



Finland as a Destination for LGBTQ+ Travellers

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Abstract

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<p>Report/Thesis Title Finland as a destination for LGBTQ+ travellers</p>
<p>Number of pages and appendix pages 32 + 2</p>
<p>This thesis explores Finland as a travel destination for LGBTQ+ travellers, focusing on their experiences of safety and inclusivity, the challenges they face, and how Finland's tourism offerings could be improved. The research aimed to identify Finland's strengths as an LGBTQ+-friendly destination and highlight areas where inclusivity efforts could be expanded. The study focused solely on Finland, leaving out international comparisons to provide a detailed understanding of its unique tourism landscape.</p> <p>The theoretical framework is based on LGBTQ+ tourism literature, emphasizing the importance of safety and inclusivity as key factors that attract travellers. The study used a qualitative approach, gathering data through semi-structured interviews with four LGBTQ+ travellers who had visited Finland. The interviews, conducted between 23–24 November 2024, were analysed thematically to identify recurring themes and meaningful insights.</p> <p>The findings show that Finland is widely perceived as a safe and inclusive destination, particularly in urban areas like Helsinki and Tampere. Participants praised Finland's low crime rates, progressive social values, and visible support for LGBTQ+ rights. However, challenges such as a lack of visible inclusivity symbols in rural areas and language barriers for non-Finnish-speaking travellers were noted. These results highlight opportunities for improvement, including expanding inclusivity efforts to rural regions and developing multilingual resources for international visitors.</p> <p>The thesis concludes that while Finland already meets many expectations of LGBTQ+ travellers, there is potential to build on these strengths. Suggestions include increasing visible markers of inclusivity across the country and creating tailored experiences that connect inclusivity with Finland's natural and cultural attractions. These findings aim to support Finland's efforts to remain a leading LGBTQ+-friendly destination while enhancing the travel experience for all.</p>
<p>Key words lgbtq+, destination marketing, inclusivity, lgbtq+ tourism, lgbtq+ traveller, lgbtq+ safety</p>

Contents

1	Introduction	4
1.1	Background.....	4
1.2	Research Objectives and Problem	4
1.3	Methods and Demarcation	5
1.4	Key Concepts.....	5
1.5	Summary.....	5
2	Inclusivity and Safety.....	6
2.1	Inclusivity	6
2.2	Inclusivity Practices in Finnish Tourism	6
2.3	Safety.....	7
2.4	Safety Measures in Finnish Tourism	8
3	LGTBQ+ Tourism and Travellers.....	9
3.1	LGTBQ+ Travellers	9
3.2	The Growth of LGBTQ+ Tourism.....	10
4	Finland as a Travel Destination	12
4.1	Natural Beauty and Sustainability.....	12
4.2	Rich Cultural Heritage	12
4.3	Inclusivity and Safety.....	13
4.4	Well-Developed Tourism Infrastructure	13
4.5	Seasonal Travel and Unique Experiences.....	13
4.6	Finland as a Destination for All.....	13
5	Research Method.....	14
5.1	Qualitative Research Design	14
5.2	The Target Group of the Study.....	15
5.3	Data Collection and Analysis Methods	15
5.4	Thematic Analysis Process	15
5.5	Ethical Considerations and Data Handling	17
6	Results	19
6.1	LGBTQ+ Travelers' Views of Finland in Terms of Safety and Inclusivity.....	19
6.2	Challenges LGBTQ+ Travelers Face When Visiting Finland.....	21
6.3	Suggestions for Improving Finland's Tourism Offerings.....	23
7	Discussion.....	26
7.1	Development Proposals	27
7.2	Further Studies.....	28
7.3	The Reliability and Ethics of the Research	29

7.4 An Evaluation of One’s Own Learning 29

Sources 31

Appendices 33

Appendix 1. Interview Guide: LGBTQ+ Travellers Experiences in Finland..... 33

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Tourism has increasingly focused on creating inclusive experiences, acknowledging the unique needs and preferences of diverse groups of travellers. LGBTQ+ tourism, a sector that has expanded globally, represents a significant and growing market that places high value on destinations known for safety, acceptance, and inclusivity. (Britannica 2024.) For Finland, a country that is known for its progressive human rights, promoting itself as an LGBTQ+-friendly destination aligns with both its cultural values and its tourism growth strategy (Visit Finland 2023). This study aims to explore Finland's appeal as a destination for LGBTQ+ travellers and evaluates how well the country meets their specific needs in terms of safety, acceptance, and hospitality.

LGBTQ+ travellers often look for destinations that prioritise inclusivity, where they can experience a welcoming atmosphere without fear of discrimination (OHCHR 2024). Finland, recognized as one of the happiest and most LGBTQ+-friendly countries, ranks highly in safety and quality of life indexes, which strengthens its appeal to international tourists, including the LGBTQ+ demographic (Finavia 2024). This research seeks to understand the factors behind Finland's attractiveness to LGBTQ+ travellers and the extent to which it provides great experience for this community.

1.2 Research Objectives and Problem

The main objective of this research is to explore Finland's position as an LGBTQ+-friendly destination and identify potential improvements to better serve LGBTQ+ travellers. The main research question guiding this study is: What makes Finland an attractive destination for LGBTQ+ travellers?

To break down this main question, the study also focuses on the following sub-questions:

- How do LGBTQ+ travellers view Finland in terms of safety and inclusivity?
- What challenges do LGBTQ+ travellers face when visiting Finland?
- How can Finland improve its tourism offerings to better serve LGBTQ+ visitors?

These questions help examine the strengths and potential gaps in Finland's current tourism approach. While Finland has a reputation for inclusivity, understanding the experiences and opinions of LGBTQ+ travellers can provide insights into areas that may require further improvement to fully meet their needs.

1.3 Methods and Demarcation

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, utilising one-on-one interviews with LGBTQ+ travellers who have visited Finland. This method allows for an in-depth understanding of traveller experiences, particularly concerning inclusivity and safety. By focusing on personal stories and opinions, this study aims to capture details that may not be captured in quantitative data alone.

The research is demarcated to focus specifically on LGBTQ+ tourism within Finland, without extending to comparisons with other countries. By narrowing the focus, the study concentrates on Finland's unique characteristics and services that contribute to or reduce its appeal as an LGBTQ+ destination. This targeted approach allows for a deeper examination of the specific factors influencing LGBTQ+ travel decisions within Finland.

1.4 Key Concepts

This research focuses on the following key concepts: LGBTQ+ tourism, inclusivity, safety, visitor impressions, and Finland as a travel destination. LGBTQ+ tourism involves services and experiences specifically designed for LGBTQ+ individuals, emphasizing acceptance and creating a welcoming atmosphere. Inclusivity ensures that all travellers feel respected and valued, fostering a strong sense of belonging. Safety highlights the importance of providing a discrimination-free and secure environment for LGBTQ+ visitors in Finland, so they can travel without fear or prejudice. Visitor impressions refer to the perceptions and experiences LGBTQ+ travellers have of Finland as a destination, including factors such as inclusivity, safety, and hospitality—this concept will be explored in greater detail in a later section. Finally, Finland as a travel destination includes the country's unique qualities, attractions, and features that make it appealing, particularly to LGBTQ+ tourists.

Together, these key concepts form the foundation of the study, guiding an exploration of how well Finland meets the needs of LGBTQ+ travellers and identifying areas for improvement to enhance their overall experience and satisfaction.

1.5 Summary

This research aims to contribute to the understanding of LGBTQ+ tourism in Finland, providing insights for tourism stakeholders on how to improve services and marketing for this target group. By investigating the perceptions, challenges, and expectations of LGBTQ+ travellers, this study supports Finland's goal of becoming an even more inclusive and welcoming destination. The results from this research may offer recommendations that not only improve the experiences of LGBTQ+ travellers but also improve Finland's reputation in the tourism market.

2 Inclusivity and Safety

Social sustainability encompasses practices and strategies that promote the overall well-being, inclusion, and fair treatment of all individuals within society. The aim is to ensure that everyone's needs and rights are met in ways that foster long-term growth, cohesion, and respect for diversity (UN Global Compact 2024). For a society to truly thrive, it must create spaces where everyone, regardless of their background or identity, feels valued and can contribute. Within the context of tourism, the concepts of inclusivity and safety play a vital role in fostering a socially sustainable environment. When these two aspects are prioritized, visitors can engage fully with their experiences, knowing they are both accepted and protected. (World Bank 2020.)

2.1 Inclusivity

Inclusivity means building environments where all individuals feel valued, respected, and represented. In tourism, this concept goes beyond just tolerance—it seeks to create genuine connections and foster a sense of belonging among all visitors, including diverse groups like LGBTQ+ travellers. Ensuring inclusivity requires implementing policies and practices that reflect a broad range of experiences, cultural backgrounds, and identities. For LGBTQ+ tourists, this can mean visible symbols of support, such as inclusive marketing, safe spaces, and knowledgeable staff who understand their unique needs. An inclusive tourism environment promotes positive and supportive interactions, allowing travellers to be themselves without fear or hesitation. (UN Global Compact 2024.)

Creating inclusive tourism experiences also benefits destinations themselves. By actively showing respect and consideration for diverse visitors, destinations like Finland strengthen their international reputation as open, welcoming, and socially progressive. This reputation can attract a broader array of visitors who seek destinations where they know they will be embraced and celebrated. However, inclusivity requires a commitment to continuous learning and adaptation. From hotels and restaurants to cultural attractions, each touchpoint in the travel experience must reflect and uphold these values.

2.2 Inclusivity Practices in Finnish Tourism

Finland has implemented a range of practices, events, and policies to promote inclusivity for LGBTQ+ travellers. One of the most visible examples is Finland's support for Pride events, such as Helsinki Pride, which attracts thousands of participants and visitors each year. This event not only celebrates diversity but also serves as a strong statement of Finland's commitment to LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion (Visit Finland 2023).

Additionally, many Finnish hotels, restaurants, and attractions have adopted inclusive practices, such as staff training programs aimed at understanding and respecting the unique needs of LGBTQ+ guests. These programs emphasize the importance of welcoming attitudes, respectful interactions, and culturally sensitive service delivery. (MyHelsinki 2023.) Finland's inclusivity efforts are further bolstered by strong anti-discrimination laws that protect LGBTQ+ individuals, ensuring their rights are upheld in all areas of society, including tourism (UN Global Compact 2024).

By fostering an environment where LGBTQ+ travellers feel valued and respected, Finland demonstrates its dedication to creating a truly inclusive tourism experience. This commitment is evident not only in public events but also in everyday interactions, making the country an attractive destination for LGBTQ+ visitors seeking a welcoming atmosphere.

2.3 Safety

Safety is another crucial component of social sustainability, particularly for vulnerable groups such as LGBTQ+ travellers. Feeling safe goes beyond physical protection—it includes the assurance of being treated with dignity, respect, and freedom from discrimination, harassment, or violence. When LGBTQ+ travellers visit a destination, they must feel confident that their identity will not make them a target for prejudice or harm. Safety is the foundation that allows all visitors to relax, explore, and enjoy their surroundings fully. (World Bank 2020.)

In tourism, ensuring safety requires a comprehensive approach that goes from physical security measures to policies that address discrimination and promote respect for all. Emotional and social well-being are equally important; travellers should know that they are not only physically safe but also emotionally supported. Destinations like Finland can enhance perceptions of safety through visible support for LGBTQ+ rights, education and training for tourism staff, and active measures to prevent and address discrimination. (UN Global Compact 2024.) Without robust safety measures, efforts to promote inclusivity will fall short, as travellers cannot fully engage with a destination if they feel at risk.

To truly create a welcoming and inclusive environment, destinations must prioritize both safety and inclusivity. Together, these elements build a climate of trust, respect, and genuine connection, enabling travellers to explore, connect, and create meaningful memories without hesitation or fear.

2.4 Safety Measures in Finnish Tourism

Safety is a crucial consideration for LGBTQ+ travellers, and Finland has made significant efforts to ensure a secure environment for all visitors. One of the key measures is the enforcement of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that protect LGBTQ+ individuals from harassment and violence, both in public and within tourism-related settings (World Bank 2020). These laws are reinforced through visible policies that promote equality and safeguard the rights of all people, including LGBTQ+ travellers.

Dedicated safe spaces, such as LGBTQ+-friendly bars, hotels, and cultural venues, play an important role in enhancing the sense of security for visitors. Many of these establishments go beyond compliance with regulations by actively fostering welcoming environments through staff training and visible symbols of support, such as rainbow flags and inclusive signage. (Visit Finland 2021.)

Training programs for hospitality staff on topics such as cultural sensitivity and respectful communication further contribute to a positive experience for LGBTQ+ travellers. By prioritizing safety measures and promoting inclusivity, Finland ensures that LGBTQ+ tourists can explore the country with confidence and peace of mind.

3 LGTBQ+ Tourism and Travellers

The term LGBTQ+ encompasses a diverse spectrum of identities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer individuals, with the "+" representing a range of other identities and orientations beyond traditional categories (National Geographic 2023). The evolving recognition of LGBTQ+ rights and visibility has paved the way for greater social acceptance and awareness of the unique challenges faced by this community. LGBTQ+ individuals often encounter barriers related to discrimination, lack of representation, and safety, making it crucial to consider their needs within various societal contexts, including travel and tourism. (OHCHR 2024.)

LGBTQ+ tourism refers to travel services, destinations, and experiences specifically aimed at meeting the diverse needs of LGBTQ+ individuals. This sector has grown into a significant force within the global travel industry, driven by an increasing demand for safe, inclusive, and culturally enriching travel opportunities. LGBTQ+ travellers often prioritize destinations where they can feel welcome, respected, and free to express their identities without fear of discrimination. (Britannica 2024.) This sector extends beyond merely offering tailored services to embedding inclusivity and acceptance into the core of tourism offerings, allowing LGBTQ+ visitors to fully experience destinations in a meaningful and affirming way.

3.1 LGBTQ+ Travellers

LGBTQ+ travellers represent a diverse group of individuals encompassing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and others who identify across the spectrum of sexual and gender orientations. The "+" symbol acknowledges identities beyond these categories, such as non-binary, intersex, asexual, and pansexual individuals, ensuring inclusivity for all who do not conform to traditional labels. (National Geographic 2023.) This diversity within the LGBTQ+ community results in a wide array of travel preferences, needs, and expectations.

For LGBTQ+ travellers, the decision-making process for travel destinations often hinges on factors such as inclusivity, safety, and the presence of welcoming environments. These travellers frequently seek destinations where they can feel free to express themselves without fear of discrimination or judgment. Many prioritize locations that are known for supporting LGBTQ+ rights, hosting inclusive events, and offering dedicated spaces where individuals from this community can gather and celebrate their identities (OHCHR 2024).

Traveling as an LGBTQ+ individual may present unique challenges due to societal attitudes, legal restrictions, or cultural norms in different parts of the world. In some destinations, LGBTQ+ travellers might encounter discrimination or exclusion, while in others, they are embraced and

celebrated. This variation makes it crucial for tourism providers to actively create safe and inclusive spaces that acknowledge and respect the diverse needs of LGBTQ+ visitors. (MyHelsinki 2023.)

Despite challenges, LGBTQ+ travellers are a significant segment in the global tourism industry. Studies show that this group tends to have higher-than-average travel frequency and spending power, contributing substantially to the global economy. Their loyalty to destinations that embrace inclusivity further emphasizes the importance of creating welcoming environments. (Visit Finland 2021.) Understanding the unique experiences and expectations of LGBTQ+ travellers is essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable tourism industry that benefits both travellers and the destinations they visit.

3.2 The Growth of LGBTQ+ Tourism

The growth of LGBTQ+ tourism over recent decades has transformed it from a niche market into a significant and influential sector within the global travel industry. This evolution reflects broader societal changes, including increased visibility, recognition of LGBTQ+ rights, and the growing acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. As more destinations realize the potential of LGBTQ+ tourism, they have adapted their offerings to attract and accommodate this segment, fostering environments where travellers can feel safe, respected, and celebrated (National Geographic 2023).

The market's expansion has been driven by the increasing demand for travel experiences that prioritize inclusivity, safety, and authentic cultural engagement. LGBTQ+ travellers often seek out destinations where they can freely express themselves without fear of discrimination, making safety and acceptance essential criteria when choosing where to travel. (OHCHR 2024.) This has spurred competition among destinations to enhance their inclusivity efforts, creating a positive cycle of growth and improvement within the sector.

Economic factors also contribute to the growth of LGBTQ+ tourism. LGBTQ+ travellers are known for their higher-than-average spending power and frequent travel habits. Studies show that this group is often willing to invest in unique, memorable experiences, and they exhibit strong brand loyalty toward destinations and businesses that embrace inclusivity and provide exceptional service (Visit Finland 2023). As a result, many countries and tourism boards have prioritized LGBTQ+ marketing campaigns, partnerships with LGBTQ+ organizations, and the development of tailored services and events to capture this market.

Technology has played a pivotal role in the growth of LGBTQ+ tourism by enabling increased connectivity and visibility. Social media platforms, dedicated travel websites, and online forums allow LGBTQ+ travellers to connect, share their experiences, and find destinations known for their inclusivity. This digital visibility not only empowers travellers but also holds destinations accountable, as positive and negative experiences can quickly spread among global audiences (MyHelsinki 2023).

In addition to economic and technological factors, LGBTQ+ tourism growth has been supported by global movements for equality and inclusivity. Pride events, LGBTQ+ festivals, and inclusive tourism initiatives create spaces where travellers can connect with like-minded individuals and celebrate their identities. Destinations like Finland, which visibly support LGBTQ+ rights and host inclusive events, stand out in the competitive tourism landscape. Such initiatives foster a sense of belonging, making these destinations highly attractive to LGBTQ+ travellers. (Visit Finland 2021.)

Despite its rapid growth, challenges remain. Barriers such as cultural attitudes, inconsistent legal protections, and safety concerns in certain regions highlight the ongoing need for advocacy and progress. However, the continued expansion of LGBTQ+ tourism demonstrates its resilience and the powerful impact of inclusivity within the travel industry. By embracing and celebrating diversity, destinations can strengthen their appeal, enhance social cohesion, and contribute to the global movement for equality and respect.

4 Finland as a Travel Destination

Finland has firmly established itself as a unique travel destination, offering a mix of natural beauty, vibrant culture, and modern comforts that cater to a wide range of visitors. The country is renowned for its untouched wilderness, where travellers can immerse themselves in vast forests, thousands of crystal-clear lakes, and the mesmerizing spectacle of the Northern Lights. Finland's focus on sustainability and environmental responsibility resonates with global trends in eco-friendly tourism, making it especially attractive to conscious travellers. (Visit Finland 2023.) This harmonious blend of nature and urban sophistication ensures that visitors can experience both peaceful retreats and dynamic city life.

4.1 Natural Beauty and Sustainability

Finland's natural landscapes are a major draw for tourists seeking outdoor adventures and pristine environments. National parks, wilderness areas, and well-maintained hiking trails provide countless opportunities for activities like camping, skiing, and exploring Arctic wilderness. During the winter months, travellers flock to see the Northern Lights and enjoy unique experiences such as husky sledding, snowmobiling, and ice fishing (Amer Experience 2024). Summer brings endless daylight, making it perfect for hiking, cycling, and water-based activities on the country's many lakes. Finland's commitment to sustainability ensures that these natural attractions are preserved and enjoyed responsibly by future generations. (Visit Finland 2021.)

4.2 Rich Cultural Heritage

Cultural attractions are another key component of Finland's tourism appeal. Helsinki, the vibrant capital, serves as a cultural hub known for its design, art, and architectural heritage. The city is home to world-class museums, art galleries, and lively LGBTQ+-friendly spaces, reflecting Finland's dedication to diversity and creativity. (MyHelsinki 2023.) Beyond Helsinki, cities like Tampere and Turku offer their own unique cultural experiences, from historical landmarks and charming old towns to festivals that celebrate Finnish traditions and modern creativity (Visit Finland 2023).

Finland's dedication to cultural inclusivity is evident in its support for LGBTQ+ events and spaces, creating a welcoming environment for diverse visitors. Pride celebrations, inclusive establishments, and visible support for LGBTQ+ rights emphasize the country's commitment to equality and acceptance. (Visit Finland 2021.)

4.3 Inclusivity and Safety

Inclusivity and safety are key pillars of Finland's appeal, particularly for LGBTQ+ travellers. The country ranks highly on measures of human rights, equality, and safety, providing an environment where visitors from diverse backgrounds can feel comfortable and respected. Visible support for LGBTQ+ rights, including inclusive events, cultural spaces, and establishments, further demonstrates Finland's dedication to creating a tourism experience that is both welcoming and inclusive. (Visit Finland 2021.) This strong emphasis on safety and acceptance makes Finland a destination where all travellers can feel at ease.

4.4 Well-Developed Tourism Infrastructure

Finland's efficient and high-quality tourism infrastructure makes travel seamless and enjoyable for all visitors. From top-tier accommodations and well-connected public transport to excellent customer service, every aspect of a traveller's experience is designed to be stress-free. Helsinki Airport, recognized as a key international hub, offers convenient access to destinations across the globe, positioning Finland as a gateway to Northern Europe. (Finavia 2024.) The strong infrastructure ensures that tourists can explore both urban and remote areas with ease.

4.5 Seasonal Travel and Unique Experiences

One of Finland's standout qualities as a travel destination is its ability to offer distinct seasonal experiences. Winter activities, such as reindeer safaris, glass igloo stays, and Arctic expeditions, have made Finland a popular winter destination. These experiences create lasting memories and provide a taste of authentic Nordic adventure (Amer Experience 2024). Conversely, the summer season offers a stark contrast with endless daylight, perfect for outdoor pursuits like hiking, cycling, and exploring the country's vast network of national parks and lakes. This versatility makes Finland an attractive year-round destination that caters to a wide range of interests and preferences.

4.6 Finland as a Destination for All

Finland's strength as a travel destination lies in its ability to balance natural wonders, cultural richness, and a deep commitment to inclusivity and safety. Whether visitors are seeking serene landscapes, engaging with vibrant urban culture, or immersing themselves in unique seasonal activities, they can expect memorable and enriching experiences. By fostering an environment of respect, accessibility, and inclusivity, Finland continues to stand out as a destination where everyone can feel at home.

5 Research Method

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological design, which focuses on understanding how individuals perceive and interpret their lived experiences. Phenomenology is well-suited for exploring LGBTQ+ traveller's feelings of safety and inclusivity while traveling in Finland. It not only uncovers what participants experience but also delves into the meanings and significance they attach to those experiences (Scribbr 2024). This method allows for a deep dive into participants' narratives, revealing insights that may not emerge through quantitative research.

5.1 Qualitative Research Design

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological design, which focuses on understanding how individuals perceive and interpret their lived experiences. Phenomenology is well-suited for exploring LGBTQ+ traveller's feelings of safety and inclusivity while traveling in Finland. It not only uncovers what participants experience but also delves into the meanings and significance they attach to those experiences. (Scribbr 2024.) This method allows for a deep dive into participants' narratives, revealing insights that may not emerge through quantitative research.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary data collection method. These interviews combine structured questions with the flexibility to explore new topics that arise during the conversation. This format enables participants to openly share their experiences while ensuring the discussion remains relevant to the study's objectives. It is particularly effective in generating rich, contextually detailed data. (ATLAS.ti 2024.)

The interview questions were developed to address the study's main objectives, which include understanding LGBTQ+ traveller's perceptions of safety and inclusivity in Finland, the challenges they face, and recommendations for improving Finland's tourism offerings. Examples of questions include:

- How do LGBTQ+ travellers view Finland in terms of safety and inclusivity?
- What aspects of Finnish society or culture do you find most inclusive?
- Have you encountered any specific instances that made you feel particularly safe or unsafe?
- What improvements would you suggest making Finland more welcoming for LGBTQ+ travelers?

The interview guide (Appendix 1) ensures that key topics are addressed while allowing flexibility for follow-up questions based on participants' responses.

5.2 The Target Group of the Study

The target group for this study comprises LGBTQ+ travellers who have visited Finland. Participants were selected based on their relevance to the research topic, ensuring they could provide meaningful insights into Finland's inclusivity, safety, and tourism services. The criteria for selection required participants to belong to the LGBTQ+ community, be non-Finnish, and have visited Finland at least once. This intentional selection ensures the study captures diverse perspectives on Finland as a travel destination for LGBTQ+ travellers.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which involves deliberately choosing individuals who are most relevant to the research objectives. This method ensures the data collected is aligned with the study's focus and offers detailed insights into the experiences of LGBTQ+ travellers. (Lim 2024.) All participants were acquaintances or friends of the researcher, facilitating open and honest discussions.

The study includes four participants, anonymized as Traveller 1, Traveller 2, Traveller 3, and Traveller 4. The small sample size allows for an in-depth analysis of individual experiences while maintaining diversity within the group. Each participant offers unique perspectives, from first-time visitors to frequent travellers, which help identify key themes in their experiences and highlight areas where Finland's tourism services could improve.

Traveller	Age	Nationality	Occupation	Visit Frequency	Visited Destinations
Traveller 1	46	Australian	Science Teacher	First-time visit	Helsinki
Traveller 2	55	Swedish	Cabin Crew Member	Multiple visits	Helsinki, Tampere, Savonlinna
Traveller 3	30	German	Sales Director	Four visits	Helsinki, Turku, Porvoo
Traveller 4	24	Danish	Student	Annual visits	Helsinki, Espoo, Inari

Figure 1. Table of the target group

5.3 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

The data collection process involves conducting semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with the four participants mentioned above. The interviews were conducted in English to ensure clarity and accessibility for all participants. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes, and, with participants' consent, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were conducted over a two-day period from November 23 to November 24, 2024.

5.4 Thematic Analysis Process

The data analysis in this study follows the principles of thematic analysis, a qualitative research method that allows identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns or themes within data. This

approach is particularly effective for exploring LGBTQ+ traveller's perceptions, as it provides a structured framework to systematically examine their experiences while leaving room for unexpected findings (ATLAS.ti 2024).

The process begins with familiarization, where the researcher immerses themselves in the data by thoroughly reviewing interview transcripts. This step ensures that the researcher understands the scope and depth of the collected information, gaining insights into the key narratives shared by participants. The next step is coding, which involves systematically labelling relevant segments of the data based on their content. For this study, the researcher highlighted excerpts that relate to themes of safety, inclusivity, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement. Coding serves as a foundational step for organizing the data and identifying patterns.

Following the coding phase, the researcher moves to identifying themes. During this step, the codes are grouped into broader categories that reflect recurring ideas or trends in the dataset. Themes are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of participants' shared experiences while highlighting unique perspectives. The fourth step involves reviewing and refining themes. Here, the researcher revisits the identified themes to ensure they accurately represent the data. This phase also involves merging overlapping themes, separating overly broad themes, and ensuring that all relevant data are accounted for.

Once finalized, the themes are defined and named, which involves clearly articulating the essence of each theme and assigning a concise, descriptive name. This step ensures that the analysis is well-structured and that the themes are understandable to readers. Finally, the researcher integrates the themes into the study by writing the report. In this step, the themes are presented with supporting quotes from participants, illustrating how the findings align with the research objectives. This ensures that the results are clearly communicated while maintaining a focus on participants' voices and lived experiences. The thematic analysis process is visually summarized in Figure 1, which outlines the sequential steps from familiarization to the final reporting of findings.

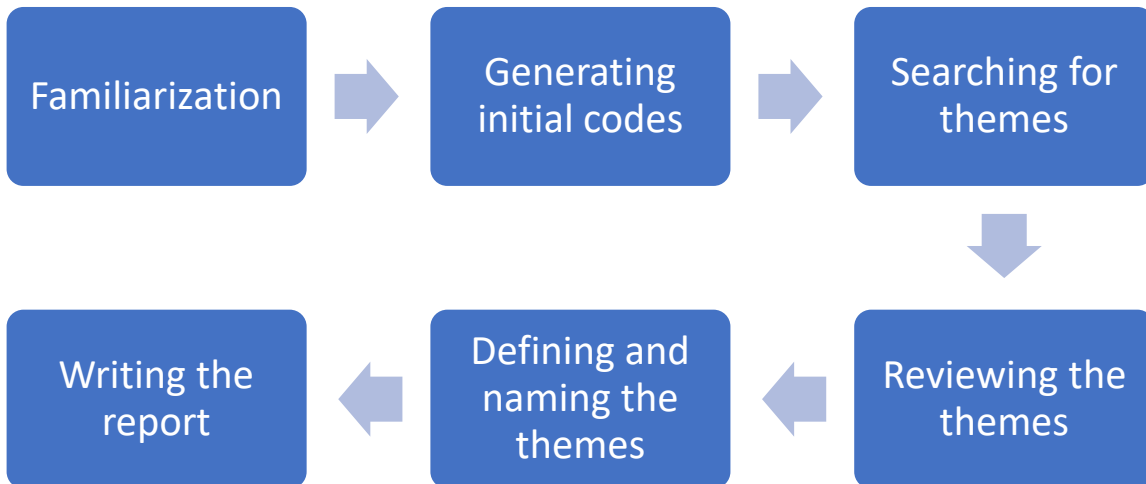


Figure 2. Thematic analysis process outlining steps from familiarization to reporting findings (adapted from ATLAS.ti 2024)

The coding process will be conducted manually using Microsoft Word and Excel. These tools are accessible and effective for organizing data and summarizing key themes.

5.5 Ethical Considerations and Data Handling

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in this study, particularly given the sensitive nature of LGBTQ+ identities. The research adhered to recognized ethical guidelines to ensure the privacy, dignity, and rights of all participants were respected throughout the process (European Commission 2021). Measures such as obtaining informed consent, maintaining anonymity, and securely handling data were implemented to uphold ethical standards.

One key aspect was ensuring participant anonymity. All respondents were assigned pseudonyms, such as Traveller 1 and Traveller 2, to protect their identities. This step not only safeguarded their privacy but also encouraged openness during the interviews, fostering an environment of trust. Moreover, participants were fully informed about how their responses would be used, and they retained the right to withdraw from the study at any point.

Another critical measure involved data handling. Interview recordings were securely stored on a password-protected device accessible only to the researcher. These recordings were deleted following transcription to further ensure confidentiality. By transparently communicating the data

deletion timeline—six months after the completion of the research—participants were reassured about the responsible use and storage of their information.

These ethical practices reflect the broader commitment of the study to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Particularly for topics related to LGBTQ+ identities, which can be sensitive, ethical research practices are essential to maintain trust and integrity. By prioritizing these considerations, the study ensures its findings are both credible and respectful of the individuals who contributed their experiences.

6 Results

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of qualitative data collected through interviews with four LGBTQ+ travellers who have visited Finland. The insights are structured into three key sub-chapters based on the research objectives: perceptions of safety and inclusivity, challenges faced by LGBTQ+ travellers, and suggestions for improvements. Each section is supported by relevant sources, and the results are illustrated through diagrams and visual aids.

The qualitative data was analysed with the assistance of the ChatGPT 4.0 language model. Prompts used to support the analysis included: “How to analyse qualitative data from interviews?” and “Explain the thematic analysis process for qualitative data.” The language model provided suggestions for identifying recurring themes, structuring the analysis, and synthesizing insights in a cohesive manner. This support ensured a systematic and thorough approach to the interpretation of the collected data.

The version of ChatGPT used does not store data for future training or model development, ensuring that all information remains confidential. Furthermore, all data and inputs were deleted from the system's memory immediately after the analysis process, safeguarding the privacy of the participants and maintaining compliance with ethical research standards.

6.1 LGBTQ+ Travelers' Views of Finland in Terms of Safety and Inclusivity

All participants emphasized that Finland is a safe and welcoming destination, with many highlighting experiences that underscored the country's reputation for safety. Traveller 3 noted feeling “completely secure even when walking alone at night in Helsinki,” attributing this to Finland's calm and respectful atmosphere. Similarly, Traveller 4 remarked that even remote areas like Inari felt safe, adding that “the openness and respectfulness of Finnish society make you feel comfortable wherever you go.” This sense of security is particularly significant for LGBTQ+ travellers, as safety is often a primary concern when choosing travel destinations. These observations align with LGBTQ+ tourism theory, which emphasizes that safety is a critical pull factor influencing destination preferences, especially for marginalized groups (OHCHR 2024). Finland's low crime rates, progressive legal protections, and high global happiness rankings further bolster its reputation as one of the safest travel destinations in the world (Finavia 2024).

In terms of inclusivity, participants praised Finland's efforts, particularly in urban centers such as Helsinki and Tampere. Traveller 2 highlighted visible support for LGBTQ+ rights, including Pride events, inclusive spaces, and marketing campaigns, describing these initiatives as “effortless and genuine.” They emphasized that inclusivity felt embedded in Finnish culture, with a natural ease

that made them feel welcomed as an LGBTQ+ traveller. Traveller 4 similarly noted that Finnish inclusivity felt “deeply ingrained and natural rather than performative,” reflecting a societal approach that prioritizes genuine acceptance over surface-level gestures.

As illustrated in figure 3, the predominant themes identified during the analysis include safety, inclusivity, visible support, and the welcoming nature of urban areas like Helsinki and Tampere. Participants consistently highlighted how visible inclusivity in urban areas enhanced their overall travel experience. Traveller 2 shared that the presence of inclusive spaces, LGBTQ+-friendly establishments, and public celebrations of diversity created a sense of belonging that made their visits to Finland particularly memorable. However, they also noted that the absence of such visible markers in rural areas could detract from the otherwise positive experience. This highlights the importance of extending inclusivity initiatives to ensure consistency across all regions, as inclusivity is not only about avoiding discrimination but also about fostering a sense of community and welcome.

Despite these strengths, participants identified areas for improvement, particularly in rural regions. Traveller 1 noted that while they did not encounter overt discrimination, rural areas lacked visible markers of inclusivity, such as Pride flags or LGBTQ+-specific resources, which are commonly found in urban settings. This absence can create uncertainty for travellers about how inclusive and welcoming these areas truly are. Rural gaps in inclusivity present an opportunity for Finland to expand its efforts, ensuring that all regions reflect the country’s broader commitment to diversity and equality.

These findings reflect Finland’s strategic focus on inclusivity, as outlined in the Visit Finland Strategy 2021–2025. The strategy emphasizes fostering diverse and welcoming experiences for all travellers while identifying areas for further development, such as extending inclusivity efforts beyond urban hubs (Visit Finland 2021). Expanding these efforts would not only address the disparities identified in this study but also reinforce Finland’s reputation as a leading LGBTQ+-friendly destination.

In conclusion, while Finland excels in creating a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ travellers, particularly in its urban centers, there is room to build on these strengths. Addressing rural gaps in inclusivity and ensuring visible support for LGBTQ+ rights throughout the country would enhance the consistency of Finland’s tourism offerings. These efforts would align with the country’s broader goals of promoting equality, sustainability, and diversity in tourism, further solidifying its position as a top-tier destination for LGBTQ+ travellers.



Figure 3: Word cloud of safety and inclusivity

6.2 Challenges LGBTQ+ Travelers Face When Visiting Finland

Participants identified two primary challenges during their visits to Finland: disparities in inclusivity between urban and rural areas and limited accessibility of multilingual LGBTQ+-specific resources. Traveller 1 observed that inclusivity efforts were highly concentrated in urban centers like Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku, where LGBTQ+-friendly spaces, events, and visible markers such as Pride flags are readily apparent. In contrast, rural areas often lacked these visible symbols of support, creating a sense of uncertainty for LGBTQ+ travellers about how welcomed they would feel in smaller towns. Traveller 1 noted, “While I didn’t face any overt discrimination, the absence of LGBTQ+-specific spaces in rural areas made me question how inclusive these regions truly are.” This disparity between urban and rural inclusivity aligns with broader challenges faced by destinations seeking to provide universally welcoming experiences, as emphasized in the Visit Finland Strategy 2021–2025 (Visit Finland 2021).

These findings underscore the need for a more consistent approach to inclusivity across all areas of Finland. Theoretical insights into LGBTQ+ tourism stress that inclusivity must be comprehensive and visible throughout a destination to foster a sense of safety and belonging for all travellers (Visit Finland 2021). While urban centers excel in meeting these expectations, the lack of visible LGBTQ+-specific resources in rural areas limits the potential of these regions to attract diverse travellers. Addressing this gap could create opportunities for Finland to extend its inclusivity efforts and ensure that LGBTQ+ travellers feel equally welcomed across urban and rural settings.

Language barriers also emerged as a recurring issue. Traveller 2 highlighted difficulties in accessing LGBTQ+-specific information in languages beyond Finnish or Swedish, particularly when planning visits to smaller towns. They noted that while general tourism information was often available in English, resources tailored specifically to LGBTQ+ travellers were rarely translated into multiple languages. This challenge is significant, as it limits the accessibility of vital information for non-Finnish-speaking travellers, making it harder for them to navigate inclusive establishments, events, or safety guidelines. These observations reflect global tourism findings, which emphasize that multilingual resources are essential for fostering inclusivity and enhancing traveller experiences, particularly for international visitors (World Bank 2020). Developing more accessible resources would ensure that LGBTQ+ travellers can fully engage with Finland's tourism offerings, regardless of their language proficiency.

As shown in figure 4, language barriers and disparities in rural inclusivity were the most frequently mentioned challenges, while some participants noted no significant issues during their visits. Despite these barriers, participants consistently emphasized that Finland's overall atmosphere remains welcoming. Traveller 4, who visits Finland annually, remarked, "Even in places where inclusivity isn't as visible, the respectful nature of Finnish people still made me feel accepted." This sentiment highlights Finland's strengths in creating an inherently welcoming environment, even in the absence of visible LGBTQ+-specific resources. Participants viewed the identified challenges not as deterrents but as areas for improvement that could further enhance Finland's reputation as an inclusive destination.

Addressing these issues would provide Finland with opportunities to strengthen its appeal to LGBTQ+ travellers. By expanding inclusivity efforts to rural areas and improving access to multilingual resources, Finland can create a more balanced and equitable tourism experience. These measures would not only address the challenges identified by participants but also align with Finland's strategic focus on inclusivity and sustainability, ensuring that all travellers, regardless of their background or language, feel supported and welcomed throughout their journey.

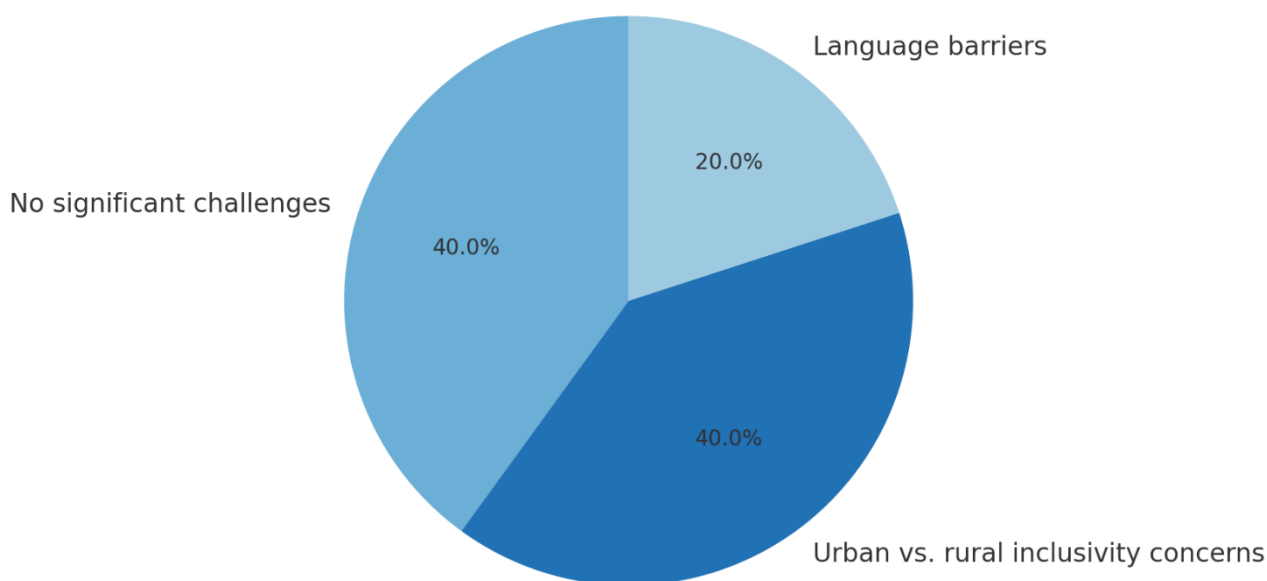


Figure 4: Pie chart of challenges LGBTQ+ travellers face

6.3 Suggestions for Improving Finland's Tourism Offerings

Participants provided several actionable suggestions to enhance Finland's appeal to LGBTQ+ travellers. One prominent recommendation was the introduction of visible inclusivity markers, such as LGBTQ+ flags, informational kiosks, or signage in rural areas. Traveller 4 suggested that such efforts would not only signal inclusivity beyond urban centers but also create a more consistent sense of welcome across the country. These markers could serve as visual cues that foster a sense of belonging for LGBTQ+ visitors, especially in regions where inclusivity might not be immediately apparent. This aligns with the theoretical framework's emphasis on visible support as a critical pull factor in LGBTQ+ tourism, reinforcing the idea that inclusivity must be both felt and seen to resonate with travellers (Visit Finland 2023). Furthermore, the presence of such markers could encourage local communities to engage in discussions about inclusivity and foster greater cultural sensitivity.

Another key proposal involved developing multilingual digital guides specifically tailored to LGBTQ+ travellers. Traveller 2 highlighted the importance of having accessible resources that provide comprehensive information about inclusive establishments, cultural highlights, and safety tips. Such guides could be designed as mobile-friendly apps or websites, featuring interactive maps and customizable itineraries for LGBTQ+ travellers. These resources would address the language barriers often faced by non-Finnish-speaking visitors, ensuring that they feel informed and supported

throughout their journey. By incorporating user-generated reviews and real-time updates, these guides could also create a community-driven platform that reinforces Finland's image as a progressive and inclusive destination. Accessible digital resources align with broader sustainable tourism principles by reducing the reliance on printed materials and making information widely available (World Bank 2020).

Participants also recommended leveraging Finland's natural attractions to organize LGBTQ+-specific outdoor activities, such as guided hiking groups, nature retreats, or camping tours. Traveller 4 emphasized that these initiatives could integrate Finland's renowned connection to nature with its commitment to inclusivity, creating unique and memorable experiences. Such activities would provide LGBTQ+ travellers with opportunities to connect with like-minded individuals in a safe and supportive environment, blending social engagement with cultural immersion. Additionally, these initiatives would cater to travellers seeking more personalized and meaningful experiences, aligning with global trends in experiential tourism. By partnering with local businesses and nature tourism providers, Finland could create inclusive packages that showcase its natural beauty while reinforcing its values of equality and sustainability.

To further expand on these proposals, participants suggested that tourism operators in rural areas receive cultural sensitivity training to better understand and meet the needs of LGBTQ+ visitors. Training programs could focus on fostering empathy, reducing unconscious biases, and equipping service providers with practical tools to create welcoming environments. Traveller 3 noted that small gestures, such as a warm greeting or inclusive language, can significantly enhance the perception of inclusivity. By investing in such training, Finland could bridge the gap between urban and rural experiences, ensuring that LGBTQ+ travellers feel equally welcomed across the country.

As shown in figure 5, participants' suggestions primarily focused on improving visibility in rural areas (40%), followed by the development of multilingual resources (30%) and the introduction of LGBTQ+-specific activities (30%). These measures highlight the priorities expressed by participants for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ travellers. Implementing these recommendations would not only address current gaps but also demonstrate Finland's commitment to inclusivity as a core value, ensuring that all travellers, regardless of their identity, feel valued and respected during their visit.

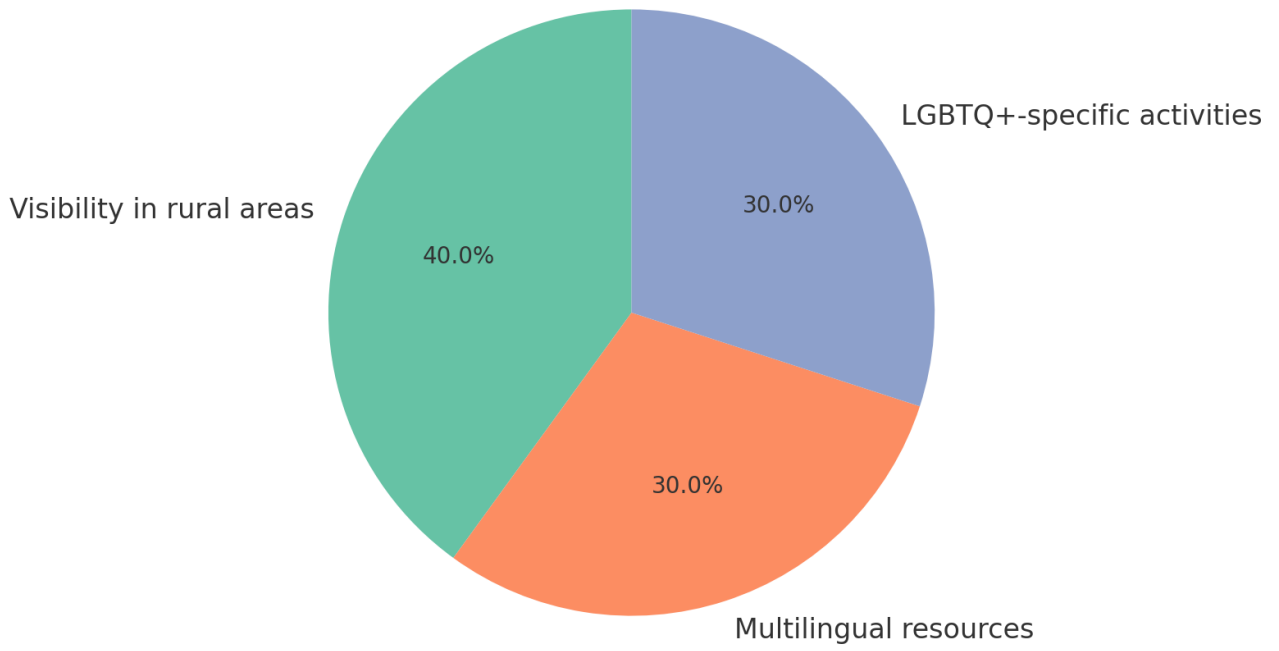


Figure 5: Pie chart of suggestions for improvement

7 Discussion

his thesis aimed to explore what makes Finland an attractive destination for LGBTQ+ travellers by examining their perceptions of safety and inclusivity, identifying the challenges they face, and offering development proposals to enhance Finland's tourism offerings. The research was guided by the main question: What makes Finland an attractive destination for LGBTQ+ travellers? To answer this, the study also addressed three sub-questions: How do LGBTQ+ travellers view Finland in terms of safety and inclusivity? What challenges do LGBTQ+ travellers face when visiting Finland? How can Finland improve its tourism offerings to better serve LGBTQ+ visitors?

The findings effectively answered these questions, revealing that Finland is widely regarded as a safe and inclusive destination, particularly in urban centers such as Helsinki and Tampere. Participants consistently praised Finland's low crime rates, robust anti-discrimination laws, and the visible celebration of diversity through initiatives like Pride. These elements reflect theoretical frameworks emphasizing safety and inclusivity as critical pull factors for LGBTQ+ travellers (OHCHR 2024). Traveller 3 shared their experience of feeling "completely secure, even walking alone at night," attributing this sense of safety to Finland's calm and respectful societal atmosphere. Similarly, Traveller 4 noted that even remote areas like Inari felt safe, largely due to the openness and respectfulness of Finnish society.

The sub-question on how LGBTQ+ travellers view Finland in terms of safety and inclusivity was comprehensively addressed. Participants described urban centers as highly inclusive, highlighting LGBTQ+-friendly spaces, events, and marketing campaigns that fostered a sense of belonging. Traveller 2 emphasized that the inclusivity in Finland felt "genuine and effortless," noting that it appeared deeply ingrained in Finnish culture rather than superficial or performative. However, this inclusivity was not consistently experienced in rural areas. Traveller 1 observed that rural regions lacked visible markers of inclusivity, such as Pride flags or LGBTQ+-specific spaces, which are prevalent in urban areas like Helsinki and Tampere. These disparities suggest that while Finland excels in creating inclusive urban environments, there is an opportunity to extend these efforts to rural settings.

The second sub-question, concerning the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ travellers, was also thoroughly addressed. Participants identified two primary challenges: language barriers and the lack of visible inclusivity in rural areas. Traveller 2 highlighted difficulties in accessing LGBTQ+-specific information in multiple languages, particularly in smaller towns. This limited accessibility for non-Finnish-speaking travellers underscores the importance of multilingual communication as an integral part of inclusive tourism. Despite these challenges, participants consistently emphasized that

Finland's overall atmosphere remains welcoming and inclusive, suggesting that the identified barriers are areas for improvement rather than deterrents.

The final sub-question, focusing on how Finland can improve its tourism offerings, generated actionable recommendations from participants. These included increasing visible inclusivity markers in rural areas, developing multilingual digital guides tailored to LGBTQ+ travellers, and organizing LGBTQ+-specific outdoor activities that leverage Finland's natural assets. These proposals align with Finland's broader tourism strategy of inclusivity, sustainability, and accessibility (Visit Finland 2023). Traveller 4 suggested that initiatives such as LGBTQ+-friendly hiking groups or nature retreats could combine Finland's renowned natural beauty with its commitment to inclusivity, creating unique and memorable travel experiences.

In conclusion, the findings confirm that Finland largely meets the expectations of LGBTQ+ travellers. It excels in providing a safe and inclusive environment, particularly in urban areas, but there is room to expand these efforts to rural regions and improve accessibility for non-Finnish-speaking visitors. By addressing these gaps, Finland can strengthen its reputation as a global leader in LGBTQ+-friendly tourism and ensure a consistently welcoming experience for all travellers. These insights not only answer the main research question but also highlight the potential for Finland to build on its existing strengths, reinforcing its position as a preferred destination for LGBTQ+ travellers worldwide.

7.1 Development Proposals

Building on the findings, several strategies are proposed to address the identified gaps and enhance Finland's appeal as a destination for LGBTQ+ travellers. One priority is to increase visible markers of inclusivity in rural areas. This could involve initiatives such as installing LGBTQ+ flags, creating informational kiosks, or organizing local Pride-inspired events in smaller towns. These efforts would signal a commitment to inclusivity beyond urban hubs and align with the theoretical framework, which emphasizes the importance of destination-wide inclusivity for attracting LGBTQ+ travellers.

Another essential strategy involves improving accessibility through multilingual digital resources tailored to LGBTQ+ travellers. These guides could provide practical information about inclusive establishments, cultural highlights, and safety tips, ensuring that all travellers feel informed and supported. Such resources would address language barriers and enhance Finland's appeal to international visitors, aligning with sustainable tourism principles (World Bank 2020).

Training programs for tourism professionals, particularly in rural areas, are also crucial. By improving cultural sensitivity and equipping service providers with the skills to meet the unique needs of

LGBTQ+ travellers, Finland can ensure a consistent and welcoming experience across all regions. These programs would help bridge the gap in inclusivity between urban and rural areas while fostering a more inclusive tourism industry.

Finally, Finland's natural assets present an opportunity to integrate inclusivity with outdoor tourism. Organizing LGBTQ+-specific activities, such as nature retreats, hiking groups, or camping tours, could combine the country's renowned natural beauty with its commitment to inclusivity. These initiatives would appeal to LGBTQ+ travellers seeking unique and meaningful experiences while aligning with Finland's focus on sustainability and nature-based tourism. (Visit Finland 2023.)

7.2 Further Studies

While this study provides valuable insights into Finland's appeal as an LGBTQ+ travel destination, it also highlights areas for further research that could deepen understanding and support the development of inclusive tourism strategies.

One avenue for future research involves conducting a comparative analysis of LGBTQ+ tourism across the Nordic countries. Sweden and Norway, for instance, are recognized for their robust inclusivity and progressive tourism strategies. A study examining how Finland's inclusivity efforts align with or differ from these neighbouring countries could provide actionable insights into regional best practices. Such research could identify transferable strategies for improving rural inclusivity and expanding LGBTQ+-specific offerings in Finland.

Another promising area for further study is the role of digital platforms in enhancing inclusivity for LGBTQ+ travellers. Research could explore how digital guides, apps, and social media platforms influence travel decisions, particularly among younger LGBTQ+ audiences. Investigating the design and accessibility of these tools in Finland and comparing them to international best practices could reveal gaps in digital inclusivity and opportunities for innovation.

The findings of this study highlight significant disparities in inclusivity between urban and rural areas in Finland. Further research could investigate the underlying reasons for these disparities, such as economic, cultural, or social factors. Studies involving rural communities, local businesses, and policymakers could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers to inclusivity and offer tailored solutions.

To complement the detailed and nuanced insights obtained in this study, future research could include a significantly larger sample size. Conducting a quantitative or mixed-methods study involving a broader range of participants would provide a more representative view of LGBTQ+ traveller's experiences in Finland. For instance, a survey targeting hundreds of respondents could help

identify common trends, preferences, and challenges faced by LGBTQ+ travellers, offering valuable data to support large-scale policy and marketing decisions. This approach would balance the rich, detailed narratives captured in this study with broader, population-level insights.

Future research could explore the impact of LGBTQ+ tourism on local communities in Finland. This would include examining how inclusivity initiatives, such as Pride events or LGBTQ+-friendly certifications, affect community perceptions, economic development, and cultural integration. Understanding these dynamics could help create strategies that benefit both LGBTQ+ travellers and local populations, fostering a more sustainable and inclusive tourism ecosystem.

By addressing these areas, future studies can build on the findings of this thesis to further enhance Finland's position as a leading LGBTQ+-friendly destination. Such research would not only contribute to academic knowledge but also provide practical recommendations for tourism stakeholders aiming to create a more inclusive and equitable travel experience.

7.3 The Reliability and Ethics of the Research

The reliability of this research was enhanced by its transparent methodology and ethical considerations. Semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences while providing the flexibility to address emerging themes. Data were analysed using thematic analysis, a widely accepted method for qualitative studies (ATLAS.ti 2024). Triangulation through multiple participants with diverse backgrounds improved the credibility of the findings.

Ethically, this study adhered to guidelines provided by the European Commission (2021). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their identities were anonymized to protect their privacy. Data were stored securely, and audio recordings were deleted after transcription. These measures ensured the integrity of the research process and safeguarded participants' rights.

7.4 An Evaluation of One's Own Learning

Conducting this research provided great insights into the process of qualitative inquiry and the complexities of LGBTQ+ tourism. As someone relatively new to academic research, especially a project of this length and depth, the process was both challenging and rewarding. Initially, the scope and expectations of the study felt overwhelming, but each step provided an opportunity to develop new skills and build confidence in my abilities. I gained a deeper understanding of the importance of inclusivity and safety in shaping travel experiences and the unique challenges faced by marginalized communities. These insights not only enriched my knowledge of LGBTQ+ tourism but

also broadened my perspective on how inclusive practices can create meaningful changes in the hospitality industry.

Navigating the interview process was a particularly enlightening experience. Having minimal prior experience with qualitative interviews, I was initially uncertain about how to approach participants and guide discussions effectively. However, through practice and reflection, I refined my skills in active listening, adaptability, and ethical research practices. Each interview taught me how to build trust with participants, maintain their anonymity, and create a safe space for sharing personal experiences. These interactions reinforced the human element of research and emphasized the value of empathy and respect.

Analysing qualitative data through thematic analysis further enhanced my academic skills. As someone unfamiliar with this method, learning to identify patterns, synthesize diverse perspectives, and draw meaningful conclusions required patience and persistence. Balancing academic precision with practical relevance was a particularly demanding aspect of this study. Ensuring that my analysis was thorough while remaining grounded in the real-world implications of the findings deepened my appreciation for the nuances of research.

Overall, this study not only broadened my knowledge of LGBTQ+ tourism but also strengthened my capacity to contribute to inclusive and socially sustainable practices in the hospitality industry. More importantly, it provided me with a newfound confidence in my ability to undertake complex research projects, handle challenges with adaptability, and deliver meaningful results. This experience has laid a strong foundation for future academic and professional pursuits, equipping me with the tools and mindset to navigate similarly demanding projects with resilience and focus.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guide: LGBTQ+ Travellers Experiences in Finland

Introduction:

- **Purpose of the Interview:** Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this interview is to explore your experiences as an LGBTQ+ traveller in Finland. I am interested in understanding your perspectives on safety, inclusivity, and overall impressions during your visit.
- **Confidentiality:** All your answers will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes. Your identity will remain anonymous, and you will be referred to as *Traveller 1*, *Traveller 2*, etc., in the final report.
- **Consent:** Before we begin, do I have your permission to record this interview? The recording will ensure accuracy in capturing your responses and will be securely stored on a password-protected device. It will be kept for six months following the completion of the research, after which it will be permanently deleted. Your identity will remain confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in all reporting. You are free to skip any question or stop the interview at any time.

1. Background Questions:

- a. Can you share a little about yourself (e.g., age, nationality, and occupation)?
- b. How do you identify within the LGBTQ+ community (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer)?
- c. When did you visit Finland, and what was the purpose of your visit (e.g., tourism, work, study)?
- d. How many times have you visited Finland? What destinations within the country did you explore?

2. Experiences in Finland:

- a. **General Impressions:**
 - i. How would you describe your overall experience in Finland as an LGBTQ+ traveller?
- b. **Safety:**
 - i. Did you feel safe during your time in Finland? Can you share any specific moments when you felt particularly safe or unsafe?
 - ii. Were there any situations where you felt uncomfortable or vulnerable because of your LGBTQ+ identity?
- c. **Inclusivity:**
 - i. How inclusive did you find Finnish society and culture toward LGBTQ+ individuals?

- ii. What stood out to you about Finnish culture in terms of acceptance and inclusivity?

d. **Challenges:**

- i. Did you face any challenges or barriers related to your LGBTQ+ identity while in Finland? If so, could you describe these experiences?

3. Interactions and Services:

a. **Locals and Service Providers:**

- i. How were your interactions with Finnish locals, service providers, or authorities? Did you feel welcomed and respected?

b. **LGBTQ+ Spaces and Events:**

- i. Did you participate in any LGBTQ+ events or visit LGBTQ+-friendly establishments (e.g., bars, clubs, community spaces)? How was your experience?

4. Comparisons and Suggestions:

a. **Comparative Insights:**

- i. How does your experience in Finland compare to other countries you have visited as an LGBTQ+ traveller?
- ii. Were there unique aspects of Finland that positively or negatively impacted your experience?

b. **Improvements:**

- i. What could Finland do to become a more welcoming destination for LGBTQ+ travellers?
- ii. Are there any services, information, or resources you feel were missing during your visit?

5. Closing:

- a. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences in Finland as an LGBTQ+ traveller?
- b. Do you have any questions about this research or how your responses will be used?