability. Additionally, ecotourism contributes to environmental preserving resources among both tourists and companies.

The study also discovered that ecotourism business owners interact and work in conjunction with local communities to promote economic growth. This increases revenues and job prospects by letting the local population know about the chances that are accessible. Activities related to ecotourism also help to build the infrastructure needed for economic growth.

The results and analysis of data in local companies in Central Finland has been seen in a number of ways, including through sustainable practices, environmental protection, participation in the local community, and economic growth. This assists the stakeholders create plans and implementation strategies for ecotourism firms, balancing the region's economic advantages with its ecological sustainability.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

Ecotourism, Nature-Based Tourism, Sustainable Practices, Wildlife Tourism, Sustainable Practices, National Parks, Tourism Cooperation

Miscellaneous (Confidential information)

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1 Introduction

Ecotourism is a famous example of responsible tourism, and it has been as one among the world's markets that experiences the most rapidly rate of progress according to Hughes, Lacey, & Hayllar, (2019). In The country's center region, Central Finland, is renowned for its breathtaking natural scenery, serene lakes, and pure nature. It is regarded as a top ecotourism destination and provides a wealth of chances for participating in environmentally friendly activities. Central Finland an exceptional destination for ecotourism Central Finland, ecotourism is a rapidly developing industry that promotes ethical and sustainable travel behaviors that save the environment, conserve cultural heritage, and improve local communities (Määttänen & Jarkko 2020).

There are many different types of ecosystems in Central Finland, such as wetlands, pure lakes, and boreal forests. Because of the region's rich biodiversity, nature lovers come from all over the world to explore and enjoy its distinctive flora and fauna. Many species, including bears, wolves, lynx, and numerous bird species, find home in the vast forests. The goals of ecotourism are to protect the environment and advance local populations' welfare. According to Day & Wong (2018), in terms of employment opportunities, revenue creation, and community development, ecotourism can provide a variety of advantages to those who live close to protected regions like national parks.

In Central Finland, ecotourism is founded on sustainable ideas. The area places a strong emphasis on eco-friendly tourism methods that benefit nearby communities and reduce environmental damage. Eco-friendly lodges and cottages that complement the surrounding landscape are common lodging options. Furthermore, a lot of the area's tour companies follow moral guidelines for seeing and conserving wildlife. Central Finland is an outdoor enthusiast's paradise. There are lots of things to do in the area that let guests experience nature directly while leaving as little of an environmental impact as possible. Among them is hiking across region.

According to Megan (2019) ecotourism can be specific moderately of travel to a venue which highlight on environmental preservation and sustainable activities, and it aims to have a good environmental impact, assist regional economies, and inform tourists about the value of environmental preservation. Eco-friendly presents a promising cover to traditional tourism, encouraging a more sustainable and responsible manner of taking in the natural treasures of the world. The objective of the thesis is to see how the local business/companies do their business in supporting and promoting

ecotourism environment by safe-guarding and protecting the environmental for nature-based tourism without any disturbance of natural resources to fosters the sustainability of ecosystem and have a benefit in return. The thesis answers the question of how local business/companies do their business in supporting and promoting ecotourism in central Finland. The author conducted semi-structure interviews align with the benefit, challenges, and opportunities of ecotourism for locals' businesses.

This thesis offers a thorough knowledge of the advantages of ecotourism. The flow of the thesis is that at first the author focuses on the ecotourism in general and then defining it according to different author's and then it introduces the relationship of ecotourism to other form of tourism. In the next section is the advantage and disadvantage of ecotourism with the benefits of ecotourism. The next chapter address about the nature-based tourism business in Central Finland also the national Parks in Central Finland where the author will discuss the current stage analysis of Finnish National Parks and their visitors in Central Finland and later the tourism cooperation in protected areas in Finland. Research method are also presented in the thesis, results of the thesis and analysis of the research as well as development and the conclusion part. Finally, the author will discuss about the ethicality, reliability, and the validity chapter. More details about the research interviews questionnaire are in appendices.

2 Ecotourism

According to Orams (1995), ecotourism is a difficult term in which numerous organizations and industry professionals have developed various definitions of ecotourism that share some characteristics but are nevertheless unique from one another. Since there is no agreed-upon definition of ecotourism, each operator defines in a different way that serves their own objectives. Understanding where ecotourism fits into the tourism industry is crucial when looking at it. According to Ceballos-Lascurain (2015), ecotourism overlaps with nature-based tourism and is a component of sustainable tourism.

2.1 What is ecotourism?

The IUCN (1996) definition of ecotourism highlights the significance of ethical and sustainable travel, which is advantageous to both local communities and the environment. Ecotourism has the potential to positively contribute to conservation efforts and assist the tourism industry's long-term survival by promoting the values that are need in long run.

Miller and Kaae (1993) expanded on the description and utilization of ecological tourism as an evolving process in regard to nature as figure 1 illustrates.

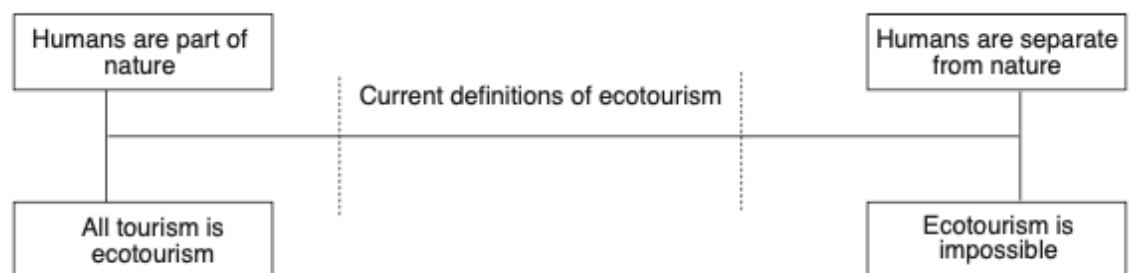


Figure 1. Ecotourism and the position of beings as both artificial and natural impact (after Miller and Kaae,1993)

According to Miller and Kaae (1993), ecotourism is a concept that exists on a continuum in relation to nature, and human influences on the environment can be both natural and unnatural. The term "natural influences" describes how people interact with their surroundings in ways that are congruent with natural systems and processes. This can include pursuits that cause the least amount of harm to the ecology, such as bird watching, camping, or hiking. Ecotourism is frequently viewed as a means of promoting these kinds of environmental encounters and natural interactions. Unnatural impacts, such as deforestation, pollution, or development, are human actions that disturb or harm natural ecosystems. Due to their potential for causing serious harm to the environment and its inhabitants, these activities are frequently considered as being incompatible with ecotourism.

Ecotourism aims to discourage activities that are unnatural and harmful to the environment while promoting those that lie closer to the natural end of this spectrum. By doing this, it will be feasible to develop a more environmentally conscious and environmentally sustainable tourism sector that promotes the preservation and protection of natural habitats. (Miller & Kaae,1993).

Saayman (2009), when ahead and defined ecotourism by categorizing into four pillars which are very important in ecotourism. These pillars include the role of conservation and promotion of natural and cultural environmental which shows that people ate part of nature heritage. The second pillar show the sustainability management of the environment where there was a stressed to protect the nature for future generation to experience also. The third pillar shows the role played by the community indicates that without them there will be no existence of green tourism in the area, and they will not be benefiting on it again. The last pillar tries to satisfy the need of tourist because more tourists want to experience the nature area so that they create memorable experience through education and experience. Figure 2. summarizes the four pillars of ecotourism.

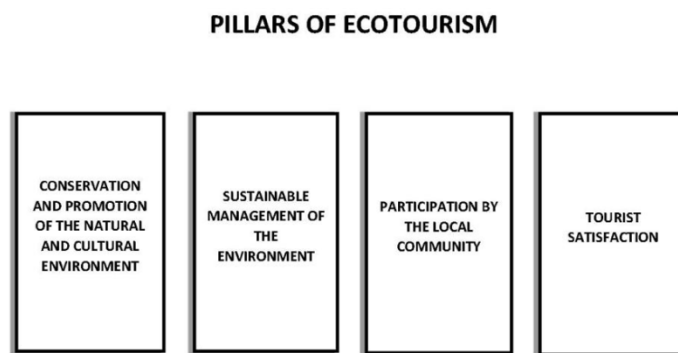


Figure 2.Pillars of ecotourism(Saayman,2009)

From the above definition concept, a generally accepted idea that steers ecologically responsible tourism in the direction of green tourism is ecotourism. While there is no agreed-upon definition of ecotourism, it is generally understood to rely on natural resources, environmental management; supporting conservation; involving local communities and preserving their well-being; providing effective interpretation and education. (Buckley, 2015).

Overall, the interconnectedness of many types of nature-based tourism is highlighted by Fennell's model, with ecotourism acting as a sustainable and ethical subset of these tourism activities. The concept highlights the necessity for ethical tourist activities that preserve animals, local communities, and the environment.

2.2 Advantage and disadvantage of ecotourism

Ecotourism encourages responsible visits to natural places with an emphasis on community engagement, environmental sustainability, and conservation as stated previously. Numerous benefits of ecotourism can be recognized from a variety of angles, including social, economic, and environmental. The contribution to and advantage of local populations are frequently emphasized in ecotourism. Ecotourism helps to support revenue, job vacancy for domestic people by patronizing local companies, using local guides, and honoring local customs and traditions. Additionally, cash raised by ecotourism ventures can be used to support environmental preservation and conservation initiatives. (TIES,2002).

Ecotourism frequently results in a far richer experience than traditional tourist. Ecotourism helps travelers develop a positive outlook and experience. The local communities will profit from the interest in ecotourism because ecotourism businesses are run locally (community-based ecotourism). Every stage of creating ecotourism destinations involves community members, which creates new employment opportunities for those who would otherwise have to leave their own neighborhood to hunt for work. This is an economic benefit which providing jobs, money, and supporting local businesses, ecotourism can help towns economically. This kind of tourism can encourage sustainable development and diversify the local economy. The revenue of nature-based tourism can be used to secure the existence of natural resources through practical efforts by tour operators or tourists or for local economic income generation and education initiatives." (Harrington, 2018; Powell & Ham,2008)

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) titled "Tourism, Education and Sustainable Development Goals." This report emphasizes on education and providing learning opportunities, promoting cultural understanding, and raising awareness about global challenges such as climate

change and biodiversity loss. According to Weaver (2011), encouraging conservation and spreading knowledge about the need of preserving natural habitats and species, ecotourism can help the environment. The negative effects of traditional tourism, such as overdevelopment, pollution, and habitat destruction, can be lessened with the support of this kind of travel.

By assisting local populations, protecting cultural assets, and encouraging intercultural interactions, ecotourism can foster social benefits. According to Emma (2019), it explores on how tourism can enhance locals' quality of life and foster respect and understanding between people. By promoting their handicrafts, conserving their traditions, and offering opportunities for cultural exchange through homestays.

One of the most disadvantages of ecotourism is due to the fact that visitors often bring their own automobiles, even when measures are taken to limit the harm that tourism causes, carbon emissions are still expected to rise in the region. While over tourism is still a possibility, the advantages brought about by ecotourism may not be dispersed fairly or evenly, which can worsen inequality. (UNWTO,2013). (Holden, 2005) states that, "ecotourism as a form of mass tourism can lead to congestion, noise pollution, and littering in sensitive natural environments" which can cause overcrowding due to ecotourism which has the potential to draw large numbers of tourists, which could clog up natural areas and worsen the environment. Careful planning is required to manage ecotourism in Central Finland, including establishing restrictions on the number of visitors permitted in specific locations, creating sustainable tourism practices, and informing tourists of the value of responsible travel. Without these precautions, Central Finland's natural ecosystem could be seriously threatened by the adverse effects of overcrowding brought on by ecotourism.

Ecotourism does have the potential to make certain destinations much more popular with tourists, despite efforts to prevent this, and eventually this is likely to lead to some of the traditional problems with tourism manifesting, including the displacing of wildlife or indigenous people. Mismanagement also can occur If not adequately planned and carried out, ecotourism can result in the mismanagement of natural resources. According to Martha (2008), ecosystems may be destroyed, biodiversity may be lost, and residents' living conditions may fall as a result of mismanaging the natural resources.

According to Mowforth & Munt (2015), ecotourism has the potential to widen the gap between the wealthy and the less fortunate which is a financial disparity. Large organizations may profit, while local communities might not see significant gains.

2.3 Benefits of ecotourism to local community

According to (Simm,2011) ecotourism, from the perspective of environmental protection, also benefits from the appreciation of the natural resources found across the world, including landscapes, wildlife, and coral reefs. Additionally, travelers support conservation efforts by paying things like park admission fees and camping fees. The history is conserved while tourists encounter local culture, way of life, and customs in various locations. When businesses such franchise hotel, tour operators, and begin modifying business practices to align with the principles of ecotourism, it is one of the biggest benefits. Recycling, the utilization of renewable energy sources, water conservation initiatives, and secure trash disposal are all growing throughout the world.

As it encourages sustainable tourism that aims to protect the natural environment while bringing economic advantages to the local population, ecotourism can have a substantial positive impact on local communities. The WTO (World Tourism Organization) suggest that “The goal of sustainable tourism should satisfy financial, social, and aesthetic requirements while also life- supporting systems. “(Hemmi, 2005, p80)

In terms of economic advantages businesses including tour operators, transportation providers, lodging establishments, and restaurants can generate cash and jobs for local communities through ecotourism. This can reduce reliance on a single industry and diversify the local economy. Almost anybody can engage in the community activities such that they organize cultural events, sell crafts. When services like clinics, sources of drinkable water, new roads, and electricity are improved, ecotourism in the area also raises the level of living in the community. (Hemmi, 2005, p80).

Lindberg & McKercher (2015), illustrate on how conservation and preservation benefit the local community at large by the preservation of natural and cultural resources is encouraged through ecotourism. As a source of revenue and a tourist draw, the local communities maintain and safeguard the environment and on other hand Cultural preservation make tourists take part in local traditions, customs, and lifestyles, ecotourism which can aid in the preservation of the community's

culture. This could spark interest in and admiration for regional culture, which would help to preserve cultural assets.

Additionally, there are organizations like volunteering where volunteers work with locals to promote their region as an ecotourism destination. The government also contributes by sponsoring local initiatives since it sees the promise in the area. Nature and its species could be preserved for future generations through environmental conservation. (Eco India,2008).

2.4 Ecotourism's connections to other kinds of tourism

The figure 3. shows how ecotourism has relationship with other forms of tourism and its environmental sustainability. This was with regards with Fennell's (2001) he analysis his critical content of ecotourism by showing the relationship of ecotourism to other form of tourism.

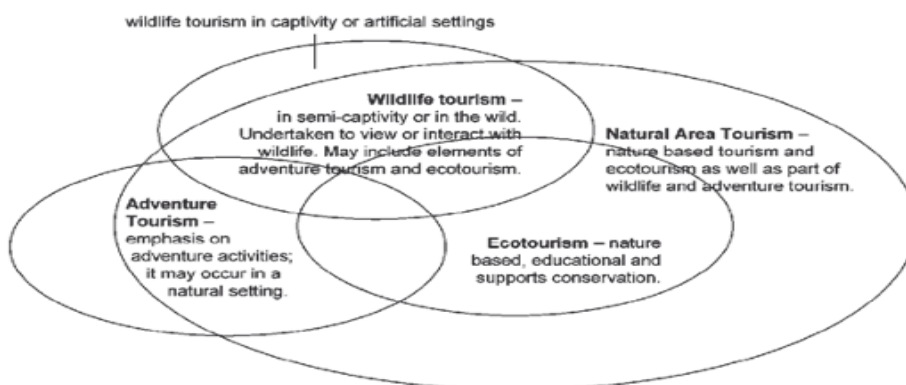


Figure 3. Relationship of ecotourism to other forms of tourism (Fennell's,2001)

The ecotourism's connection to other kind of tourism is described in Fennell's 2001 model, which also encompasses adventure, wildlife, and nature area. Wildlife tourism is the first a category of nature-based travel that emphasizes seeing and engaging with animals in its natural setting. Safaris, animal tours, and excursions to national parks and wildlife reserves can all be included. Many wildlife tourism activities are educational in nature, educating tourists about various animals and their ecosystems. (Fennell,2001).

The second category is the adventure tourism describes travel pursuits entailing dangers and strenuous physical demands. Activities like hiking, mountain climbing, skiing, and aquatic sports can be categorized under this. Adventure tourism frequently entails engaging more actively in nature and wilderness locations, such as through backcountry camping or organized adventures. (Fennell,2001).

Nature area tourism is the third category among the other forms of tourism which involve visits to protected natural areas, such as national parks, reserves, and other protected regions. This can entail engaging in outdoor activity in these places, such as hiking and camping. Tourism in natural areas frequently places an emphasis on environmental awareness and conservation. (Fennell,2001)

3 Nature base tourism business

According to (Brockington& Duffy,2010) the term nature-based tourism has been used to describe” The experience of wild animal and specific landscape tourist who are willing to use their money in transforming natural resources into products.”

Nature-based tourism attracts tourist during their free time for purposes of enjoyment. In Finland nature-based tourism activities which include camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, and visiting of parks among others are organized by the companies responsible for nature tourism field (Hemmi 2005, 356). It includes other components of tourism like adventure tourism sustainable tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism (Weaver,2001). Engaging in nature-based tourism, enable us to create a good conducive environment for tourist so that they can explore new things in the area. (Fennell,2015)

Nature-based tourism plays a major key role for tourist who need to engage in different outdoor activities away from normal activity. All these activities have improved the maintenance of natural resources for the next generation. In nature-base tourism revenue can be created because tourists are prepared to pay money to witness and experience wild animals and particular landscapes, nature-based tourism generates revenue by turning natural resources into products (Brockington & Duffy, 2010; Harrington,2018).

3.1 Wildlife tourism as a nature-based tourism

In general wildlife tourism involves seeing and engaging with wildlife in its natural setting, frequently through the use of safaris or guided excursions. Travelers who want to view the splendor of wildlife and nature as well as learn about conservation initiatives and strategies to preserve the environment support this quickly expanding sector. (Clem & Chris, 2019).

According to Fennell (2014), involves the sustainable use of natural resources and promotes the preservation of wildlife, biodiversity, and local communities. The author points out that wildlife tourism gives special chances for visitors to see and engage with animals, helping local communities economically and increasing public awareness of conservation initiatives.

In the same way, Shackley (2006) describes wildlife tourism as an activity that entails going to and experiencing natural environments as well as seeing wildlife in its native setting. The author makes the distinction between wildlife tourism and other forms of travel that frequently take place in national parks or protected regions, such as bird watching, hiking, and photography.

While there are numerous advantages to wildlife tourism, there are also issues with the ecosystem and animal welfare. According to a study by Higham and Lück (2019), responsible and sustainable tourism methods that put an emphasis on animal care and conservation are essential. The authors contend that appropriate wildlife tourism activities must be promoted through education and awareness-raising campaigns. It can significantly boost local economies and increase public awareness of conservation initiatives, but it also comes with environmental and animal welfare risks. The long-term sustainability of wildlife tourism depends on responsible and sustainable tourism practices.

3.2 Adventure tourism as a nature-based tourism

Adventure tourism is a type of travel that focuses on getting outside and experiencing nature while visiting far-flung or exotic locations. It entails taking part in strenuous activities like zip line, rock climbing, trekking, camping, and white-water rafting, among others. The goal of adventure travel is

to test one's physical and mental limitations by engaging in a novel and thrilling activity or setting. (Mason, & Johnston, 2015)

Adventure tourism includes nature-based tourism, which involves interacting with the natural world. This might involve going on hikes, looking for wildlife, watching birds, and discovering natural treasures like caverns and waterfalls. The natural habitats available in nature-based adventure tourism locations are diverse and include national parks, deserts, islands, mountains, woods, and waterways. (Fennell,1999).

According to Fennell (2015), as more tourists look for one-of-a-kind, genuine, and transforming experiences while choosing their leisure activities. As more people look to connect with nature and experience real cultural and natural experiences, there is an increasing demand for adventure tourism goods that focus on the natural world.

Adventure tourism is essential for environmental preservation and sustainable development, according to a Higham and Shelton (2011). Through the use of responsible tourism practices, adventure tourism may boost local economies and encourage the preservation of natural resources.

3.3 Sustainable practices

The use of tactics and policies that seek to reduce adverse effects on the environment and maximize the socioeconomic advantages for local people are referred to as sustainable practices in nature-based tourism. Conservation of biodiversity, community engagement, and environmental stewardship are integrated to guarantee that tourism operations are conducted in an ethical and sustainable way. (Becker & Makens,2012).

Sustainable tourism is to maximize good effects while minimizing negative effects on the environment, economy, and society. This can be accomplished by promoting local culture and traditions, safeguarding natural and cultural resources, planning and managing tourism operations responsibly, and involving and empowering local communities and tourists. Additionally, sustainable tourism aims to provide economic gains that are equally shared among all parties involved and to give tourists enriching and delightful experiences that deepen their understanding of the local environment

and culture. The ultimate objective is to develop a tourist sector that is environmentally and economically sustainable and that supports the protection and conservation of the world's natural and cultural heritage. (World Tourism Organization, 1993).

Natural resources and ecosystems are discussed in relation to green tourism practices of preserving and guarding these priceless resources for the long-term advantage of both the environment and the travel and tourism sector. In order to create and put into practice sustainable tourism practices, a variety of stakeholders, including governments, organizations, corporations, and local communities, are involved in this discussion. According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 1999) recognize the significance of sustainable tourism and has incorporated environmental protection into its Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. The law places a strong emphasis on the necessity of reducing adverse environmental effects, safeguarding natural and cultural assets, and assisting local communities.

Sustainable tourism encourages collaboration between various stakeholders, including government bodies, local communities, tourism operators, and environmental organizations. By involving all relevant parties in planning, decision-making, and implementation, sustainable solutions can be developed to address the complex challenges of tourism development because by combining the talents, resources, and information of various stakeholders, collaboration fosters enhanced efficiency, effectiveness, and creativity in tourist efforts.

In addition, it encourages a more equitable distribution of benefits and increases communities' capacity to actively take part in the management and planning of tourism activities. Collaboration and stakeholder involvement are important aspects of sustainable tourism that support an inclusive, participative, and integrated strategy for the development of the tourism industry. Working together, many stakeholders may advance environmentally and socially responsible tourism that improves visitor experiences while also helping local communities and the environment. (UNWTO 1999)

Visitor education and awareness providing tourists with information and expertise about the local environmental, social, and cultural settings they are visiting. The aim of visitor education is to promote responsible and sustainable tourism activities while also raising visitors' understanding of and

appreciation for the natural and cultural resources they are utilizing. Sustainable tourism strives to increase visitor awareness and promote ethical conduct. This includes teaching visitors on cultural and showing respect local population and reducing their environmental impact while traveling. Visitors can actively help preserve sites by encouraging sustainable behavior. (UNWTO,2015)

Weaver, D. B. (2018), states that “visitor education focuses on educating tourists about the natural, cultural, and social aspects of the destination, awesomeness highlights the significance of generating distinctive and unforgettable experiences for visitors that are socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable, in contrast to visitor education, which focuses on informing tourists about the natural, cultural, and social aspects of the location.”

According to David and Laura (2014), work examines the conceptual underpinnings of sustainable tourism and offers examples of sustainable practices in many tourism-related industries. It encompasses subjects like ecotourism, cultural tourism, sustainable development, and nature-based tourism, among others.

According to Fennell (2008), ecotourism, a branch of nature-based tourism that places a strong emphasis on environmental protection and neighborhood involvement. Fennell covers ecotourism's guiding concepts and methods, as well as sustainable management techniques, the need of environmental education, and the possible advantages and difficulties of putting ecotourism efforts into effect.

4 National parks in Finland

A national park in Finland is a protected area set aside by the government of Finland. The diverse ecosystems, flora, animals, and geological formations found inside national parks are all subject to conservation efforts. They encourage ecotourism and ecological preservation while offering possibilities for scientific study, environmental education, and outdoor leisure. To preserve the biological integrity and cultural value of these protected sites, Metsähallitus works in partnership with numerous governmental organizations, local communities, and stakeholders. (Peippo,2016).

There are various national parks in Finland, a nation recognized for its magnificent scenery and dedication to environmental preservation. Finland has 40 national parks which together occupy 10% of its total land area that collectively occupy a space of around 9,900 square kilometers. Metsähallitus, the Finnish state-owned company in charge of overseeing state-owned lands and waters, manages these parks. In terms of their landscapes, ecology, and recreational opportunities, Finland's national parks are varied. They include a variety of natural landscape elements, such as woods, lakes, rivers, wetlands, marshes, and coastal regions. Since each park has distinctive qualities and draws of its own, they are well-liked vacation spots for nature lovers, hikers, campers, and wildlife watchers. (Finland National Parks Association,2021).

According to metsähallitus (2021), the National Park, which is situated in the Lapland region, is one of Finland's most well-known national parks. With a total area of over 2,850 square kilometers, it is the largest national park in Finland. It is Finland's longest free-flowing river, and the park's unspoiled wilderness and open spaces are its most renowned features. The park's rich cultural past and breathtaking natural beauty can be discovered by visitors through hiking, canoeing, or going on guided tours.

The National Park, which lies close to Helsinki, the capital city of Finland, is another noteworthy national park. With its lush forests, serene lakes, and rocky cliffs, Nuuksio provides a pleasant refuge despite being close to the city. For day outings and outdoor pursuits like hiking, berry picking, and birdwatching, the park is a well-liked location.

Overall, Finland's national parks provide a wide variety of experiences for those who enjoy the outdoors and the natural world. These parks offer chances to commune with nature and take in the splendor of Finland's wildness, whether it's hiking through pristine woods, canoeing along beautiful rivers, or seeing animals in its native habitats. (metsähallitus 2021).

4.1 National parks in Central Finland

There are four national parks in central Finland highlight the area's varied topography and unmatched beauty. These parks provide a variety of leisure activities as chances to discover the region's distinctive ecosystems and cultural heritage. While encouraging environmentally friendly

tourist practices, Central Finland provides a variety of ecotourism activities and places that let travelers enjoy the area's distinctive natural heritage. Three national parks in Central Finland are managed by Metsähallitus, the Finnish government agency in charge of looking after state-owned lands and rivers.

One of the most prominent national parks in Central Finland is Pyhä-Häkki National Park located in the western part of Central Finland. This park, which is close to the town of Saarijärvi, has a total size of roughly 13 square kilometers. It is renowned for its historic attractions, pristine lakes, and old forests. The Pyhä-Häkki ridge, a notable geological feature in the region, is the source of the park's name. Hiking along clearly indicated routes, fishing in the lakes, and camping in authorized locations are all options for visitors to enjoy the park. Several lean-to shelters and fire pits are available in the park for picnics and overnight stays. Pyhä-Häkki National Park covers an area of 13 square kilometers. The park is known for its old-growth forests, tranquil lakes, and prehistoric rock paintings. Visitors can enjoy hiking, fishing, and camping in the park. (Sorjonen, 2020).

The Salamajärvi National Park is another noteworthy national park in Central Finland. This park, which is close to the town of Kivijärvi, has an area of around 62 square kilometers. It is distinguished by its enormous marshes, old-growth forests, and remoteness. Numerous animals, including moose, lynx, and several bird species, can be found in the park. Hiking the park's paths, kayaking the lakes, or fishing the rivers are all enjoyable ways for visitors to explore the area. A wilderness lodge and camping spots are also available in the park for overnight visits. (Nurmi, & Ylitalo, 2016).

Another well-liked site in Central Finland is the Leivonmäki National Park. This park, which is close to the town of Joutsa, has an area of around 28 square kilometers. It is renowned for having a variety of scenery, including marshes, lakes, and woodlands. Hiking, gathering berries, and fishing are just a few of the outdoor enthusiasts' favorite activities available in the park. Visitors can also enjoy the well-marked pathways, lean-to shelters, and camping spots there. (Finnish national park, 2003)

In general, the national parks in Central Finland offer chances for outdoor enthusiasts and lovers of nature to take in the beauty of the area's natural surroundings. These parks provide a variety of experiences that highlight the distinctive qualities of Central Finland's landscapes and ecosystems,

whether it is trekking through old woods, paddling in clean lakes, or exploring cultural heritage sites. (Finnish national park ,2003).

4.2 The current stage analysis in National parks and nature-based tourism

Leivonmäki National Park and Konnevesi National Park in Central Finland draw a sizable number of tourists every year, especially in the summer when outdoor activities like hiking, camping, and fishing are common. There have been worries in recent years about how tourism affects the natural ecology and cultural history of national parks, including issues about littering, erosion, disturbing wildlife, and destroying historical sites. In order to encourage sustainable tourist practices and nature conservation and tourism development, national park authorities have been compelled by these problems to take action. (Finnish national park ,2003)

Increasing visitor numbers in recent years, to Finnish national parks has significantly increased, particularly those in Central Finland. (Metsähallitus, 2020)

Nature-based tourism is where the popularity of nature-based tourist activities in Finnish national parks can be credited with the increase in visitor numbers. With its abundance of lakes, forests, and hiking routes, Central Finland provides many options for outdoor pursuits like hiking, camping, wildlife viewing, and fishing. National parks in the area, like Isojärvi and Pyhä-Häkki, draw outdoor enthusiasts and thrill-seekers. (Metsähallitus, 2020).

Economic impact the region has benefited economically because of the increased visitor volume. The local economy benefits from the money spent by visitors to national parks on lodging, dining, transportation, and other tourism-related activities. For instance, according to a study by the University of Eastern Finland, the overall economic impact of visitor expenditure in Central Finland's five national parks in 2017 was estimated to be around 15 million euros (University of Eastern Finland, 2018).

Partnerships and collaboration of various stakeholders, including local communities, tourism businesses, and environmental organizations, collaborate to maintain Finland's national parks. To improve the tourist experience and ensure sustainable park administration, initiatives like cooperative marketing campaigns, stakeholder workshops, and the formation of local alliances have been put into place. (Huxham & Vangen,2005).

4.3 Tourism cooperation in protected area in Finland.

In order to promote responsible tourism while preserving the natural and cultural legacy of the protected areas, numerous stakeholders collaborate on tourism in Finland's protected areas. Metsähallitus, the government agency in charge of managing state-owned lands and waters, local communities, travel companies, and conservation groups are the main parties active in tourist cooperation in Finland's protected areas. (Metsähallitus, 2020).

The Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment Ministry (2020) states that providing visitors with top-notch tourism experiences while balancing the preservation of natural and cultural assets is a key component of sustainable tourism in protected areas. The Ministry acknowledges that tourism may boost local economies and communities, but it must be carefully planned and controlled to prevent harm to the environment and communities.

In Finland, Metsähallitus is setting the standard for promoting eco-friendly travel. In order to provide sustainable tourist goods and services that are in line with conservation objectives, the organization adopts a proactive strategy that entails close partnership with regional communities and tourism enterprises. Metsähallitus has created rules for eco-friendly tourism in national parks and other protected areas as part of this initiative, and these standards act as a foundation for tourism cooperation in these regions. (Metsähallitus, 2020).

Local communities play a significant role in tourism cooperation in Finland's protected areas. For instance, the local Sámi community in the Lapland settlement of Hetta participates in the development and promotion of tourism goods that highlight its distinctive natural resources and cultural history. Visitors to Hetta can engage in reindeer herding activities and learn about Sámi culture and traditions. The Sámi are reindeer herders. (Mei-Fen ,2015)

Additionally, tourism-related enterprises collaborate with protected areas in Finland. In Finland, for instance, many ecotourism companies follow sustainable tourism guidelines like limiting waste and

lowering their carbon footprint. Some companies go above and beyond these fundamental ideas by providing trips that support sustainability, such wilderness tours powered by renewable energy. (Smith, 2022)

Furthermore, through disseminating knowledge, conducting research, and advocating for the preservation of the natural and cultural legacy of protected areas, conservation organizations in Finland are aiming to encourage the use of sustainable tourism practices. According to Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC) (2010), for instance, has issued recommendations for sustainable tourism in protected areas.

5 Research implementation

This section will go into detail about the research, how it was conducted, and how it was created. In the first section, the definition and various forms of research will be clarified and enable the demonstration of the research and evaluate the quality of the understanding the significance of methodology and findings.

5.1 Research method/ qualitative method

A systematic process used by researchers to collect, evaluate, and interpret data in order to gain fresh perspectives, information, and understanding of a particular phenomenon or topic in tourism sector. It is a crucial instrument for increasing knowledge and creating theories that can be applied to solve issues and make wise judgments across a range of academic disciplines.

The type of research topic or phenomena being studied, resource availability, time restraints, ethical issues, and ethical concerns all have an impact on the choice of research method. Whatever the method, effective research involves careful planning, close attention to detail, and a strict methodology for gathering and analyzing data.

To guarantee accurate and valid results and develop knowledge in a variety of academic subjects, it is crucial to apply the right research methodologies. In this thesis qualitative method was used to gather more information about the local business/ companies supports and promotes ecotourism

in Central Finland. In this thesis the author used qualitative research centered on investigating people's subjective experiences as well as their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about the phenomenon being studied.

According to Braun & Clarke, (2019), states that qualitative research is a research approach that utilizes non-numerical data in examining social phenomena. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a method for investigating, understanding, and interpreting human experiences and the meaning people give to them. In addition, qualitative research was conducted through secondary data and empirical information, and it was applied by semi-structured interviews.

5.2 Validity and reliability

Validity in thesis writing describes the level to which the study's results measures or examines (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). It is the degree to which the research findings are reliable, accurate, and can be generalized to the population or phenomena being studied. (Kerlinger & Lee ,2000).

The author of the thesis has acted relying on the results and largely relied on the data gathered from interviews and follow up questions. The perspectives, experiences, opinions, and recommendations of the participants provided the basis for the data collection, which was directly tied to the study topic. The author guarantee that the research study accurately records and assesses the targeted variables, establishes causal linkages, was applied to other contexts, and generates trustworthy results.

In this thesis, the author indicates the reliability, stability, and consistency of the study findings. It describes the degree to which the results of a study may be verified by other researchers who employ the same techniques and procedures. This is a crucial component of research since it guarantees the validity and reliability of the findings. The degree to which the accuracy with which the findings represent the data with precision is refers to reliability by (Smith and Noble, 2014).

However, it is important to note that reliability does not guarantee the validity of the research. Reliability suggests that the study's results are consistent and replicable, but it does not necessarily mean that the findings accurately reflect the reality being studied. Validity, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the study measures what it intends to measure. (Kerlinger & Lee ,2000). The

research methodologies, the analytical process, and the results have all been incorporated and discussed by the author in this thesis. The results also have a theoretical foundation, and all of the information has been considered in light of that theory to support the conclusions.

Limitation

Interview data significantly depends on the subjective viewpoints, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants. Due to participants' possible memory lapses, social desirability bias, or individual interpretations of the questions, this intrinsic subjectivity might add bias into the findings. Additionally, by accidentally influencing participants' responses through their tone, body language, or unintentional leading questions, researchers may unknowingly contribute to bias but as mentioned earlier there is no biasedness in the thesis. It follows the validity and reliability of the thesis. The ability to generalize of the results is constrained by the limited sample size of qualitative investigations, which is frequently a result of time and budget limitations. The conclusions drawn from a particular participant group might not apply to other circumstances or the whole community. Therefore, care should be taken when extending the results to different situations or people or making sweeping generalizations about them. The interviews were collected in free and fair manner in that the participant were happy to be part of the interview.

5.3 Data collection

The author of the thesis decided to use the semi-structure interviews as a way of data collection. A semi- structure interviews is used as a qualitative method because it offers a way to gather rich in-depth data by allowing the interviewees to share their experience, thoughts and opinions in more natural and conversational manner. In additional the flexibility of semi- structure interviews allows the author to adapt their questions and approaches to better suit the need of each interviewees making it a highly versatile research tool.

A semi-structured interview starts with a general structure of the subjects to be addressed, but the interviewer is also given more leeway and room for improvisation based on the participant's responses. Due to its ability to provide a more in-depth examination of the participant's thoughts,

experiences, and opinions, this style of interview is frequently employed in qualitative research projects. The first question or statement in a semi-structured interview typically introduces the main subject to be covered. A series of pre-planned questions that serve as the interview's structure come next. These inquiries are frequently open-ended, allowing the interviewee to give thorough answers. In order to look more into a topic of interest or obtain clarification, the interviewer may also offer follow-up questions.

According to William & Lisa (2006), they discuss how this method allows researchers to gather rich and detailed data by providing a balance between structure and openness in their interviews. They emphasize that semi-structured interviews enable researchers to gain in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perspectives, and meanings attached to phenomena.

The interviews conducted for the thesis using teams & zoom video call for one interview and the other interview was conducted from teams, but it was audio due to network which was not stable, we could not make a video and I had one written interview. This method was used for interviews to make it possible and easily reachable than face-to-face method. The duration for the two interviews which was done through zoom and team was approximately 42mins each and the written one took about one week to get feedback because the calendar for interviewee was fully pack. The mode of communication throughout the interview was English and an Email communication with written interview. Both interviews were recorded to gain insight for later reporting results by transcript it papers to make my analysis easier. The interview template was presented in appendix 1 consisting of main question which had 10 questions in total and appendix 2 consisting of both main question and follow up question which was submitted to written interview.

5.4 Data analysis

The process of evaluating research data gathered from multiple sources, for instance interviews that was collected was used as data analysis in a thesis. The goal of data analysis was to get important conclusions and insights from the data to confirm or disprove the study questions. According to Thorne (2000), discuss several steps of data analysis mentioned that data analysis in qualitative research typically involves several key steps on how to analysis data. These steps may vary slightly depending on the research approach or methodology used, but they are generally the focus of the

paper may be different. However, the steps generally outline a common approach to analyzing qualitative data.

The interviewee was from the companies who practices ecotourism and are doing ecotourism activities. After the interviews the author went through the recording and transcription. Thematic analysis was used in which it was coded and put same answers into same colour and later it was analyse in the table. They where from both the main question and follow up question for the validity, dependability, and accuracy of the outcomes. Additionally, it validates the legitimacy of the research project and offers insight into the interpretation of the data gathered.

6 Results

In interviews I got to know more about benefit of ecotourism on business by gathering information from different company representative and from the owners who are doing entrepreneur in ecotourism activities. There were certain commonalities between the answers from the interview and on other hand what is needed to be improve in the future. The results section of a thesis presents the key findings of the research, supported by data analysis and interpretation (Brown & Lee, 2019). The interviews were categorized into three phases. Phase one presenting the interviews results then phase two coding of in the results the phase three analyzing the follow up question on the table.

First phase

Presenting interviews for the interviewee of the three companies.

Presenting the interview from the companies

During the interview day we went into details and talk about general issue concerning ecotourism especially how the tourism companies run their business and using ecotourism. The questions were sent in advance to the interviewees for them to get prepared and gather more answers for the interviews. It went well and it creates a comfortable environment for the day. Each question had a follow up question. Below is a first part of the interview.

The introduction part of the interview was that I started introduction by myself the way I did in the cover letter of the email before. After which the interviewer introduces his/herself and what he does in the company and life experience in tourism industry. The first interviewer was from DMO company she is a destination specialist in the company, and she has been working in the company for 6 years now and the task includes international marketing for B to B, developing sustainable tourism for Central Finland and culture tourism. Interviewee B is an entrepreneur doing a forest yoga for families and the company is located at Leivonmäki National Park and it covers the outdoor activities. From her I got the written interview. Interviewee C was an entrepreneur in Leppävesi lake around national park producing different activities for travelers, foreigners, and Finnish people. My client is versatile. I have 10ha for activities, 1 cottage and 1 farm and, I have pet places for 14 people and 20 accommodations.

The second part was the question about the kind of threats that interviewee A sees in the future of ecotourism, and she responded that well, Hard to see at this point because we have few tourists now. And maybe in the future the number will not increase too fast. Tourists in general is the threat to the world as they take a walk to nature for example in the forest. If the amount of tourists increases Central Finland has some problems in national parks for instance especially people could not travel abroad, they could travel more to the parks and the number was high but now it has stabilized after COVID. Interviewee B had a different opinion about it and responded that globally climate change and mass tourism. Locally building wind turbines and possible mining. While interviewee C also had a different thought about it and responded that threats in the future of ecotourism will be diseases, attitudes, political situations towards travelling, pollution, immigration, different pandemics, health problems, lower crises/ security, religion, and military crises.

The third question was about how does ecotourism contribute to the development of small businesses and entrepreneurial opportunities for local people in Central Finland? And interviewer A answered that there were all possibilities on their hands and will risk for selling and marketing for example picking the berries, mushrooms while interviewer B's response was especially for nature tourism entrepreneurs, operating in national parks and in their immediate vicinity, ecotourism is significant. Cabin accommodation is usually a side business for agricultural entrepreneurs in areas where traditional agriculture is challenging. Eco-tourists also like to buy locally grown products and appreciate, for

example, handmade items and interviewer C said that doing barter and trade will contribute to the development of small business.

Phase two

The process of coding questions with similar answers from the interviews. From the table the author coded all the responses with the same answer to one color and different response were not coded.

Table 1. Responses from the interviews

questions	Company A (DMO)	Company B (entrepreneur)	Company C (entrepreneur)
What specific steps or initiatives does your company/ hotel takes to minimize its environmental footprint and promotes sustainability?	Doing waste recycling.	We participate in the Sustainable Travel Finland or STF program. Although only at the beginning of the path. Especially in the waste sorting guidelines, efforts have been made to make sorting as easy as possible for customers.	Doing waste recycling.
How do you involve and engage local community in your ecotourism initiatives?	Past history we have done initiatives and the most important internationally which was recognized was connecting the local to find companies which	I mainly market rye bread courses to local people. I have also taught forest yoga to groups of schoolchildren, for example. Some of	The company is small, and farming is countryside put if there is possibility, I will join them

	was open during the covid.	the cottage customers are locals.	
How do you ensure that the natural areas or attraction visited during your ecotourism activities are protected and conserved?	Market other popular national parks to avoid overtourism.	By sharing clear instructions. By making waste sorting as easy and clear as possible.	sharing clear instructions and by making waste sorting as easy and clear as possible.
How do you educate and raise awareness among your staff and guest about importance of ecotourism and sustainability?	Have specific page called sustainable Jyväskylä to educate the on what is sustainability.	The cabins have brochures about the national park, tour etiquette and recycling, as well as waste sorting instructions.	Have projects and educates them on how to keep the community clean
Do you have specific policies or guideline in place to reduce waste, conserve energy and manage water resources?	Doing waste recycling.	Written instructions in the waste containers and I also revise the instructions when receiving the customers.	Written instructions in the waste containers and I also revise the instructions when receiving the customers.

Phase three

Showing analysis of follow up question in a table form. Same response from the same questions were coded in the same colour, the same question with different response were uncoded. Then there was empty box with no response that meaning that interviewer will response later.

Table 2. Analysis of the follow up questions.

Follow up questions for question	Company A	Company B	Company C
What possible implication would these threats have on the ecotourism industry?	Mass tourism increases littering, parking areas and other buildings.	climate change upsets natural conditions, increases natural disasters, changes ecosystems. Mass tourism increases littering, parking areas and other buildings.	
Are there any particular region or aspects of ecotourism that you anticipate being more vulnerable to these threats?	The surrounding environment of national parks affects the national parks.	The surrounding environment of national parks affects the national parks.	Selling and marketing weakest point.
Do you have specific example on how ecotourism has directly benefited the economic well-being of local communities?	Creates jobs for young people for example local guide	Renting the equipment is also a good addition for cottage entrepreneurs	Renting the equipment is also a good addition for cottage entrepreneurs
Are there any challenges associated with the economic impacts of ecotourism in this region?	Marketing is always challenging	Marketing is always challenging	Marketing is always challenging

Is there any specific small business or entrepreneurial opportunities that have flourished due to ecotourism in Central Finland?	Yes. Petäjavesi Hakaman sheep farm	Unfortunately, I cannot give an example of such a company.	Build places for future ecological
Are there any challenges or barriers that local face when trying to establish ecotourism-related business?	Obtaining initial capital, forming a customer base, surprises caused by external factors that cannot be influenced by oneself.	Marketing in small businesses is always challenging. Obtaining initial capital, forming a customer base, surprises caused by external factors that cannot be influenced by oneself	Marketing in small businesses is always challenging surprises caused by external factors that cannot be influenced by oneself
How to incorporate ecotourism with other sectors and industries to attain more balanced and equitable development in Central Finland? Is their specific example or strategies in central Finland?	There could be a technical visit by people from abroad to learn about Finnish ecological	Visit Jyväskylä Region is working on marketing. Sustainable Travel Finland program.	Have funds to build new places.
In your opinion what would be the key benefits for the region if ecotourism were better integrated?	Increase the number of overnight stays.	It will benefit the region by increasing the number of overnight stays.	Marketing would be centralized.
Are there any specific target audience or markets for these activities?	Marketing organization and doing sell promotion.	Forest yoga for families with children, Rye bread courses are suitable for everyone interested in	Recreations events, families and travelers.

		baking and tradition, regardless of age and gender.	
What is some challenge or obstacles faced when developing and offering this ecotourism?	Interaction, core business is different from ecotourism.	I can offer forest yoga only from spring to autumn when it is not raining. There has been very little marketing	Money and power
What are some of the challenges faced in implementing these initiative's and how you have overcome them?		Making an affordable and ecological electricity contract is challenging, a solar electricity system was in the plans, but at this stage too expensive.	attitude
How does engagement and participation of guests or visitors contribute to these sustainability efforts?		waste sorting and recycling eases the maintenance of the cottages.	waste sorting and recycling eases the maintenance of the cottages.
What specific benefits do the local communities derive from being involved in ecotourism?		A touch of authentic Finnish food tradition while participating in a rye bread course.	
Are there any challenges or obstacles faced when it comes to involving and engaging local's communities, and if so, how do you address them?		Reachability. Finding a suitable time and reaching people interested in the service. We need to invest more in advertising.	Small business sometimes cannot attractive business.

<p>What specific actions or practices do you implement to minimize the ecological impact of your ecotourism activities?</p>		<p>Digital marketing, communication and invoicing. Recycling and locality are preferred in construction, maintenance measures waste sorting and all operations.</p>	<p>Follow different directive and law.</p>
<p>Are there any collaboration or partnership you have established with local conservation organization or authorities to support your efforts?</p>		<p>Cooperation agreement with Metsähallitus on working in connection with Leivonmäki National Park. I belong to the board of the Friends of Leivonmäki National Park association as a deputy member. We have been members of Leky since its foundation.</p>	<p>Meeting every month as a company commune to discuss ecological environment.</p>
<p>How do you ensure that your staff is well informed and trained on ecotourism principles and sustainability practices?</p>	<p>Gathering stories from the companies and trying to promote those stories about what the company are doing on sustainable travel.</p>	<p>The company has no other personnel than the owners/entrepreneurs</p>	<p>Educate them on how to keep the community clean.</p>
<p>What kind of educational materials or activities do you provide to your guest to enhance their understanding of the importance of ecotourism and sustainability?</p>	<p>Training the company by giving free of charge training by paying profession to come and teach them on sustainability.</p>	<p>Paper brochures about the national park. Poster about hiking etiquette in the cabins.</p>	<p>Posters about the company.</p>

<p>How do you ensure that these policies or guideline are effectively communicated and enforced among staff and visitors?</p>	<p>Reduce number of printed materials.</p>	<p>Written instructions on re-cycling and sorting.</p>	<p>Written instructions on re-cycling.</p>
<p>Any additional information about your sustainability policies and guidelines or any future plans or goals relating to waste, energy and water management?</p>	<p>Going for eco-compass certificate.</p>	<p>STF- program manual.</p>	<p>Highlight the clean nature.</p>

7 Discussion

From the gathered information on research study of the role of local business/companies in ecotourism in Central Finland shows how they can widen their skills to promote ecotourism. The responses shows that ecotourism can have positive impacts on local businesses in Central Finland, creating new economic opportunities while also promoting sustainable practices and preserving it. Income generation for small enterprises in Central Finland, ecotourism may open up new revenue streams.

In Central Finland, ecotourism has the potential to bring forth new employment opportunities. To meet the demands of ecotourists, local companies may need to hire more staff. According to research responses job development in ecotourism is frequently focused on a variety of skill sets, including guiding and interpretation as well as culinary and hotel services. Ecotourism can help with economic diversification in local companies can lessen their reliance on traditional industries, like forestry or agriculture, and draw tourists who are interested in nature-based activities and experiences by providing distinctive and environmentally friendly tourism experiences.

Ecotourism in Central Finland requires distinctive and sustainable goods and services by creating and providing ecologically sustainable and culturally absorbing experiences, local businesses can profit from ecotourism. From the gathered response ecotourism frequently stimulates product development and innovation, resulting in the development of new services in the areas of lodging, dining, transportation, and other industries. Businesses in the area may receive financial incentives from ecotourism to support conservation efforts. Businesses benefit from protecting the natural and cultural surroundings because they draw ecotourists who seek for places with real cultural history and clean ecosystems.

The success of ecotourism firms frequently depends on cooperation with regional communities. This because this shows how the ecotourism boost the local pride, empowerment, and community involvement in other locations through local businesses /companies. By using local labor, supporting local vendors, and funding community development projects, local businesses can help to engage the neighborhood. Promoting and preserving regional customs and cultures can be accomplished through also by ecotourism because local enterprises in Central Finland can promote their customs, handicrafts, folklore, and distinctive cultural heritage by participating in ecotourism activities; this generates economic benefits while conserving regional uniqueness.

On other hand Ecotourism can aid in the development of a distinctive regional brand and identity for Central Finland. Emphasizing the region's natural beauty and ecotourism options aids in drawing in a specific target market interested in ecotourism. Local businesses can gain from this branding and marketing by becoming more visible and drawing more visitors who expressly look for ecotourism sites.

8 Recommendation in the future

Ecotourism gives Central Finland the chance to diversify its economy by drawing tourists drawn to the area's natural and cultural features. This may lessen the area's reliance on conventional sectors like forestry or agriculture. The increased demand for local companies' goods and services might be advantageous for accommodations, restaurants, and shops. On other hand the promotion of

Regional cultures, traditions, and cultural heritage is frequently a part of ecotourism. This could promote the production and sale of traditional handicrafts, cuisine, and art by local companies, promoting the preservation of culture and providing work for local producers, artists, and artisans.

Local companies can integrate to work together and with nearby suppliers via ecotourism. For instance, local farmers, fisherman, and craftspeople can provide the products and supplies for hotels and restaurants. This promotes a greater sense of sustainability and authenticity while strengthening ties with the neighborhood, boosting revenues, and promoting local goods. Ecotourism can create opportunities for local businesses to enhance their skills and capacities. This can be done through training programs on sustainable practices, hospitality management, customer service, and marketing. By improving their skills and knowledge, local businesses can offer high-quality services that meet the expectations of ecotourists, resulting in positive reviews, recommendations, and repeat visits.

As ecotourism grows in Central Finland, there is a need to develop and upgrade local infrastructure. This can involve expanding transit systems, building eco-friendly lodging, establishing nature paths, and building visitor centers. These improvements support the neighborhood's service and construction sectors, creating jobs and boosting the local economy. Ecotourism can motivate locals to start their own businesses and create distinctive experiences or services to meet the demands of environmentally friendly tourists. This can include eco-lodges, adventure sports, sustainable farming practices, and guided nature tours. Encouraging entrepreneurship fosters local innovation, aids in diversifying the tourism offers, and draws in a wider spectrum of visitors, all of which are advantageous to a variety of neighborhood businesses. Implementing these recommendations can create sustainable economic growth, enhance cultural preservation, and foster a stronger sense of community in the region.

9 Conclusion

The researched topic was about the role of local businesses in ecotourism in Central Finland .The thesis has answer on the questions on how the local business/companies support and promoting ecotourism and another was about the challenges and opportunities brought by local business/companies through ecotourism to people in Central Finland whereby the entrepreneurs 'gave out their

objectives that in the research marketing is always challenging, how to bring the services to the customers' attention because the pandemic completely prevented the arrival of international customers and caused major challenges for event- and accommodation companies that relied on foreign customers. We can see again the year-round nature of tourism also causes challenges because the seasons changes when it winters there is low income for tourist to the region. By concentrating marketing with small and medium-sized companies throughout the region, by emphasizing the principles of sustainable development in all business activities. Nature tourism companies could be trendsetters here.

Local business /companies promote eco-tourism by safe-guarding and protecting the environmental for nature-based tourism without any disturbance of natural resources and to fosters the sustainability of ecosystem and have a benefit in return while doing their ecotourism activities. The area places a strong emphasis on eco-friendly tourism methods that benefit nearby communities and reduce environmental damage. Eco-friendly lodges and cottages that complement the surrounding landscape are common lodging options. Furthermore, a lot of the area's tour companies follow moral guidelines for seeing and conserving wildlife. There are many different types of ecosystems in Central Finland, such as waterways, pure lakes, and forest ecosystems. Because of the region's rich biodiversity, nature enthusiasts come from all over the world to explore and enjoy its distinctive flora and fauna.

One thing from the interview analysis shows how economic advantage Draw attention to the numerous financial benefits that ecotourism provides to regional companies. This might involve rising income, the creation of jobs, and better infrastructure. And there will be more money from ecotourism initiatives, such as escorted nature excursions, leisure pursuits, and eco-friendly lodgings to support the regional economy. For instances there are small entrepreneur that has prosperous due to ecotourism and have flourished in Central Finland encouraging more to start the business. Especially in the waste sorting guidelines, efforts have been made to make sorting as easy as possible for customers.

In conclusion, Marketing would be centralized so that the small businesses could take advantage of the proximity of national parks and produce even more and better services in a sustainable way for

customers who value sustainability. The principles of sustainable development would become available to all actors in the region. This will make more tourists to the place and there will be more income to the companies and creations of jobs in the tourism industry due to ecotourism.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Thesis questionnaire.

1. What kind of threats do you see in the future of ecotourism?
2. How does ecotourism impact the economic well-being of local communities in central Finland?
3. How does ecotourism contribute to the development of small businesses and entrepreneurial opportunities for local people in Central Finland?
4. How can ecotourism be better integrated with other sectors and industries to promote more balanced and equitable development in central Finland?
5. What ecotourism activities do you offer?
6. What specific steps or initiatives does your company/ hotel takes to minimize its environmental footprint and promotes sustainability?
7. How do you involve and engage local community in your ecotourism initiatives?
8. How do you ensure that the natural areas or attraction visited during your ecotourism activities are protected and conserved?
9. How do you educate and raise awareness among your staff and guest about importance of ecotourism and sustainability?
10. Do you have specific policies or guideline in place to reduce waste, conserve energy and manage water resources?

Appendix 2. Thesis questionnaire with supporting questions

1. What kind of threats do you see in the future of ecotourism?
 - a) What possible implication would these threats have on the ecotourism industry?
 - b) Explain how these threats may arise or amplified in future?
 - c) Are there any particular region or aspects of ecotourism that you anticipate being more vulnerable to these threats?

2. How does ecotourism impact the economic well-being of local communities in central Finland?
 - a) Do you have specific example on how ecotourism has directly benefited the economic well- being of local communities?
 - b) What are the key factors contributing to maximizing the positive economic effects of ecotourism on local community?
 - c) Are there any challenges associated with the economic impacts of ecotourism in this region?

3. How does ecotourism contribute to the development of small businesses and entrepreneurial opportunities for local people in Central Finland?
 - a) Is there any specific small business or entrepreneurial opportunities that have flourished due to ecotourism in Central Finland?
 - b) Are there any challenges or barriers that local face when trying to establish ecotourism-related business?

4. How can ecotourism be better integrated with other sectors and industries to promote more balanced and equitable development in central Finland?
 - a) How ecotourism can be better integrated with other sectors and industries to attain more balanced and equitable development in Central Finland? Is their specific example or strategies in central Finland?
 - b) In your opinion what would be the key benefits for the region if ecotourism were better integrated?

5. What ecotourism activities do you offer?

- a) Are there any specific target audience or markets for these activities?
 - b) What is some challenge or obstacles faced when developing and offering this ecotourism?
6. What specific steps or initiatives does your company/ hotel takes to minimize its environmental footprint and promotes sustainability?
- a) What are some of the challenges faced in implementing these initiative's and how you have overcome them?
 - b) How does engagement and participation of guests or visitors contribute to these sustainability efforts?
7. How do you involve and engage local community in your ecotourism initiatives?
- a) What specific benefits do the local communities derive from being involved in ecotourism?
 - b) Are there any challenges or obstacles faced when it comes to involving and engaging local's communities, and if so, how do you address them?
8. How do you ensure that the natural areas or attraction visited during your ecotourism activities are protected and conserved?
- a) What specific actions or practices do you implement to minimize the ecological impact of your ecotourism activities?
 - b) Are there any collaboration or partnership you have established with local conservation organization or authorities to support your efforts?
9. How do you educate and raise awareness among your staff and guest about importance of ecotourism and sustainability?
- a) How do you ensure that your staff is well informed and trained on ecotourism principles and sustainability practices?
 - b) What kind of educational materials or activities do you provide to your guest to enhance their understanding of the importance of ecotourism and sustainability?
10. Do you have specific policies or guideline in place to reduce waste, conserve energy and manage water resources?
- a) How do you ensure that these policies or guideline are effectively communicated and enforced among staff and visitors?

- b) Any additional information about your sustainability policies and guidelines or any future plans or goals relating to waste, energy and water management?

Abbreviations

IUCN-Union for Conservation of Nature.

TIES -International Ecotourism Society.

UNWTO -United Nation World Tourism Organization.

WTO -World Tourism Organization.

FANC -Finnish Association For Nature Concervation.

DMO -Destination Management Organization.

B to B – Business to business.

STF -Sustainable Travel Finland.