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**SEEING THE WORLD FROM HORSEBACK**

**An Overview of Hungarian and Finnish Equestrian Tourism with  
Special Focus on Akác-tanya Farm**

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## ABSTRACT

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<b>Working life instructor</b> Kati Mucsi		<b>Pages</b> 49 + 6
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<p>This thesis was conducted to outline the field of equestrian tourism laying a focus on Hungary and Finland. The work was commissioned by Kati Mucsi from Akác-tanya agritourism and horse farm in Újlengyel, Hungary. The purpose of the thesis was to acquire information on equestrian tourism, benefit Akác-tanya and generally increase awareness about the field.</p> <p>A research was included in the thesis and it was a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. A semi-structured interview was made for equine tourism professionals in both countries and a questionnaire was conducted with the students of three equestrian institutes in Finland. Additionally, the heads of those programs were interviewed. The research mainly took place in November 2012 in Hungary and in February 2013 in Finland.</p> <p>All in all there were 6 interview and 21 questionnaire respondents, all except one being female. The results showed that only a few students knew Akác-tanya, however, a strong interest to visit the firm arose. The heads of programs had heard about Akác-tanya and were interested in co-operation. Equestrian tourism was seen as interesting and the majority of 14 respondents thought that it is rather or very likely that they will work in the field. The students saw the development of Finnish horse tourism to be more important for domestic than for foreign markets.</p>		

### Key words

Akác-tanya, equestrian tourism, Finland, horses, horse tourism, Hungary, riding

**TIIVISTELMÄ OPINNÄYTETYÖSTÄ**

<b>CENTRIA</b> <b>AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU</b>  Kokkola-Pietarsaari	<b>Aika</b>  Huhtikuu 2013	<b>Tekijä</b>  Torkkola Jaana
<b>Koulutusohjelma</b> Matkailun koulutusohjelma		
<b>Työn nimi</b> NÄE MAAILMA HEVOSEN SELÄSTÄ Yleiskatsaus unkarilaiseen ja suomalaiseen hevosmatkailuun, painotuksena Akác-tanya tila		
<b>Työelämäohjaaja</b> Kati Mucsi		<b>Sivumäärä</b> 49 + 6
<b>Työnohjaaja</b> Katarina Broman		
<p>Tämä opinnäytetyö toteutettiin kokoamaan yleiskatsaus hevosmatkailusta keskittyen tilanteeseen erityisesti Unkarissa ja Suomessa. Työn toimeksiantajana toimi Kati Mucsi Akác-tanya maatilamatkailu- ja hevostilalta Újlengyelistä, Unkarista. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli kerätä tietoa hevosmatkailusta, luoda näkyvyyttä Akác-tanyalle ja yleisestikin lisätä tietoisuutta tästä alasta.</p> <p>Tähän työhön sisältynyt tutkimus oli yhdistelmä määrällisiä ja laadullisia tutkimusmenetelmiä. Molempien maiden hevosmatkailun ammattilaisille tehtiin semi-strukturoitu haastattelu ja kysely tehtiin hevosalan opiskelijoille kolmessa oppilaitoksessa Suomessa. Lisäksi kyseisten kolmen koulutusohjelman johtajia haastateltiin. Tutkimus ajoittui pääosin marraskuulle 2012 Unkariin ja helmikuulle 2013 Suomeen.</p> <p>Kaiken kaikkiaan haastateltavia oli 6 ja kyselyyn vastanneita 21, joista yksi oli mies. Tulokset näyttivät, että vaikka Akác-tanya oli entuudestaan tuttu vain harvoille opiskelijoille, he olivat todella kiinnostuneita vierailemaan tilalla. Koulutusohjelmajohtajat olivat kuulleet Akác-tanyasta ja yhteistyöstä oltiin kiinnostuneita. Hevosmatkailu nähtiin mielenkiintoisena ja 14 vastaajan enemmistön mukaan on joko melko tai todella todennäköistä, että he tulevat työskentelemään alalla. Opiskelijat näkivät Suomen hevosmatkailun kehittämisen tärkeämmäksi kotimaisille kuin ulkomaisille markkinoille.</p>		

**Asiasanat**

Akác-tanya, hevoset, hevosmatkailu, ratsastus, Suomi, Unkari

**ABSTRACT  
TIIVISTELMÄ**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Equestrian tourism is a relatively new and unknown way of spending holidays, however, it has been proved to have a vast growing potential. What makes this topic interesting to be examined is the diversity that it includes; from horse-related events as spectator activities to traditional horse riding holidays, together with riding for disabled people as a form of therapy. Another matter is the lack of previous research and information available about the topic; this niche field of tourism needs attention and promotion. Thus one of the main objectives of this final work is to clarify what equestrian tourism actually is and where it belongs to in the whole tourism industry.

Yet another reason for this topic is the writer's strong personal interest in horses and willingness to combine them with tourism, meanwhile promoting the awareness about equestrian tourism. The concentration will lie on two countries, Hungary and Finland, whose equestrian tourism will be discussed and compared from the point of view of history, current situation, significance, education and future. At the moment such countries as Iceland, Ireland, France and Italy produce most equestrian tourism services.

Hungary has long roots when it comes to horses - it is even said that the country was established on horseback - this makes it interesting to examine equine tourism in this country. Even though Hungary has suitable environment and valuable horse-related traditions, Finland also has its trump cards which however have not yet been properly utilized. Exploring and comparing the differences and similarities will be interesting. However, the lack of material about Hungary in English creates a challenge for writing this thesis. The choice of these two countries is additionally supported by the fact that it is likely no similar research has been conducted before.

All in all the purpose is not only to examine and clarify the definition and significance of this rather new field of tourism, but also to compile a compact package of information about equine tourism in Hungary and Finland. The

empirical part aims to gather information required about this topic and to promote Hungarian Akác-tanya agritourism and horse farm in Finland. The commissioner of this thesis is the owner of Akác-tanya, Kati Mucsi. The research is a combination of quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews to provide the best possible results.

As for the structure of this thesis, at first equestrian tourism is discussed generally; giving definitions, what this field consists of and what its history and current state are like. The third chapter will concentrate on equestrian tourism in Hungary and Finland while the fourth chapter is to present Akác-tanya, being an example of a horse tourism enterprise. Research implementation including for instance the objectives, methods and data collection will be described in the fifth chapter and results of the research will be analyzed in the next one. The last part concludes and discusses. It contains the author's own opinions about the topic and the process of writing this thesis, also concerning conducting the research and how it succeeded.



## **2 THE WORLD OF EQUESTRIAN TOURISM**

Equestrian tourism is an interesting and very diverse field. On the other hand, this diversity prevents a stable positioning of this field of tourism under any other term such as sport, leisure, adventure or rural tourism. In addition, equestrian tourism has the potential to attract different customers and it also has an emerging role in the whole tourism industry. All these matters will be discussed more in detail in the following subchapters.

### **2.1 Concept and position in the tourism industry**

Since equestrian tourism in its current form is quite a recent phenomenon, there is still a lack of eligible definitions. This term also has synonyms; 'equine tourism' and 'horse tourism', which will be used interchangeably throughout this work to refer to the same thing. One way of defining equestrian tourism is presented below:

Equestrian tourism is a term that covers a multitude of horse-related activities. These include participatory activities where the visitor does the work of riding or driving the horses, and also spectator activities where the visitor observes others who are participating and/or embraces the equestrian culture in other ways.  
(Fáilte Ireland 2008.)

This definition is especially well-describing because it takes into account not only the forms where people participate actively in horse tourism but also the passive ones. In addition, it shows the diversity of equine tourism by mentioning that it includes equestrian culture and various horse-related activities. Fáilte's definition is supported by Ollenburg (2005) who also brings up the fact that horse tourism can belong under various main terms such as rural, urban or adventure tourism (Ollenburg 2005, 47).

The term can still be defined further from Ollenburg's statement in order to create a bigger picture of the position of equine tourism in the whole tourism industry. Equestrian tourism is a form of adventure tourism since people aim to get

experiences or adventures; it is also rural tourism because most companies offering these services are located in the rural areas. Additionally it is a form of nature tourism in the sense that nature mostly is the setting for horse-related activities, and activity tourism since it includes carrying out a physical activity. (Martin-Päivä 2006.)

Thus the position of equestrian tourism actually depends on the specific activity that is carried out. To give some examples, the annual Helsinki International Horse Show gathers people participating passively in horse-related activities that in this case belong to sport tourism. Rural and nature forms of horse tourism is represented e.g. by Zoraïda's Horse Riding in Georgiopolis, Crete, Greece. The company is established in a small village in order to be able to offer tourists experiences on horseback in a rural landscape.

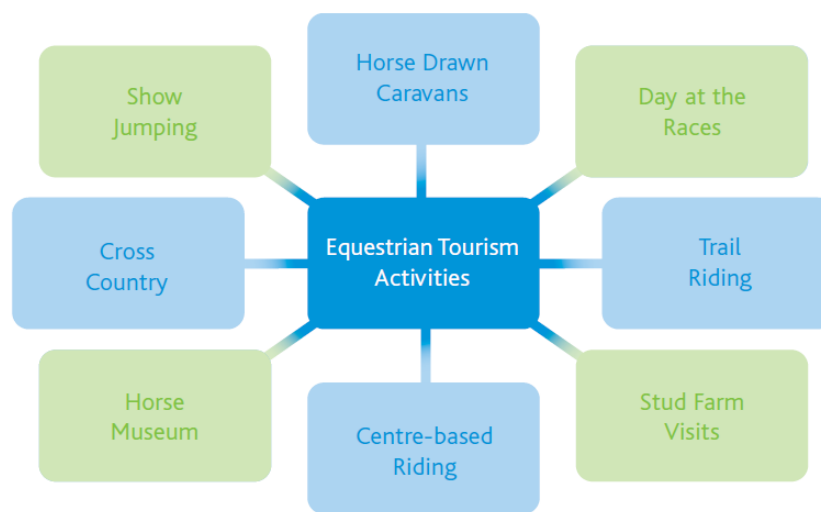


GRAPH 1. Horse-drawn carriage in the old town of Poznan, Poland represents urban equestrian tourism.

Two other terms that are closely related with equestrian tourism are 'horsemanship' and 'equestrianism' which can be seen as synonyms. They refer to the practice and/or art of handling, riding or training horses. The purpose of horsemanship is to be able to control the horse with minimum efforts but still achieving maximum results. This is and should be the core and heart of horse-related activities. Equestrianism belongs to the most popular participatory and spectator leisure time activities world-wide. (Encyclopedia Britannica 2012; Merriam-Webster 2012; Fáilte Ireland 2008.)

## 2.2 Sub-activities

Equine tourism is not only about horse riding even though it is mainly characterized by it, but, there is also a wide range of other sub-activities that equestrian tourism includes. As mentioned earlier, these horse-related activities can be participated in either actively or as spectators. This subchapter provides an overview of the diversity of the equestrian tourism field and discusses a few of the most common activities more in detail. The graph below illustrates the situation with some examples:



A New Strategy for Irish Equestrian Tourism

GRAPH 2. Examples of equestrian tourism activities (adapted from Fáilte Ireland, 2008).

One of the most popular forms of horse tourism is trail riding; it means riding a horse outdoors on the natural roads and treks. This activity is guided and takes safety features into account and can be made suitable for riders of different levels. The horse breeds used for trail riding purposes are calm and strong, such as the Icelandic horse. The duration of the trips varies beginning from a few hours and they may or may not include overnight stays. Especially the social and relaxing features of trail riding differentiate it from lessons at a riding school; the riders can chat and get to know each other while trekking in the nature. (SUOVA 2012; MEK 2009b.)

As a spectator activity, various equestrian events arranged around the world are attended by thousands of visitors. These events can be seen, depending on their nature, either as a part of sports or cultural tourism. Some examples of internationally significant equestrian sports events are Kentucky Derby in the USA, and Melbourne Cup in Australia, both gathering enormous numbers of spectators and bearing prizes of millions of dollars. Equestrian sports are also part of the Olympic Games. Examples of culturally important horse-related events are the Connemara Clifden show in Ireland and Siena Palio in Tuscany, Italy. (Miraglia, Martin-Rosset & Saastamoinen 2010; RacingBetting 2012.)

There is also a number of other activities, such as 'ski riding', horse shows and museums, therapy riding, coach driving (see graph 1) and show jumping. Horse-drawn carriages offering services for tourists can be found in some cities, for instance at Central Park in New York and in the old town of Chania in Greece (Centralpark.com 2013). When it comes to 'ski riding', it is an activity where one person rides a horse and another one is the skier and tied to the horse (see graph 10). There is also a variation where there are different obstacle courses both for the skier and the rider. At least in Finland there are even competitions arranged on this field.

### **2.3 History and the current state**

The whole equine sector has a massive effect on today's world; in Europe over 100 billion euros in 2009, providing some 400 000 full-time jobs and the number of horse riders rising by 5% per year. This is not a surprise taken that horses have had a major importance for people throughout history. The first time that horses were tamed was some 6,000 years ago, and since then they have created a significant part of the transportation system not only for personal but also for commercial and military use. Additionally, it can be said that also horse competitions have existed as long as there have been tamed horses – this indicates that the people's demand for such activities developed early. (Koski, Rissanen & Tahvanainen 2004, 69-72; theNAT 2012; EHN 2010.)

What was interesting in the ancient Greece and Rome is that horses were most often used as a showy mode of transportation of the higher class rather than for agricultural work. Equestrian sports were popular throughout the ancient times and in Rome they were the most popular sports event outclassing even the well-known gladiator fights. In addition, they were the only form of sports that women were allowed to attend. Thus it can be said that these competitions were an early form of spectator horse tourism since they gathered people to watch them. (Koski, et al. 2004, 69-72.)

Mostly after animals were no longer needed as a means of transportation, equine tourism emerged. This happened in Europe during the 1950s. Today horses are being used mostly for recreational activities and companionship in the developed countries; the way of using horses has changed but the relationship and attraction to horses has remained the same over time. The demand for horse-related activities is increasing, equine tourism being one niche field of them. It is getting increasingly specific, has major growing potential and has become one of the most established ways to develop horseback riding. Currently such countries as Italy, Iceland, France and Ireland (marketed as “The Land of Horse”) are among the top horse tourism providers. The overall number of horses in the world today is 58,5 million which guarantees their big importance also in the future. (Ollenburg 2005, 47; FITE 2012; theNAT 2012; Castejon 2009; Helgadóttir & Sigurdardóttir 2008; Fáilte Ireland 2008.)

Today various horse-related events play an important role not only in satisfying modern people’s socio-cultural needs, but also in preserving traditions and cultural heritage. As for more urban events, horse riding has been a part of the Olympic Games since the year 1912. Equine tourism also has a strong impact on the development of rural areas by increasing the number of visitors and thus bringing more services, employment opportunities and community activities to the area. It also supports landscape conservation; rural attractions will be maintained when more people visit them. (Miraglia et al. 2010; Hofstee 2008; FEI 2012.)

On a general level such things as internet marketing, ever-decreasing flight prices, establishment of new low-cost carriers, people’s rising interest in trying various

activities during their trips - or taking a purely interested led holiday - and the increased leisure time affect positively the demand also for equestrian tourism. Horse riding, among other activities such as fishing, walking and water sports, is one of the most popular options answering this demand for active holidays. It can also be a solution for more and more demanding modern tourists wanting to experience something different, for instance seeing the traditional "Puszta Five" event in Hungary (see graph 3). Tourists do not necessarily have any previous experience of the activities they participate in during their holidays. (Scottish Tourism Board 2001; Middleton, Fyall & Morgan 2009, 58.)

## **2.4 Equestrian activities as a tourism product**

Consuming equestrian tourism, just like any other tourism product, is characterized by the product's intangibility, inseparability, variability and perishability. Briefly this means that rather than something concrete, tourism is a set of experiences whose production and consumption happen at the same time - thus it cannot be saved for later use. Additionally, the experiences gotten vary greatly. These characteristics set some challenges for creating and realizing the tourism product; for instance how to make compensations for a dissatisfied customer since an intangible product cannot be fixed or remade. What is also to be considered is the fact that a tourist is moving in space and time; this means a wide variety of services is being consumed at different stages. Thus in order to be able to create a successful tourism product, e.g. a horse riding holiday package, all these needs have to be thought through. (Hall, Muller & Saarinen 2009, 26, 29.)

Also safety needs to be considered when thinking of equine activities, and especially horse riding, as a tourism product. Horses are large, previous prey animals; thus they can behave unpredictably. However, if everything is being realized with proper equipment and with staff that is professional and able to sufficiently guide the tourists, horse-related activities are rather safe. Additionally, getting involved in horse tourism is easy and anyone can participate. (Riders4Helmets 2011; FITE 2012.)

Horse-related activities are often characterized by the rural or natural environment which increases the awareness and understanding of ecological issues and challenges that rural areas face. Horses help people feel happiness, entertainment, challenges, satisfy the need of nurturing and belonging, and get into a flow experience due to concentration. Equine tourism makes riding available for a larger number of people and increases international communication. It also has positive health effects and it brings the unique feeling of sharing the speed and power of the horse. (Hofstee 2008; Muller 2009, Keaveney 2007; ICRT 2012).

## **2.5 Consumers**

Active consumers of the horse-related leisure time activities are most often women. The main reasons for participating in these activities are fulfilling the need of belonging and nurturing, in practice this happens by establishing self-identity as a rider and by taking care of the horses. These might be the reasons behind most of the leisure horse riders being women, e.g. 95% in Great Britain and 93% in Finland. Also the age and educational background of most common customer type vary from country to country; in Italy 40-year-old males with higher education are the largest group while in Hungary, economically active young people with high school graduation are most common. (ICRT 2012; SRL 2012a; Martin-Päivä 2006; Könyves 2009.)

### **3 HUNGARIAN AND FINNISH EQUESTRIAN TOURISM**

Given the fact that tourism, and especially equestrian tourism, is mostly an outdoor activity, Hungary and Finland are having quite different starting points. While Finland belongs to a semi-continental climate type characterized by four seasons and a long winter, Hungary benefits from its continental climate enabling good possibilities for outdoor activities throughout the year. Particularly “Puszta”, a steppe type of land, is suitable for horse-related activities.

These two countries differ also in many other ways from the equestrian history to the national horse breeds and activities and education in the field. All of these topics will be covered in the subchapters that follow. The last subchapter is to create a general overview, to compare and summarize.

#### **3.1 History**

“Magyars [Hungarians] were created by God to sit on horseback” (Bedford, Dunford & Fallon 2009, 67) is an old saying which describes the significant role that horses have played throughout the Hungarian history. This phrase must have its roots in the fact that those people arriving to the area of “Hungary-to-be”, elected their tribal leader while sitting on horseback. As for horse breeds, it is difficult to say which of them originate strictly from the area of Hungary, but some examples are Kisber Half-Bread, Shagya Arabian and Nonius Horse. (Kamarasy 2012; Interviewee A 2012.)

In Finland the history of equestrianism is long but does not have its roots as far back in history as in Hungary. Horses have been used in agricultural work, as a means of transportation and in warfare. In all these aspects the only endemic horse breed called Finnhorse, has been very important while its written history begins in the year 1907 when the studbook was established. As a breed the Finnhorse is versatile and tough and now it has gained its position as a national symbol of Finland among other things such as sauna. Finnhorses can be seen in graph 5. (Suomenhevonen.info 2013; Ticklén 2006; TH 2010.)



International equestrian tourism visitors came to Hungary already in the 1960s and 70s; strong traditions of the country are connected with horses, cultural background and historical events. At the end of the 1980s, there was a vast increase in the number of equestrian tourism service providers in Hungary due to the high profitability of the services. However, the minus side of this was a decrease in the quality and thus the Hungarian Equestrian Tourism Association (HETA) was established to monitor the development. The situation changed ten years later when the price of equestrian tourism products increased, and the number of foreign tourists decreased as a result of the economic recession and high inflation rates. Thus the number of service providers started decreasing and this is still happening today. (Interviewee B 2012; Könyves 2009.)

Hungary is also famous for Kincsem (1874-1887), a thoroughbred race horse that won 54 races without a defeat. A large horse racing venue, Kincsem Park, located in Budapest was named after her, and there is also a statue dedicated to this horse in front of the entrance to the stadium. (TBHeritage 2005; Budapest Vacation Service 2012.)



GRAPHS 3 & 4. Traditional horsemanship is still alive in Hungary: Skillful Puszta Five and a horse laying down (permission given by Linda Paull Garrison on 14 January 2013).

In Finland the popularity of horse riding started rising beginning from the 1960s and during the 1980s it was mostly a hobby of the young people and children, even though the number of horses in Finland was less than one tenth of the best years. Despite the increasing number of horse riders, the whole equestrian field was working in a small scale in the 1990s compared to other countries. People

were unaware of the possibilities of using horses for tourism purposes and the demand had to be created; this was the situation some 20 years ago. The Trail Riding Union of Finland, a rather equivalent Finnish organization to HETA, was established in 2004. The purpose of the union is to support the benefits of entrepreneurs of the field, for instance in the form of co-operation and marketing. Equine tourism in Finland can be seen as a phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Interviewee C 2012; TH 2010; SUOVA 2013; Pussinen & Thuneberg 2010.)

As for horse-related spectator activities, the traditions in Finland are long. The first horse riding competition took place in the year 1911, whereas the first trotting competition was organized in 1817 on the ice of River Aura in Turku. Concentration on the harness racing rather than on horse riding is a speciality in Nordic countries; in Finland it is the second biggest spectator activity after ice hockey, when measured by the number of visitors. (SRL 2012b; Pussinen & Thuneberg 2010; Lith 2006; MEK 2009b.)

## **3.2 Current state and importance**

This chapter discusses the current situation of the equestrian tourism field in Hungary and Finland and the significance it has in these countries. The chapter is divided into subchapters which are taking a closer look at certain aspects forming an image of the overall situation.

### **3.2.1 Outlines of the situation**

Hungary has a competitive advantage in the form of suitable environment, long traditions and quality of horses. However, the main tourism trends, such as spa culture and recreation in Budapest and Lake Balaton regions, leave only a small share of the total of incoming tourists for equine tourism. In Hungary, economically active youths with a high school graduation consume horse tourism the most. (Lew, Hall & Timothy 2008, 116; Interviewee A 2012; Interviewee B 2012; Könyves 2009.)

Even though good possibilities for equestrian tourism exist also in Finland, it is still rather unknown as a horse country; also on a general level Finland's tourism consists mostly of domestic travel. The country attracts foreigners with its pure nature bringing possibilities for activities, four seasons, northern location and unique culture. Some important touristic regions are Helsinki in the south, Lapland in the north and Finnish Lakeland in the central and eastern parts of the country. Equestrian tourism is only a niche field with very few foreigners; 5% of the incoming horse tourists come from abroad. The most typical consumer of equestrian tourism services in Finland is a 35-45-year-old woman who has previous experience from horseback riding. (KTM 2006, 12-14; MEK 2009b; MEE 2010.)



GRAPH 5. Both Finnhorse and Finnish nature are suitable for trail riding (permission given by Luonto-Taipale on 10 December 2012).

Following the trend happening in the whole of Europe, also in Finland horseback riding is gathering increasing interest. Today there are over 160,000 horse riders in the country; the number has more than doubled since the year 1994. The majority (93%) are women or girls. In Hungary, purely equestrian tourism services were used by 10 000 people actively and 100 000 passively in 2011, while the number of horses in 2012 was 60 000. In 2011, 5 000 horses were used for equine tourism purposes either actively or passively. However, the number of horses has strongly decreased since 2002 and the horse riding sector has continuously

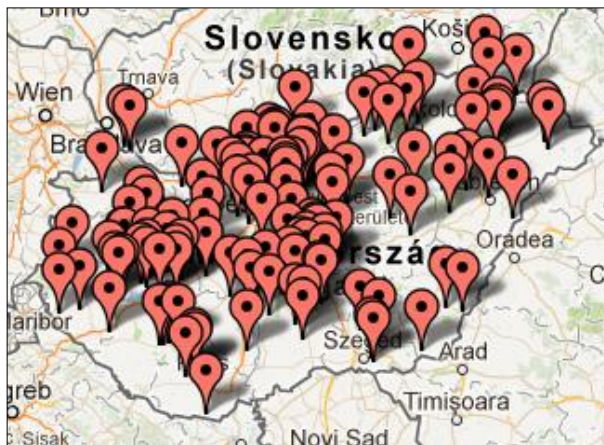
declined during the past decades. As for Finland, the total number of horses is estimated to be 80 000 and the growth has been rapid; some 40% during the past ten years. One third of the whole horse population are Finnhorses. It is being estimated that 8-10 horses create one new job. (SRL 2012b; Hevosagro 2011; MEK 2009b; Kincsem 2012; Hippolis 2010.)

### 3.2.2 Equestrian events

Some important equine events in Finland are the annual Helsinki International Horse Show, 3 days lasting Finnderby in Ypäjä, Bastioni Horse Festival in a historical setting of Hamina, and *Kuninkuusravit* (transl. Finnhorse Trotting Championship) with its location varying each year. The greatest equestrian event in Hungary is *Nemzeti Vágta*, the National Gallop, taking place in Budapest and gathering horse riders from all around the country. Other main events are *Hortobágyi Lovasnapok* (transl. Equestrian Days of Hortobágy) and trotting and galloping derbies held in Kincsem Park in Budapest. (MEK 2009b; Interviewee A 2012; Vagta.hu 2012).

There are some significant places for various equestrian-related activities in both countries. The most important areas in Hungary are Hortobágy, Bugac and Lajosmisze; all of them are located in the area of Great Plains and Lake Tisza. Könyves has examined the availability of various horse-related activities and services in different parts of Hungary and this area is clearly the first in every section. Still horse tourism companies can be found around the country. Additionally, Kecskemét is called the horse capital of Hungary with its national and international competitions, major job creation and horse cluster and international co-operation enhancement. In Finland differences between regions can also be seen; Northern Finland is the most popular area for producing equestrian tourism activities. Meanwhile southern parts of the country are popular for horse riding and Middle- and Eastern-Finland with the Ostrobothnia region for harness racing and horse breeding. (MEK 2009b; Interviewee A 2012; Könyves 2009; Pussinen & Thuneberg 2010; EHN 2010.)

### 3.2.3 Enterprises in the field



GRAPHS 6 & 7. The member companies of the Hungarian Equestrian Tourism Association and the Trail Riding Union of Finland (adapted from Google 2013; Google & GeoBasis-DE/BKG 2013/2009).

Graphs 6 and 7 above present the situation of those enterprises being members of the national horse tourism organization in Finland and Hungary. These maps clearly reveal the vast difference that exists between these two countries on the number of companies offering horse tourism activities. Geographically, Hungary equals approximately to one fourth of the size of Finland but has some 200 stables registered to the Hungarian equestrian tourism association (HETA), while the rather equivalent association in Finland has 39 members. One of the SUOVA's member stables is located in Estonia. (thisisFINLAND 2012; Hungary 2012; SUOVA 2012.)

However, a correct image of the situation might not be given only by the number of the member enterprises. Naturally not all the horse tourism providers are members of these associations; in Hungary the total number of these companies can be estimated to be 400 to 500, and in Finland some 200. However, many of these

Finnish companies are not full-time equestrian tourism providers. In Finland organizing riding camps is a rather basic service of a horse stable and the members of the Trail Riding Union only concern trail riding. (Interviewee B 2012; Interviewee C 2012; MEK 2009b.)

Hungary is also a pioneer in rating equestrian tourism services; at the end of the 1980s HETA introduced the “Horse Shoe Quality Assurance System” which assesses the horse stables with a scale from one to five horse shoes depending on the extent and quality of their services (see appendix 6 for details). This could be compared to the star rating of hotels. The Trail Riding Union of Finland has something similar, yet much simpler, called *Priimatalli* (transl. Prime stable), it has been awarded to 27 of the member stables. This qualification can be acquired once the enterprise has enforced specific rules that have to do with safety and quality development. Also the Equestrian Federation of Finland has its own classifications; accepted riding school, private stable and hobby stable. (HNTO 2006; Interviewee B 2012; SUOVA 2012; SRL 2012a.)

Additionally, the development of the field has got a recent change in Hungary starting from January 2012; the government has adapted an obligatory service assessment system. If the entrepreneurs do not register, they lose their right to do business. The purpose is to ensure a certain level of quality of the services. Participation in the horse shoe system remains voluntary. (Interviewee B 2012.)

### **3.3 Education**

One of the most important factors that is required for the maintenance and development of any field is the existence of well-trained people and professionals. Thus education is also important in equestrian tourism, especially since it is a wide field with vast diversity. Due to this, plain knowledge on the equine field alone is not enough but in addition skills in for instance salesmanship, co-operation and entrepreneurship are needed. (Martin-Päivä 2006.)

In Finland, there are various institutions giving education on the fields of equestrianism and equine tourism, the best-known and largest of them being Ypäjä Equine College. Another example is JEDU vocational institute in Haapavesi offering trail riding tourism service producer studies. However, horse tourism as a part of the education of the equestrian field is still rather young. For now, it is important to ensure the quality of the programs and the professionalism of the employees. (Martin-Päivä 2006; JEDU 2013.)

In Hungary, equestrian education is being offered on the vocational school level but additionally there is expert training for instance for equine tour leaders. This enables life-long learning. Even though the education is well available also for those with lack of funds, the vocational tuition is fragmented and not market-orientated. As an example of an institution, Kaposvár University with its Pannon Equestrian Academy offers degrees and courses such as horse farming, stud management, farrier course and basic training of horses and riders. Table 1 below presents the structure of Hungarian equestrian field education in 2005. It shows how one can progress and which professions he is able to practice on which educational level. (Kincsem 2012; Mihók & Bodó 2005; Pannon 2011; Ke.hu 2011.)

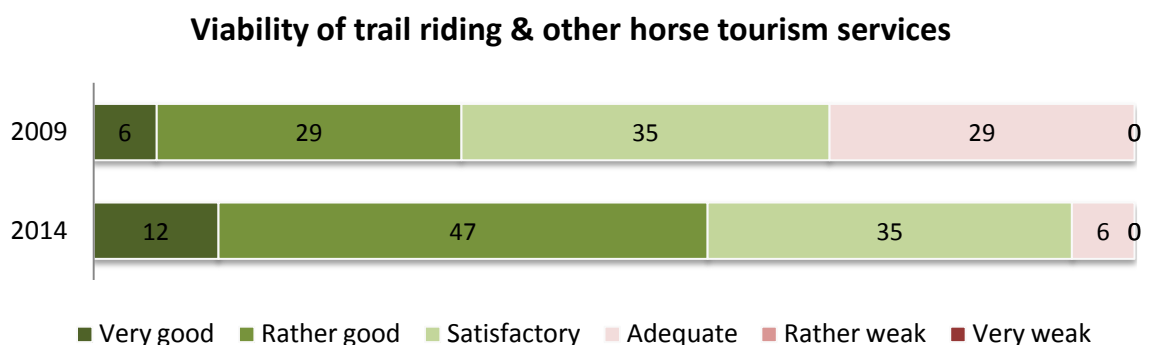
TABLE 1. The structure of the Hungarian equestrian education field (adapted from Mihók & Bodó 2005).

	<b>Workman course</b>	<b>Secondary school</b>	<b>BSc</b>	<b>MSc</b>	<b>PhD</b>	<b>Research group</b>
<b>Breeding</b>	Groom	Foreman of a team	Stud leader	Ing. of horse breeding	All the disciplines	All the disciplines
<b>Sport</b>	Groom	'Bereiter'	Assistant trainer	Trainer		
<b>Racing</b>	Groom	Jockey	Fodder master	Trainer		
<b>Tourism</b>	Groom	Accompanying rider	Tour leader	Entrepreneur		
<b>Additional profession</b>	Smith, cartwright, sadder trainee	Smith, cartwright, sadder assistant	Smith, cartwright, sadder craftsman	Farrier		

### 3.4 Future aspects

Finland has a lot of potential in producing equine tourism but it is not being used yet. Thus one of the most important things for the development of equine tourism in Finland is to create visibility and imago. Other central development matters listed by MEK are branding, product development, developing the knowledge, marketing, networking and strengthening the position of horse tourism. Equestrian tourism development is also part of the national OutdoorsFinland project. (Interviewee C 2012; MEK 2009b.)

Also in Hungary, there is a national program aiming to develop the equine sector and equine tourism. It was launched in the beginning of 2012 and it is named after the historical Hungarian racehorse, Kincsem (see subchapter 3.1. for more details on Kincsem). The importance of equestrianism is being realized for example in the form of economic growth such as improving employment, infrastructure and cultural life. The main purpose of the program is to support the development of equine tourism by facilitating off-road riding, enabling education on the field, reviewing the funding and institutional reinforcement. (Kormany.hu 2012; Kincsem 2012.)



GRAPH 8. Viability of trail riding and other horse tourism services in Finland 2009 and an estimate for 2014 (adapted from Pussinen & Thuneberg 2010).

According to the Finnish Equestrian Entrepreneurship Questionnaire conducted in 2009 and analyzed by Pussinen and Thuneberg, also the entrepreneurs of the field have strong faith in the development. As graph 8 above shows, none of the respondents thought that the viability of trail riding and other equine tourism services is rather weak or very weak. Compared to other equestrian fields included



in the research, the horse tourism sector was clearly seen to have the most development possibilities. (Pussinen & Thuneberg 2010.)

Unlike Finland, Hungary is much more known for its horses and equine traditions. Together with a suitable environment they are valuable strengths when it comes to development. The horses are healthy and well-trained but the number of them is decreasing and the domestic services and products are not being appreciated. This is wanted to be changed by adding tuition of equestrian culture in the public schools; thus the national identity and consciousness will be strengthened. Additionally, knowledge in equine culture and interest in horses is wanted to be increased. Könyves (2009) argues that the main obstacle for the equestrian tourism development is the lack of an institutional network providing tourism education and having adequate financial resources. (Kincsem 2012; Könyves 2009.)

In addition, there is a need for a proper riding network with facilities both for the riders and horses along the route. A solution for this problem is a plan of 'Eurohorse' network covering Hungary with four different horse riding route complexes and being a part of the national Kincsem project. The horse riding route network serving both domestic and international riders is also needed in Finland and already existing routes should be utilized more. (Kincsem 2012; Interviewee A 2012; Martin-Päivä 2006; MEK 2009b.)



GRAPHS 9 & 10. Sleigh riding and 'ski riding' are activities utilizing the Finnish winter (permission given by Luonto-Taipale on 10 December 2012).

Apart from creating the imago of Finland, it is also important to learn to utilize all times of the year; now equine tourism is quite seasonal. For instance wintertime enables different kinds of activities than the ones that can be done in the summer. Such activities as sleigh rides and 'ski riding' (as shown in the graphs 9 and 10) could be new chances for tourism purposes. Other strengths are Finland's pure nature with a lot of space and good suitability for horse riding, exoticness, the Finnhorse and holiday centers. Additionally, current legislation is supporting the field; for instance *Jokamiehenoikeus* (transl. everyman's right/right to roam) allows the use of land by the general public for recreation and exercise. (Sydänmaanlakka 2012; Interviewee C 2012; MEK 2009b.)

In Hungary the need for development lies rather on the marketing and foreign language knowledge than on the number of horse stables. Bedford et al. (2009) note that Hungary has a great supply of stables and riding schools but they are more oriented for local people than for tourists. In addition German is more commonly spoken than English. Also HETA has updated their webpage in English last time in 2001 and many of the stables do not have proper internet sites either. Thus it is very difficult for a foreign tourist to find trustworthy and up-to-date information online. (Bedford et al. 2009, 67; Könyves 2009; HETA 2001.)

Another part to be developed in Hungary is the equestrian field education. The institutions exist but there is a lack of well-educated professionals and a need to develop the differing quality levels of instruction and training. Additionally, the vocational institutes should be marketed more. In Finland, MEK wants to concentrate on providing continuous, systematic and diverse training for the entrepreneurs of the field. This is important so that a safe and high quality horse tourism product can be offered to the consumers. (Kincsem 2012; MEK 2009b.)

If Finland wishes to develop its equine tourism, there is a need to reach for foreign markets; in 2012 there were over 2 million people doing trail riding and some 45 million people with a connection to horse riding in Europe. However, according to the national equestrian tourism survey where 97 horse tourism companies took part, 23% said they have no foreign tourists while a majority of the respondents (72%) stated their clientele is formed from 1% to 10% by foreigners. The same

research revealed that 90% of the companies are doing their business individually without official co-operation contracts. For the future development it is crucial to increase co-operation in order to reach the foreign markets better. Also the companies should be encouraged to look for foreign customers; 28% of the survey respondents have no interest in investing in it. It is also necessary to increase the variety and quality of the current horse tourism products and create a working product package of high quality to attract more customers. (MEK 2009a; MEK 2009b; Kincsem 2012.)

Naturally the development cannot be realized without facing challenges and threats. These are rather similar in both countries; lack of suitable infrastructure, current economic recession and lack of funding, increasing competition and problems with finding professionals and suitable horses. Additionally in Hungary, the current legislation needs to be changed to be more supportive for free trail riding while also in Finland regulations are tightening. One significant matter is also the attitudes of people; values and expectations are changing, as well as the consumers' interest in the equine tourism product. Creating co-operation among enterprises of different fields and forming networks is also challenging in both countries. (MEK 2009b; Kincsem 2012; Interviewee C 2012.)

### **3.5 Summary and comparison**

This subchapter gives a general overview of the equestrian tourism in Hungary and Finland; it compares and summarizes main parts from what has been discussed previously in this chapter. The aim of the subchapter is to be brief and informative.

Even though Hungary has long equestrian traditions dating back to the establishment of the country, for the past decades the horse riding sector has been decreasing and today there is a bigger number of horses and horse riders in Finland. Equestrian tourism has existed in Hungary already in the 1960s while in Finland it can be seen as a phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some 400 to 500 horse tourism companies can be found all around Hungary, the corresponding

number in Finland is approximately 200 of which many have horse tourism as subsidiary trade.

The possibilities and urge for developing equestrian tourism exist in Finland and Hungary. Both countries have launched governmental programs to map what is needed to be done and to support the development. The concentration lies mostly on marketing and increasing people's knowledge, funding, international markets, networking and increasing the number of professionals and horses. Table 2 below illustrates the overall situation.

TABLE 2. Comparing Hungarian and Finnish equestrian tourism.

	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Finland</b>
<b>Generally</b>	Long traditions and existing/easily revivable imago as a horse country.	Finnhorse a part of the imago but not very known as a horse country.
<b>Suitability &amp; facilities</b>	Very suitable; puszta. 400-500 enterprises.	Suitable; lots of space, supporting legislation. Ca. 200 companies.
<b>Horses</b>	60 000, well-trained but number decreasing. Various national horse breeds.	80 000, number strongly increasing. Only one endemic horse breed.
<b>Examples of development matters</b>	Networks and riding routes, education, knowledge, international markets.	Networks and co-operation, utilizing all the seasons, branding, international markets.

#### 4 EQUESTRIAN TOURISM ENTERPRISE: AKÁC-TANYA

The commissioner for this thesis is Kati Mucsi, the owner of Akác-tanya agritourism and horse farm in Hungary. This chapter describes the company starting with basic information such as location and then discussing their services and premises more in detail.

Akác-tanya is an agritourism and horse farm located in Újlengyel some 50km away from the capital Budapest. The farm is owned by a Hungarian-Finnish couple and is a part of In-Natura Ltd. which was established in 1999. The idea started in 1998 with the couple having two horses and their friends asking for horse riding when coming for a visit. Since then, the number of horses has increased from two to 30 during the years; they vary from a small pony to a large horse since also the riders are different. The stable is located near to Pusztavacs and the geographical center of Hungary, the customers will be transported to the stable from the accommodation that is some 8km away. From Budapest or from the airport Akác-tanya can be reached in some 40 minutes by car via M5 motorway, if they so wish, the customers will be transported from and to the airport by the staff of the horse farm. (Akác-tanya 2006; Interviewee A 2012.)



GRAPHS 11 & 12. The main building of the farm and horses ready for a riding tour (adapted from Akác-tanya 2006).

Apart from horse riding and accommodation including three meals, a number of other services such as karaoke, sauna, manicure, pedicure, massages, hunting, dentist services, small trips and excursions are provided. These services are

mostly subsidiary. Also arranging events, meetings and special programs for groups is possible. For instance weddings and birthday celebrations have taken place at Akác-tanya. The farm is especially popular among Finns since the owners and most of the personnel are speaking Finnish. However some Hungarians visit the place too; for instance in a form of school children's camps. On the other hand the great supply of similar horse tourism destinations in Hungary decreases the number of domestic tourists. (Akác-tanya.hu 2012; Interviewee A 2012.)

After the extension of the premises in 2011, accommodation is now available for 50-60 people; there are options from single and shared rooms in the main building to small apartments and cottages depending on the customer's wishes. Additionally it is possible to stay in a tent or caravan of your own; there are approximately 10 caravan places with electricity and water supply and a large space available for tents. The length of the stay is also modifiable and the cost includes accommodation, breakfast, lunch and dinner; similar package with horse riding has a bit higher price. Even though the climate in Hungary is suitable for horse riding almost all year round, the best times can be said to be spring and early autumn. High season at Akác-tanya lasts from April till October and the low one takes place from November till March. During the low season, there can simultaneously be 8 horse riders and during the high season 21. (Akác-tanya 2006; Interviewee A 2012.)

Overall, even though equestrian tourism is the main field of Akác-tanya's business, there are a number of other ways one can go and enjoy holidays there. Instead of continuing with doing extensions of the premises in the future, the owners are now concentrating on increasing the service level. The easiest way to get to know the company is to visit their website which is available at <http://www.akactanya.hu>. (Akác-tanya 2006; Interviewee A 2012.)

## **5 CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH**

This chapter will discuss the research included in the thesis. It is a description of the planning process of the research starting with the objectives and the target groups. The methods used and the research material and how it is to be collected will be described after that. Examining the validity, reliability and ethical issues of the research will finish this chapter.

### **5.1 Objectives and target groups**

This research serves three main aims; benefitting the Akác-tanya horse farm, acquiring information about equestrian tourism in Hungary and Finland and increasing the awareness about the field in general. To be more specific, in this case benefitting means promotion and mapping new potential customer groups via presentations and questionnaires. The target groups of the study are Hungarian and Finnish equestrian tourism professionals and students and their heads of programs of three equestrian field institutions in Central and Northern Ostrobothnia, Finland. In other words, there is no particular research problem. Instead, there is a challenge of getting the desired information and reaching the goals with the methods and target groups used.

It is attempted to find out knowledge about and interest in Akác-tanya when it comes to these students. The reason for choosing exactly them as a target group is that they are young and engaged in horse-related studies; thus it can be said that they are one of the largest consumer groups of horse-related activities in this area. They can provide another point of view and different ideas than the teachers and professionals. Another aim is to introduce the concept of horse tourism and collect ideas about marketing and development of the field from the interviewees and survey respondents. As consumers of equestrian services, the students are also the best source of asking where to find and thus market horse stables. If these students have not heard about Akác-tanya, it is unlikely that somebody else would have, either. This will produce indicative information about the marketing needs of Akác-tanya in these two regions.

## 5.2 Research methods

The planning process of a research is of great significance and one has to also understand the theory of different research methods before knowing which one to apply. This is crucial for reaching valid and reliable results that also answer the research question. According to Veal (2006), different methods themselves cannot be said to be good or bad, only their suitability for certain task varies. Since this research is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, both of them will be examined in this chapter. The entity will be referred to as mixed methods. However, the different sub-types of each method will be only briefly discussed and the concentration lies on questionnaires and semi-structured interviews which are the forms of research used in this thesis. (Veal 2006, 95, 195.)

The main research types are quantitative, which has to do with statistics and numerical data, and qualitative which studies people's opinions and feelings about certain matters instead. Testing a hypothesis or finding out how different variables affect on each other using a wide sample group is typical for the quantitative method. This method is often in use for questionnaires, for instance realizing a customer satisfaction questionnaire at a holiday destination. As for the qualitative method, it concentrates on individual sources of information; interviews and observations are common examples. Since it is hardly possible to deeply interview or observe a big sample group, in this case a large amount of information is gathered from a relatively small number of people. (Veal 2006, 40, 99.)

Qualitative research types are usually characterised by flexibility rather than quantitative methods that usually follow a pre-planned schedule. Additionally, the different phases of the process are clearer and more sequential in the quantitative research while they might be overlapping when the qualitative method is used. Different qualitative methods are, for instance, in-depth and group interviews, participation observation, textual analysis and ethnography. These interviews are non-structured in nature and are often recorded, they may last up to several hours and can be redone. When doing observation, the target group is being monitored and, depending on the research, they are or are not aware of the presence of the



researcher. Content of certain material is analyzed in text analysis while ethnography is a mix of different methods. (Veal 2006, 196, 198.)

When it comes to quantitative methods, various kinds of questionnaires are the most common; street, household and mail questionnaires are some examples. The number of respondents usually varies from fifty and sixty to some thousands; however both smaller and larger scale researches are possible. Also structured interviews may be used. They are either filled in by the interviewee or by the interviewer. It is to be noticed that Veal (2006) states that a survey is not a synonym for a questionnaire, but instead it implies the whole research process. (Veal 2006, 232, 236.)

When creating a qualitative semi-structured interview, there should be one to two central topics having no more than 5 to 7 sub questions. The purpose of having sub questions is to narrow down the focus of the study but still allow questioning. The verbs used should be explanatory and question words preferably “how” or “what”, rather than “why” which might refer to quantitative cause-and-effect relation. The questions used are open-ended and do not have theory or literature references. Mainly it can be said that this type of an interview is freer than a strictly structured interview but more organized than a normal discussion. (Creswell 2009, 129-131.)

As for the quantitative survey, it is crucial that the questions are compact, clear and as precise as possible; however one must use ordinary words. Also for instance layout issues of the questionnaire, such as font size or the paper colour, may have an unexpectedly big effect on the response rates. The questionnaire should be structured so that it starts with a short introduction followed by simple, easy and non-personal questions leading to the studied topic or phenomenon. The respondents will immediately lose their interest with too difficult questions. The questionnaire finishes with a conclusion and a thanking remark, also including instructions on how to return the survey. The way of delivery should be carefully considered too; posting, online questionnaires, face-to-face and via phone are some examples. (Smith 2010, 65-66.)

When looking at the structure of the questions, most questionnaires include a combination of closed-ended (also known as pre-coded), and open-ended questions which both have their pros and cons. Questions with pre-defined alternatives present the challenge of the researcher predicting all the possible answering options, while open-ended questions allow the respondents to express their opinions freely. However, filling in closed-ended questions is easier, requires less effort and is less time-consuming. The results of such questions are also easier to be analyzed and provide numerical data while freely formed answers are more difficult in this aspect. Also the format of the closed-ended questions has to be varied so that the respondent will not fall into a certain answering pattern and always tick the same answering option. (Smith 2010, 63-65, 69.)

To go more in detail to the contents, each and every question should have its purpose to be in the questionnaire. Smith (2010) points out the importance of including only questions answering to issues that need to be known and not those that the researcher wants to know. This also minimizes the amount of unneeded data at the analysis point of the research. (Smith 2010, 66.)

Naturally both of the main research methods have their pros and cons; the quantitative method may fail to see all the diversity and not allow all the response options, while qualitative research may face problems with generalizing and using the acquired information. On the other hand, the quantitative process is transparent and other researchers can easily use and reanalyse the numerical findings while qualitative results may be easier to understand by people with no statistical training. Due to all this, scientists are increasingly starting to embrace so-called 'mixed methods' which is a relatively new form of research combining these two. Such an approach to research will allow studying complex problems providing a wider understanding on the matter and utilizing the good sides of both methods. (Creswell 2009, 203-204; Veal 2006, 195, 233.)

### 5.3 Research material and data collection

The research consists of two parts; some 30 quantitative questionnaires conducted in Finland and 6 semi-structured qualitative interviews, 2 of them made in Hungary and 4 in Finland. The part in Hungary will take place in November 2012 and the one in Finland in December 2012 and February 2013.

The reason for choosing the semi-structured interview is that those being interviewed are professionals in the equestrian field. Thus they most probably have information to share that would not have been thought of to be asked when making a quantitative questionnaire. This would have created a problem of losing valuable information. As for the students, they are too big a group to be interviewed and mostly it is wanted to get numerical data on their knowledge about and interest in equestrian tourism and Akác-tanya. Thus questionnaire is suitable for examining this sample group.

The research mainly takes place during February 2013 in three Finnish vocational institutes offering various horse-related programs; at JEDU Haapavesi with trail riding tourism service producers, HAI Haapajärvi with rural entrepreneurs of equine industry, and KPEDU in Perho with horse grooms. The number of survey respondents is expected to be low due to the fact that class sizes in the equestrian field education are small.

Another part of the research concerns horse tourism professionals in Hungary and Finland. Kati Mucsi (Interviewee A), the owner of Akác-tanya, and a representative of the Hungarian equestrian tourism association (Interviewee B), are the Hungarian interviewees. The Finnish equestrian tourism professional interviewed is Markku Janhunen who is a representative of the Trail riding union of Finland (Interviewee C), additionally some of the heads of programs (Interviewees from D to F) have their specialization in equestrian tourism. Thus these are the people who know most about equine tourism and as Creswell states, in qualitative sampling, it is of major importance to choose such interviewees that will best help with understanding the research question (Creswell 2009, 178). Most of the

research material is realized in Finnish and the questionnaire and interview forms are found in the appendices both in Finnish and English (see appendices 1-5).

At first Akác-tanya is presented in the class and then there is time for further questions and comments by the audience. After that a survey is given to the students to be filled in. The content covers themes such as the students' opinions and thoughts of the whole equine field but especially horse tourism, why they chose to study this field and their knowledge about and interest in Akác-tanya. After conducting the questionnaire, the head of program will be interviewed discussing similar topics.

Concerning what is being done, the writer of this thesis made a study trip to Hungary in the beginning of November 2012 to visit Mucsi's company and interview her. This might not have been obligatory but since there is a presentation about Akác-tanya at the institutes, it is important that the speaker knows what she is talking about. Promoting a place that one has not even visited herself does not feel reliable. Additionally, the trip made it possible to discuss face-to-face with the commissioner and thus avoid any misunderstanding that might occur during the thesis process. It also provided a first-hand experience of one type of Hungarian equestrian tourism product and enabled making the interview. Additionally, a representative from the Hungarian Equestrian Tourism Association (HETA) was interviewed to gather another professional view on the topic. This interview is an important source of information since there is a lack of material about Hungarian equestrian tourism in English.

#### **5.4 Questionnaire and interview design**

When planning the interviews and the questionnaires, it was important to define what is wanted to be found out. The author of this thesis was given a lot of freedom to realize this study as she wishes by the commissioner. This was on the other hand a challenge too, since there were numerous possibilities to carry out a research for Akác-tanya. However, as mentioned earlier, the purpose of the interviews of the horse tourism professionals is to collect information about

equestrian tourism. The questionnaire aims to promote Akác-tanya and find out the students' interest in it and equine tourism, the interviews of the heads of programs support the survey.

Creating the interview forms was easier than the questionnaire. After some thinking, three to four main themes were found. They were specified by subthemes to support the interview process. Since all the interviewees present a very specific field, the author ended up with three different forms that are shown in appendices 1-3. The way of conducting the interviews is face-to-face but one of them is realized via phone. In this research, the method of recording the qualitative data is audio-recording; however, taking notes is an option B. This research includes interviews also in another country than the thesis writer's home country which makes it recommended for her to get accustomed with the local culture.

As for the questionnaire, at first an introduction was written. It includes information concerning what the questionnaire is about, how long it takes to fill in the paper, telling about the raffle included and reminding that all the information acquired will be handled confidentially. The text was designed so that it would encourage answering. The questions concern three topics; basic information of the respondent, the equestrian field and equestrian tourism and Akác-tanya. The balance between open-ended and closed-ended questions was also carefully considered, finally there were 2 open-ended and 11 pre-coded questions - one of them having an "Other -what?" option - making a total of 13 questions. At the end there is a thanking remark and a place where one can leave his/her contact information for the raffle and newsletter of Akác-tanya.

The questionnaire was designed in Finnish but translated into English to be attached as a part of the thesis. The form is found in appendix 4 in Finnish and in appendix 5 in English. As for the distribution, all the papers will be given out personally instead of mailing them or having an online survey so a rather high response rate is being expected. Additionally, there is a raffle of a horse riding holiday package of one week for those leaving their contact information at the end of the questionnaire. This is an incentive to answer.

## 5.5 Validity, reliability and ethical aspects

To start by defining the terms, validity has to do with how well the acquired information describes the phenomenon being studied, while reliability means how reliable the gotten results are; in case somebody else repeated a similar research, the results would be congruent, too. As for ethical issues, they concern matters such as honesty and respect of the respondents and the research sites. However, ethics are also present in the research question, purpose, data collection, data analysis and writing the research. (Veal 2006, 41, 70; Creswell 2009, 88-92.)

The qualitative research method used in this research is semi-structured interview, altogether 6 interviews will be made. This form of research has a good validity but on the other hand, the reliability is not very high; qualitative interviews present only the opinions of the interviewees and their generalization is difficult. However when conducted carefully, they can bring insights into certain phenomena and richer data than questionnaires. Also in this research, interviewees have information that could not be gathered from anywhere else. (Smith 2010, 109).

An issue that might be decreasing the quality of the interview results is an inexperienced interviewer. Smith (2010) notes that one can easily and unconsciously be leading the answers to what he/she expects or wishes to hear or lose objectivity by becoming too emotional. These risks will be reduced by proper preparation and practicing. Also the researcher's presence and specific place where the interview is conducted may distort the responses received. Additionally, explaining or using different words for asking the same questions can have a big effect. Smith (2010) advises the researcher to use exactly the same questions and avoid reforming them since people might understand the explanations differently. These are some examples of facts that need to be taken into careful consideration in order to avoid biased interview responses. (Smith 2010, 115-116; Creswell 2009, 179.)

As for the quantitative part, it is very challenging to find all the possible response options for closed-ended questions. Also it is relatively easy to lie in closed-ended questions since all one needs to do is to tick an incorrect box. However, little can be done for this and these are things that need to be accepted as a part of the

research. On the other hand, quantitative questionnaires have high reliability. The questionnaire used in this research will be approved by the teacher supervisor and is to be tested before it is given to the respondents. (Smith 2010, 64.)

Being a form of mixed methods study, this research has quite a small sample of some 30 respondents for the quantitative part which describes only the needs and opinions of this group. Also the sample has not been chosen randomly as it most often is in quantitative researches. Nevertheless it can be said that these are not major problems considering the big number of the interviews, of which 3 are supporting the questionnaires. The main aim of the survey is to map the interest of the students' in Akác-tanya horse farm and hear their opinions about horse tourism, rather than collecting theoretical information about equestrian tourism. It is also being understood that the results acquired from the surveys can only be seen as guidelines when thinking of the future marketing of Akác-tanya on the area.

Considering the ethical issues, one the author is being faced with is the fact that most of the interviewees are from very specific fields; this makes it nearly impossible to keep them anonymous. The solution for this problem is to ask each interviewee if they allow their opinions to be connected to their names. If not, the name will not be revealed at all in the research; instead, words such as "representative" or "member" will be used. Additionally in interviews, views of the interviewees include indirect information (Creswell 2009, 179). The way of analyzing this information may be ethically questionable. Also, this thesis is a relatively complex entity. It must be made clear to the participants what the purpose of the research is and what their role in it is. Thus a situation of deception, the researcher having a different understanding than the participants, will be avoided (Creswell 2009, 89). The author of this thesis has gathered knowledge about research ethics and careful attention is being paid to them in all the stages of the process.

## **6 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter discusses and analyses the results gathered through the various stages of the research. The first subchapter concentrates on the questionnaire results while the second one concerns the interview part. The interviews of Kati Mucsi, Markku Janhunen and the representative of the Hungarian Equestrian Tourism Association were used purely as a source of information. Thus the content of these interviews will be analysed only briefly. The total number of interview respondents was 6 while the questionnaires were filled in by 21 people. The number of those answering the questionnaire was somewhat lower than expected in the planning process of the research.

### **6.1 Questionnaire outcome**

The questionnaires were conducted in three Finnish equestrian institutions; on 12 February in Haapajärvi with 8 students, on 13 February in Haapavesi with 5 students and on 22 February in Perho with 8 students. The activity of answering was surprisingly positive; all except three also wrote their ideas on the open-ended question. All of the respondents were female and a majority of 9, aged on a scale 15 to 18 years. This was expected since all of the institutions are vocational schools with most of the students coming directly from elementary school. However, in Haapavesi they also had adult students. From the total number, 8 people were 19 to 22-year-olds, three aged between 23 to 26, and one older than 26.

As table 3 on the next page shows, the strongest reason for choosing to study in the equestrian field was getting a profession out of one's hobby. However, this question stated 'Please choose one most suitable option' but it was ignored by some respondents and multiple choices were made. In this case one of the options was randomly chosen as an answer to be analyzed statistically, this may slightly distort the results since the number of respondents is as small as 21. The

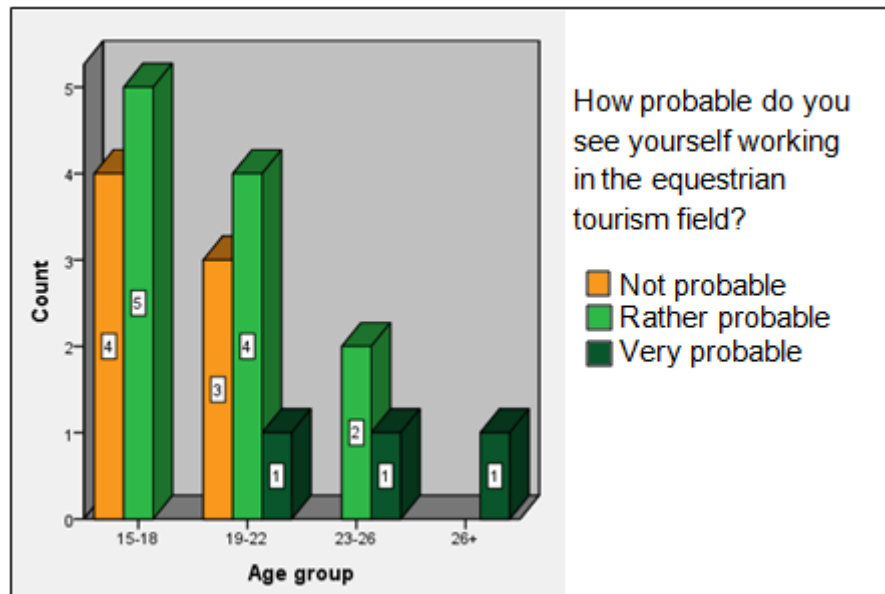


second biggest reason stated was 'love for animals'. The open-ended specification of choice 'other' was willingness to learn more while additionally the option 'the field seemed interesting' was also chosen by one respondent. Other answering options of this question were not used.

TABLE 3. The reason for choosing to study in the equestrian field.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
I wanted my hobby to be my profession	13	61,9	61,9	61,9
Love for animals	6	28,6	28,6	90,5
The field seemed interesting	1	4,8	4,8	95,2
Other reason	1	4,8	4,8	100,0
Total	21	100,0	100,0	

When the interest in equestrian tourism was asked, two chose 'I cannot say' while everybody else said they were interested in the field. Graph 13 on the next page illustrates the situation of the likelihood of personally working in the horse tourism field by age groups. Altogether 7 people said working in the field is 'not probable' while the rest 14 thought it is either 'rather probable' or 'very probable'. Nobody thought it would be 'extremely probable' or 'not at all probable'. It seems that those who are over 19 years old see working with horse tourism to be more likely than younger respondents. Overall these results are positive from the point of view of equine tourism since according to them, majority of these students may find their way to work in the field.



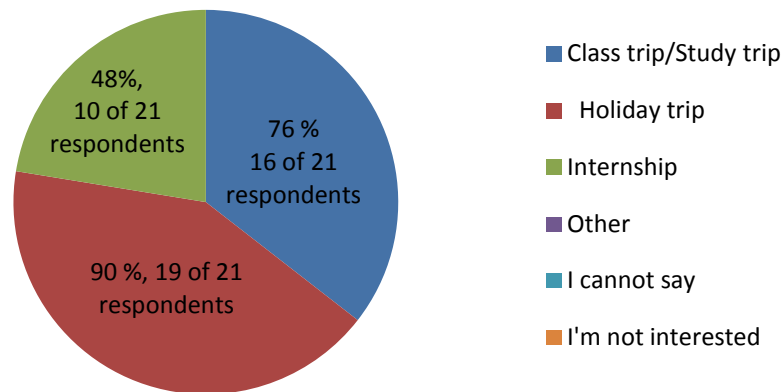
GRAPH 13. Probability of working in the equestrian tourism field by age groups.

When it comes to developing Finnish equestrian tourism, the respondents found domestic markets to be more important than reaching the foreign markets. The domestic development was seen to be 'very important' or 'extremely important' by 86% of the answerers, and for foreign development the corresponding percentage was 67. Foreign markets were 'rather important' to 33% and domestic for 14% of the students. The options 'not important' and 'not at all important' were not chosen.

As for Akác-tanya, 4 students had heard about the company before but none of them had been there. This shows that the visit and presentation of the farm was needed. In two of the schools, also students and teachers of other fields were listening to the presentation which helped to reach also other kinds of potential customers for Akác-tanya. Even though only a few had heard about Akác-tanya, the majority of 17 respondents (81%) were either 'very interested' or 'extremely interested' in visiting the farm. Additionally, three students (14,3%) stated that they are rather interested, one (4,8%) not interested and nobody not at all interested.

Due to the multiple allowed answers, the percentages on graph 14 on the next page exceed 100%. Holiday trip proved to be the most desired way to visit Akác-tanya by 19 answers while none of the respondents answered 'other', 'I cannot say' or 'I'm not interested'. The second preference lays on class or study trip and 10 respondents would be interested in doing their work placement on the farm.

### How to visit Akác-tanya?



GRAPH 14. How would you be interested in visiting/re-visiting Akác-tanya?

Many ideas arose in the open-ended question asking where the companies of the field should be marketed. Most common answers were either equine or any kind of magazines and internet. A magazine of some type was mentioned by 8 respondents and the internet by 10 of which 4 with an example of Facebook. Two people brought up television marketing and two marketing in various equestrian events and competitions. Also companies of tourism and other fields, accommodation facilities, travel agencies, vocational institutes and work places were mentioned. The importance of brochures was additionally pointed out. There was also another open-ended question, 'other comments' and it got some answers. One said that horse tourism is interesting but probably not her future job, while others were thankful for Akác-tanya, their brochure and the presentation.

Mostly the questions were understood correctly, however, some respondents made multiple choices in the question where only one answering option was allowed (question no. 3). Additionally question number 8 was left unanswered by three people. Possibly it was unnoticed since in a majority of the cases, answering to number 9 and 10 was not necessary. When the respondents were given an open-ended question about marketing horse (tourism) companies, two misunderstood 'how and where' to concern geographical area rather than a place where to market.

Getting to the final questionnaire form included a designing process. The most difficult thing was to obey Smith's advice on including only questions bringing information that is really needed and no 'want-to-knows'. Sometimes it was difficult to distinguish which type certain questions were. This made the process challenging and the questions were changed multiple times before the final form of the questionnaire was reached.

From the point of view of validity, questions brought answers to what was wanted to be known. The closed-ended questions, such as number 3, seemed to have suitable answering options and a sufficient number of them. As for reliability, it is quite high since most of the questions are closed-ended. Thus it would be easy to do a similar questionnaire and get similar answers. However, there might have been a pressure to show high interest in horse tourism since the whole visit and presentation concerned it. Also on the questions with a scale from 1 to 5, choosing the ultimate ends was mostly avoided.

## **6.2 Interview outcome**

The interview in Hungary with the representative of the Hungarian equestrian tourism association was challenging because of the language barrier. Additionally, it was not properly finished due to the lack of time of the interviewee. Still it was of great importance to meet someone from this association and the interview gave valuable information that would have been otherwise difficult to obtain. It was complemented by the interview of the commissioner Kati Mucsi who has been an entrepreneur in the equestrian tourism field for over 10 years. These two interviews gave two different view points on the same matter and created a versatile overall picture of Hungarian horse tourism together with the information that was found from written sources.

A professional view on Finnish equestrian tourism was given by the representative of the Finnish trail riding union, Markku Janhunen. Due to the long distance, this interview was realized via phone and it worked well. His experience and knowledge was important in mapping the field of Finnish equestrian tourism.

According to the interviews of the heads of programs, everyone had heard of Akác-tanya before. All of the interviewees also indicated an interest to possibly do co-operation in some form with the company. Such options as work placement, study trips and teachers' trainings emerged in the discussions. Overall the opinions of the heads of programs in all three institutions were very similar for this topic. Two of them have their specialization in the horse tourism field and one is a riding instructor. (Interviewees D, E & F 2013.)

When it comes to the significance of these study programs on the field of horse tourism, the program in Haapavesi is unique in the whole of Finland educating trail riding tourism service producers. In other words, those graduating from there will be professionals of the equestrian tourism field. The program has been held for some 11 years and the number of students has been varying. However, the institution also arranges various short courses on horse tourism and they have been more popular than the degree program itself. The reason for this might be that the short courses do not bind people for a long period of time. (Interviewee D 2013.)

In Haapajärvi the rural entrepreneur students have the freedom to choose which field they want to concentrate on, horse tourism can be one of them. The program has long roots. It is not purely horse-based, instead the students also learn other tasks needed to be done in an agricultural company. Thus they have a wide variety of skills for the future employment and also for setting up an enterprise of their own. The specialization on horses is worth 30 study weeks (1sw equals approximately to 40h) and the title is Rural Entrepreneur. This institution already has a concentration on Hungary so Akác-tanya was also welcomed. (Interviewee E 2013.)

From the program in Perho the students graduate as horse grooms. However, one can also get the qualification as *harrastepalveluiden tuottaja* (provider of recreational services). With that qualification, they are allowed to guide horse riding tours and work at hobby stables approved by the Equestrian Federation of Finland. The program started in 2001 with the name 'using horses in tourism' but it was changed in 2009. However, the current problem is that only a small number of

the students decide to concentrate on the tourism field. The specialization studies for producing recreational services are 30 study weeks and the work placement of 6sw must be completed in a company organizing riding tours and trail riding. At the moment there are some 30 students studying in the program. (Interviewee F 2013.)

All of the programs seem to have positive future aspects, even though there might be a small decrease in the number of study places. However, cutting the places is happening generally in the vocational institutes in Finland, not only in the equestrian field education. Haapajärvi is an exception since in the Northern Ostrobothnia region there is a continuous need for those who work in the field of agriculture and they might even need more study places. According to the head of program in Haapavesi, the education of the field should constantly be developed and a way should be found to motivate the students. She says that there is a lot to develop in horse tourism but the possibilities for it exist. Also the importance of the international markets for Finnish equine tourism is brought up. (Interviewees D, E & F 2013.)

When it comes to validity, the interviews gave valuable information that was needed in the thesis. Careful consideration of the questions and discussion topics increased validity, there was no question without a purpose. Additionally semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewee to express their thoughts and opinions rather freely. In other words, even if a certain matter was not mentioned by the interviewer, the respondent has the possibility to bring it up. However reliability is not as high as in the quantitative part of the research; most of the interviews reminded of casual conversations. Also, as an inexperienced interviewer some mistakes such as forgetting to ask details, interrupting the respondent and possibly leading the answers with the word choices were made. Still in this case, these can be considered to be minor flaws without any significant effect on the outcome.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

First of all, this thesis process has been very rewarding and instructive. Finding a topic that interests me so greatly guaranteed a high motivation throughout the process. Additionally finding a suitable commissioner, Kati Mucsi, from a Finnish-Hungarian Akác-tanya agritourism and horse farm was crucial when it comes to the outcome of the thesis, it also brought more value to the work.

One of the biggest challenges faced was finding information about the topic; equestrian tourism is a current field and not many materials are yet available. Additionally, Hungary turned out to be a challenging choice due to the lack of material in English. Still it did not make examining this country any less interesting. There was also some information concerning both Finland and Hungary that I would have wanted to add but was unable to find and thus it had to be left out.

To summarize the main points discussed in this thesis, equestrianism is a large and diverse field with major importance. In Europe in 2009 it was worth 100 billion euros, it also belongs to the most popular participatory and spectator leisure time activities world-wide. Even though tourism is a small part of the whole equestrian field, there are still good possibilities and markets for the development of equine tourism. The demand is constantly increasing and equine tourism has become one of the most established ways to develop horse riding. Today, Italy, Iceland, France and Ireland are some of the main horse tourism providers. On the other hand the field has its roots in the history, horse competitions existed and were popular spectator activities already in ancient Greece and Rome.

Through this thesis process it was also found out that Hungary and Finland are rather different countries from the point of view of equestrian tourism. Hungary has suitable weather and environment with 'puszta', it has also long traditions and a reputation as a horse nation. In the meantime, Finland is hardly known as a horse country and does not have as long a history, still its pure, spacious nature is very suitable for horse riding. Additionally, during the past decades the equine field has constantly been on a decline in Hungary while in Finland the number of horses

and horse riders has been rapidly increasing. The number of Finnish equestrian tourism companies is estimated to be some 200, in Hungary the equivalent number is some 400 to 500.

Some significant topics needing development in Finnish and Hungarian equestrian tourism are riding routes, networking, increasing the number of well-trained horses and professionals and reaching international markets. Co-operation enhancement is also needed, managing to combine a diverse and functional product package of high quality is one of the future challenges. Additionally Hungary should concentrate on the education and language knowledge, Finland on utilizing all the four seasons and branding. However, the economic recession, lack of funding and suitable infrastructure set their challenges for the development.

Thinking of the research included, it has given me valuable experience; not only have I combined both quantitative and qualitative methods but also done interviews; some with recording and the others while taking notes, via phone and face-to-face, formal and informal and one over a language barrier. Generally the research combination used worked very well in my opinion. The interviews taught me flexibility on how important it is to be able to adjust your behaviour, speech and level of language depending on the respondent. On the other hand, designing the questionnaire taught me what is to be considered when creating a form that will be filled in by the respondents. The importance lies on such things as the positioning and wording of the questions, layout, varying question types and above all, clarity.

The questionnaire was also successful in my opinion. It was well realized and was able to reach the purpose for which it was made. On the analysis stage using a statistical program for examining the question with multiple allowed answering options turned out to be challenging. Overall the results of the questionnaire were positive thinking of the future of equestrian tourism. These students seemed to have a good attitude and an interest in this field, they also had valuable ideas or horse tourism marketing purposes. However, only a few of them had heard about Akác-tanya before so my visit and marketing was needed. Maybe this reflects also the need for additional marketing in the area. I was happy to be able to raise people's interest in visiting the farm and increase the knowledge of horse tourism.



Additionally I felt welcomed in all of the schools that I visited and also got some positive feedback.

To cover a diverse sampling on the equestrian field, the schools chosen teach different kinds of programs. I was able to reach those students that will become horse grooms, tourism service providers and agriculture entrepreneurs. Since Finland is also a significant country in the concept of harness racing, I would have wanted to include a visit to an educational institution teaching this field. However, I was unable to reach them.

I am rather satisfied with the way this thesis eventually turned out to be as an entity. I have learnt a lot but I also hope that my work will be useful for instance for those who are seeking for diverse but compiled information about equestrian tourism. The empirical part has also benefitted and brought visibility for Akác-tanya.

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**Haastattelu teemat Unkarin hevosmatkailusta /  
Interview themes about Hungarian equestrian tourism**

**Tutkimus / Research:** SEEING THE WORLD FROM HORSEBACK: An Overview of Hungarian and Finnish Equestrian Tourism with Special Focus on Akác-tanya Farm.

**Haastattelutyyppi / Interview type:** Semi-structured interview/Semi-strukturoitu haastattelu.

- ❖ **Teema 1/Theme 1:** Haastateltavan ja hänen edustamansa yhdistyksen/yrityksen esittely. / Introduction of the interviewee and company/organization she or he represents.
  
- ❖ **Teema 2/Theme 2:** Unkarin hevosmatkailu; nykytila, soveltuvuus, historia, merkitys, yhdistyksen/yrityksen asema. / Hungarian equestrian tourism; current state, aptitude, history, importance, position of the company/organization.
  
- ❖ **Teema 3/Theme 3:** Unkarin hevosmatkailun kehitys ja kehittäminen; vahvuudet, heikkoudet, mahdollisuudet, uhat (SWOT). / Hungarian equestrian tourism development; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT).



**Haastattelu teemat koulutusohjelmajohtajille /  
Interview themes for the heads of degree programs**

**Tutkimus / Research:** SEEING THE WORLD FROM HORSEBACK: An Overview of Hungarian and Finnish Equestrian Tourism with Special Focus on Akác-tanya Farm.

**Haastattelutyyppi / Interview type:** Semi-structured interview/Semi-strukturoitu haastattelu.

- ❖ **Teema 1/Theme 1:** Haastateltavan ja hänen koulutusohjelmansa esittely. / Introduction of the interviewee and his/her degree program.
  
- ❖ **Teema 2/Theme 2:** Akác-tanya: tietämys, mahdollinen kiinnostus yhteistyöhön.  
/ Akác-tanya: knowledge, possible interest in co-operation.
  
- ❖ **Teema 3/Theme 3:** Suomen hevosmatkailu; nykytila, soveltuvuus, tämän koulutusalan (hevosten hoidon/maaseutuyrittämisen/vaellusratsastuksen) asema ja merkitys. / Finnish equestrian tourism; current state, aptitude, position and importance of this educational field (equine care/rural entrepreneurship/trail riding).
  
- ❖ **Teema 4/Theme 4:** Suomen hevosmatkailun ja tämän koulutusalan (hevosten hoidon /maaseutuyrittämisen/ vaellusratsastuksen) tulevaisuus. / The future of the Finnish equestrian tourism and this educational field (equine care/rural entrepreneurship/trail riding).

**Haastattelu teemat Suomen hevosmatkailusta /  
Interview themes about Finnish equestrian tourism**

**Tutkimus/Research:** SEEING THE WORLD FROM HORSEBACK: An Overview of Hungarian and Finnish Equestrian Tourism with Special Focus on Akác-tanya Farm.

**Haastattelutyyppi/Interview type:** Semi-structured interview/Semi-strukturoitu haastattelu.

- ❖ **Teema 1/Theme 1:** Haastateltavan ja SUOVA:n (Suomen Vaellustallienliitto Ry) esittely. / Introduction of the interviewee and SUOVA (Trail Riding Union of Finland).
  
- ❖ **Teema 2/Theme 2:** Suomen hevosmatkailu; nykytila, soveltuvuus, historia, merkitys, SUOVA:n asema. / Finnish equestrian tourism; current state, aptitude, history, importance, position of SUOVA.
  
- ❖ **Teema 3/Theme 3:** Suomen hevosmatkailun kehitys ja kehittäminen; vahvuudet, heikkoudet, mahdollisuudet, uhat (SWOT). / Finnish equestrian tourism development; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT).

## Hevosmatkailu ja Akác-tanya maatilamatkailu- ja hevostila

Tämän kyselyn tarkoituksena on kartoittaa Pohjois- ja Keski-Pohjanmaan alueen hevosalan opiskelijoiden tietämystä ja ajatuksia hevosmatkailusta, sekä unkarilaisesta Akác-tanya maatilamatkailu- ja hevostilasta. Tavoitteena on myös selvittää opiskelijoiden kiinnostusta vierailulla Akác-tanyassa esimerkiksi opintomatalla.

Kyselyssä saatuja tietoja ja tuloksia käsitellään ehdottoman luottamuksellisesti ja käytetään opinnäytetyön materiaalina. Kaikkien yhteystietonsa kyselyn loppuun antaneiden kesken arvotaan viikon loma Akác-tanyalla sisältäen yöpymisen, ylläpidon ja ratsastuksen. Arvoltaan paketti on n. 520€.

Lomakkeen täyttäminen kestää n. 10 minuuttia, merkitsethän vastauksesi selkeästi. Vastauksesi on meille tärkeä, kiitos!

Lisätiedot:

Opiskelija  
Jaana Torkkola  
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### 1. Sukupuoli

Nainen  Mies

### 2. Ikäryhmä

15 - 18  19 - 22  23 - 26  26+

### 3. Miksi lähdit opiskelemaan hevosalaa? (Valitse yksi parhaiten sopiva vaihtoehto)

- Halusin harrastuksesta ammatin  Eläinrakkaus  Muilta saadut suositukset
- Sosiaalinen painostus esim.ystävilta tai vanhemmilta  Hätävaravalinta  Ala vaikutti mielenkiintoiselta
- En osaa sanoa  Muu syy, mikä? \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Koetko hevosmatkailun kiinnostavana alana?

Kyllä  En  En osaa sanoa

**5. Asteikolla yhdestä viiteen (1-5), kuinka todennäköisesti näet itsesi työskentelevän hevosmatkailun parissa?** (1= ei lainkaan todennäköisenä, 5 = erittäin todennäköisenä)

1       2       3       4       5

**6. Asteikolla yhdestä viiteen (1-5), kuinka tärkeänä koet Suomen hevosmatkailun kehittämisen...** (1= ei lainkaan tärkeänä, 5 = erittäin tärkeänä)

**6.1 ...kotimaisille markkinoille**

1       2       3       4       5

**6.1 ...ulkomaisille markkinoille**

1       2       3       4       5

**7. Miten ja missä hevos(matkailu)alan yrityksiä voisi mielestäsi markkinoida?**

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**8. Oletko kuullut Akác-tanyasta aiemmin?** Mikäli et, siirry kysymykseen 11.

Kyllä       En

**9. Oletko käynyt Akác-tanyassa aiemmin?** Mikäli et, siirry kysymykseen 11.

Kyllä       En

**10. Mikäli kyllä, miten hyvänä koit Akác-tanyan asteikolla yhdestä viiteen (1-5)?**

(1= ei lainkaan hyvänä, 5 = erittäin hyvänä)

1       2       3       4       5

**11. Millä tavalla olisit kiinnostunut vierailemaan / vierailemaan uudestaan Akác-tanyassa?** (Usean vaihtoehdon valitseminen on sallittua.)

Luokkaretki/Opintomatka     Työharjoittelu     Lomamatka  
 Muu       En osaa sanoa     En ole kiinnostunut

**12. Miten kiinnostunut olisit vierailemaan / vierailemaan uudestaan Akác-tanyassa asteikolla yhdestä viiteen (1-5)?** (1= ei lainkaan kiinnostunut, 5 = erittäin kiinnostunut)

1       2       3       4       5

**13. Muita kommentteja**

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**Kiitokset vastauksestasi!**

**Täytähän alle yhteystietosi, mikäli haluat osallistua viikon ratsastuslomapaketin arvontaan (arvo n. 520€). Paketti arvotaan maaliskuun alussa ja voittajalle ilmoitetaan henkilökohtaisesti.**

Pakettiin kuuluu yöpyminen, ylläpito ja ratsastus yhdeksi viikoksi. Lennot Unkariin ja lentokenttäkuljetus eivät sisälly hintaan. Lentokenttäkuljetuksen voi ostaa 35€ hintaan.

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**Nimi:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Osoite:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Sähköposti:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Puhelinnumero:** \_\_\_\_\_

Kyllä kiitos, osallistun matkan arvontaan. Lisäksi yhteystietojani saa käyttää Akác-tanyan muutaman kerran vuodessa ilmestyvän uutiskirjeen lähettämiseen. Halutessani voin helposti poistua listalta.

Ei kiitos, osallistun vain matkan arvontaan.

## Equestrian tourism and Akác-tanya agritourism and horse farm

The purpose of this questionnaire is to map the knowledge and thoughts of equestrian field students in Northern and Central Ostrobothnia regions, concerning horse tourism and Hungarian Akác-tanya agritourism and horse farm. Finding out the students' interest to visit Akác-tanya for instance in the form of a study trip is also an aim.

The information and results gathered through the questionnaire are absolutely confidential and will be used as a material in a thesis. A one week holiday package (incl. accommodation, upkeep and riding) at Akác-tanya will be raffled among all those who have left their contact information at the end of the questionnaire. The package is worth ca. 520€.

Filling in the form takes approximately 10 minutes, please mark your answers clearly. Your answer is important for us, thank you!

Additional information:

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### 1. Gender

Female  Male

### 2. Age group

15 - 18  19 - 22  23 - 26  26+

### 3. Why did you choose to study at equestrian field? (Please choose one most suitable option.)

- I wanted my hobby to be my profession  Love for animals  Recommendations from others
- Social pressure from eg. friends or family  Make shift choice  The field seemed interesting
- I cannot say  Other reason, what? \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Do you find equestrian tourism as an interesting field?

Yes  No  I cannot say

Please turn

**5. On a scale from one to five, (1-5), how probable do you see yourself working at the equestrian tourism field? (1= not at all probable, 5 = extremely probable)**

1       2       3       4       5

**6. On a scale from one to five (1-5), how important do you think it is to develop Finnish horse tourism... (1= not at all important, 5 = extremely important)**

**6.1 ...for domestic markets**

1       2       3       4       5

**6.1 ...for foreign markets**

1       2       3       4       5

**7. How and where do you think horse (tourism) companies could be marketed?**

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**8. Have you heard of Akác-tanya before? If no, please go to question 11.**

Yes       No

**9. Have you been to Akác-tanya before? If no, please go to question 11.**

Yes       No

**10. If yes, how good do you think Akác-tanya is on a scale from one to five (1-5)?**

(1= not at all good, 5 = extremely good)

1       2       3       4       5

**11. How would you be interested in visiting / revisiting Akác-tanya? (Choosing multiple options is allowed.)**

Class trip/Study trip       Internship       Holiday trip  
 Another       I cannot say       I'm not interested

**12. How interested would you be in visiting / revisiting Akác-tanya on a scale from one to five (1-5)?**

(1= not at all interested, 5 = extremely interested)

1       2       3       4       5

**13. Other comments**

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**Thank you for your answer!**

**Please fill in your contact information if you wish to take part in the raffle of a riding holiday package of one week (worth ca. 520€). The package will be raffled in the beginning of March and the winner will be contacted personally.**

The package includes accommodation, upkeep and horse riding for one week. Flights to Hungary and airport transportation are not included. Airport transportation is available for the price of 35€.

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**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Yes thank you, I participate in the raffle. Additionally my contact information may be used for sending a newsletter of Akác-tanya a few times per year. I can easily exit the list if I so wish.

No thank you, I only participate in the raffle.



**The Horse Shoe Quality Assurance System created by the Hungarian  
Equestrian Tourism Association**

Classification parameters (summary)  
Die objektiven Parameter der Einstufung (Zusammenfassung)

	The number of stars awarded is an average of points ratings scored for five principal factors * (max. 5 points)  Durchschnittliche Punktzahl der 5 Hauptgesichtspunkte einzeln* (max. 5 Punkte)	The number of horses available  Anzahl der an der Dienstleistung beteiligten Pferde	The selection of facilities and services (min. **)  Anzahl der unterschiedlichen Dienstleistungsarten (min.)**	The staff's knowledge of foreign languages (compulsory)  Obligatorische Fremdsprachkenntnisse	Number of points  Punktzahl
★★★★	>4	>10	>3	+	22–25
★★★★	>3.8	>8	>3	+	19–21
★★★	>3.4	>8	>2	–	17–18
★★	>3	>6	>2	–	15–16
★	>2.4	>5	>1	–	12–14

\* (1) Setting and riding environment (2) Maintenance of horses and suitability of equipment (3) Suitability of horses (4) Equestrian facilities and services (5) Quality and qualifications of staff  
(1) Gesichtspunkte die Umgebung, (2) die Pferdehaltung, die Brauchbarkeit der Werkzeuge betreffend. (3) Die fachliche Eignung der Pferde, (4) die Reitdienstleistungen betreffenden Gesichtspunkte. (5) Fachliche, personelle Faktoren.

\*\* Instruction, cross-country riding, carriage riding, displays and specialist services, such as riding for hunting, riding therapy and breeding.  
Unterricht, Geländeritte, Gespanne, Vorführungen, spezielle Dienstleistungen: Jagdausritte, therapeutisches Reiten, Zucht usw.

(Adapted from the “Lovasturizmus Magyarországon” brochure published by the Hungarian National Tourist Office.)