

**Sustainable tourism in Eastern Uusimaa:
Current state and future development**

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Raportin nimi SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN EASTERN UUSIMAA: CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT	Sivu- ja liitesivumäärä 39 + 2
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<p>Kestävä kehitys on ollut kasvavassa asemassa kaikenlaisessa yritystoiminnassa, eritoten matkailualalla. Sekä yritykset että kuluttajat ovat yhä enenevässä määrin kiinnostuneita toimimaan kestävän kehityksen periaatteiden mukaisesti.</p> <p>Itä-Uusimaa, joka alueena tunnetaan erityisesti Porvoon ja Loviisan kauniista vanhoista kaupunginosista, on eräs suomen suosituimmista matkailukohteista.</p> <p>Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli kartoittaa Itä-Uudenmaan matkailuyritysten suhdetta kestävään kehitykseen, määrittää sen nykyinen tilanne ja kehittämisen tarpeet. Toimeksiantajana toimi Itä-Uudenmaan alueella toimiva kehitysyhtiö Posintra Oy.</p> <p>Tutkimus toteutettiin maaliskuun 2014 aikana kvalitatiivisena haastattelututkimuksena, jonka kohteena oli kuusi toimeksiantajan valitsemaa Itä-Uudellamaalla toimivaa matkailuyritystä. Haastattelu koostui kahdestatoista pääkysymyksestä, sekä haastateltavien vastausten mukaan määräytyneistä jatkokysymyksistä, jotka käsittelivät kestävyden kolmea eri osa-aluetta: taloudellinen, sosiaalinen ja ympäristöllinen.</p> <p>Tutkimustuloksista selvisi kestävän matkailun periaatteiden olevan erityisesti yritysten toiminnassa vahvasti läsnä. Tarpeita ja haluja kuitenkin löytyy yritysten suunnalta myös jatkokehitykseen.</p>	
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<p>Sustainable development has been a constantly rising trend in all sorts of commercial activities, especially in the tourism industry. Both corporations and consumers are increasingly interested in acting accordingly to the sustainability principles.</p> <p>Eastern Uusimaa, An area known especially for the beautiful old town sceneries in Porvoo and Loviisa, is one of the most popular tourism destinations in Finland.</p> <p>The aim of this thesis was to research the relationship between sustainable development and the tourism businesses of Eastern Uusimaa. To define its current state and the needs for future development. The commissioner for this thesis was an Eastern Uusimaa-based development company Posintra Oy.</p> <p>The research was conducted in March of 2014 with the qualitative research method of in-depth interviewing six tourism businesses operating in Eastern Uusimaa that were chosen by the commissioner. The interviews consisted of twelve main questions and several supplement questions based on the respondent's answers. The questions dealt with the three main aspects of sustainability: Social, economic and ecological.</p> <p>The results showed that the principles of sustainability were generally well present in the ways that the businesses are operating. However, there are still needs and desires for further development within the businesses.</p>	
<p>Key words</p> <p>sustainable development, sustainable tourism, eastern uusimaa,</p>	

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1 Introduction

With the ever growing amount of tourism around the world, one of the most significant issues that has risen up within the last few years is sustainable development/sustainable tourism (even though the concept itself has not always been defined clearly and universally). It is a well-established fact that even though tourism and international travel could potentially be a bringer of economic and social well-being for the host communities, more often than not tourism is known to have caused a substantial amount of damage and burden on to the host environment, and in order to prevent and minimize the negative effects of tourism there is a need for strategic planning towards sustainable action involving social, political and cultural issues that are closely intertwined with each other.

Eastern Uusimaa, a region situated in the south of Finland has a long-lasting and successful history as a tourism destination. It has currently over 94 000 inhabitants (as of 2010). This bi-lingual culture-county, characterised by various old-town areas (It has the oldest house stock in all of Finland), coastal regions, manor milieus and island communities is located in southern Finland coastal zone of the Gulf of Finland. The region consists of the cities of Porvoo and Loviisa and ten villages/towns: Askola, Lapinjärvi, Liljendal, Loviisa, Myrskylä, Pernaja, Porvoo, Pukkila, Ruotsinpyhtää and Sipoo. (Itä-Uudenmaan liitto 2006) Eastern Uusimaa is one of the most industrialised counties in Finland. The most significant forms of industry include energy production, chemical industry and the food industry. (Ritalahti & Holmberg 2010)

This thesis aims to gather information on the current level of sustainability practice among selected tourism businesses operating in the region of Eastern Uusimaa and find common issues that need development and ways on how to improve sustainability within these tourism companies.

Research problem

Since improving the sustainability of local tourism businesses and trying to communicate the basic idea of this concept to them is being viewed as being one of the most

important objectives of this research, I have narrowed down the research problem of this thesis as follows:

Is the concept of sustainable development understood in tourism businesses of Eastern Uusimaa and furthermore, is there a true motivation within these businesses to make efforts to work sustainably, and improve their actions more towards sustainability?

The main approach for tackling the research problem was to conduct a series of interviews with six different tourism companies to determine and evaluate their relationship to sustainable development. These interviews were designed by using the qualitative research method of in-depth interviewing as a basis for constructing the interview questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted mostly of open-ended questions and will be conducted via face-to-face conversations with the representatives from local tourism businesses.

Thesis objective

This study will be conducted as a part of a larger tourism development project called “Vetovoimaa ympärivuotiseen matkailuun Etelä-Suomessa” an ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) project handled by Posintra Oy who are also the commissioner for this thesis and funded by the union of Päijät-Häme.

Based on the analysis of study results the situation regarding sustainability around Eastern Uusimaa’s tourism industry will be mapped out coherently so that needs for improvement and directions for further action can be determined and suggested. The objective is to further communicate these suggestions to other tourism businesses to give them ideas for possible areas to develop to become a more sustainable business. The results of this thesis will also be used as a base for another thesis, that seeks to develop a marketing plan regarding sustainable development for businesses operating in Eastern Uusimaa, and can also be used as a basis for similar future research with in other regions of Finland and also repeatedly in Eastern Uusimaa too, if necessary.

2 Background

As the basis for constructing the interview questionnaire I have used a document received from the commissioner, which was devised during a previous development project they were involved in called “Vetovoimaa ja kestävää laatua ympärivuotiseen matkailuun Etelä-Suomessa”. The document is called “Kestävän kehityksen huoneentaulu” (the board of sustainable development) and it showcases the cornerstones of sustainable tourism in 5 bullet points as well as presenting other 10 bullet points that define the requirements for a tourism company to be truly sustainable. In addition, various other academic resources defining and discussing the concept of sustainable tourism were used in constructing the interview questions in order to get broadness and more diversity to the questions and additional themes to discuss. In other words, the questionnaire is used to find out what is the relationship between these tourism companies and the sustainability requirements.

2.1 Commissioner

The commissioner of this thesis, Posintra Oy is a development company in Eastern Uusimaa that is focused on improving and strengthening the economic life and competitiveness of the region as well as increasing the socio-economic well-being.

The company was founded in 1998 by the city of Porvoo and the municipality of Askola located in the Porvoo municipality as well as several local enterprises, banks, schools etc. Some of the main cornerstones of Posintras’ activities regarding sustainable development are regional development projects and development of ecological housing. Regional development is mainly focused on improving tourism and the development of nearby archipelago areas to increase their vitality. (posintra 2014)

2.2 The Eastern Uusimaa tourism industry

Eastern Uusimaa is largely viewed as being a significantly large historical and cultural treasure trove. Major tourist attractions in Eastern Uusimaa include Porvoo and Loviisa and their old towns, Svartholma sea fortress in front of Loviisa, Strömfors works area in Loviisa and Pernaja coastal rural communities. Located north of the region are

the municipality of Askola as well as a number of small villages, Pukkila, Myrskylä, Lapinjärvi and Liljendal that are characterized by the old village milieus and churches, as well as rural tourism sights . In addition, Eastern Uusimaa has a large number of tourist activities such as mansions, cultural events and leisure homes. (Itä-Uudenmaan Liitto 2006) The single most popular destination within the area is the city of Porvoo, which attracts over a million visitors per year thus being one of the most popular tourism destinations in the whole country. (Ritalahti & Holmberg 2010)

The accommodation capacity in Eastern Uusimaa is relatively small due to the close proximity of Helsinki and the small size of the region itself. According to Porvoo tourism offices there are 1032 bed spaces with 871 of them belonging to registered accommodation services. (Ritalahti & Holmberg 2010)

Tourism statistics show that in 2013 the number of registered overnight stays in the Eastern Uusimaa region amounted to a total of 180 840. From these stays, roughly 36 00 of them were foreign visitors. The majority of these overnight stays were registered in Porvoo with over 110 000 overnight stays while more than 70 000 visits were registered in Loviisa and the surrounding regions of Porvoo. In comparison to 2012, the decrease of overnight stays was 10,2% for the city of Porvoo and for Porvoo and other parts of Uusimaa, the decrease was 19,2%, This quite considerable drop in visitors can most likely be attributed to the on-going economic depression and when comparing to other regions, the overall situation seems to be that the majority of Finland was experiencing varying amounts of decrease in the amount of overnight stays as well. (MEK 2014)

Nevertheless, the amount of foreign overnight stays in the whole of Finland's during the same period was increased by 0,5%. (MEK 2014)

Due to the proximity of Helsinki metropolitan area Eastern Uusimaa region as a tourist destination is characterized by a large number of both domestic and foreign day-trip visitors. The amount of day-visits to Eastern Uusimaa in 2013 was 2 238 000 with the expenditure that the visitors generated amounted to over 98 million euros. The total expenditure of all visitors to the area (overnight stays etc.) amounted to 168 million

euro. The most commonly used tourism services among daytime visitors are café and restaurant services. (Lopez & Holmberg & Ritalahti 2014)

According to the tourism development strategy of the union of Eastern Uusimaa, the major focus points in developing the regions tourism industry is to focus on business travel, coastal area tourism services and events and creating an electronic marketplace. All these focus points have their foundation on the principles of sustainable development. (Itä-Uudenmaan Liitto 2006)

2.3 Significance of the research

As this research project and thesis is a part of an on-going real-life tourism development project that is being worked on by the commissioner, this research will hopefully serve as an important and significant document to the commissioners' similar projects in the future. The ideal situation and outcome for the commissioner would be that the results of this research can be (after the analysis) transferred and communicated to other tourism companies in a clear and easily comprehensible way in order to give them clear ideas and suggestions for improvement of their own sustainable actions.

In addition, the commissioner hopes that this research and its methods could be used as a blueprint for similar sustainability-related researches in the future.

The state of sustainability within tourism businesses around the area of Eastern Uusimaa is an area that has not been a target of considerable research so far, so creating an up-to-date overview of the situation seems relevant considering that the issues of sustainability are nowadays one of the most popular and commonly researched in the tourism industry.

3 Theoretical framework

This chapter will cover all the necessary background theory related to this thesis, focusing on offering a clear description and description of the two main concepts related to this research and closely related to each other as well, sustainable development and sustainable tourism.

3.1 Sustainable development

Sustainable Development is a term that holds countless definitions and is at the same time considered to be one of the most important issues in regards the future of our planet. At the core of sustainable development perspective lies the need to make the economic, environmental and social dimension of development compatible in the long-run, while acknowledging possible competition across these areas in the shorter term. (OECD 2008)

“All definitions of sustainable development require that we see the world as a system—a system that connects space; and a system that connects time.” (iisd 2013)

To put it simply, sustainable development stands for meeting the needs of present generations without jeopardizing the ability of futures generations to meet their own needs – in other words, a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations to come. It offers a vision of progress that integrates immediate and longer-term objectives, local and global action, and regards social, economic and environmental issues as inseparable and interdependent components of human progress. It is also important to realise that sustainable development is not concerned with the preservation of the physical environment, and social and economic resources, but with their development based upon sustainable principles. Therefore the emphasis is based on the conservation of resources and planning their use as efficiently as possible. Therefore it can be concluded that the process of sustainable development is a constantly on-going process that should never stop advancing. (Edgell 2008, 11-12)

The term and concept of sustainable development is believed to have first surfaced in 1972 during the UN environmental conference that focused on maintaining the balance of nature and the sensible use of resources on an international level for the first time. Some criticize the term "sustainable development" stating that it's too vague.

One of the other criticisms for sustainable development is that it's not entirely incorrect to state that the whole term of can be seen as an oxymoron (a figure of speech in which incongruous or seemingly contradictory terms appear side by side) Sustainability requires a long-term perspective and something that is sustained, should not change. On the other hand "development" implies change. Putting these two words together, it's not difficult to come up with bizarre paraphrases for sustainable development, such as on-going or perpetual change. Such notions would not be acceptable to the majority of the proponents in sustainable development. (Girard, Nijkamp 2009, 39)

That criticism is somewhat justified, considering since that conference, there has been a great number of variations for the definition, but the most frequently quoted definition is from Our Common Future, also known as the Brundtland Report. (Cavagnaro & Couriel 2012, 76) It contains within it two key concepts:

"the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

The United Nations 2005 World Summit Outcome Document refers to the "interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars" of sustainable development as economic development, social development, and environmental protection. This definition involving these three core aspects is probably most commonly accepted definition of sustainable development in the context of tourism and travel as well. Therefore the theoretical basis for this thesis will focus on this particular definition.

Within the context of economic policies, the word “development” has been typically identified with the growth of real per-capita income or consumption. But in the concept of sustainable development not only is there a concern with the quantity of economic growth but even more importantly the quality, and a strong emphasis on human wellbeing alongside economic growth. Economic sustainability is associated with meeting and sustaining the requirements for strong and durable economic growth, such as ensuring a healthy environment for financial and inflationary stability, as well as maintaining capacity for new innovations and investments. Ecological sustainability focuses on maintaining the integrity, productivity and resilience of the biological and physical environment around us, and maintaining access to a healthy nature. Social sustainability is concerned with ensuring high employment and constructing efficient safety nets that can withstand major demographic and structural changes, as well as ensuring equity and democratic participation in decision making. The conditions for ecological and social sustainability are distinct from, and as important as, economic efficiency. The core of sustainable development is that it blends these three distinct aspects together by emphasising the links between them, their long-term complementarity, and the need for balancing them in the case of short term conflicts (OECD 2008)

One problem however is that due to the agenda of sustainable development being so wide, along with the difficulty of calculating such things as the potential satisfaction of future needs or the future impact of current actions, accurate measurement of sustainability is a considerably difficult task. The transnational dimension of key threats to sustainability, which renders monitoring difficult, further complicates this problem. (OECD 2008)

From the last decade of the twentieth century onwards, sustainable development has become a widely used term by governments, Businesses, NGO’s and the academic community. It has evolved over three decades from an environmental issue to a socio-political movement for bringing forth beneficial social and economic change in the world. (Cavagnaro & Curiel 2012, 1)

The discussion and various attempts at defining, clearly indicate that sustainable development is indeed a concept of great complexity. The fact that so many different actors,

some of which are viewed as having divergent and politically opposed objectives, such as different governments, international lending agencies, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and the academic world have adopted the term “sustainable development”. This can be seen as a clear reflection of the inherent ambiguity of the concept. Because of the ambiguity, a variety of different perspectives on sustainability has developed over the years. (Edgell 2006)

Several researchers have argued, through various international forums that there are actually four pillars of sustainable development rather than three, the fourth being cultural. However, as of right now, the fourth dimension seems to be more vaguely defined than the other three aspects, and therefore it hasn't been commonly accepted as a part of sustainable development. (Wikipedia 2014)

Sustainable development is also been linked to a similar concept called “Green Development”. Green development is generally different from sustainable development in the sense that just like the name suggests, Green development puts more consideration into what is generally regarded as environmental sustainability over economic and cultural aspects. (Swarbrooke 2002, 63)

Is sustainable development a kind of guiding principle, as many of its supporters would argue? Or rather a concrete goal or set of goals that can be measured evaluated and deemed "achieved"? Considering that there is a substantial amount of academic writing that support both of these of points and even offer several other ways of viewing sustainability, a single definitive answer is unlikely to be found. It can concluded however that the reigning political systems needs to provide the blueprint and influence and a system where sustainable development is regulated and rewarded in order for people to participate in it and ultimately achieve a more sustainable world in the future. (OECD 2008)

However, Sustainable development will not be brought about by policies only: it must be taken up by society at large starting with organisations devoted to sustainability, setting up the principles that are guiding the many choices each citizen makes every day, as well as the big political and economic decisions that are being made. This requires

profound changes in thinking, in economic and social structures and in consumption and production patterns. It will require a mass acceptance and implementation throughout the world in order for it to reach its desired effects and be truly a successful concept. (OECD 2008)

3.2 Sustainable tourism

As in many other industries, sustainability in tourism especially has become an increasingly popular concept during the course of the past decade. This new rising popularity can be felt across the board as consumer demand for sustainable tourism products grows, governments and municipalities are presenting and implementing sustainability policies and the industry itself has been active in adapting its actions more towards sustainability. (Conrady & Buck 2009 36-37)

But what does “sustainable tourism” really mean? How can it be measured and credibly demonstrated, in order to build consumer confidence, promote efficiency, and fight false claims?

While looking at the common criticism around sustainable tourism, they more or less seem to be related to the perceived vagueness of the term and its content.

More specifically meaning that there does not seem to be a more or less universally accepted theoretical basis for the concept there is no consistently agreed upon theoretical from which a scientific understanding can be built. “Without guidance from theory that is verified through scientific testing and no commonly accepted and agreed indicators, the theoretical framework or model can be used inappropriately and lead to poor planning.” (Wu 2009) Nevertheless, there is an on-going development to try creating a list of viable indicators so the effectiveness of sustainable tourism could be reliably measured.

Other notable issues are related to the measurement of the effects of sustainable planning and action. Some of the other issues that are problematic to sustainable tourism are for example that in a lot of the destinations the concept of sustainable tourism has been implemented mostly by the power of the so-called developed countries over the developing countries.

The second challenge of implementing sustainable tourism is that tourism is a complex adaptive system with many independent actors. The delivery of tourism experiences requires many companies working in co-operation to provide product and services to travellers. The system is dynamic and self-organizing. Tourism does not have a “top down’ structure. More recently there has been growing appreciation of the number of stakeholders, both directly involved in tourism and ancillary to it, involved in sustainable tourism. (Swarbrooke 2002, 6-8)

The concept of sustainable tourism is far younger than the concept from where it’s derived from “sustainable development”. The term was first coined up in the late 1980’s when tourism-related academic world began implementing the ideas of the Brundlandt report into their own industry even though at first these concepts were commonly referred to as “Green Tourism”, and as the name states, the main focus was on environmental issues, minimising the negative effects and maximizing the benefits of tourism on the environment. So the social and economic aspects hadn’t really come in to the picture yet at this point. (Conrady & Buck 2009, 39)

The term Sustainable tourism itself was coming into wider use in the early nineties. By this time the aforementioned aspects of social well-being (the effects of tourism on the host-communities and the well-being of staff members in tourism related companies) and economic benefits for the host communities were being taken into consideration more and more. This broadened concept was recognised in “The Green Paper of Tourism” published in 1995 by the European Union. This newly defined concept quickly gained popularity amongst the industry and has continued to be a hot topic throughout the new millennium. (Aronsson 2000)

The World Tourism Organisation in its definition published in 2004, describes sustainable tourism as follows:

"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"

The WTO definition further states that the necessary requirements for sustainable tourism development includes that all the necessary stakeholders are active in participation and constantly informed, and that the success of sustainable tourism is dependent on strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. “Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.”(World Tourism Organisation 2004)

Another valuable aspect regarding sustainable tourism development is related to development and maintenance of high level of tourist satisfaction in every destination and in this way, ensuring a meaningful experience to the tourists. Another important goal should be that their awareness about sustainability issues could be raised and sustainable tourism practises should be promoted amongst them. (World Tourism Organisation 2004)

The three key sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices can be universally applied to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the constantly developing special interest tourism segments. The three principles of Sustainability refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and it is regarded with absolute importance that a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions in order to ensure a continuous sustainability. (World Tourism Organisation 2004)

To shortly illustrate the three points mentioned in the previous paragraph the WTO definition states that successful sustainable tourism development should:

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

2) Make efforts to embrace and respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to co-existence and tolerance for different cultures.

3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, fair distribution of socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders involved, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and helping to maintain and develop social services in host communities, and making efforts to alleviate poverty” (World Tourism Organization 2004)

The above definition clearly differentiates three different aspects of sustainable travel, the ecological, social and economic.

In addition to the aforementioned aspects of sustainability, one the important concepts related to sustainable tourism or any other sustainable form of business is CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). CSR can be defined as measures and actions that corporations make in order to improve social, economic and environmental well-being of their respective communities.

3.2.1 Ecological sustainability

Ecological sustainability could be considered as the sole most important thing in the whole concept of sustainable development as well as in sustainable tourism. It is basically the foundation that the whole concept was built upon and further developed. Ecological sustainability stands for development and action that does not harm the natural biodiversity, use natural resources in a wasteful and careless manner or disrupt any natural ecologic processes. Sustaining biological and natural diversity is essential to any kind of development in the world. Regarding the global travel business, the main point is that tourism should not put too much strain on the environment and try to adapt its actions so that they don't exceed the environmental carrying capacity and if

possible, try to invest some of the profits gained from tourism to help preserve the natural environment of the destinations. After all, in many ways the environment could be considered as being the single most important resource for developing tourism products. The experience and enjoyment of the environment is at the core of how tourism is marketed. Almost no other industry is as dependent on the environment as the tourism industry. Nevertheless, sustainable tourism planning should not put too focus on environmental issues and ignore the two other important parts in sustainable planning. (Swarbrooke 2002, 49-56)

Whether intentional or not, the tourism industry, related businesses and the tourists themselves have a wide impact on the host environment. The effects can be temporary or permanent, weak or strong and these effects may also have social and economic consequences for the host community. Therefore it is of utmost importance that necessary steps are being taken to ensure protection and development of the environment through sustainable tourism management. The most common ways to prevent negative environmental effects usually involve energy conservation, water conservation, proper waste management, and cutting down logistics, which is usually achieved by using local products, making large purchases in co-operation with other local businesses. However traveling back and forth between destinations is the single most environment straining issue involved within tourism. (Swarbrooke 2002, 55)

3.2.2 Economic sustainability

Economic sustainability is one of the three basic aspects in the concept of sustainable development and sustainable tourism. Economic sustainability in the context of tourism means that the tourism industry is able to develop without it impacting negatively to other local economic activities while keeping tourism business profitable in the long run. With economic sustainability the aim is to benefit the local communities and other interest groups. The main positive economic impacts of sustainable tourism relate to foreign exchange earnings, contributions to government revenues, generation of employment and business opportunities. There are obviously some unfavourable effects as well. (Swarbrooke 2002, 65)

There are many hidden costs to conventional tourism and they can have unfavourable economic effects on the host community. Often rich countries are better suited to profit from tourism than poor ones, even though the least developed countries have the most urgent need for income, employment and general rise of the standard of living by means of tourism. They are often the least capable to take advantage of these benefits. Among the reasons for this are large-scale transfers of tourism revenues out of the host country, as well as the exclusion of local businesses and products. (biodiversity.ru 2014)

Developers may want the government to improve the airports, roads and other infrastructure and may also push the government to provide tax breaks and other financial advantages which are costly activities. Public resources spent on subsidized infrastructure or tax breaks may reduce government investment in other critical areas such as education and health. In addition, many countries have embraced tourism as the single most important way to boost their economy. This has made them very vulnerable to anything that negatively affects the local tourism industry. (biodiversity.ru 2014)

Businesses generally tend to be a little reluctant to take on sustainable measures mainly because it requires sometimes relatively large investments and purchases and does not generate short term income for the company. (Swarbrooke 2002, 59)

In order for tourism to develop more towards sustainability in the economic sense, and to counter the negative impacts, there are a variety of measures that can be undertaken. For instance, an effective way could be to develop forms of tourism that make the most out of the economic benefits of tourism and try to minimize the economic cost. Another important thing is to ensure that the benefits of tourism are spread as widely as possible throughout the host community as well as making sure that tourists are paying a fair price for their holiday experience, while making sure that the costs of attracting and meeting the needs of tourists are shared equally between the tourism industry and the government agencies.(biodiversity.ru 2014)

Making efforts to protect local businesses from unfair competition from larger externally owned enterprises is also important, but it is necessary also to try and not to take

this sort of protectionism too far, since it could result in too much power being given to local businesses. This situation could in turn result in poor service, high prices and finally a drastic drop in visitor numbers. (Swarbrooke 2002, 67)

3.2.3 Social sustainability

Generally in the on-going debate and discussion on sustainable tourism the social aspect tourism has been given less attention than the ecological side. This is maybe due to the fact that the socio-cultural impacts of tourism are noticeable only in a relatively long timespan and are to a large extent, quite intangible and hard to notice, but when the changes have occurred, it is very difficult to try and reverse them. Commonly, the focus with social sustainability in tourism has been on the protection of the host community from the negative effects that tourism might bring upon such as traditional values by introducing foreign elements which are in conflict with the cultural, historical, and religious heritage of the community. But in reality the issue of social sustainability is much wider and that it needs to be acknowledged that all the stakeholders in tourism have rights and responsibilities that need to be recognised. (Swarbrooke 2002, 72)

The concept of social (or socio-cultural) sustainability is also firmly associated with the attitudes of local inhabitants to tourism industry and the travellers and tourist that visit the area. Do the locals view the effects of tourism and the presence of tourist positively or negatively? The attitudes of the locals usually correlates with the amount of tourists visiting the destination and whether or not their behaviour is perceived to be affecting local cultural and social system. (Edgell 2006)

As stated above, social sustainability seeks to preserve local customs, values, cultural features and conceptions of a destination and projecting these features to tourists who are visiting the destination. While economic sustainability promotes the idea that tourism profits should be kept within the local community, social sustainability deals with the distribution of these profits. The emphasis is on preventing the exploitation of one group of a society for the financial gain of another. (Edgell 2006)

While the majority of sustainable tourism's aspects are focused on local sustainability, they should not overshadow the concept of tourist satisfaction. Many locations rely

heavily on the tourism industry, so providing tourists with a rewarding experience is essential to economic success. As long as guests visit with the intention of leaving natural resources and local customs intact, the location is left with the resources to provide future tourists with the same enjoyable experience. (Swarbrooke 2002, 74)

At a corporate level social sustainability is concerned with the well-being and fair treatment of the employees and providing employment opportunities for the local community ensuring that the company tries to hire as much local workforce as possible, for example in the case of a foreign tourism business operating abroad at a destination, where instead of bringing employees from its home country to work there it would be ideal to try and bring in the locals at a destination. If possible, businesses especially in the tourism industry should try to embrace the local culture in which they operate in and use that as a tool in marketing and promotion (Swarbrooke 2002, 75)

4 The research

This chapter first focuses on the chosen research method for this thesis, namely in depth interview, which is a qualitative research method. This chapter provides an overall description of the concept of qualitative research and a further definition of the chosen research method for this thesis. After that, focus shifts on describing the practical issues involved in conducting the research for this thesis. Starting from the planning stage and arranging the interviews, and moving on to general observations about the interview situations themselves.

4.1 Methodology

Qualitative research is a method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines. The social sciences are a field that is perhaps most commonly associated with it but also for example market research and further contexts. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour. The qualitative method investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where when. (Veal 1997, 130)

Qualitative techniques that are commonly used in leisure and tourism research include In-depth interviews, group interviews, participant observation and ethnography. For this particular thesis the chosen technique is the in-depth interview. The reason for choosing this research method was because of the relatively small number of planned respondents for the research, which would enable to spend more time on each individual respondent, which in turn would allow excessive data gathering and the ability to make most out each respondent's answers. (Veal 1997, 130)

Informal and in-depth interviews usually involve a relatively small number of individuals being interviewed at length, possibly on several different occasions. It usually results in gaining large amounts of information from a small number of people, which is in dire contrast to for example questionnaire-based quantitative interview-research where the tendency is to gather relatively small amounts of data from a large number of respondents. With qualitative techniques the data that is collected usually does not lend

itself to statistical analysis and the conclusions are not drawn from such analysis either. This is again usually in contrast to quantitative research. (Veal 1997, 70-71)

When looking at the study situations that are best suitable for qualitative research it can be determined that situations where exploratory theory building rather than theory testing is needed, when the focus of the research is on meanings and attitudes and the where there is the importance that the concepts, issues and terms are defined by the subjects and not by the researcher beforehand. Much of the qualitative research is based on the belief that the people who are personally involved in a particular situation can express their viewpoints, experiences and feelings most accurately by allowing them to speak freely in their own words without the predetermined intermediary or constrained framework of the researcher. (Veal 1997, 132)

An in depth interview is most commonly characterised by its considerable length, depth and structure. A typical length of an in-depth interview can vary from half an hour to several hours and the interviews may be conducted on several different occasions. In-depth interviews also aim to be more thorough regarding the issues that are being discussed than a questionnaire based interview. Rather than just asking a question, to which the respondents gives a short simple answer, the interviewer encourages the respondent to talk, asks supplementary questions and asks the respondent to explain his/her answers more thoroughly. Therefore an in-depth interview can be less strictly structured than a questionnaire based interview with also bearing in mind that the information likely to be obtained from each respondent can vary in all sorts of different ways. (Veal 1997, 132)

An important skill when conducting an interview is to avoid agreeing or disagreeing with the respondent, suggesting answers or trying in any other way to lead the conversation to a particular direction. Adopting this skill can prove to be quite difficult since it's natural for us to engage in conversation actively and even unconsciously present our own viewpoints even if it's just done with non-verbal expressions and friendly noises. So there is a very fine line that interviewers need to tread between not influencing the respondent's answers but also try to maintain a friendly atmosphere during the interview. (Veal 1997, 133)

Some of the carefully planned sequencing of questions which is built into formal questionnaires must be achieved by the interviewer by being very sensitive and quick thinking. For example having discovered that the interviewee's answer to a certain yes or no-question is no, the follow-up question should be left open (For example "what is the reason for it) rather than a question where the interviewer tries to lead the respondent to a certain direction, (Such as "is it because of this or that particular thing?). (Veal 1997, 134)

Tape-recording of interviews is common, although in some cases it might be seen that it inhibits the respondents' answers. In the beginning of the interview, it is important to make introductions, explain the purpose of the study, and put the respondent into a comfortable position. If tape recording is not possible then notes must be taken during the interview or immediately afterwards. There usually is considerable value in transcribing interviews word by word, even though it is a time consuming process. But highly recommended since it's really the only possible way to get every little detail and nuance of the discussion into account during the analysis process. There are various ways of analysing interview transcripts and notes. The essence of the analysis procedure is to return to the terms of reference, the conceptual framework, and research questions and begin to sort and evaluate the information collected in relation with the questions posed. Analysing involves re-reading the interview transcripts to identify themes emerging from the respondents' answers. You can use your topics and questions to organize your analysis, in essence synthesizing the answers to the questions you have proposed. If the interviews raise more questions than they answer, then more interviews may be necessary to properly examine the issue at hand. (Veal 1997, 135)

4.1.1 Reliability

There are number of considerations needed to be taken into account in regards to the reliability of this thesis and whether or not the interviews conducted really do achieve the goals and answer the questions they were originally designed for. The interview situation can lend itself to a number of different issues that could affect the reliability of the research. For example, the respondents may try to exaggerate or understate their answers to certain questions. They may also have difficulties in remembering some of

the information that is being questioned correctly. They may also try to answer the questions in a way that they think will be “correct”, a way that will please the interviewer in hopes of giving a more positive image of themselves. (Boyce & Neale 2006, 3)

4.2 Execution of the research

Respondents for this research were chosen from a list provided by the commissioner that contained the contact information of ten different tourism companies from all over Eastern Uusimaa. At the commissioner's request I proceeded to establish contact with the chosen tourism companies and we set a date for an hour long meeting, where we would be able to discuss the issues that I had prepared. It was a slow process in the beginning due to first having difficulties at reaching a lot of these companies, but eventually they started to answer my messages and phone calls. The majority of them seemed enthusiastic and eager to grant me an appointment, nevertheless in some cases setting the actual date and time for the interview was a time consuming process in itself. The respondent companies (mostly small-scale) represented a variety of tourism services, including accommodation/restaurant services, local tourism officials, and local cultural sites.

After setting the dates for each interview within the span of 3 three weeks with a schedule of 2-3 interviews a week, I would travel to each set meeting and begin my interview process.

The interviews were conducted with people in managerial positions in each company, so their knowledge about the operational ways of the company was well informed. The representatives from each company seemed to be quite pleased and eager to speak about the issues. The questions were quite well understood in general, and the terminology that was used in the questions did not seem problematic at all. The biggest issue was that the interview questions were originally constructed in English and the level of English skills was quite varied among the respondents. So in an effort to get as much information out the respondents' answers, the majority of the interviews were con-

ducted in the Finnish language. The length of the interviews that consisted of twelve main questions with eight supplementary questions that were dependant on responses to the main questions, varied from approximately 12 minutes to 25 minutes depending on the respondent's knowledge and interest towards the subject. In addition to the pre-determined questions there was a one particular interview where there were some brief discussions about issues that weren't covered in the pre-designed questions. Those issues will be referenced in the chapter containing the analysis of the results.

5 Results

The Aim of this study was to investigate the relationship of Eastern Uusimaa tourism businesses with sustainable tourism. The survey was carried out in six Eastern Uusimaa tourism companies pre-chosen by the commissioner. The original aim was to interview ten businesses but, unfortunately I was only able to successfully contact and arrange meetings for the aforementioned six. Therefore the research results cannot be used to represent the views and situation of all the Eastern Uusimaa's tourism enterprises, but it can still offer a viable and interesting representation of the current situation.

Responses were received from companies operating in two different cities in Eastern Uusimaa, Loviisa and Porvoo and two villages situated in the municipality of Porvoo, Ilola and Kulloonkylä. The results represent only a small part of the areas' tourism businesses. The basis for constructing this study included sustainable development and sustainable tourism theory covering their ecological, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions.

5.1 Analysis of the results

This section will present the results of the interviews divided according to three sustainability principles.

General sustainability topics

As a start off, respondents were asked to try and describe the concept of sustainable development in their own words, to get a general idea whether or not these people had an understanding about the subject of discussion and how deep the understanding was. While there certainly were quite big differences in how detailed their descriptions were, each respondent was aware of the concept of sustainable development in at least some level. About 2/3 talked about the relationship between ecological and economic aspects and only two of the respondents made the connection with social issues as well. Thankfully it became apparent further on, that even in the companies where the respondent failed to take into account the other two aspects of sustainability, the rest of

the questions revealed that these aspects weren't ignored in the actual ways that these companies operated by.

In order to find out how devoted the businesses were to the principles of sustainability, the next question was "Is sustainability a part of your company's values?"

2/3 of the respondents clearly stated that sustainable development is a part of their company's values in some form, more in a practical level rather than written down on a document, apart from one company in which the founding principles of the company were already closely tied to sustainable development.

When asked to describe the reasons for adopting these sustainable values, the motivations somewhat differed. 1/3 of the respondents commented that the sustainable values were at the core of their business vision right from the start, and they would like for their company's image to be linked to sustainability. More than half of the respondents said that the growing interest in sustainability issues among customers (ecologically or nearby produced products, green values in general) was a part of the reason for adopting sustainable values into their business practice. Couple of the respondents stated that the main requirement for any sustainable action is that it's economically feasible, so ideological reasons did not play a huge part in these decisions.

Sustainable development is an important value for the companies, in large part because these companies are located in the middle of culturally and historically valued region of the country.

When discussing the possible areas and issues for future sustainable development within the companies, there was a wide range of issues covered.

The issues that were mentioned ranged from with trying to find new producers nearby and trying to organize logistics better (because it saves time and costs) and ranging from developing recycling and waste management procedures to better communication (Referring presumably to communication about sustainability), preserving cultural heritage, and making people more aware and appreciative of the local culture, improving energy usage (to minimize consumption), and also trying to find new local business partners to co-operate with. Two companies expressed desires to get official certifi-

cates to prove that they are an environmentally conscious/sustainable business. Only one of the respondents stated that due to lack of resources, their company is not able to develop their sustainability any further and therefore did not wish to speculate on possible improvement ideas.

So, overall, the needs for development seemed to veer more towards the environmental side, but social aspects were taken into consideration to a certain degree. In relation to the first questions, this outcome seems logical.

In addition, Most of the respondent companies expressed interest in building a network and co-operating with other local businesses and added that one of the most important requirements for a business partner or a co-operator would be that they share similar sustainable values with them. Couple of the respondents were somewhat keen on co-operation and networking with other companies, but for other reasons mainly rather than directly related to sustainable values.

Following on the discussion on the companies sustainable values, it seemed logical to find out if the employees were informed and aware of these values. If the company is indeed devoted to sustainable development, then logically the workers should be made aware of them.

When asked about how well the sustainable values of the company are communicated to the employees, All of the respondents stated that their employees were aware of the sustainable values at least on a some level, even though some of the respondents also said that the awareness is not necessarily the result of direct communication of the values, but just slowly acquired knowledge that is gained after working in the company for a lengthy period. Others stated that because they view their sustainable values are an important part of the company, employees have been instructed and they are informed of the values, the amount of communication directed to employees seemed insufficient to them and plans were already being made to increase the amount of education about the values to the workers, so that in turn the employees would be able to communicate them further on the customers. Especially in situations where for example the products

they are offering are locally produced or if they feel that there is a significant customer interest in these issues in general.

Environmental issues

On the issue of environmental protection and whether these companies have some sort of official policy regarding environmental procedures, the general feeling seemed to be that all of the companies are making at least some efforts to be environmentally sustainable, some companies more than others. But the fact that none of the companies seemed to have any official document where their policy would be explained seemed interesting, even though couple of the respondents stated that their company is planning to have this type of document produced in the future.

Recycling and waste management seemed to be a common area where each of the companies are making efforts to be sustainable. This is hardly surprising however, since it's more or less a mandatory obligation for businesses to handle their waste management properly. One of the interviewees mentioned the desire to abandon physical marketing materials and to focus solely on online marketing and electronic communication in order to minimize paper waste.

Developing a more sustainable energy policy seemed to be also one common thing that nearly all of the respondents expressed interest in, but then again, these statements do not necessarily indicate that there is some sort definite plans to make any real changes to energy policies. One of the respondents said that their company has been using geothermal heating for over 30 years and added that it has proven to be a smart and cost-effective option in the long run.

Social issues

Since employee well-being is considered to be an essential part of sustainable development in the corporate context, the discussion went on to this issue. Regarding efforts to maintain the well-being of the company's employees, all of the companies appeared to have an agenda to maintain an openly communicative and social atmosphere at the work place, workers would take part in discussions with the employer, people are allowed to express their opinions freely, events and happenings are being arranged within the work community, from cultural events to sports and exercise. Interestingly, only one of the respondents mentioned that their company offers a healthcare program to their employees. Another one mentioned that give-away food products from the company were being handed out to workers as well. Aside from one of the interviewed people who stated that the biggest effort made to maintaining the employees well-being is paying them a salary, it was pleasant to find out that there is clearly quite a lot of effort being made in this area, and an and healthy work environment is valued. But the variety in the answers to this question indicated that each interviewee understood the question in their own way.

Since supporting, developing and embracing the local regional community and its offerings is considered to be an important part of sustainable tourism, the next few questions dealt with this subject matter.

When discussing the relationship between the local culture of the Eastern Uusimaa region with the companies' image and/marketing, all of the companies recognised the importance of local culture in at least some level. Some went as far as saying that without the cultural heritage that Eastern Uusimaa has, particularly the cultural history of Porvoo, their businesses would most likely not be successful or even exist at all. At least 1/3 of the interviewees considered it an inseparable part of their image, and the connection was actively being promoted and made evident in marketing materials, but they also felt that the connection should be made more evident and communicated more.

From the local culture, the discussion moved on to local populace when the interviewees were asked if they specifically target their marketing towards local area customers. Every company representative that was being interviewed, informed that the local peo-

ple living in the Uusimaa region are indeed a major marketing segment, this included not only the Porvoo-Loviisa region and the rest of the eastern part of Uusimaa but also the so called “capital area” covering Helsinki and its nearby towns and cities. It was an expected result, considering how popular day-trip destination for nearby-area tourists the Porvoo-Loviisa region has been. One of the respondents specified that the ways in which the marketing is directed to locals is through advertisements in local newspapers, free paper advertisements that are delivered through mail. Other respondents did not go into details in describing what types of ways and channels are being used to market to nearby-area customers.

In addition to the topics discussed that were included in the actual interview questions, there was also a brief discussion with one of the respondents concerning their business’ role as a “social enterprise”. The term in short could be described as being any sort of enterprise that is entered on the relevant register and at least 30% of whose employees are disabled or long-term unemployed. From the point of view of sustainability, it is a major attribute considering the social aspects of it, and also a fairly uncommon thing in the Finnish corporate landscape in general, let alone in the tourism industry. The reasons behind that seem to be that generally businesses are not eager to accept the challenge of hiring for example disabled people, or since it does not offer any financial benefits for the company according to the respondent. Nonetheless, discovering a tourism company in this region, that has operated and continues to develop itself based on this concept was a pleasant surprise, and promoting the idea to other businesses around the area, would seem to be an interesting, if not an easy one, due to the aforementioned reason that seemed to have made the concept somewhat unpopular especially regarding private enterprises seeking to be as profitable as possible.

Economic issues

The respondents were asked about communicating their sustainable values to customers/clients and the reasons and methods they use to do it. Once again the reason for asking was to find out more about the companies devotion and interest to sustainable development.

Half of the respondents answered that they are communicating the values through direct interaction with the customers, as well as through marketing material (both electronic and paper), where they inform customers about their use of locally produced ingredients in their products for example. The main reason for this type of communication seemed to be that the customer's desire to know about these sorts of things has grown over the years, and to build a sustainable image for the company in general.

One of the respondents, who said that the values are not directly communicated to customers, nevertheless speculated that the customers still might be aware of them in some level due to the apparent strong cultural-historical value that the company and the estate they were operating in, possessed.

To determine how valuable the respondents perceived the communication of sustainable values to be, they were asked if they felt that communicating sustainable values somehow affects the customer behaviour.

2/3 of the respondents were pretty convinced that the promoting and marketing of sustainable values has a positive effect on the customer buying behaviour and half of the respondents stated that it's an important part of marketing due to the ever rising consciousness and interest for sustainable businesses among customers. Especially in the restaurant business, it has been a common thing for years already that customers are interested in and eager to buy products made from locally produced ingredients. On the other hand, one of the respondents stated that he views communicating sustainable and green values to clients as being merely an on-going trend that will eventually fade away, even though he also mentioned that the focus should be on implementing sustainability rather than promoting it actively and being vocal about it.

In the last question of the interview, the respondents were asked whether it's important that their business associates/partners also inhibit sustainable values, or operate in a sustainable way.

Every one of the respondents concluded the interview by stating that it was highly important that the companies they went into co-operation with, would share similar sus-

tainable values as themselves. The main reason for this is that if the co-operators would not share similar values, it would have a negative impact on the image of the company.

The other major point that came across from the responses was that opportunities for networking with other companies that hold sustainable values and actions with high regard would be greatly appreciated among the interviewees. However, there are always financial concerns related to any sort of co-operation with another company.

When discussing co-operations with nearby area businesses once again it was pleasant to find out that all the companies had made some kind of efforts, or at least had a desire for working together with other local companies. The amount of co-operation varied much still, and one of the respondents mentioned that he would be interested in getting help in networking with local businesses around area. In half of the respondent companies, the co-operation was already quite developed. There was co-operation between local suppliers and service providers, the city's tourism bureaus and even other local tourism businesses. But nevertheless even the most active companies in this field were enthusiastic about developing this aspect even further. Perhaps they were even more enthusiastic than the not so active companies. It was considered to be financially much more efficient to try and use local suppliers and other services as much as possible.

5.2 Suggestions

In conclusion, it can be stated that overall, the state of sustainable development within these tourism businesses of Eastern Uusimaa is good. The companies that took part in the research have recognised the importance of operating sustainably in all the three areas. While not necessarily devoted to a pre-determined policy, at least the way they operate indicate that these companies appreciate the aspects that are included in the definition of sustainable tourism business, even if they themselves may not be aware of it. Naturally there are still many areas in which the ways of operating could be developed further towards sustainability, and based on the analysis of the results, the next paragraphs will focus on possible suggestions for future development in these companies.

While the rather small sample of tourism businesses partaking in these interviews makes it a little difficult to draw any sort of definitive idea on how the sustainable development actions should be developed on a general level, I can however reach some conclusions and make suggestions based on the results I have gathered.

The general idea that was received from analysing the results, was that overall in reference of the specific areas of sustainability, social, ecological or economic, any of these companies did not seem to have any serious lacking in relation with the topics that were being discussed. This outcome is without question, highly positive. Instead, the situation seems to be that the sustainable ways of operation should just be expanded further and the awareness about the different aspects of sustainable development should be increased.

Speaking more specifically in order to present more concrete ways for possible development, in the following paragraphs the suggestions related to the most important questions will be discussed in detail.

First off, the whole understanding of the concept of sustainable development should be on a similar level within the different companies. There seemed to be quite a lot of differentiation in the understanding of the concept as a whole. Of course, as stated above there was not a single respondent who didn't have a clue at all, but nevertheless the descriptions that some of the respondents provided were fairly limited. The common issue seemed to be that the ecological aspects clearly dominate the picture too much, and the awareness of the social and economic aspects seems to be quite low. So, more communication about the aforementioned less known aspects would be beneficial. It seems ideal that businesses could be informed and instructed about sustainability through various ways including educational seminars and information sessions arranged by third parties, networking with organisations involved with sustainable tourism development

Moreover, even if the general awareness about ecological issues relating to sustainable development was very good and while some ecologically sustainable actions were al-

ready implemented, I found it somewhat strange that there seemed to be a lack of any sort of official environmental protection policy, which raises questions about the determination of these companies to be truly sustainable. The question is how to motivate the companies to improve their behaviour especially in the current economic situation that we live in.

Another significant aspect is the relationships and networking with other local businesses, both tourism related and others. One of the clearest signals that I received from the interviews indicated that open networking and co-operation within local tourism businesses should be developed, since all the respondents clearly seemed to understand the benefits of connecting and using the services and products of other local businesses and were more than willing to co-operate even more. As mentioned in the analysis one of the respondents clearly said that he wishes for more opportunities and outside help for networking with local businesses. But what would be the most suitable ways to try and help these businesses. It seems clear that the options are plentiful and would require participation from city officials and third parties.

Also, understanding the value of communicating the sustainable values to customers is something that generally seems to require some more work from the companies. While roughly a half of the respondents recognised the fact that customer interest towards sustainable development is growing and the positive effects of promoting their own sustainability to customers, The problem is of course, how to convince the other half of the companies that communication of sustainable values are worth the effort and that they have a positive effect on customer buying behaviour and that the marketing value is worth the possible financial investment. In these economically unstable times, it will of course be difficult to try and persuade companies into taking these kinds of efforts for sustainability seriously, because of the general lack of short term income benefits they offer and if their own perceptions of the value of communicating and promoting sustainability is not that high.

It also became clear that since pretty much all of the businesses' image was closely linked to the local culture (mainly talking about Porvoo and Loviisa). This relationship between the businesses and the culture should be maintained for it was perceived to be

a valuable immaterial asset to these companies. It would of course be even more beneficial to go beyond the maintenance to encouraging companies to make it more evident because locality can give an exciting image to a product or a company. Once again this is an excellent opportunity for the municipality administration officials and the local tourism businesses to work together and try to promote the local culture possibly through online resources (visitporvoo, visitloviisa) and other communication channels.

The promotion of sustainable values in general could also have a positive impact on customer behaviour. Not only in regards to the sales of the particular company, but in the sense that it could help to improve the perception of the general public on sustainability issues and encourage them to make sustainable choices in their everyday lives. Similar type of promotion could be implemented upon the issue of environmentally sustainable actions, since the majority of the companies do not have written down policy for these issues, the question is, how we can encourage them to do so? Could it be suggested that having an environmental protection policy along with the already implemented environmentally sustainable actions, would it bring along benefits for their company image, and could that be used successfully as a marketing tool?

The outcome and aim of these development suggestions is that Eastern Uusimaa tourism sector would continue to be developed in a pragmatic way towards a more sustainable future. The seeds for the development have already been planted in the region's tourism strategy, and now the more specific issues can be started to address. Perhaps the most logical thing would be to first start helping the companies with expand the networking in order to build and enhance a unified sustainable community for the tourism businesses in the region and begin to raise their awareness about various issues regarding sustainability. After that, determining the needs of development for each individual company would be easier and effective.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to conduct a qualitative research on the current state of sustainable tourism in the Eastern Uusimaa, using the method of in-depth interviewing a certain group of local tourism businesses pre-designated by the commissioner Posintra Oy.

Now, with the research having reached its conclusion, it is safe to state that it has proven to be a fruitful one and a clear picture can be drawn from the results that were collected. Despite the initial challenges in arranging the interviews as well as the fact that some of the companies that were originally planned to be interviewed couldn't be reached. It also needs to be taken into consideration that the answers received from the respondents were quite possibly not entirely neutral, since it is quite possible that the respondents wanted to appear to be as sustainability conscious as they could, but that issue is debatable.

Reviewing the issue of whether the research problem of the thesis was answered: As stated in the above chapters, all companies that were a part of this researched are currently implementing actions that are considered to be sustainable and present a clear interest and knowledge in this field. Naturally, the actions that are implemented as well as the amount of dedication and interest for further development varies from business to business, depending on various things (for example the size of the company, business type, the overall values of the company etc.). Luckily, some common elements regarding the needs for development could be found and some suggestions on how to proceed with improving the overall state of sustainability within the businesses could be made.

Reviewing the reliability of this thesis: Based on the information I received during the writing of this thesis from the commissioner, another thesis is currently being planned that will focus on developing a sustainable development marketing plan for businesses in Eastern Uusimaa, based on the results gathered from this research. So in this regard at least, the research can be considered relevant and somewhat valuable to future de-

velopment of sustainability in this region and therefore the objective of this thesis can be considered as being successful. I think that in order to get a more comprehensive picture of the sustainability situation, a more comprehensive research that involves more tourism companies in this region could be implemented sometime in the future.

Reflecting this study as a personal learning experience, I should state that this was my first foray into planning and executing a qualitative research project of this kind. Never before have I conducted a qualitative interview during my study time, but I found the experience to be interesting and rewarding. Constructing the interview questionnaire itself was already a somewhat familiar task for me, and since I had a clear basis provided by the commissioner for developing it, I think I succeeded in constructing a diverse set of questions. On the other hand the issues relating to the face-to-face interaction with the respondents were new to me, such as remaining neutral and not trying to influence the way they respond to the questions, and I noticed during some of the interviews, that much like in casual conversation, I sometimes had a tendency to non-verbally express whether I agree on something or not and therefore I had to focus on maintaining a neutral stance during the interviews.

Sustainable development and sustainable tourism as concepts are something that have interested me for quite some time and I have been hoping for a chance to work on some sort of project that was related to it. During the writing of this thesis I discovered how large and complicated concepts they actually are in the sense that how there are many different approaches in defining and implementing them and also how the social, cultural and economic sides are all interlined with each other and how decisions regarding one side affects the others and so on. I certainly hope to be able to continue studying and working with sustainable development in my future work life.

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Attachments

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you understand the concept of Sustainable development/sustainable tourism?

2. Is sustainability a part of your company's values?
 - b) If yes then what are the main reasons for implementing sustainability into your company's values?
 - c) If not, then what are the reasons for not implementing?

3. Would you be interested in developing your company (even) more towards sustainability?
 - b) What aspects should be developed further?

4. How well are your sustainable values communicated to your employees?

5. Does your company have an environmental protection policy, and if it does, what are its contents?
 - b) How do you handle your waste management?
 - c) What kind of an energy policy does your company have?

6. What kinds of efforts are being made to maintain the well-being of your employees?

b) How well are your sustainable values communicated to your employees?

7. Are you communicating your sustainable values to customers?

b) In what kinds of ways?

c) Are you encouraging them to make sustainable choices?

8. Do you feel that promoting your company's sustainability somehow effects the buying decisions of the clients?

9. Do you make efforts to promote the regional culture in your marketing/ is the regional culture a major part of your company's image?

10. Are you specifically targeting your marketing towards local/nearby area customers?

11. Are you co-operating with other local businesses around the area and in what ways?

12. Would you prefer to be involved with business associates (sub-contractors, service providers etc.) that emphasise sustainability in their values?