

**Travelers' awareness and attitude towards environmentally sustainable tourism in Helsinki.**

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### **Abstract**

As much as we appreciate how big role has tourism played in our global economy, tourism is one of the industries considered to have affected the environment significantly due to its fast-growing characteristic. It's high time we considered the actions how to minimize the negative impacts of tourism on the environment. Environmentally sustainable tourism serves the purpose of taking environmental aspect of tourism into consideration in management.

Larger number of tourists obviously brings more financial benefits to Helsinki but also poses a more concerning issue regarding the environmental aspect of tourism. It is now considered wise to study how to perform better in Helsinki tourism with the least impacts on nature.

The objective of this thesis was to study the attitude and awareness levels of tourists in Helsinki towards environmentally sustainable tourism. This thesis is commissioned by Helsinki Marketing, the marketing company for the tourism in Helsinki.

The literature review discusses the history of relationship between tourism and environment, then followed by key concepts of sustainable tourism. It also finds out there is an increasing global demand for sustainable tourism. It points out that global consumers expect higher accountability from companies regarding corporate social responsibility. The question of whether or not environmentally sustainable tourists exists is mentioned, as well as the concept of slow travel. Finally, the consumer behavior theory suggests that tourists have the tendency to forget about their daily responsibility while they are on holiday, thus they act more environmentally friendly while at home than while travelling.

The methodology discusses in details the author's reasoning behind the type of market research, the research method, sampling and data collection design. It demonstrates why the method chosen provides good support for solving the research problem. The choice of method is described comprehensively and explained appropriately.

The survey results show rather positive levels of attitude and awareness towards environmentally sustainable tourism. The analysis of the study provides interesting insights about the topic. Studying the awareness and attitude towards sustainable tourism among travellers to Helsinki would be a great help for the local government and travel agents to act upon the demand for environmentally sustainable tourism, coping accordingly with the need for a better practice in tourism.

### **Keywords**

Environmentally sustainable tourism, sustainability, awareness, Helsinki

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Rationale .....	2
1.2	Research question .....	3
1.3	Research objectives and limitations .....	3
1.4	Research method .....	4
2	Environmentally sustainable tourism .....	5
2.1	History of relationship between tourism and environment.....	5
2.2	Sustainable tourism.....	7
2.3	Environmentally sustainable tourism.....	10
2.4	Global demand for sustainable tourism .....	12
2.5	Tourism and corporate social responsibility .....	13
2.6	Environmentally sustainable tourists .....	15
2.7	Consumer behavior in tourism .....	17
3	Environmentally sustainable tourism in Helsinki.....	19
4	Methodology .....	21
4.1	Research type .....	21
4.2	Survey structure .....	21
4.2.1	Background information questions .....	22
4.2.2	Main survey questions.....	23
4.2.3	Questionnaire approval and implementation .....	24
5	Analytics of the survey.....	26
5.1	Socio-demographic factors.....	26
5.2	Geographic factors .....	27
5.3	Financial factors .....	28
5.4	Level of awareness .....	29
5.5	Purchasing and consuming behaviors .....	30
5.5.1	Accommodation.....	30
5.5.2	Restaurant.....	32
5.5.3	Means of transport .....	33
5.5.4	Products/services .....	33
5.5.5	Concernment to environmental issues .....	34
5.6	Open opinions .....	36
6	Discussion .....	38
6.1	Reflection on the research results .....	40
6.2	Recommendation on future .....	42
6.3	Reliability and validity .....	43
6.4	Learning outcomes .....	44

References .....	46
Appendices.....	51
Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire .....	51

## **1 Introduction**

Climate change is real. Even though there are many deniers out there who do not believe in it, the evidence for rapid change in climate is compelling: sea level rise, global temperature rise, warming oceans, shrinking ice sheets, glacial retreat, extreme events, declining Arctic sea ice (NASA 2017). One of biggest causes is the production of fossil fuels, which generates most carbon dioxide to the air. Other industries, however, also contribute their cause to the big problem, as long as there are human activities involved.

Tourism is one among other industries, considered to have affected the environment significantly due to its fast-growing characteristic (The World Tourism Organization 2015). And the more sophisticated the modern world is getting, the bigger footprints we leave behind in tourism industry. The contribution of tourism to greenhouse gas emissions is rising, and are projected to grow 130% between 2005 and 2035 (European climate foundation, 2017). On the other hand, climate change also has impacts on tourism industry for instance rising temperature will reduce the viability of some winter sports destinations, affect biodiversity and lead to more forest fires. Part of this particular impact is already affecting Finland, the country of long winter and cold weather. Messilä Ski Resort in Lahti region reported an income loss during the winter season 2015-2016 due to the declining snow and warm weather (Timonen, 2016).

It is obvious that tourism should start acting towards the solution of this problem in order to lower its impact. It's crucial that all functioning elements in tourism industry, including travelers, take responsibility and be more environmentally considerate. The purpose of this thesis is to study the level of awareness and attitude towards tourism environmental sustainability among travelers in Helsinki, the capital of Finland by conducting a survey. The commissioning party of this thesis is Helsinki Marketing, the marketing company for tourism in Helsinki. By understanding travelers' point of view towards ecologically friendly tourism, Helsinki Marketing will then can decide on their marketing strategies and incorporate the practice with local tourism agencies, hotels, restaurants, museums, etc. The exploration of potential for environmentally sustainable tourism in Helsinki will help companies to consider implementing eco-friendly tourism concept in their operation based on customer expectations.

## 1.1 Rationale

Finland tourism has been on increasing growth for the past 5 years and expecting to continue until 2025 (Visit Finland, 2017). Finland is one of top three destinations in 2017 according to LonelyPlanet. Helsinki is the main destination for travelers when visiting the land of hundreds of thousands of lakes. More people than ever before visited the city of Helsinki and stayed there overnight last year 2016. This year 2017 when Finland celebrates 100 years of independence, Helsinki can expect even more travelers. (Helsinki Times, 2016).

Larger number of tourists obviously brings more financial benefits to Helsinki but also poses a more concerning issue regarding the environmental aspect of tourism. It is now considered wise to study how to perform better in tourism with the least impacts on nature as many developed countries are practicing. Our Nordic neighbors Norway and Iceland are among the top ecotourism destinations with their remote beauty. Denmark and The Netherlands are considered green countries to tourists due to their sustainable way of living and working. It's high time Helsinki of Finland implemented green practices in tourism industry, not only to attract more tourists but also to help resolve environmental impacts of tourism.

Studying the awareness and attitude towards sustainable tourism among travelers to Helsinki would be a great help for the local government and travel agents to act upon the demand for environmentally sustainable tourism, coping accordingly with the need for a better practice in tourism. The results of the study will give insights into how tourists would like Helsinki to be as a travel destination, from which company and local government can learn to offer better products and services.

This thesis was motivated by the personal deep interest of the author towards Finnish nature. She herself is trying to be environmentally friendly and influence others on this matter. The author believes that the more people answering the survey, the more people are aware of the concept and that's already one step closer to the goal of "we are in this together" regarding protecting our mother planet.

## **1.2 Research question**

As the thesis is commissioned by Helsinki Marketing, it is expected by the company that they would like to understand how travelers in Helsinki behave when it comes to environmentally sustainable tourism. Travelers are the customers of Helsinki Marketing whose behaviors they would like to study. In order to learn what is customer's point of view towards the topic, the research question of "How important is environmentally sustainable tourism among travelers in Helsinki?" was given to this thesis.

Customer behavior has always been an interesting topic in marketing industry. Yet it is considered a complex issue as there are many factors influencing one's choice. When already knowing the importance of environmentally sustainable tourism, the company could analyze the factors that affect traveler's decision making. The thesis question is tailored for their marketing efforts and Helsinki Marketing could then decide how they would provide products or services so that they can reach a higher level of customer satisfaction

## **1.3 Research objectives and limitations**

The objective of the research is to study the level of awareness and attitude towards environmentally sustainable tourism among travelers in Helsinki. By "awareness", this thesis searches the answer to see the current level of understanding the concept from travelers. "Attitude" part will then seek to define the interest of commitment to the action following their understanding.

After succeeding in collecting the answers, the author then proceeds to analyze and understand the results of the survey in order to give a better comprehension of level of importance of environmentally sustainable tourism to Helsinki Marketing. It provides them with statistical facts hence they could act accordingly to promote the city of Helsinki as a green destination and to influence the local tourism players to operate in line with the image the city wants to build.

Sustainable tourism is an umbrella concept where underneath lie environmental, social and economic features. Since this thesis involves the participation of travelers, the target area of this thesis is limited to environmental aspect of sustainable tourism. It's more obvious for people to recognize their own action related to environment rather than to social and economic aspects of sustainable tourism.

#### **1.4 Research method**

The nature of this thesis together with its objectives navigates towards to research-based type of study. A quantitative survey will be created among travelers in Helsinki to collect data and later on analyzed. The survey happened at the Helsinki Tourist Information centre office of Helsinki Marketing at Pohjoisesplanadi 19, Helsinki where travelers come for getting brochures and necessary information about the city. The office is located in Helsinki centre where most travelers stay and visit. The target number of answers to this survey is 200 from all platforms.

## **2 Environmentally sustainable tourism**

The umbrella concept of it all is Sustainable Tourism, in which lie underneath Environmental, Social and Economical dimensions. In tourism policy terms, environmental aspect has been considered primarily, followed by economic as its development and social comes last in the family of sustainability. (Hall 2010)

The concept of environmentally sustainable tourism includes comprehensively handling climate change and preserving of natural resources for future generations while adequately meeting the needs of current population. (New Zealand tourism guide, 2017)

Tourism, either in this form or another, has a significant impact on use of natural resources, changes in global environmental and social lifestyle. While the impacts on society and culture are less noticeable and assessable, changes in availability of natural resources are clearly visible. This chapter of the thesis will go more in depth to see the relationship between tourism and environment, global impacts of tourism on nature and understand more thoroughly why there is a great demand of environmental sustainability in tourism practices. (Michelle et al, 2015)

### **2.1 History of relationship between tourism and environment**

Tourism phenomenon was witnessed to have appeared in the 1990's when a large proportion of the world's inhabitants started the trends of travelling and participating in leisure-time activities at their discretion. Evidently this growth was associated with its traditional root back in 1950's when the prosperous Westerners valued the importance of holidays and threw themselves into leisure pursuits. Nowadays when the globe's wealth is not anymore polarized only to the Western world, people start their movement to destinations outside their own familiar neighborhood. Tourism is increasingly being valued as a great means to exchange and develop one's knowledge of other cultures, traditions and lifestyles. It's where globalization comes from. (Page 2002, 3)

In the process of globalization, tourism, however like any other form of economic activity, has influences on the environment. The term "environment" can be interpreted in various ways. O' Riordan (2000) defined "environment" as: all aspects of surroundings of humanity, affecting individual and social groupings. Pearce (1989:185) associated "environment"

with its physical attributes: soil, vegetation, relief, aspect, fauna, climate – and the dynamics of the relationship between these elements". Tourism is recognized to generate, besides its benefits to society intellectually, from moderate to enormous disturbances to the surroundings. In order to meet the demand of such a fast-growing industry, authorities have made rapid decisions to destroy and exploit a vast amount of nature to construct accommodation, man-made attractions and what more to serve the purpose.

The relationship between environment and tourism had appeared on a big amount of academic papers during the three decades from 70's to 90's (Dasman *et al.* 1973; Bosselman 1978; Mathieson 1982; Farrel and McLellan 1987; Ross and Wall 1999b). Experts of these public debates have expressed their concern over the significance of conservation of nature against what's called "mass tourism" (Hunter and Green 1995). The phenomenon was discussed by Krippendorf (1987) when the world's tourism experienced a sudden upsurge.

People agree at different levels on how resources should be used and how important environmental problems are (Page 2002, 3). Over the debated subject, there stand two main streams of beliefs: whether humans are harming the environment or the two work together. This sort of division illustrates the opposite perceptions in the society during that time: the former represents the conflict of "man versus nature" while the latter flips the image over into "man together with nature". Table 1 summarizes the two common world views Page and Dowling (2002, 3) as following.

Table 1. The dominant world view (anthropocentrism) and eco-centric view

Dominant world view	Eco-centric view
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dominance over nature</li> <li>- Natural environment as a resource to be exploited by human</li> <li>- Economic growth is necessary for human development</li> <li>- The reserves of resources are plentiful</li> <li>- Technology will provide solutions to environmental and resource-related problems</li> <li>- Consumerism</li> <li>- National/centralized community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Harmony with nature</li> <li>- All elements of nature have intrinsic worth</li> <li>- Humans have simple material needs</li> <li>- The earth's resources are finite</li> <li>- Appropriate technology is needed which is in balance with nature</li> <li>- Recycling</li> <li>- Minority tradition</li> </ul>

The table above presents an abstracted comparison between the world's two differing paradigms in which one is human-centered and the other is nature-centered. The dominance world view values humans to be the most vital living species on earth who have the opportunity to use the unlimited natural resources. On the contrary, the other one sets their heart on the meaningful importance of the surroundings. These two opposing viewpoints underlie their believers' approach towards natural issues as the consequence of human affair such as tourism. (Page and Dowling, 2002, 3)

Over the time, there were fewer believers in the dominance world view as they started to experience more environmental issues in relation with daily occurrences and especially mass tourism. An increasing need for alternatives drove the cause of emerging nature-based experiences. In addition, less developed countries also became aware of the advantage of such activity as it proposes a great deal of non-native reciprocity and render less damaging utilization of natural resources such as logging and cultivation (Honey, 1999, 4). This acknowledgement served as the original mentality for the later known term "Ecotourism", from which "sustainable tourism" derived.

## **2.2 Sustainable tourism**

Tourism sustainability has three vital pillars which are essential for the development of tourism: Social, environmental and economic aspects. The concept of the three pillars of sustainability has been accepted all over the world. The tourism linked associations need to look at the three pillars of sustainable tourism. The three areas should be taken into consideration by communities, companies, and individuals for any action related to tourism in order to maintain sustainable growth of the industry. The main aim of sustainable development is to ensure a long-lasting balance between these three dimensions. The success of sustainable tourism management could only be guaranteed if the inter-relationships between all three dimensions are recognized. (Swarbrooke, 2002, 47.)

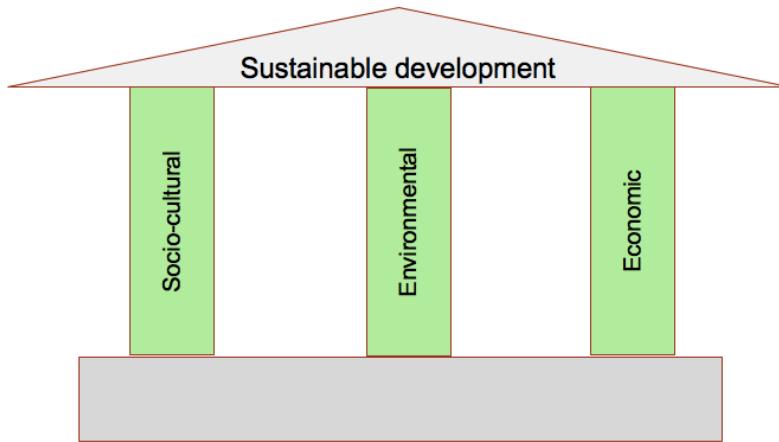


Figure 1. Principles of sustainable tourism (UNWTO)

According to UNWTO (World Tourism Organization by United Nations) in 2013, there are three principles which sustainable tourism should follow:

Table 2. Three principles of sustainable tourism (UNWTO)

Social	Environment	Economy
Respect the socio- cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.	Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.	Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income- earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

The list identifies and specifies the three core values: environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable tourism.

It is also worth mentioning that nowadays, it is common to see the terms “ecotourism”, “responsible tourism” and “sustainable tourism” being used interchangeably. One of the reasons for that is due to the close relations between ecological and social dimensions, indicating that any sort of “green” tourism will have impacts to the society as the whole, and that the objectives of any of those are towards the same direction.

The Responsible Tourism Partnership defines responsible tourism as the kind of tourism that:

Table 3. Responsible tourism (The Responsible Tourism Partnership, 2017)

Minimizes negative economic, environmental, and social impacts		
Generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry	Involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances; provides access for physically challenged people	Makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity
Provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues		
Is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.		

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF), an organization which promotes building a future in which people live in harmony with nature, has offered a list of principles for Arctic tourism. The organization works with tourism operators, government, researchers, conservation groups and communities from all over the Arctic to create the first Arctic specific guidelines for sustainable tourism:

Table 4. Principles for Arctic tourism (WWF)

Make tourism and conservation compatible		
Respect local cultures, historic and scientific sites	- Support the preservation of wilderness and biodiversity - Use natural resources in a sustainable way	- Arctic communities should benefit from tourism - Trained staff is the key to responsible tourism
Make the trip an opportunity to learn about the Arctic		
Follow safety rules		

The ultimate purpose of Arctic tourism principles is to integrate conservation into tourism practices. Its principles are also categorized into three main aspects as in sustainable tourism discussed previously. The principles also emphasize the benefits for tourists by encouraging the opportunity to learn about the Arctic and that safety is important.

### **2.3 Environmentally sustainable tourism**

As discussed in the relationship between tourism and environment, sustainable tourism was believed to originally refer only to environmental aspect of tourism and it is by far the most popular part of sustainable tourism once it's mentioned. Especially nowadays when the topic of climate change exists in almost our ever day conversations, environmental sustainability becomes more important than ever. It is based on nature centralized theories and practices. It emphasizes that each country and organization either large or small should together bring actions to prevent loss of natural resources and at the same time encourages the proactive use of renewable energy (Hemmi 2005a, 77). Considering the huge impacts by tourism on environment, the idea of environmentally sustainable tourism is to resolve the problems we have caused to nature due to given activities in the industry.

Tourism is one of human activities that is both dependent on natural resources and contribute to their depletion (Michelle et al, 2015, 43). It is believed that tourism is a large energy consumption and greenhouse gas generation sector. It also brings to bear the adversity of global fresh water resources, land use, biodiversity loss, food supply and food waste management. Even though most tourism activities happen locally, the impact is added up on a global level (Gössling and Hall 2006a).

Fossil fuels together with other sources of energy are the main power supply to tourism sector. They currently account for the biggest shares of global emissions of gases which cause changes in the climate of our planet. The use of energy in tourism has been thus far calculated for three main sub-areas: transport, lodging and activity. Among those sub-sectors, transportation is the one that generate most CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, in which air transport makes up 40% of tourism's overall footprint, followed by car transport at 32% and accommodation 21% (2005). These percentages are predicted to highly soar by 2035, especially in air transport and accommodation parts. If no or little action is taken seriously from the moment, tourism will become a growingly originator of greenhouse gas emissions in the near future. (Michelle et al, 2015)

Fresh water is another vital player that keeps tourism alive. Though we all consume water while at home, tourists are proved to have bigger water consumption while traveling. Besides hygienic purposes and wellness activities like sauna, spa and swimming, tourists also consume water in the form of infrastructure construction and operation. On average, a tourist consumes about 300 liters of water per day and that number increases in higher standard accommodations (Gössling et al. 2012). Also, energy use is required for production of water and water is needed for production of energy. This interrelation could only intensity the existing problem of water scarcity and energy consumption in many areas around the world. Furthermore, water is number one essential for food production in tourism industry. UNESCO calculated in 2009 that average human diets require 2000 to 5000 liters of water per person per day. It is crucial to realize that fresh water consumption will soon become a bigger issue on global level but not anymore regional or national.

Tourism cannot go without food. One of the reasons why people travel is to have the chance to taste the food at the destination, as food is an essential part of any culture. Given the significant importance of food in hospitality industry, it is obviously correct to list the impacts of food consumption to the environment as one of central factors. In 2008 UNTWO calculated that an average of 200 million meals per day were consumed by tourists in 2005. The sustainability of food sector in tourism falls within the responsibility of food providers, with hotels and restaurants paying significantly larger shares for the cause of food production. Since hotel and restaurants are primarily owned by private businesses, food producers subsequently have to go under the pressure of profitability math calculations, which then leads to mass globalization of food production. Food production requires a large amount of water for irrigation system and processing. It also leads to the use of chemicals during the time of food growing. The consumption of some specialties is the cause for putting some species in higher level of endanger and generating bigger implications to the biodiversity system, for example the deforestation of mangrove forests caused by disappearing giant shrimps. (Gössling et al. 2012).

Tourism is also held accounted for the land use and change. The more people travel, the more tourism grows and the more changes are made to the land. Direct uses of land in tourism include accommodation construction, man-made attractions, public facilities while indirect land uses include food production, waste management infrastructure and tourism goods manufacture. These changes lead to increasing pressure on wildlife extinction and biodiversity loss. Even though one part of tourism nowadays is to educate people about local community and preserving nature, it still hasn't made up to what tourism has taken from the natural environment. (Michelle et al, 2015)

Environmentally sustainable tourism has one major purpose, to minimize all the above-mentioned impacts caused by tourism to the environment. It is to make sure that natural resources used by tourism are well preserved and maintained for future generations (Swarbrooke, 2002. 47). Management of resource use is extremely crucial and tourism associations need to adequately understand the close linkage between tourism impacts and resource scarcity. Yet there has been very little confirmation of the fact that limitation applied to resource consumption will have a major impact on tourism industry. Tourism itself is amendable and tolerant to new changes in policies (Gössling et al. 2012). So far there has only been a small number of decision makers considering the restriction to resource use in tourism. The management authorities in tourism industry are more likely to achieve better results in environment sustainability goals if more intense actions are carried out.

## **2.4 Global demand for sustainable tourism**

The acknowledgement of the importance of tourism sustainability has not started just recently. In fact, there is a history behind it. The milestones in sustainability is reportedly dated back in 1972 when the Stockholm Conference happened. It's when the first global environmental meeting by the United Nation (UN), the declaration included 26 basic principles and policy goals took place and also the establishment of UNEP, United Nation Environment Program. Many other sustainable tourism events also happened along the years, from the Brundtland Report in 1987, The Earth Summit (Rio) in 1992, The World Summit in Sustainable Development in 2002 to the Rio+20 Conference in 2012, in which the document "The future we want" emphasized on the role of sustainable tourism as driver for change as well as the importance of measuring impacts for better well-informed decision making. 2017 is marked as the UN Year of Sustainable Tourism Development. In the UN's report "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", tourism was explicitly mentioned in three out of seventeen SDG's (Sustainable Development Goals), in which more particular targets are listed underneath each goal. (World Travel Market, 2016)

In 2015, multiple studies showed the increasing demand for sustainable tourism. Booking.com surveyed over 32,000 travelers in 16 countries and the results showed that one out of two holidaymakers is considering environmental aspects of a destination when planning a holiday. Travelers are also three times within the bounds of possibility to book a "green" lodging in 2015 than they did in 2014. The year 2015 saw the bigger proportion

of world explorers to reduce their footprints and that their journeys will have positive impact on the local community, comparing to the previous year 2014. (Sustaining Tourism, 2017)

A big competitor of Booking.com, Expedia also pulled off a survey on travelers' attitude towards sustainable tourism. It found out that 29 percent of consumers is expected to choose one company over another based on environmental performance, up from 19 percent in 2011. The results indicated that about two thirds of travelers believe that tourism businesses are supposed to help the environment in their business operations. What Expedia learned from its survey is that there is a certain expectation from majority of public that it's company's responsibility to ensure that their company policies follow the green trends so that efforts are made among more and more holiday makers. (Sustaining Tourism, 2017)

A 2015 study for the Province of Ontario in Canada found that 61% of respondents were very or extremely interested in businesses or destinations showcasing their sustainability initiatives, 73% somewhat or extremely likely to consider sustainability in their travel plans. (Sustaining Tourism, 2017)

What we can see from the results of the above-mentioned surveys is that interest in sustainable travel is increasing in recent years, it is an obvious indication that changes need to happen in order to meet the demand of travelers, in additions to all the benefits of environmentally sustainable practices.

## **2.5 Tourism and corporate social responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an approach to business administration where, in addition to the more traditional issues of profitability and other shareholder concerns, closer voluntary consideration of ethical, social and environmental issues as well as the organization's varied stakeholders is taken in operation and value creation (Gössling et al, 2015).

According to Investopedia (2017), CSR is an organization's proposal strategy to evaluate and be accountable for the corporation's impacts to the outside world on social and environmental levels. The term is used to indicate the striver made by one group to exceed the necessary requirements set by authorities.

Same as the term “sustainable tourism”, CSR can also be referred interchangeably to different terms as “corporate citizenship” or “social responsibility”. No matter which term a company uses, however, the vision is rather the same, towards a better implementation of sustainable practices. The concept of “triple bottom line” is increasingly adopted by more companies, where they dedicate to set the alignment of their business and good social and ecological practices. The concept is commonly dubbed with 3P’s or “people, planet, profit”, which encompasses all the three core values of business sustainability: social, environmental and economic elements.

A study by Cone Communications pointed out that global consumers expect higher accountability from companies. As in the progress of looking for companies to partner with, they seek to see beyond the basics of materials and service quality. 91 percent of respondents hold companies accountable for addressing social and environmental concerns. Almost the same number of consumers expressed their idea of seeking out responsible commodities. Also, nine out of ten would blacklist any products once they discover the dark truth that company hide in their deceptive acts.

"European companies have really led the way on environment efforts, such as green energy usage, eco-friendly office and travel policies, and ensuring that businesses take a responsibility for controlling if their net impact is positive or negative," said Richard Stevenson, head of corporate communications at ecommerce platform ePages.com. On why CSR matters, he added "In recent history, the organizations that have achieved remarkable things tend to be the ones that share success with others, instinctively". (Business News Daily, 2017)

According to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, Finnish companies possess all the necessary prospects to be at the same levels as global leaders in CSR matter. Their statement indicated that “We have long traditions in compliance with labor legislation, occupational safety and health legislation and environmental legislation, and we live in a democratic society where everyone has freedom of speech. We respect human rights and work tirelessly against corruption and bribery. All of these are potential competitiveness factors in the global market”.

## **2.6 Environmentally sustainable tourists**

Targeting different consumer groups with different offers has always been a practical approach among businesses and decision makers in any industry. The significance of this approach is even bigger in tourism industry when the level of willingness to comfort customers are even higher than in some other industries. Customers in tourism seek to get away from their daily life responsibilities by going on vacations, just so they can be comforted according to their expectations. Being able to circle a group of environmentally sustainable tourists is definitely among the management authority's interests. (Dang, 2017)

By definition, environmentally sustainable tourists (also referred to as environmentally friendly tourists, eco tourists, green tourists and such) are portrayed as the ones who have or wish to have as little impact as possible during their travels. It would be ideal for tourism if such type of tourists exists, especially if there are many. However, the question whether or not such type of travelers exists is still open for possible answers. So far there has not been enough proof for their existence nor there is a market segment for them in the industry. Contrary to the ideal expectation by eco-friendly tourism players, studies on travelers conducted in the parks, eco-destinations and eco-lodges have found some interesting facts: Not everyone who visits the park, not everyone who visit eco-destinations, and not everyone who stay in eco-lodges is an environmentally sustainable tourist. (Dolnicar, 2015)

A variety of studies researches had been carried out in the past in an attempt to portray such particular tourists and brought about some greatly various results. If all the researchers managed to put together their findings in order to depict the character, an environmentally sustainable tourist is someone who is "half educated, half not, slightly environmentally concerned, slightly environmentally aware, slightly willing to forgo comfort and adventure seeking, and slightly female". Obviously, tourism managers do not benefit from such profile if they were in the process of seeking to target this customer group. (Dolnicar, 2015)

Those tourists if existed, are believed to be attempting every way possible to mentally comfort themselves by acquiring any sort of information to calculate their carbon footprint To ensure they are within the limits. The ideal scenario would be management policy makers of the destination providing tourists with tools that allow them to evaluate the cost of environmental vacation alternatives. Unfortunately, such tools are unavailable at the moment. There are actually online calculators for footprint calculations, however only a few of

them are readily functional for counting up the carbon footprints of the entire vacation if one wished to do so. They in any event offer various results which lead to different interpretations and deem to be unreliable source of data (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). Even though eco-labeling and green certifications are in many cases at customer's sight, it isn't visibly clear which scale they use to assess the criteria (Dolnicar, 2015).

The confusion caused by different pieces of information on how environmentally sustainable one vacation is might cause hesitation to environmentally sustainable tourists when booking a vacation. Extremely environmentally concerned tourists are likely to choose not to travel at all if they don't feel they could trust the destination in terms of providing the correct data. That situation isn't in any favors of tourism management bodies. The current situation of lacking information prevents tourists from making a fully informed vacation choice. (Dolnicar, 2015)

The interpretation of behaviors of environmentally sustainable tourists is somewhat similar to the one of "slow tourists", a type of tourist in slow tourism, which is a form of tourism with shorter distances, longer stays, in-depth experiences at the destination and low footprint (Fullager et al. 2012). Slow tourists truly desire to take quality "time out". They consider carefully the alternatives for each activity they take during the entire travel time from starting to book the tickets to planning their travel days. They tend to avoid if possible air and car travel by taking train, coach, foot and bicycle. Various academic interpretations of the term indicate that slow tourism contributes greatly to sustainable tourism. (Dickinson, J. 2015)

Those tourists, however, do not necessarily identify themselves as slow travelers. They are not aware of their label even though they met the criteria in a study by Dickinson et al (2011). They are then further classified into two different categories: one that focuses on in-depth experiences at the destination over longer period of time, involving high engagement level with local community and area. The second category is identified by with farther distances where the tourists see moving around as the main experience purpose. Those in in category take time to move around by taking slower modes of transport with less carbon consumption. While the first category was interpreted mainly by North-American conceptual mindset, the second one is a more European way of interpreting. (Dickinson, 2015)

Nevertheless, the two categories are associated with the more quality time experiences. It is, however, criticized for its applicability on a bigger scale. It is argued that only people with more time and money can afford this type of traveling. The challenges posed by slow

travel is that it's not necessarily an option for the majority of people regarding the modes of transport they can choose and the amount of time and money spent during the travels. (Dickinson, 2015)

## 2.7 Consumer behavior in tourism

Different situations and surrounding environments results in different ways of behaving. Tourists are typical examples for this theory. They believe that with the vacation, they deserve a break from normal world life. In general tourists tend to lower their level of commitment to environmental behaviors during their travel. Moving from home environment to vacation environment gives tourists the perfect opportunity to escape from their daily life burden. When booking a vacation, they have the expectation of not having to stress about ordinary concerns. No matter how much they enjoy the destination, the connection between tourists with it is weaker than theirs with their home place. Therefore, tourists feel less accountable for their actions, also their vacation behaviors are thought to have less long-term effect at the destination than at home. Their home environment might have more infrastructure availability for them to function with the mindset of environmental sustainability while their behaviors while destination environment might not. The majority of people's motivation for practicing eco-friendly habits is the visibility of their impact: they can clearly see that saving water and electricity results in smaller energy bills. People tend to offer themselves the chance of enjoying their vacation without troubling their thoughts with environment. They even refuse to change their behavior at the destination to protect environment, pointing that the authorities should be liable for that. (Dolnicar, 2015)

Vacation accommodations for example are the place where we could see the visible evidence of why tourists feel less accountable for environment. Most accommodations offer the room prices inclusive of water and electricity, bathroom supplies, room amenities, sometimes food and beverages in the minibar in some high-end hotels. Customers don't see the difference in their check-out receipts, which probably explains why they are less likely to try to save some water and energy during their stay. Unlike at home, monthly energy bills clearly act as a reminder of how much have they consumed and also the economic reason is very appealing. Majority of hotels are not charging their customers for changing sheets daily during their stay. While obviously not everyone is changing sheets daily at home, here they have the option to sleep on clean sheets every day without extra charge. And in today's tourism world where the competition is fierce among accommodation providers, customers are increasingly pampered with more and more complimentary

offers, imposing restrictions or charging extra on water and energy usage is just like making a step backward so that other competitors can make one step forward in the war of winning customers over. For businesses, that might sound like an unreasonable strategy to carry out. For customers, this is a great opportunity for catching great deals with generous offering from hotels, which could be larger room with more water, energy and amenities consumed. (Dang, 2017)

### **3 Environmentally sustainable tourism in Helsinki**

It's important to note that other countries have emphasized the fact of regarding low-carbon efficiency as an economic sector. Countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, UK, Sweden who have bigger populations and bigger tourism growth are making an effort in means to reduce their emissions in tourism (Michelle et al, 2015). Finland with smaller population and is a less popular tourism destination, hasn't been the first one to take initiative in reducing emissions. Finland is still at its start line, while its Nordic neighbors are years ahead with their electric car use. Finland currently has over 1000 electric cars, while Sweden has 10 times more and Norway 100 times more. Finland's decision makers have recently set the goal of having 250,000 electric cars by 2030. They now have 13 years to convince citizens. This goal when it's reached, Finland will have made a big shift in their energy consumption sector. This will have a major effect on tourism system in Finland, especially Helsinki as Finnish largest city and most popular destination among other Finnish cities. (Yle News, 2017)

The City of Helsinki is committed to promoting environmentally friendly practices in all its operations and wish that all happenings in the city follow the same implementation. Public transport is free of charge for the members of congresses as the way to promote environmentally friendly modes of transport. The public transport connection between Helsinki centre to Helsinki-Vantaa airport is very efficient. One airport train ride takes 40 minutes and with a reasonable fare of €5,50, enabling tourists to use public transport rather than private ones when travelling to and from the airport. Helsinki has a very well-planned network of public transport including metro, tram, bus and ferry alternatives and all share the common fare system. Helsinki city main attractions are within walking distances. Public bicycles are also at disposal. If the public transport means is somehow inconvenient for tourists to use, they have the option to order an eco-taxi. (Visit Helsinki, 2017)

Many hotels in Helsinki are certificated with environmentally friendly labels. There are 11 hotels with EcoCompass, 15 hotels with Swan ecolabel and 13 Greenkey hotels. Eco-Compass is a suitable environmental management system for SMEs, public events and the offices of the city administration. The Swan is the official Nordic Ecolabel, introduced by the Nordic Council of Minister which demonstrates that a product is a good environmental choice. The Green Key award is the leading standard for excellence in the field of environmental responsibility and sustainable operation within the tourism industry. Many

hotels implement an effective waste management and recycling system. Many also provide their guests with bicycles for use during their stay. Several of them offer carbon footprint calculators for tracking down their level of consumption. (Visit Helsinki, 2017)

## **4 Methodology**

This chapter discusses in details the author's reasoning behind the type of market research, the research method, sampling and data collection design. The background research is proven skillful and provides varied and fully justified support for the topic of this thesis. The author also demonstrates why the method chosen provides good support for solving the research problem. The choice of method is described comprehensively and explained appropriately. Sampling and data collection design is discussed in detail with attention to the quality of data collected. Also, this chapter justifies the validity and reliability of the research.

### **4.1 Research type**

The method chosen for carrying out the empirical investigation of this thesis is quantitative study. The purpose of this thesis is to understand consumer behavior in tourism industry regarding environmental sustainability, therefore quantitative survey is the best suit to conduct the study with a mass participant. A customer behavior study requires much larger number of representative samples and quantitative method is the most common way to collect information from a target group within a reasonable amount of time.

The author's initial intention is to collect data during two weekends maximum, therefore quantitative research is a greater choice for meeting the deadlines. Data collected by this method is quantifiable and available for statistical analysis afterwards. A quantitative research offers a large coverage of diversity in situations, which is applicable in customer behavior study. As it covers a larger amount of audience, quantitative methods have higher level of reliability and validity. In this case, Helsinki Marketing company can use the statistical data collected from the survey as the base for their decisions regarding how they want to promote the city of Helsinki as a destination.

### **4.2 Survey structure**

After choosing the most suitable method for carrying out the study, the author then proceeds to structure the survey. The survey is aimed to be able to collect as much information as possible, yet it has to be short. A short questionnaire will engage more people in participating than a longer one, due to the fact that tourists prefer to spend their day visiting places rather than spending time answering a long survey. A shorter length not only engages tourists at first but also keep them answering until the last question. By that way the data collected from the survey is more reliable since fewer blank answers are expected. The questions should be giving mainly in multiple choice answers option, ensuring that answering the survey takes maximum 3 minutes. Since it's a consumer behavior survey, it should also give as many situations as possible in order to have diversity in the analysis. After considering all the aspects above, the author decides to have the survey limited to 14 questions. The wording of the survey should be as easy English as possible, in case of differences in English skills among participants.

#### **4.2.1 Background information questions**

The survey participant group is expected to represent the diversity geographically, demographically and financially. People are all different so in order to analyze the data effectively, it's good to categorize them in different aspects as regions, ages, education levels, how often they travel and their financial capabilities. The author decides to put the background information section of 5 questions in the beginning of the survey as they are easier to answer. That is considered a good way to lead people and engage them in answering the following questions. The multiple-choice answers are given in the order from low to high, enabling respondents to follow easily.

There are many factors influencing how one behave in a certain situation. Therefore, background information collection is very essential for analyzing the data. Regarding the background information question, after the question of number of trips per year, the author then proceeds with the question about financial capability of each traveler on their trip in Helsinki. Due the fact that people behave differently in spending money, it is considered suitable for the survey to include the money question. Now this money question when put this way will get more answers than asking about the income. Tourists will more likely not answer the question about their income. As we can somehow see the relation between how much one earns and how much one spends on their travels, the question of "How much money do you spend in total per day in Helsinki (including accommodation)?" is more discreet than the question about incomes.

In order to gain a better understanding for the customer behaviors in the upcoming questions in the survey, the author included two more questions related to financial capability of tourists. It is important to understand that if one is travelling more often, they are more exposed to the travelling world and their attitudes towards things in their travels can be different. And when they are spending more money on their trips, a wider range of activities are offered to them, thus their consumption behaviors are also different.

#### **4.2.2 Main survey questions**

When it comes to the main survey questions, effectively crafting a well-structured questionnaire body requires a few criteria. First is to set a goal for the survey. The ultimate objective of this survey is to find out tourists' awareness and attitude towards the topic of environmentally sustainable tourism. The survey should learn buyer behavior by mainly including how they choose one specific type of product/service or how much they favor one over the other alternatives. The multiple-choice answers are given in the scale of not important to very important.

After the background information question, the questionnaire continues with the very first question related to environmentally sustainable tourism, it is to ask how familiar they are to the topic itself. This signals for tourists to know that they are now entering the section of the main questions regarding the topic of the survey. This also serves as paving the way for tourists to get ready for more specific questions upcoming.

In order to get the answer for the level of awareness, the author includes in the survey the question of whether or not the accommodation tourists are staying eco-friendly. The answers options given to this question are Yes, No and I don't know. The Yes answer is then followed by a question of how well the eco-friendliness is communicated in their accommodation. This is to see how much they pay attention to the issue of environmental sustainability. It's important to place this question about eco-certified accommodation in front of other question related to accommodation choices, as it raises the topic before tourists are asked more in-depth questions.

Decisions made in tourism industry are related to accommodation, food, transport, activity at the destination. Therefore, the survey includes questions about those areas in tourism. Under each question, there are sub-questions relating to the main topic. For example, in

accommodation question there are environmental criteria for tourists to choose to stay at this type of accommodation rather than other. The same goes for the restaurant question, food related criteria are introduced. In transport question, different means of transport are given to see which one do tourists value better than the other alternatives. In product/service question, options relating to environmental aspect of activity are presented.

One last multiple choice question is to see how much people care about environmental issues in general such as climate change, animal extinction, pollution situation, unsustainable use of natural resources. The last two sub-question in this is to see how eco-friendly tourists are at their destination and at home. This derives from the theory of tourists being less environmentally responsible for the destination than at home which was mention in the previous chapter.

The survey is designed to end with an open question to see how people suggest Helsinki to be regarding an eco-friendly destination. This serves as a place to collect opinions on how people want to see the development of Helsinki.

#### **4.2.3 Questionnaire approval and implementation**

After crafting the questionnaire, the author then sends to Helsinki Marketing for evaluation. The company offers some valuable constructive feedback. For example, the first question of “where do you come from” was previously given the option of open answer. However, when it comes to analyzing the data, there might be many different answers which cause difficulties in grouping the respondents into more specific categories. Therefore, multiple choice answers for that question are then given in the form of big geographical regions instead of open answers. Another question removed has been the gender question as the company did not see the importance of the gender to this specific topic. Also, the company added some more criteria in the questions of accommodation, restaurant, transport, product/service choices.

After that the questionnaire has gotten additional comments from thesis supervisor. Some minor details in the multiple-choice answers has been then adjusted. The author then tests it by giving to three friends, asking them to try filling it out and give critical feedback. Their suggestion on some minor changes in wording is given and the author takes into consideration when fixing them. Other than that, they find the survey questions easy to understand and well structured.

After taking all the comments and suggestions from different partners, the author finalizes the questionnaire and finally has the survey carried out at the office of Tourist Information Centre (Pohjoisesplanadi 19, Helsinki). The survey is offered in two formats: online and prints. Due to some technical issues, the author is not able to use the available computers at the office for offering the survey to tourists who visit, therefore she has only her own computer. Because of that, the number of answers collected from the online format is not as big compared to the prints format, which can be handed out to many people at the same time. Whenever there are tourists coming to the office to gather some information about the city, the author approaches them, offers to help if possible and proceed with handing out the questionnaire. A small fraction of tourists refuses to answer for several reasons such as tight schedule, having just arrived or no English skills. Other than that, the majority of tourists are willing to answer, with a few of them proactively asking to answer. All the answers collected from printed version of the questionnaire are then transferred to the online platform for better data analysis with the help of Excel.

## **5 Analytics of the survey**

As planned, the survey happened in the Tourist Information Centre of Helsinki Marketing. The survey consists of fourteen questions. The first thirteen of them were multiple choice questions with the last one being an open question. The author managed to keep the survey questions short and easy enough to understand, and the multiple-choice questions were considered a good way to not drive tourists away from answering the given questions.

The location of the survey played a big role in collecting the targeted amount of answers. The Tourist Information Centre is located right at the heart of Helsinki centre, where there are many nearby attractions, hotels, restaurants and walking streets. The Tourist Information Centre were constantly filled with tourists coming for their questions. That amount of traffic allowed the author to be in close contact with many of them with their willingness to cooperate. After 4 days of conducting survey, the author has collected 246 answers, out of 200 targeted. Even though 6 respondents only completed the first half of the survey, that should not tremendously affect the general results of the rest 240 answers. The analytics of the survey only refers to the tourists surveyed. It does not represent the behaviors of all the tourists in Helsinki.

### **5.1 Socio-demographic factors**

Figure 2 below shows the groups of respondents according to their age. It demonstrates that all different age groups participated in the survey. Out of 246 respondents, the largest portion is in the age of 41-60 years old with 40,8 percent. The second biggest group follows with 28,6 percent of the range 26-40 years old. The young generation group of the age 18-25 accounts for 14,3 percent of the participants, followed by elderly group of over 61 years old at 13,1 percent. Only 3,3 percent of the respondents are under 18 years old. The diverse age groups give a fair collection of answers considering this socio factor.

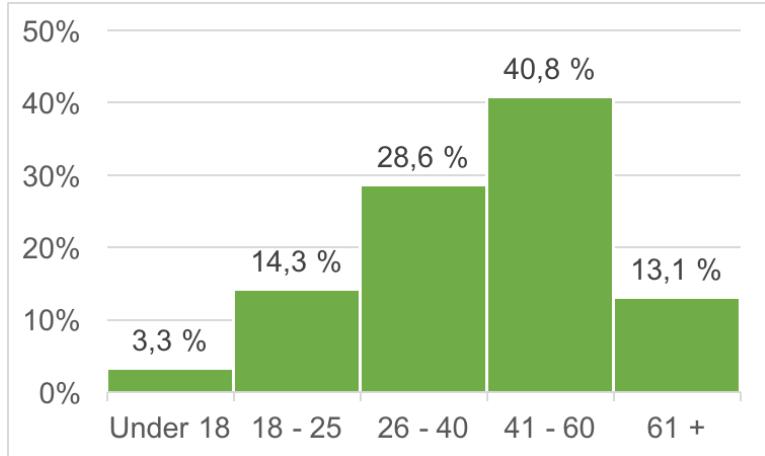


Figure 2. Age (n=245)

The tourists who respond to the survey are well educated. 40,2 percent of them complete a Master's degree and 38,2 percent have a Bachelor's diploma. 19,5 percent finish high school and 2,0 percent finish primary school. It is good to note that the majority of respondents who finish high school are in the age group of 18-26 years old. All who respond to have finished primary school are under 18 years old. None of the tourists has an empty educational background. (Figure 3)

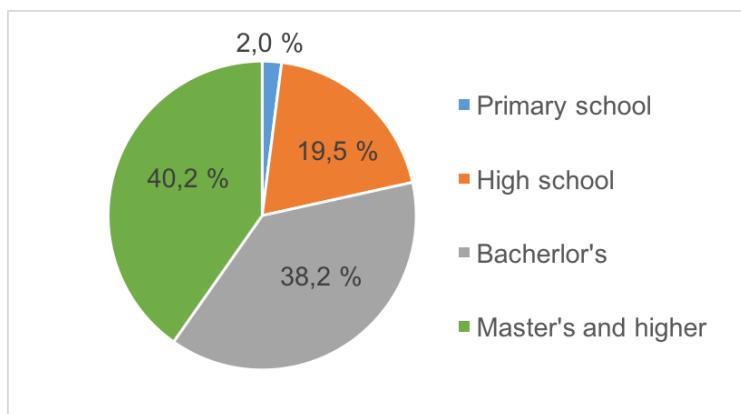


Figure 3. Highest education (n=246)

## 5.2 Geographic factors

Figure 4 below illustrates the nationality of the tourists. Over one half of them are from other European countries (54,5 percent). 17,5 percent of the tourists is from Nordic countries. Tourists from Asia make up for 11 percent, followed by North America at 9,8 percent. Only 1,2 percent of the tourists come from South Africa while none from Africa. Australian tourists account for a small portion of 6,1 percent.

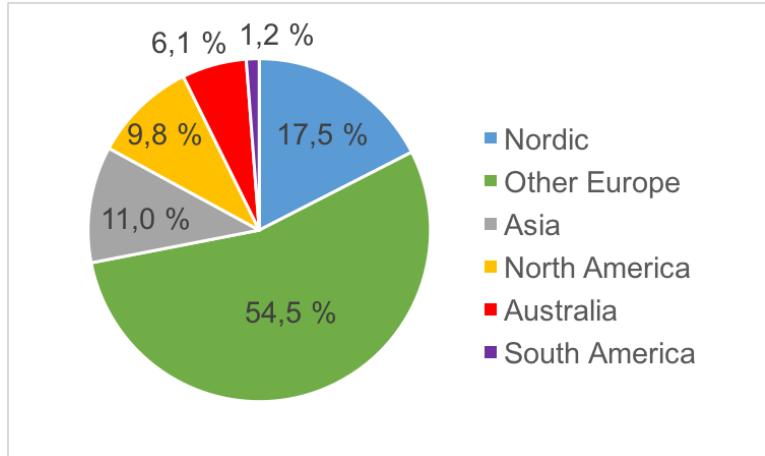


Figure 4. Nationality (n=246)

### 5.3 Financial factors

On average the majority of people (two thirds) make 1 to 3 trips per year. One fifth of the respondents travel more often at the range of 4 to 6 trips per year. At the range of 7 to 9 trips per year, there is only 3,3 percent of respondents. 6,1 percent of them travel more than 10 times a year, while 4,9 percent of them say they don't travel every year. (Figure 5)

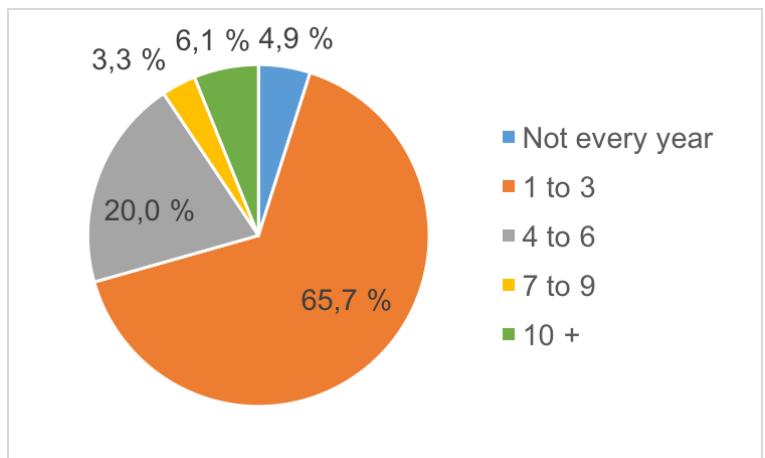


Figure 5. Number of trips per year (n=245)

Over one quarter of participants spend or willing to spend over €50 per day on their Helsinki trip while over a half spend double than that, over €100 per day. 19,5 percent of them spend more than €200 while only 2,8 percent spend over €300. 1,2 percent of them spend over €500 per day. (Figure 6)

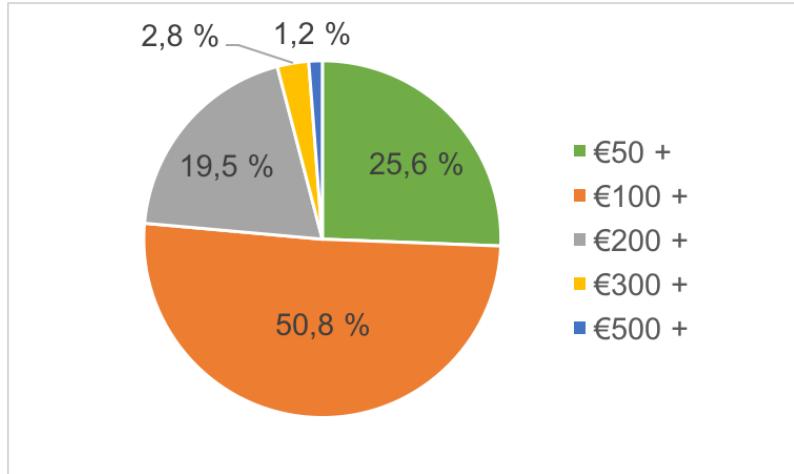


Figure 6. Total money spent per day including accommodation (n=246)

#### 5.4 Level of awareness

The next two questions in the survey seek to understand the level of awareness towards the topic “Environmentally Sustainable Tourism”. The first question asks about the familiarity level with the topic, in which there are three attributes of the topic. The answers are given in the form of numbers, in which 1 means “Not familiar” and 5 means “Very familiar”. Graph 1 illustrates that quite a large number of respondents are not familiar with the topic at all (level 1). 37,1 percent of them mark themselves as unfamiliar with the topic itself while around 8,9 percent claim to know be very familiar with its attributes. An average of 22,2 percent has a neutral answer to the question, meaning they know something about the topic but not too much. Also, an average of 15,2 percent mark number 4, claiming they have some reasonable amount of understanding about the topic. (Figure 7)

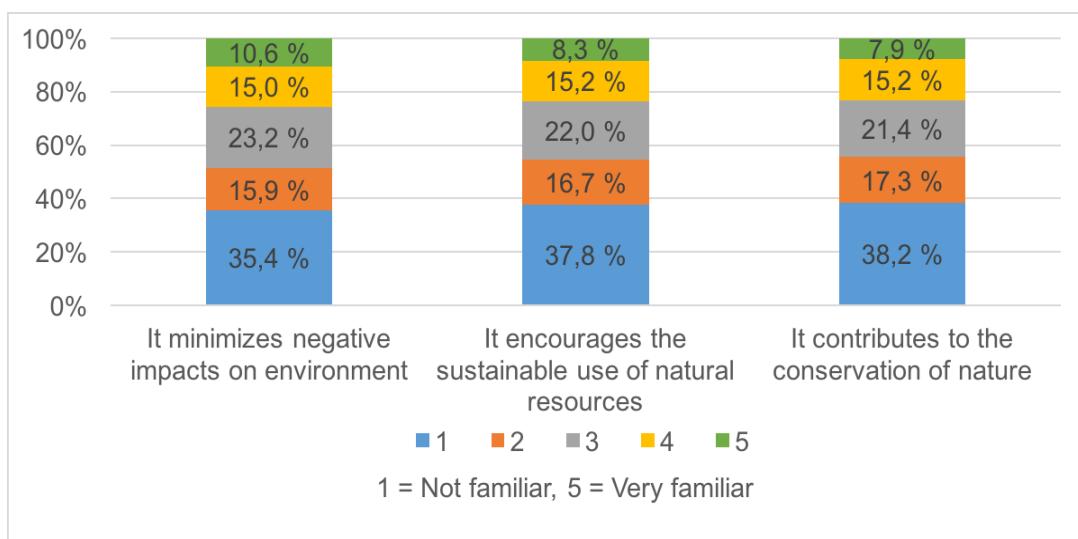


Figure 7. Familiarity level to the topic of Environmentally Sustainable Tourism (n=246)

Moreover, when it comes to whether or not the tourists know if their accommodation in Helsinki is eco-certified, the majority of the answers is “I don’t know” and account for 71,4 percent of all respondents. 14,3 percent say they stay in an eco-certified accommodation while the same amount doesn’t. (Figure 8)

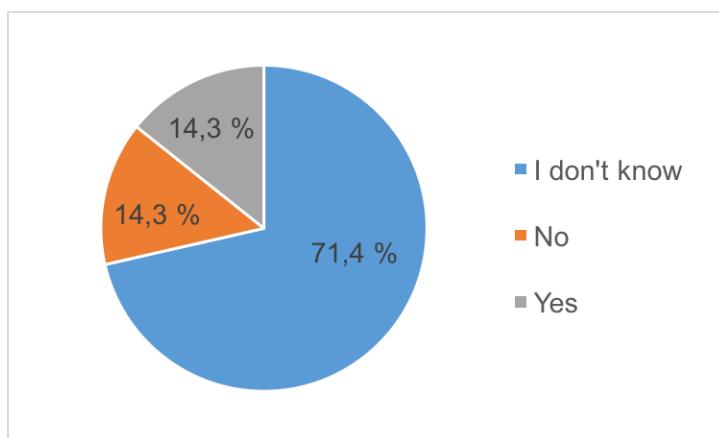


Figure 8. Eco-friendly certificated accommodations (n=245)

A follow-up question is given to those who answer “Yes” for the above question in order to find out if it is well communicated about the level of eco-friendliness at their accommodation. Only 1 person grades 5 for it while 2 persons vote for 1. Over half of them (54,3 percent) give a neutral 3 for their accommodation’s communication over the issue of being eco-friendly.

## 5.5 Purchasing and consuming behaviors

The second half of the survey seeks to understand the behaviors of travelers. It consists of five sets of questions, in which sub-questions are listed underneath. These are also multiple-choice questions where participants choose how important the issues are. The scale given in these questions are from 1 to 5, in which 1 means “Not important” and 5 means “Very important”.

### 5.5.1 Accommodation

The first set of questions in this section is about how important it is for tourists that their accommodation is eco-certified. Most of the people (35,4 percent) evaluate eco-certified accommodation as quite important. Eco labels do not seem to interest at all the group of 22,6 percent. Also, 18,5 percent of them think that it is just a little bit important. Only 9,1 percent of respondents find eco-certification very important when it comes to choosing a place to stay for their trips. (Figure 9)

While the very first question is about how eco-friendly one accommodation is on paper, the following questions focus on the practical implementation for one to be eco-friendly. Graph 2 clearly demonstrate the common opinions on how important it is to tourist for accommodation to provide information about eco-friendliness, have good recycling possibilities and use energy saving lights and electronics. For the above mentioned three factors, the majority of people rate their importance quite high. 75 percent value the three factors from quite important to very important. Only 25 percent interprets their opinion through the survey that those factors do not affect or affect very little to the decision on which accommodation they choose to stay.

The last question in this sets mentions about how much tourists would like to have their sheets changed daily. 60,5 percent of tourists find it important to have new sheets every day, in which 19,8 percent find it very important.

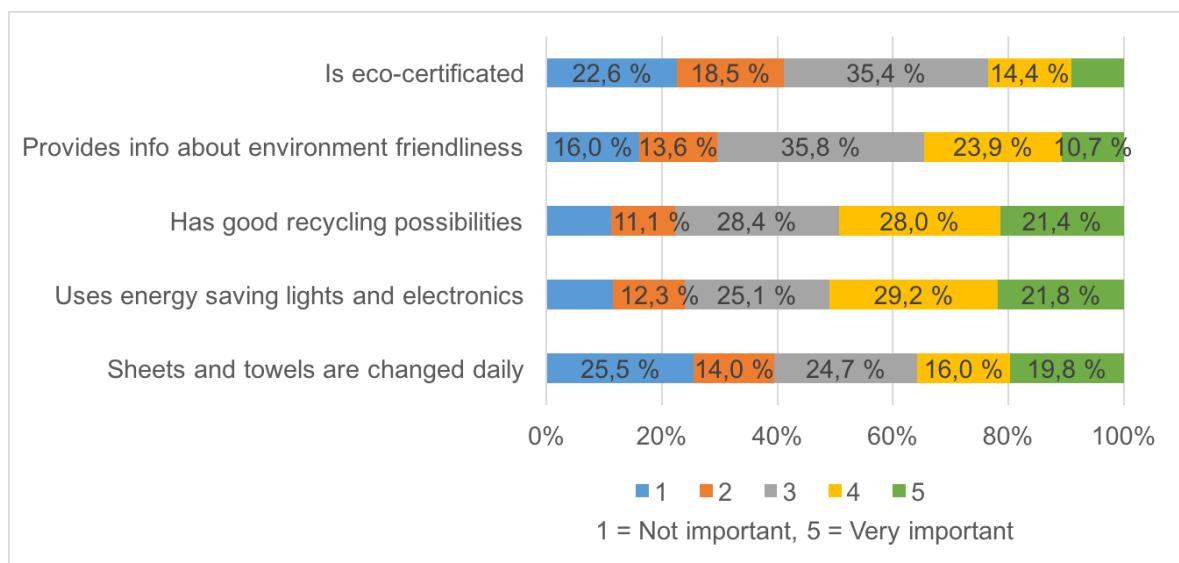


Figure 9. Level of importance when choosing an accommodation (n=243-245)

### 5.5.2 Restaurant

The next set of questions is about how important it is for tourist to choose a restaurant with the following criteria separately: It serves vegetarian food, vegan food, locally produced food and organic food. As discussed before in theoretical part, food consumption has a big impact on environment. Also, different types of food have different impacts. Red meats for instance require a larger footprint in production than white meats. Moreover, meat production in general require larger footprint than many types of vegetable. Imported food ingredients need additional energy over large distances compared to locally produced food. Organic food ensures the elimination of use of chemicals to the environment.

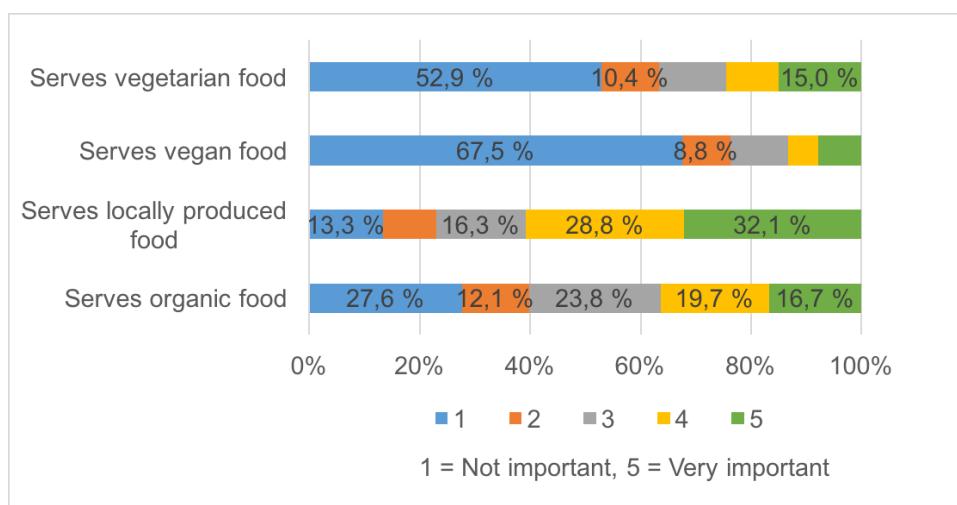


Figure 10. Level of importance when choosing a restaurant (n=239-240)

Figure 10 shows that it is very important to 15 percent of surveyed tourists that the restaurant they are choosing serves vegetarian food and 7,9 percent choose vegan food restaurant. The majority of people (60 percent) do not consider vegetarian and vegan options as necessary in the menu of their restaurants.

When it comes to locally produced food, 77,1 percent express their interest when choosing restaurants by stating from quite important to very important. Among that group, most value it as very important (32,1 percent) and important (28,8 percent).

The last criteria in the survey about restaurant choice mentions organic food. Again, it can be seen from the graph that there is a big interest in organic food options. 60,2 percent of respondents are more likely to choose a restaurant when it serves organic food.

### 5.5.3 Means of transport

The purpose of this set of question is to evaluate the choices made by travelers about means of transport while traveling. Six multiple choice questions are introduced and travelers will answer in the scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not important and 5 being very important. (Figure 11)

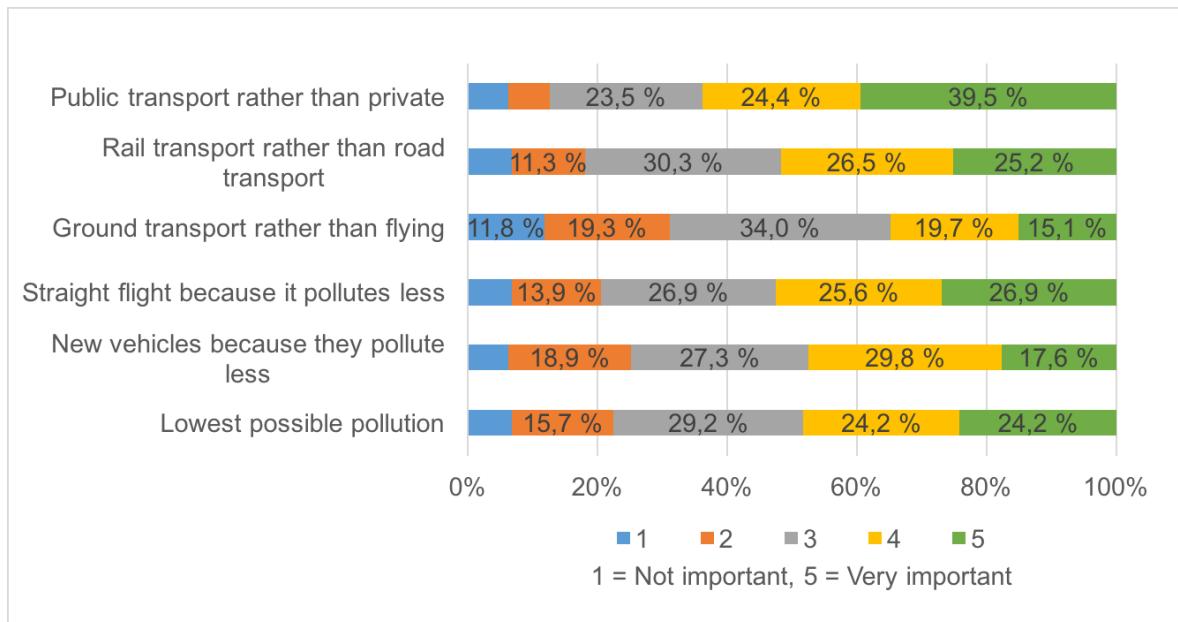


Figure 11. Level of importance when choosing means of transport (n=238)

The given set of questions receives rather positive answers in the context of environmental sustainability. Overall roughly 78 percent choose 3, 4 and 5 for all the questions, indicating that those criteria are important to them. More specifically 87,4 percent choose public transport over private alternatives. 82 percent prefer rail transport rather than road transport. 69 percent of respondents think it's important for them to choose ground transport over flying. 79,5 percent favor straight flights because they pollute less than lay-over flights. 75 percent choose new vehicles because they pollute less. 77,5 percent prefer any means of transport that has lowest possible pollution.

### 5.5.4 Products/services

Besides basic activities when travelling such as eat, sleep and move around, tourists also engage themselves at the destination with ranges of activities. This set of five multiple choice questions attempts to find out how much environmental sustainability tourists take

into consideration when choosing products and services. Again, the scale is from 1 to 5 ranging from “not important” to “very important” and participants will choose one number for each question.

Figure 12 illustrates the answers collected from surveyed tourists. It clearly shows the high interest in going towards the positive direction of acting for the environment. 93 percent of tourists find it important engaging themselves in activities related to nature and at the same time not generating any pollution to it. Especially 40 percent consider it very important. It is also important for them to shop locally produced souvenirs (88,6 percent) with 31,6 percent considering it very important. However, people show less interest when it comes to choosing an eco-certified producer for their products and services. Only 12,6 percent see it as very important. The result from this certain criterion resonates with the one about eco-certified accommodation. It once again indicates lower interest in having an eco-label on their products and services. The last question acts as a general summary for this whole set of questions and it also receives positive answers. 78,3 percent of participants share the same attitude that it is important and very important to have lowest possible pollution when choosing products and services.

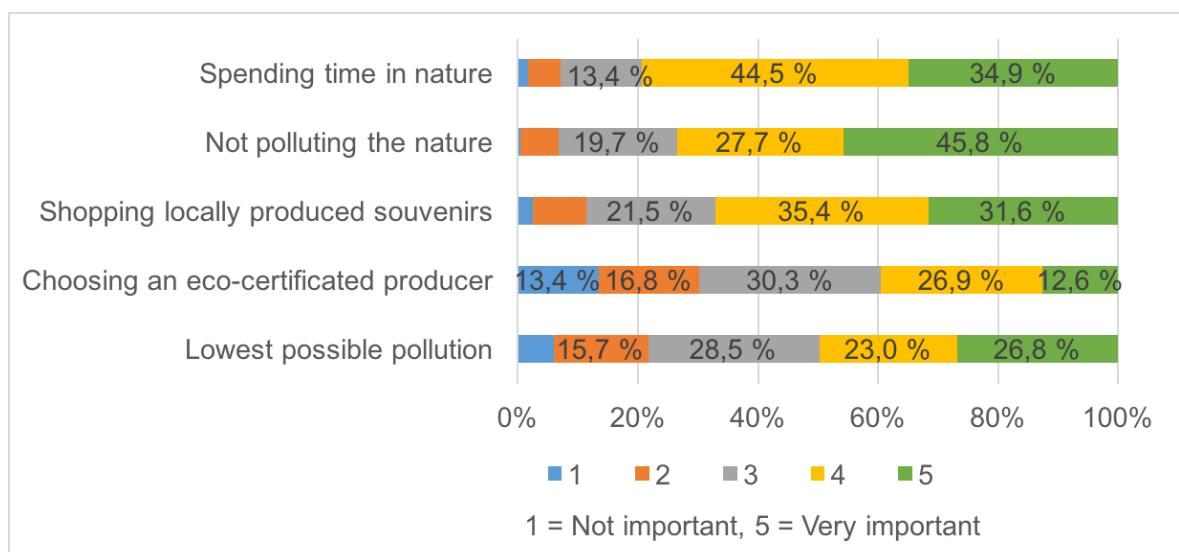


Figure 12. Level of importance when choosing products/services while travelling (n=235-238)

### 5.5.5 Concernment to environmental issues

This is the last set of questions in the sequence of five behavioral questions. Therefore, it is presented as the common question at the end. Also, the question set is put a little bit

differently in order to fully communicate the whole message that the survey attempts to convey: To find out how much tourists are concerned about environmental issues. There are seven questions asked in the scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being not concerned and 5 being very concerned.

The first five questions raise the key issues related to environment during the current years: climate change, animal extinction, ocean pollution, forest pollution and unsustainable use of natural resources. All the five questions gain huge interest from tourists. Compared to other behavioral questions asked previously, this set of questions score the highest. It is considered quite important, important and very important to 95,3 percent of tourists. Especially for 50 percent of them are strongly concerned over the discussed environmental issues. (Figure 13)

The last two questions mention the level of eco-friendliness of tourists while at home and while travelling. 88,2 percent of tourists are quite concerned to strongly concerned over being eco-friendly while travelling. The same tourist group show higher level of concernment (95,3 percent) when it comes to being eco-friendly while at home. It happens to almost all respondents that they increase one more level of concernment after answering the previous question about being eco-friendly while traveling. This result is the practical proof for the theories discussed earlier.

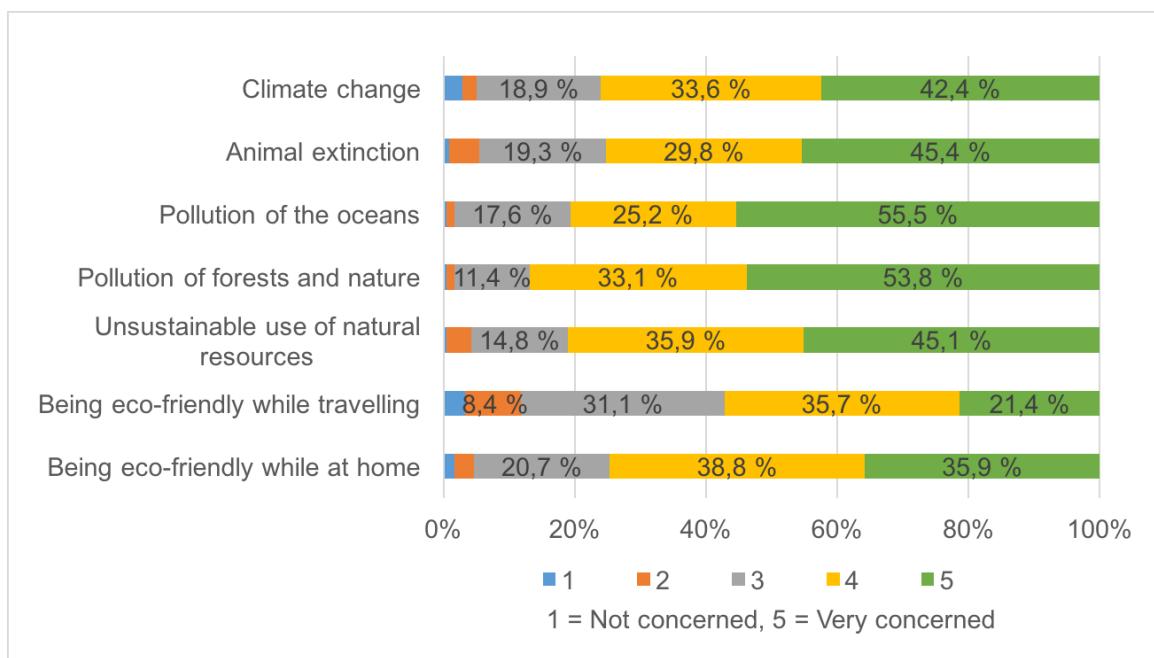


Figure 13. Level of concernment to environmental issues (n=236-238)

## 5.6 Open opinions

The last question of the survey is reaching for open opinions of people on how could Helsinki become more of an eco-friendly destination. Among 246 people answering the survey, only 41 of them (16,7 percent) share their comments and suggestions on how they see the situation. Among those who answer the open question, 24 percent of the respondents believe that Helsinki is already a fairly eco-friendly destination. Some justify that Helsinki is doing very well compared to other European cities they have visited. One claims that Helsinki is the most eco-friendly city they know and they don't have any suggestion on how it should improve more. (Figure 14)

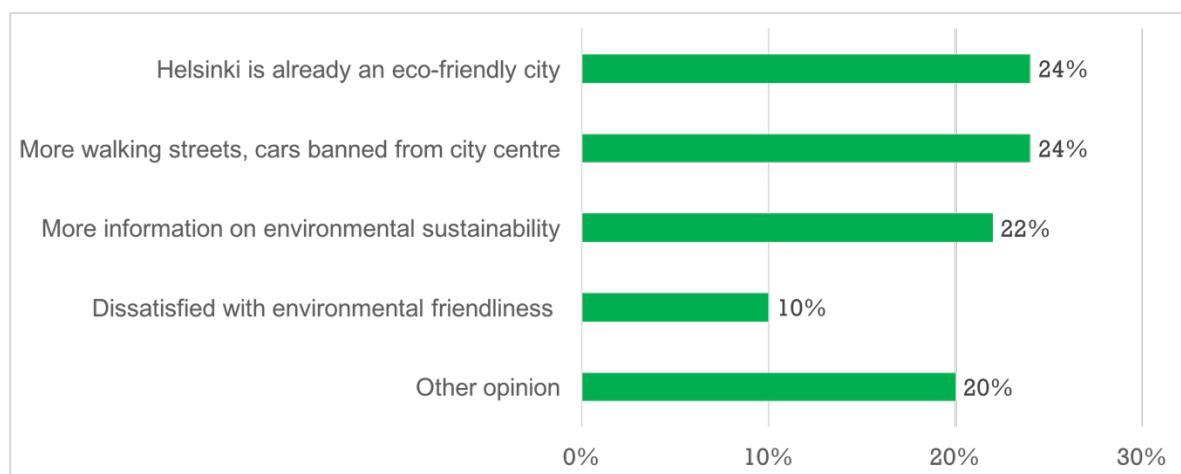


Figure 14. Open opinion

The same amount of percentage (24 percent) of open question respondents suggest that Helsinki should have more walking streets and cars should be banned from city centre. Three of them suggest having free city bikes and free public transport in order to encourage people using them more than cars. One comments that there should be more pedestrian areas with better signs in English.

22 percent express their wish to have more information on various issues related to environmental sustainability. For example, more information about walking routes, eco-friendly practices, instructions on waste management, English explanation when buying local products. One emphasizes that every food place could post how much food waste they had on previous day to encourage tourists to buy only as much as they consume.

10 percent of them show some dissatisfaction on the environmental friendliness of the city. One argues that plastic bags should be banned from being distributed in shops. One

is unhappy how there is so much cigarette trash on the streets. The other expects to have more empty trash bins in the city centre as they are almost full all the time. Also, one wishes the city is going to improve the options for recycling and the way garbage is collected.

Besides the main opinion groups, there are two people expect to see more locally produced products and services. One suggests having more electric vehicle fueling stations in the city. One person shows his disbelief in climate change issue. Another respondent dislikes the eco-friendly concept in a hotel as it would cost more than usual.

## **6 Discussion**

Generally, the results of the survey point towards the positive direction in terms of environmentally sustainable tourism.

The majority of tourists in Helsinki come from developed areas of the world, mainly from Europe and overall, the tourists are highly educated. That could be the reason why the results of the survey are more positive than negative, as tourists in Helsinki have broader knowledge of the environmental issues or at least they live in the area where this issue are discussed more often than in developing areas of the world.

Since the majority of them come from developed areas, their most common spending budget is €100 and it is considered a reasonable amount of money spent, as Helsinki is among most expensive city among European cities and in the world (Business Insider Nordic, 2017). Having a bigger budget also means they have more options to choose, since for example some eco-friendly accommodations, products and services are more expensive than the normal alternatives.

The results from the last question about accommodation is an interesting one in the context of the whole question set about choice of accommodation. After four first questions about good practices happening in a lodging place, the last question sort of wakes up the reality in travelers, it asks how important it is to have sheets and towels changed daily. This question develops in the opposite direction compared to the rest. While in the first four questions, choosing a higher number means their expectation is better for the environment, a higher number chosen in the last one can only mean the other way around. Also, another fact to take into consideration is the first four do not require travelers to compromise with their personal comfort, while the last one does. Therefore, in theory tourists who choose a higher number in the first four questions are believed to choose a lower number in the last one and vice versa. However, in reality, there are some mixed opinions and different interpretations are introduced. Some tourists who value high importance of implementing good practices in accommodation property don't want to sacrifice their comfortable new bed sheets and towels every day and some do. Tourists who do not care so much about eco-friendly practices can be divided in half: those who want their sheets and towels changed every day and those who don't. What can be understood here is some tourists want to be comfortable in their room whether or not their accommodation is an eco-friendly one and some act the opposite.

It is very interesting to see that eco labels gain the least interest among other factors in this question about choosing accommodation. We can obviously see from the answers in Graph 2 that travelers value the practical implementation of environmentally friendly practices in their hotel more than the certification itself. This piece of information is considered valuable for accommodation providers when it comes to how they want to portrait their properties to their clients.

It seems that tourists in Helsinki are passionate about having locally produced food offered in the restaurant menu. Overall, the majority of tourists don't seem to mind if a restaurant is not serving vegetarian and vegan food. However, they would like their restaurants to offer locally produced and organic food.

The last two questions in the last set mention the level of eco-friendliness of tourists while at home and while travelling. The results from them are the practical proof for the theories discussed earlier. Tourists don't usually want to bring the daily responsibilities with them to the trip. Travelling is the way to escape from home environment and tourists have the tendency to care less about their actions related to environment.

In general, tourists have lower scores of awareness as most of them are not familiar with the topic "environmentally sustainable tourism". The reason for that could partly be the wording of the topic itself. Many people might know and are familiar with "environment" but not with "sustainable". The term itself is rather scholastic and usually exists in academic books, articles and researches. In the author's opinion, tourists are more often encountering the term "eco-friendly" which can be found in advertisements of some hotels, tours, or destinations. Also, the word "eco" appears more often as also in "eco-label" and "eco-certified". Basically, the two terms mean the same thing, only the wording makes it more difficult for tourists to recognize the topic.

In addition to the low score in the direct question about level of awareness, tourists also score quite low in paying attention to whether or not they are staying in an eco-certified accommodation. The results can mean that either tourists don't always pay attention to the information about the accommodation or there is not enough information available for them to start noticing. However, the results from following question about accommodation explain that eco-label is not that important to the majority of them.

Despite low level of awareness, their attitude towards environmental practices is more positive. Most of the tourists find those criteria for environmental sustainability important to them. Even though they don't really value the presence of eco-labels in their products and

services, they highly appreciate good environmental practices in tourism industry. One of the reasons could be that the tourists participating in the survey are highly educated. They have some certain level of understanding about the situation of environmental issues. Therefore, the majority of the tourists understand the survey questionnaire quite well. They score rather high in the attitude questions.

Another reason is believed to be geographical factor. The larger proportion of tourists is from Europe, where it's common to hear about environmental issues and eco-friendly practices in their daily life. Especially for tourists coming from Nordic countries, eco-friendly is one of the main criteria for many people when doing any activity. Overall tourists surveyed come from developed areas of the world where people are said to have higher interest in the topic and their governments are more proactive in implementing environmentally sustainable practices. Their behaviors are therefore different from people coming from developing countries.

The biggest challenge in the research is the language barriers. Many of the tourists who arrive at the office do not speak English or have some limits in their English skills. Therefore, they refuse to answer the survey or they answer only a few first questions before quitting the more academic-looking questions. The author has to eliminate the handout from the total amount completely. Also a few senior tourists seem reserved when there is a stranger approaching them, which makes them stop the author from continuing the speech. The author attempts to have as many answers as possible from equally fair amount of people from each group of age and nationality for having the diversity in the results. However, some tourists do not cooperate which results in the unbalance of the size of groups. Tourists from Asia, especially senior citizens tend to refuse to answer the survey than other groups. The analysis might have been different if all the tourists approached agreed to answer the survey.

## **6.1 Reflection on the research results**

The objective of this thesis was to find out the level of awareness and attitude towards environmentally sustainable tourism among tourists in Helsinki city. The objective was achieved well, as the author was able to understand how important the topic was for the travelers. The research results successfully cover both "awareness" and "attitude" as the survey answers how well tourists know about this topic and how important it is for them to implement environmentally sustainable practices.

The survey questionnaire revolves well around the literature as it covers different aspects of environmentally sustainable tourism such as accommodation, food, transport and activity mentioned in the theoretical part. These are the important aspects of the topic for any tourism organizations to take into consideration when making decisions. The data collected from the survey primarily reflects what has been introduced in the literature.

The results concluded from the survey support very well with the arguments made in the theory. It illustrates the point of there is high demand of environmentally sustainable tourism among travelers. It also offers the evidence of tourists being less concerned with environmental issues while on vacation compare to when at home. These results were expected by the author, as she has spent years working in hospitality industry and her observation on customer behaviors have presented the same understanding.

In addition, the analysis supports the theoretical fact that there is little evidence of the existence of environmentally sustainable tourists. And finally, tourists are demanding more from businesses and destinations is the fact resonated with the previously introduced theory. The author has learned from the whole process is that customers are usually in a more passive position during their holiday when it comes to taking initiatives in environmental sustainability. Therefore, they are expecting the city of Helsinki to take the lead in improving some of the aspects in the city tourism.

During the time working on the thesis, the author has managed to improve her knowledge about the topic to a higher level. It was a process of self-study and self-reflection. Compared to before starting the thesis versus after, there has been a major improvement in her understanding of the environmental issues in tourism industry. The more the author reads about the topic, the more she reflects on herself as a tourist in other cities and then asks herself the same questions she asks the tourists. Putting herself in the shoes of tourists to understand how and why they have their opinions that way really helps the author to get deeper into the topic. The author finds herself doing a meaningful job for Helsinki Marketing company, as well as the city of Helsinki as she believes that the results of the thesis truly bring values to decision makers of Helsinki tourism industry. Any studies about consumer behaviors are of value as they shape which direction the industry is heading towards to in order to satisfy the growing needs and wants of their customers. Besides the default value of this study, the author believes in the fact that in Helsinki city there is one person asking tourists' opinion on the topic definitely raises the awareness of the tourists to a higher level, as they get to know a little bit more about the topic and they appreciate the efforts that Helsinki city is doing for them.

## **6.2 Recommendation on future**

Realizing the importance of environmentally sustainable tourism for tourists in Helsinki, it's crucial for Helsinki Marketing and its partners to take into consideration how they would like to implement their next marketing strategy.

Helsinki Marketing is a marketing company owned by the City of Helsinki and it works in close cooperation with the departments and units of the City of Helsinki. It is responsible for Helsinki's operative city marketing and business partnerships. Helsinki Marketing's scope of operations covers marketing activities related to tourism, congresses, events and business promotion, application procedures for major events and congresses, some of the city's event productions, and tourist information services (Visit Helsinki, 2017).

The findings concluded from this thesis can be served as the foundation for a marketing strategy about Helsinki as a "green" tourist destination in all of its tourism operations. The company can consider a closer cooperation with tourism players such as accommodation providers, catering companies and tour operators. Since most of the environmental effects are caused by human behaviors, it is reasonable for them to adjust their behaviors so that fewer impacts are made to the environment. Helsinki Marketing can consider using "social marketing" in their marketing strategy, which is the use of marketing to encourage and enable individual and organizational behavior change for the public good (Truong & Hall, 2013).

Social behavior change is essential in solving any social problems in which environmental issue is one. When Helsinki Marketing aims to influence people to accept a target behavior or stop a harmful behavior, people will find themselves doing it voluntarily without feeling any sense of compulsory because of any government authority. Helsinki Marketing can include major players in the industry when setting out to promote the city and good practices in tourism. For example, a number of hotels in Helsinki have adopted social marketing to encourage their customers to reuse towels and linens with the presence of a reuse request cards in order to save energy. Helsinki city can emphasize more on this practice so it could be more widespread. Waste recycling is another aspect that the city could promote more effectively as tourists coming from different countries might have different habits of recycling.

The amount of work needed for social marketing is rather big and it takes time to conduct. Having a good plan before carrying out the strategy is crucial. This could give an opportunity for the next person who is doing the social marketing plan for Helsinki Marketing regarding promoting the city as an eco-friendly destination.

Even though the issues regarding environmental changes on our planet require some immediate actions, people actually take time to understand the whole picture and get involved in the common goal of protecting the environment and preserving natural resources. Education usually takes time and therefore, it's essential to start implementing good practices as soon as possible.

Among the tour operators and outfitters in the Arctic, Finland has not yet become one of them, while neighboring countries like Sweden, Norway have joined the Arctic tourism association. Even though tourists perceive Helsinki as an eco-friendly destination already, there is a lot more work to do for Helsinki and Finland to do in order to catch up with our neighbors to become one of the leading countries in environmental sustainability.

### **6.3 Reliability and validity**

Reliability of a thesis is presented in consistent results gaining from the same study carried out by different researchers. It shows the degree to which research method produces stable and reliable findings after a number of times conducting. There are three categories in research reliability. The first one is test-retest reliability which conducts the same study more than one time over a period of time with the same group of participants. The second category is parallel forms reliability uses more than one method to conduct the same study with the same participant group. The last one is inter-rater reliability, in which different study conductors use the same method for the same study. (Research methodology, 2017)

Reliability is a way of evaluating the quality of the measurement procedure used to collect data in a study. The survey questions are part of the measurement procedure. In quantitative research, the measurement procedure consists of variables. The reliability of these variables is shown in how stable or constant they are. The assumption that the variables are stable or constant is central to the concept of reliability. Theoretically, a stable or constant measurement procedure should produce the same or nearly the same results if the same individuals and conditions are applied. (Lærd Dissertation, 2017)

Some variables are more stable than others, meaning some can vary greatly while others remain almost the same. The measurement procedure however introduces some level of “error”, which means the variation on the actual score happens in different timing conditions. However, it is assumed that the variations don’t happen often and that not all measurement procedures have same amount of variation to the actual score. If the “error” component of a study is relatively small, it’s safe to say that the study is reliable. (Lærd Dissertation, 2017)

Reliability alone is not enough. In fact, reliability is the prerequisite for the validity of a study and the two are well connected to each other. Research validity in a study relates to the fact that the survey measures the necessary elements. In other words, it represents how well structured are the variables of a survey regarding the intended purpose of the study. Validity can be divided in two groups: internal and external where internal validity represents how well the findings match reality and external validity to how well the findings can be replicated to other environments. (Lærd Dissertation, 2017)

#### **6.4 Learning outcomes**

After completing the thesis, the author understands the theoretical bases for statistical analysis of results from empirical studies and knows the basic statistical methods used to describe variables, describe relationships between variables. She is able to grab the essentials of the methods of measurements of humans’ behaviors, including multiple situations.

The author is able to find, analyze, evaluate, select and integrate information using different sources. She is able to formulate the research questions and choose an appropriate research method for carrying out the study. She has also made a good use of computer programs such as online survey form, spreadsheets, pivot tables in order to perform calculations and analyze the numbers. The ability to communicate the data using tables, graphs and figures are obtained.

Another learning outcome achieved is the ability to present and evaluate the study results responsibly, critically and objectively. The author is also able to conduct substantive argumentation, utilize personal views that are based on critical analysis of work in the relevant fields of knowledge.

Overall, the process of writing the thesis has been an interesting learning curve for the author, with great experience from the customers, support from the colleagues from commissioning company and the advice from discussions with thesis supervisor.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire**

#### **Environmentally sustainable tourism in Helsinki**

Environmentally sustainable tourism = Eco-friendly tourism in short.

The aim of this survey is to understand the level of awareness and attitude towards Environmentally sustainable tourism among travelers in Helsinki.

The survey serves in Bachelor's thesis by Ba Dang, a Hospitality Management student at Haaga-Helia University and commissioned by Helsinki Marketing, the marketing company for Helsinki tourism.

1. Where do you come from?

- Nordic  Other Europe  Asia  North America  South America  Africa  Australia

2. What is your age?

- Less than 18  18-25  26-40  41-60  61+

3. What is your highest education?

- No education  Primary school  High school  Bachelor's  Master's and higher

4. How many holiday trips do you take per year?

- Not every year  1-3  4-6  7-9  10+

5. How much money do you spend in total per day while traveling in Helsinki (including accommodation)?

- €50+  €100+  €200+  €300+  €500+

6. How familiar are you with the topic of "Environmentally sustainable tourism"? 1 = Not familiar, 5 = Very familiar

1 2 3 4 5

It minimizes negative impacts on environment

It encourages the sustainable use of natural resources

It contributes to the conservation of nature

7. Is your accommodation in Helsinki certificated with "eco-friendly"?

Yes  No  I don't know

8. If yes, how well is the eco-friendliness of your accommodation communicated? 1 = Not so well, 5 = Very well

1 2 3 4 5

Level of communication

9. How important are these to you when choosing a hotel? 1 = Not important, 5 = Very important

1 2 3 4 5

Is eco-certified

Provides info about environment friendliness

Has good recycling possibilities

Uses energy saving lights and electronics

Sheets and towels are changed daily

10. How important are these to you when choosing a restaurant? 1 = Not important, 5 = Very important

1 2 3 4 5

Serves vegetarian food      ○○○○○

Serves vegan food      ○○○○○

Serves locally produced food      ○○○○○

Serves organic food      ○○○○○

11. How important are these to you when choosing means of transport? 1 = Not important, 5 = Very important

1 2 3 4 5

Public transport rather than private      ○○○○○

Rail transport rather than road transport      ○○○○○

Ground transport rather than flying      ○○○○○

Straight flight because it pollutes less      ○○○○○

New vehicles because they pollute less      ○○○○○

Lowest possible pollution      ○○○○○

12. How important are these to you when choosing a product/service while travelling?

1 = Not important, 5 = Very important

1 2 3 4 5

Spending time in nature      ○○○○○

Not polluting the nature      ○○○○○

Shopping locally produced souvenirs      ○○○○○

Choosing an eco-certificated producer      ○○○○○

Lowest possible pollution      ○○○○○

13. How concerned are you about...? 1 = Not concerned, 5 = Strongly concerned

1 2 3 4 5

Climate change	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Animal extinction	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Pollution of the oceans	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Pollution of forests and nature	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Unsustainable use of natural resources	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Being eco-friendly while travelling	○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Being eco-friendly while at home	○ ○ ○ ○ ○

14. How could Helsinki be a more eco-friendly destination?

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Thank you very much for your answers!

Ba Dang, student at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences.

Please contact [badangthi91@gmail.com](mailto:badangthi91@gmail.com) should you have any queries regarding the questionnaire.