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Creating criteria for sustainable tourism products in Finland

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Commissioner of this thesis is HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences. The objective of this research is to create criteria for sustainable tourism products and find also existing products or sustainable supply in Finland.

Negative impacts of tourism can be minimized and different criteria and indicators have been created worldwide in order to maintain sustainable tourism development and improve tourism management practices and decision-making in tourism destinations. As a consequence the number of tourism businesses, which are committed to follow the principles of sustainable tourism development, has grown together with different sustainable tourism products. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) could be an opportunity for entrepreneurs to promote their sustainable tourism products and ultimately mobile devices could enhance sustainable tourism purchases.

Research problem indicates the need to better understand what kind of criteria there exists, which criteria are used to define sustainable tourism products and whether the current criteria are considered useable. It is also mandatory to explore closely sustainable products and supply in Finland and finally find out if these products could be sold through mobile devices.

The methodological approach in this research is deductive and based on extensive theory, supported by company interviews. Research approach chosen is qualitative research and data will be collected by using semi-structured interviews where the sample is deliberately chosen. Target group of this research represent small Finnish nature tourism businesses and tourism businesses that offer organic or ecologically responsible tourism services and have environmental certificate.

Key words Sustainable tourism, sustainable tourism product, sustainable supply, criteria, tourism business, mobile devices

Glossary of acronyms

CO^2 - Carbon Dioxide

COBA- Cost-Benefit Analysis

CSR- Corporate Social Responsibility

DMO - Destination Management Organization

DMS - Destination Management Systems

ECEAT- European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism

EIA- Environmental Impact Assessment

ETIS- European Tourism Indicator System

EMIS - Environmental Management Information Systems

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

GHG - Greenhouse Gas

GIS - Geographical Information Systems

GPS - Global Positioning Systems

GSTC- The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

GTF- Green Tourism of Finland®

ICT – Information and Communications Technology

IT - Information technology

LAC- Limits of Acceptable Change

LSI- Local System of Innovation

MEK- The Finnish Tourist Board

SDSN- Sustainable Development Solutions Network

SI- Sustainability Indicators

TDM - Travel Demand Management

TIS - Tourism Information System

TOI- Tour Operators´ Initiative for Sustainable Tourism

UNEP – United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNWTO - World Tourism Organization

WTTC - World Travel & Tourism Council

WWF - World Wildlife Fund

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1 Introduction

Tourism industry is a large and continuously growing industry what makes it a potential driver for growth in the world economy. Tourism is also the biggest source of income for many countries. In 2013 the total economic contribution of Travel & Tourism industry reached 9.3% of global Gross domestic product (GDP), including direct, indirect and induced impacts. Travel & Tourism`s impact in GDP is larger than some of the biggest manufacturing industries in the world. In 2013, including induced and indirect employment, Travel & Tourism maintained 266 million jobs worldwide. (WTTC 2013, 2.)

In 2012 the amount of international tourist arrivals reached one billion for the first time in the history (UNWTO 2013, 2). The amount of international tourists is an opportunity for economic growth, but a challenge for development and sustainability. The recognition of the economic power of tourism has made it a contributor towards more sustainable global development. To encourage tourism companies and the governments to take action towards responsible tourism, many indicators and certifications for sustainable tourism have been set by the international, national and regional tourism organizations. Today Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has a strong impact in tourism. Constant using of smartphones is seen as an opportunity to encourage travellers and tourism businesses in building sustainability. (Ali & Frew 2013, 116-118.)

Usage of ICT enables information sharing and negotiations between tourism stakeholders (Buhalis 2003, 3). Tourists use technology such as mobile devices in many ways during their trip and this demand for in-trip online access is seen as an opportunity to improve sustainability and enhance sustainable tourism purchases. Usage of different applications has risen through smartphones and tourists can upload applications which include different information like education provided by tourism suppliers or tourist organizations in destinations. (Ali & Frew 2013, 116-118.)

Focus of this research is to explore different criteria set for sustainable tourism products and study existing products or sustainable supply in Finland. Findings will be discussed only from business point of view. Target group chosen to this study represents small Finnish nature tourism businesses and tourism business that offer

organic or ecologically responsible tourism services and which are located in different parts of Finland. They follow sustainability principles in all operations and have environmental certificate admitted by Green Tourism of Finland® or ECEAT Finland. In Finland there is large number of different tourism businesses and tourism products which made limitations mandatory. These tourism businesses were chosen because they offer sustainable tourism products and consider sustainability in their core business and company values. Also their interest in sustainable tourism development and knowledge of criteria was considered substantial.

Research approach used in this thesis is qualitative research and data will be collected by using semi-structured interview method. The methodological approach is deductive and based on extensive theory and company interviews.

Commissioner for this Master´s thesis is Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. This thesis is a part of bigger ongoing project called Mobile Services in Tourism to Enhance Sustainable Purchases which is executed in co-operation with University for Sustainable Development in Eberswalde Germany.

1.1   Research problem

It is mandatory that all tourism products and activities are responsible and acceptable both locally, but also on international level (Edgell 2006, 118-119). To be able to measure responsible tourist activities or tourism products international and national tourism associations worldwide have set criteria for their members. Different certifications and criteria will ensure the basic principles the company can reflect to so that their business processes could meet the certain requirements and standards. (Worldwatch Institute 2013.) Criteria for sustainable tourism development in each country should respond to legislation, culture and regional conditions as well as type of the company (UNEP 2003, 26-27). This makes number and variation of criteria very large.

In Finland non-governmental tourism organizations have created criteria for tourism businesses and sustainable tourism products. These criteria are originally based on globally accepted criteria concerning sustainable tourism development, but are modified in order to adapt them to Finnish legislation and conditions. Therefore

creating a clear picture of criteria that are set for sustainable tourism products is challenging not to mention the understanding of their usability.

Tourism is economically important to Finland and sustainability in tourism sector has been discussed because tourism in Finland is mostly nature-based. Finland´s Tourism Strategy is paying attention to Finland´s image in practicing sustainable tourism and sustainable development in processes and services supply among tourism businesses. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2013, 20-21.) Despite the tourism strategy and other actions taken in sustainable tourism sector, existing products and sustainable supply in Finland is not well marketed which makes sustainable tourism businesses and their products almost invisible.

In addition to visibility in tourism markets, tourism businesses would need to improve their presence in mobile devices (Car et al. 2013, 1, 7-8). Mobile applications could be an opportunity for tourism businesses to provide selected supply based on their location or preferences. This supply could include sustainable tourism products which could be filtered and compared based on certain criteria. (Nhat Nguyen et al. 2003, 1.)

Research problem indicates the need to better understand what kind of criteria there exists, which criteria are used to define sustainable tourism products and whether the current criteria are considered useable in Finland. It is also mandatory to explore more closely sustainable tourism products and supply in Finland and finally find out if these products could be sold through mobile devices.

1.2   Aim of the research and research questions

The *aim* of this research is to create criteria for sustainable tourism products and find also existing products or sustainable supply in Finland.

Reflecting to research problem and aim of this research, following research questions were formed:

1. What defines sustainable tourism product?
2. Which criteria are needed to present sustainable tourism products?
3. Is there a need for new criteria specific to Finland or are the current criteria suitable?

4. What kind of sustainable products and supply there exists in Finland?
5. Would mobile devices enhance selling and purchasing of sustainable tourism products?

It will be interesting to find out on what level small tourism businesses in Finland are interested in this research and the project of Haaga-Helia and how they recognize themselves in sustainable tourism sector. Since they are small tourism businesses, the ability to adapt to new and innovative technology might be a challenging task. It is possible that they do not see any benefit in being present in mobile devices. If new criteria are seen necessary, they will have to adapt Finnish law and regulations, geographical location and nature as well as be financially reasonable regarding the size and field of each tourism business.

1.3   Structure and theoretical framework

Theoretical framework of this research covers seven main topics. *Chapter 1* includes introduction, definition of research problem, aim of research and research questions.

Chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5 represent the theoretical framework of the research. First *chapter 2* comprises sustainable tourism which is divided into five related topics: Sustainable tourism concept, sustainable tourism development, dimensions of sustainable tourism development, managing sustainable tourism and tools for assessing and measuring sustainable tourism.

Chapter 3 introduces theories from business perspective including tourism product, tourism companies and sustainability, challenges, strategy for sustainability and networks and small businesses

Chapter 4 contains indicators for sustainable tourism, certifications and criteria and *Chapter 5* sustainable supply in Finland, sustainable Tourism Organisations and associations in Finland and finally the summary of theoretical discussion and research framework.

Chapter 6 presents research approach and methods, qualitative approach, semi-structured interview, sample and participants, validity and conducting the research.

Key findings of the empirical study will be introduced in *chapter 7* which include data analysis and key results, analysing qualitative data, criteria for sustainable tourism products and existing products and sustainable supply in Finland, criteria for sustainable tourism products, sustainable supply in Finland, mobile Devices and sustainable tourism products and finally conclusions and recommendations.

2 Sustainable tourism

2.1 Sustainable tourism concept

Sustainable tourism is lacking a clear definition which is widely accepted, having negative effects on implementing sustainable tourism in the destinations. Tourism literature introduces two approaches in defining sustainable tourism. According to first approach sustainable tourism is sector-specific and tourism-centric where sustainable tourism is separate from sustainable development. What is a reasonable limit for tourism, what should be sustained, for whom, how long and under what conditions. The second approach is considering sustainable tourism as multi-sectorial context and in light of sustainable development. It is recognizing the impact of tourism and the need to minimize those impacts in order to achieve the sustainable development goals. Tourism alone is not a user of resources in different areas so the role of accompanying other users is important to recognize. (Ali & Frew 2013, 42-44.)

The concept of sustainable tourism has involved problems in interpretation and practice. One of the key problems is related to sustainability as a whole including its spatial and temporal extent. Yet focus in sustainability has always been in a minimal part of the total like on destinations and many tourism practices where processes and impacts are most visible. This narrow focus brings limitations to practical and ethical nature of sustainable tourism because in sustainable development the scale of issues and connection between global and local is seen very important. (Saarinen 2006, 1121, 1124-1125.)

In sustainable tourism the practical focus on contributing to sustainable development has mainly been on local and destination level. Even though sustainable tourism has a challenging nature and focus in practice is scarce, political arguments of sustainable tourism are based on the idea that sustainable development is a comprehensive, future-oriented and equal process implemented globally. Behind sustainability as a concept lie separate traditions, resource, activity and community-based, with different focuses. (Saarinen 2006, 1124-1125.)

Growth limits cannot be set only on local or global perspectives, but sustainability is about both local and global responsibilities. Globalization forces different political and economic actors to emphasize human relations and ethics from global and local point of view. It is mandatory that tourism as an activity is decentralized from local-scale and tourism-centric approaches when referring to sustainable development. Otherwise sustainable tourism may become a useless concept with a framework to multiple purposes without any reference to comprehensive and ethical idea of sustainability. The whole industry has to change and redirect its position in planning discourses and conventions in order to encourage sustainable development which ethical element is in theory and practice locally and globally. (Saarinen 2006, 1134.)

Despite the different interpretations and discourses of sustainable tourism it is commonly agreed as a way of travelling which, despite its huge growth, will not destroy nature or built environment and which respects local communities in the way that will preserve their culture, history heritage and arts. And although the concept is problematic and has analytical weaknesses, it has provided a platform on which different stakeholders in tourism can interact, negotiate and reflect on their actions' consequences for the environment (Saarinen 2006, 1124).

Tourism attractions as part of national economic resource should be protected and improved for the future. The relationship between tourism stakeholders is complex, but important including the host communities, tourists, attractions, businesses and the environment. The challenge is in finding a balance between all these principles considering the different point of view between hosts and guests, businesses and consumer. (Edgell 2006, 15, 18.)

Niche markets are growing and there are popular concepts of sustainable tourism like ecotourism, community tourism and pro-poor tourism. "Unfortunately in large scale of developing sustainable tourism, these niches are more micro solutions to micro problems." (Abegg, B. 20 Mar 2014.)

2.2 Sustainable tourism development

"From the sustainable development perspective, the sustainable use of resources and the environment and the well-being of communities are goals to which sustainable

tourism could and should contribute— if the industry's role is also seen to be beneficial to that process by groups other than the industry itself." (Saarinen 2006, 1133.)

When developing sustainable tourism practices it is necessary to consider different levels and scales in order to avoid too large and complex or too narrow point of view. These levels are tourism products, tourism enterprises with different business units, tourism destinations with regions or national tourism like countries and global level. On global level focus is on minimizing the negative impacts of transportation and implementing regulations to minimize for example CO_2 emissions while tourism companies are focused on energy efficiency, cost savings or for example the way people travel to the destination. In reality and research, destinations are seen as a good scale when promoting sustainable tourism, tourism management, planning and development. (Abegg, B. 20 Mar 2014.)

The amount of international tourists is an opportunity for economic growth, but a challenge for development and sustainability. The recognition of the economic power of tourism has made it a contributor towards more sustainable global development in all three areas, economic, environmental and social. It is seen as an opportunity in answering the challenges from economic growth to climate change. Since international tourism continues to grow UNWTO has recognized some challenges still to overcome in tourism development such as complicated visa procedures and increased taxation. At the same time their priority is to ensure the sector growth in responsible way. UNWTO will continue to increase awareness of the impacts of tourism and therefore they have encouraged travellers to support local production, protect and respect the local heritage and culture, save energy and whenever possible to use local transportation. (UNWTO 2013, 2-3.)

Tourism has the multiplier effect to the growth of tourism because it promotes employment through tourist services and other supporting services and makes input to the development of other industries as well. Positive impacts are the income it provides, but it also helps in discovering the world so that environment, cultures, nations and people are understood and protected. Unfortunately growing tourism has also negative effects to certain areas around the world. Uncontrolled tourism is causing negative impacts to the environment, pressure on the natural resources and noise and

pollution. It is important that those who develop tourism would make plans to reduce or minimize negative environmental effects of tourism. Involving local people to regional development along with local governments is emphasized. (Ineson 2005, 133; UNWTO 2013, 2-3.)

Probably the most recognized definition of sustainable development is the one mentioned in Brundtland Report in 1987: "Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." At the moment however, it is not clear what their needs will be. Sustainability has three aspects of development which are environmental, social and economic. Some have mentioned even the fourth aspect which is transportation with carbon dioxide emissions. Sustainable development is an ongoing process and it will be realized through these dimensions. Sustainability balances the dimensions by confirming the perspective that economic growth and environmental development are not mutually exclusive. All three dimensions are dependent on each other. (Ali & Frew 2013, 40-41.)

2.3 Dimensions of sustainable tourism development

Sustainability has three aspects of development which are economic, social and environmental. Some have mentioned even the fourth aspect which is transportation with carbon dioxide emissions. Sustainable development is an ongoing process and it will be realized through these dimensions. Sustainability balances the dimensions by confirming the perspective that economic growth and environmental development are not mutually exclusive. (Ali & Frew 2013, 40-41.)

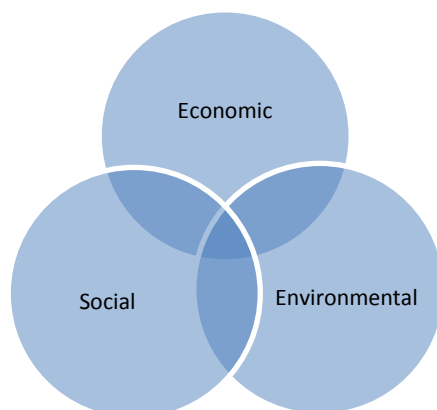All three dimensions are dependent on each other as illustrated in figure 1.

Figure1. The three dimensions of sustainable tourism

Economic sustainability means creating welfare for all society levels focusing on the costs and benefits of the needed activities. It refers to the level of economic profitability that is enough to cover the costs caused by tourism or appropriate income to cover the negative impacts caused to local community. With economic profitability it is possible to cover the damage in culture, environment and social environment and prevent protest and discontent. Financial success or failure often cause power and control issues. Economic sustainability emphasizes local participation and education about tourism as well as assisting tourists in the preservation of local culture and biodiversity. (Ali & Frew 2003, 40-41; Mowforth & Munt 2009, 105-107.)

Tourism affects national and local economy directly or indirectly. Direct benefits come from tourists and travel activities which are arranged in the area. All the expenditure visitors make is used to wages and salaries and is ultimately returned to capital and taxes. Expenditure on local services and recreation is a direct benefit from travel activity. Indirect benefits are received from business operators who spend partly their receipts on services and goods which are needed in their customer service. These include supplies, capital costs like interest on debt and profits to owners. When suppliers in turn buy certain items from other sources and chain continues within the country and locally, income and employment are received indirectly. (Ineson 2005, 175-176,180.)

Negative factors caused by tourism can be an inflationary impact on local prices, leakage of tourism income from local community and unnecessary infrastructure projects. Tourism is seasonal which will affect the usage of resources positively or negatively. Infrastructure may not be used efficiently from economic perspective or on the other hand resources that are over-used are allowed a period to recover. (Swarbrooke 1999, 65.)

Many current economic trends are not assorted with principles of sustainable tourism. Globalization with product standardization and reduction is affecting diversity and multi-national enterprises are growing causing threats to local host economies. Local control will be lost which is an important sustainable tourism principle. In order to develop forms of tourism that are more sustainable and economically profitable will involve many issues. These tourism forms should optimize economic benefits of tourism and minimize the costs. Economic benefits should be divided equally and

widely in the host community and it should be ensured that visitors pay the fare price. Government agencies and tourism industry should share the costs of meeting the needs of tourism in the destination and local businesses should be protected. Leakage reduction from local economy is necessary. (Swarbrooke 1999, 65-66.)

Global Sustainable Tourism Council has set economic criteria for tourism destinations. The criteria are the following: "Economic monitoring, local career opportunities, public participation, local community opinion, local access, tourism awareness and education, preventing exploitation (commercial, sexual or any other form), support for community, local entrepreneurs and fair trade." (GSTC 2014.) Criteria are developed in order to improve economic benefits in communities while at the same time reducing negative impacts. GSTC has also created performance indicators that are suggested to each criterion. (GSTC 2014.)

Social sustainability means enabling equal opportunities for everyone and protecting the rights of all individuals. Tourism may cause social divisions which is appearing as increasing differences between tourists and those who are excluded from it. While others are benefitting from tourism, some are marginalized by it. Therefore each community must be able to handle inputs, functions and relationships so that there will be no disharmony or it is minimized. Tools for sustainability such as calculating carrying capacity, assessing environmental impacts and sustainability indicators can be used to prevent or mitigate the effects of these divisions. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 104.)

Even though societies would be able to adopt new inputs, the culture might change among the tourists. Culture is describing human life like economy or society. Cultural sustainability is an ability to preserve own culture, but also adapt to differentiating elements in other cultures. One important element of sustainable tourism is tourists' responsible behaviour and respect towards local culture by minimizing the fracture. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 104.)

Socio-cultural impacts of tourism are usually hard to see and understand. These impacts appear slowly over the long term, but the changes are permanent. While the focus has been in protecting the host communities from the negative impacts of tourism, it is acknowledged that broader view is needed and all stakeholders in tourism are responsible and have rights. Tourism development is very political which means

that social impacts of sustainable tourism should be considered from more political point of view. (Ali & Frew 2003, 40-41.)

Swarbrooke (1999, 69) states that social dimension in sustainable tourism can be implemented with the four E`s which are equity, equal opportunities, ethics and equal partners. Equity is related to ensuring that all stakeholders will get fair treatment. Equal opportunities should be offered for both employees in tourism industry, but also tourists. Ethics should be considered in tourism industry in order to ensure honesty with tourists and ethical activities with suppliers. Governments should act ethically towards the host population and tourists yet tourist themselves should consider and treat local people as equal partners. (Ali & Frew 2003, 40-41; Swarbrooke 1999, 69-71, 78.)

Socio-cultural criteria aim to enhance the benefits tourism brings to local communities and culture, but also visitors. At the same time negative impacts should be minimized. Socio-cultural criteria set by Global Sustainable Tourism Council for tourism destinations are the following: "Attraction protection, visitor management, visitor behaviour, cultural heritage protection, site interpretation and intellectual property (a system to contribute to the protection and preservation of intellectual property rights)." (GSTC 2014.)

Environmental sustainability means protecting and managing natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable and their continuity for the future generations. Environmental sustainability can be realized when economic progress is detached from environmental damage caused by humans. Countries struggle with environmental challenges along with lacking understanding of environmental issues and inability in creating long-term strategies. Environmental problems are not solved successfully on local, national or global scales. Between the first Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and Rio+20 in 2012, environmental issues have become even more challenging with continuing climate change, uncertainty in managing chemicals and pollution, untenable agriculture and use of water resources, new diseases and unhealthy cities. Disappearing forests, desertification and degradation of oceans contribute to the loss of biodiversity. (SDSN 2012, 4.)

Environmental change has a strong influence on poverty since the poor are dependent on surrounding natural resources. Climate change has led to unavoidable and

increasing phenomena like extreme weather events. It will create challenges to agriculture, infrastructure and cities especially on coastal areas and weaker regions. Action will be required in production and consumption habit concerning primary resources in countries with high or middle income. Strategies must be created in order to achieve economic, social, environmental, governance and personal security objectives which are resilient to climate change. (SDSN 2012, 4-5.)

Sustainability of agriculture and security of food are causing challenges. Food production is polluting groundwater and topsoil with fertilizers and pesticides and inducing different kind of toxic emissions like greenhouse gas leading to inhabitant areas and lower biodiversity. There should be enough food on the Earth, but over-nutrition and food wasting among billions of people is keeping another billions underfed. Growing lack of food and under-nutrition will continue in the future due to growing number of people, climate change and shortage of drinkable water, clean supplies and land erosion. Sustainability in agriculture should be improved by investing in education and resilience to climate change while losses in food production chain should be minimized and reduction of fertility promoted. (SDSN 2012, 4-5.)

Another challenge is unmanaged growth of cities and urban areas which is causing large slum areas and unhealthy people. Transportation and energy technologies are outdated causing environmental disasters and unemployment. Outdated infrastructure and investment decisions are causing misuse of resources. At the same time cities are also potential places for new innovations in technology and policies. Cities enable positive change in economic development, poverty reduction, social interaction, environmental sustainability and governmental approach. Attention is now paid to policymakers who should familiarize themselves with the environmental challenges and make long-term objectives together without fearing the costs and implementation. (SDSN 2012, 5-6.)

Global Sustainable Tourism Council has named twelve environmental criteria for tourism destinations that improve the benefits to the environment, but reduces impacts that are considered negative. These criteria are: "Environmental risks, protection of sensitive environments, wildlife protection, greenhouse gas emissions, energy conservation, water management, water security, water quality, wastewater, solid

waste reduction, light and noise pollution and low-impact transportation." (GSTC 2014.)

The world´s economy is still dependent on fossil fuels and it is still the primary source of energy with over 80% share. It is calculated that in order to stop climate change, the economy should be decarbonized by 2050. It means achieving industrial system with less **carbon dioxide** and decarbonized energy. Some good results have already gained with renewable energy technology. One problem is the price since fossil fuel is still cheaper on a market than energy sources with low-carbon. Solution could be adding the social and environmental costs to prices of fossil fuel in order to see the true costs besides climate change and pollution it creates. (SDSN 2012, 5.)

There are specific measurements which can be used to track social, economic and environmental sustainability. Social sustainability can be measured with number of accidents in work, product safety ratings or actions against corruption and transparency performance in labelling. Economic sustainability can be measured through the growth of revenue, margin percentages, revenue per employee, customer satisfaction and how well the future expenses are reserved. Environmental sustainability can be measured with the weight or volume of used materials, input for recycled materials, use of energy, percentage of local products and services used, saved energy, water reuse and recycling, greenhouse gas emissions, yearly transportation costs and negative effects on biodiversity. (Werbach 2009, 113.)

2.4   Managing sustainable tourism

Without coordinated approach to sustainable tourism management, individual groups will consider it only from their viewpoint without thinking the bigger picture of how all fits to local, regional and national levels. (Ali & Frew 2013, 84, 141.)

When choosing a management approach it is necessary to evaluate economic, environmental, cultural, heritage and social policies while making decisions on tourism development considering both natural and built resources. The goal is to choose approach which is supporting long-term sustainability and which is practical and acceptable and brining the profit to tourism businesses and not harming the

surrounding environment. Effective management requires an ability to measure the impacts caused by tourism and understanding of how these impacts are produced. (Buckley 2009, 149.)

Many environmental organizations have encouraged tourism businesses to take action in sustainable tourism management and implement co-operative environmental programs to encourage their guests to act sustainably. Many countries, communities and companies have already understood that sustainable tourism can be reached through good management. Local communities can approach sustainable development with strategic marketing plan, creating guidelines for tourism programs and recognizing the value of sustainable tourism in long-term growth. (Edgell 2006, 6 ,15, 30,109-111.)

Action steps suggested for managing sustainable tourism include preserving resources and diversity, mitigating waste and overconsumption, including tourism into strategic planning on national and local level and vice versa involving local community in tourism. Action steps also involve supporting local economies and providing consultation and information for the public and stakeholders, providing proper training for staff, marketing tourism responsibly and maintaining ongoing research using the efficient tools. One management strategy is also concerning technology and applying the most innovative technology in order to achieve the goals in sustainable tourism. The public and tourists should be offered education and programs to improve their awareness of delicate environment, protected areas and their conservation. Media and school system are useable information suppliers in educating the sustainable use of resources. (Edgell 2006, 6,15, 22-23, 30,109-111.)

Sometimes implementing tourism policies or planning practices might be challenging due to political instability or weak local government, especially in developing countries. There is a case study made in Turkey where Tosun (2001, 93) points out how unstable policy causes uncertainty and inefficiency in sustaining tourism development. Local government which is lacking financial resources and bureaucratic administration system are not able to respond efficiently to public needs or defend the interests of the local people and their needs in their constituencies and popular tourist destinations. Municipalities are lacking a connection between functions, responsibilities and income structures. "Consequently, any approach to sustainable tourism development in the

absence of strong local planning authority and involvement of local communities in the planning process to some degree seems to be very difficult." (Tosun 2001, 293.)

Another less successful example is from East Indonesia (Cole 2006) where community benefits from sustainable development were negated when Department of Tourism failed in providing needed training and information. Due to this failure the communication gap between locals and experts were never fulfilled. Institutional support is seen important especially in rural areas or developing countries where local capacity is minimal in knowledge and resources. Lack of participation may also be caused by political unwillingness to give any power or resources to communities. (Phillips & Roberts 2013, 39.)

Managing sustainable tourism can be successful if tourism stakeholders co-operate and partnership includes everyone affected by the development. The role of private sector and community is emphasized in daily implementations and activities. The government`s role is to apply the standards that will protect the development process and encourage communities for sustainable tourism. The role of government might be very different. Central governments deal with macroeconomic problems like unemployment, but local governments are important to local communities and aware of local human and natural resources. In sustainable development governments have an important part in introducing the responsible people and getting them to make decisions in planning and management. (Edgell 2006, 6 ,15, 30,109-111; Gorica et al. 2012, 139,140-145.)

2.5   Tools for assessing and measuring sustainable tourism

Besides the growing environmental awareness also intense competition, changed customer demand and changes in operating environment have enforced tourism companies to take action towards sustainable development. In order to meet the customer's needs, tourism businesses should respond to sustainability objectives in the destination and actively reduce negative impacts their business operation is causing to environment. Stakeholders have recognized the business sense in sustainable actions and it has led to growing number of different tools for assessing and measuring sustainable tourism and tourist behaviour. (Ali & Frew 2013, 3-4, 72, 116.)

There are several different tools how the aspects of sustainability can be measured. In order to address all the aspects (environmental, economic, social) it is necessary to combine different tools. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 109-113.)

Environmental impact assessment (EIA) is a tool for national decision makers to use in struggle against environmental destruction. With the help of EIA process potential impacts to environment can be identified and environmental recovery and development enabled. In EIA process techniques such as matrices, cost-benefit analysis (COBA), ecolabelling and certification, environmental auditing or for example geographic information system (GIS) can be used. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 110,113-115.)

Industry regulations can be a tool when local governments set regulations for the tourism industry. These regulations can be restricted planning, laws to business practices determined by local governments, regulations set by professional associations, guidelines and control or international regulations and agreements to governments. Industry-specific regulations are promoted with voluntary self-regulation and corporate social responsibility (CSR). (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 109-113.)

A code of conduct is an important attribute in tourism industry which is used to influence attitudes and change behaviour. Nearly all codes are voluntary with only few legitimate and they are created for both tourists and the industry. Unfortunately many problems exist in the use of code of conduct for example misuse by the industry as marketing ploy. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 110,113-115.)

Visitor management techniques are used in controlling the tourist movements by using channelled visitor movements, zoning or restricting entry. Today the trend is to restrict the use of cars and motorized vehicles in certain areas like areas with attractive nature. Local participation can be encouraged with pricing structures where different amount of money is charged from international and national visitors. *Carrying capacity* calculations can be also used to manage visitor amounts in certain area or destination. It has been criticized because calculations can be manipulated for own interest and it gives a power to those who have management over the carrying capacity. Changing circumstances increase or decrease the carrying capacity of a certain place. Calculated carrying capacities are for example environmental, social or ecological carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change (LACs). (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 109-113.)

Travel Demand Management (TDM) is an application of different strategies and policies that can be used in reducing travel demand or spreading this demand for different areas or time periods. Managing travel demand is seen as an opportunity to encourage sustainable travel options together with information and technology. Originally TDM was invented for managing regional traffic or transport from home to work. By using information technology, needed information is delivered to travellers in order them to do more sustainable choices when purchasing travel services. (Ritalahti, J. 12 Oct 2012.)

Travel Information System (TIS) can change the form of tourism service demand in the future. With a help of different tools people will get more information, help and opportunities to reduce their ecological footprint when travelling and they are able to choose more sustainable services and suppliers. Allowing tourists to get information about the destination based on their location could be used to direct their decisions towards sustainable services and products. This could mean information on emissions within different modes of travelling, sustainable choices in consumer behaviour like local food, recycling, saving energy. And travel distance and ways of travelling. (Ritalahti, J. 12 Oct 2012.)

Sustainability indicators are such indicators that link together economic, social and environmental issues and the power relationships behind them. "These indicators are the use of resources, waste pollution, local production, access to basic human needs, access to facilities and freedom from violence and oppression, access to the decision-making process and diversity of natural and cultural life." (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 110-111.) Important aspect is that local community members have been able to participate in the formulation process. The development of these indicators started in 1992 in the Rio Summit. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 110-111.)

Indicators are used as a way of measurement or baseline all over the world due to their basic design of constraints and usability in different circumstances. Indicators enable comparison between regions and businesses with adaptability to differences confronted in these sectors. Indicators suggest how compliance with criteria could be measured and if the criteria are met whereas criteria demonstrate what should be done in order to meet the principles. Criteria do not indicate how something is done or if the goal is reached. (GSTC 2014.)

The newest indicators, European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS), were released by European commission in 2013. ETIS is a toolkit for Sustainable Destinations. The aim of ETIS is to improve long-term competitiveness of tourism industry in European Union. This system consists of different indicators, toolkit and dataset which form an easy to use instrument for destination´s use and do not require special training. (European Union 2013, 7.)

Fair trade in tourism is considered as a technique of sustainability because its aim is to price the product based on principles not just profit and allocate the benefits received from production or an activity to population concerned. It is an act towards equal development, but only if profitability is also kept in mind. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 110-111, 115-118.)

Measuring *ecological footprint* enables quantifying environmental impacts in a single indicator and helps identifying possibilities to save costs. Used techniques are holiday footprinting and ecological footprinting. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 110-111.)

Carbon budget analysis involves techniques such as carbon emissions trading, personal carbon budgets and carbon offsetting. Carbon emissions' trading is targeting carbon dioxide (CO_2) and it is one method to reduce carbon emissions in the struggle against climate change. Personal carbon budgets refer to personal carbon allowances and restrictions in individual behaviour patterns to meet global sustainability needs. Companies selling carbon offsetting give funding for projects that aim to reduce carbon dioxide emissions (CO_2). (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 115-118.)

Unfortunately indicators, certifications and criteria have not brought a wanted solution in reducing the negative impacts of tourism due their difficult interpretation and lack of knowledge among tourism entrepreneurs. Related to implementing different indicators, the real life situation usually is the fact that tourism providers or destination management do not know their market or target group. So before they can implement any criteria to fill up the indicators they must begin from benchmarks. It might mean making a survey or analysis which is time consuming and expensive. Therefore it is important that entrepreneurs see the benefits of implementing different indicators. (Abegg, B. 20 Mar 2014.)

Weaknesses of many tourism eco-certification programs are that enterprises can get them too easily. Certifications can also be valuable tools, but they are easily abused.

Also many eco-certification programs focus too much in easily measureable air and water pollution than consumption of natural resources or species that are endangered. Both should be included or just more significant one. (Buckley 2009, 137,278,280-281,288,290.)

Tools used to assesses and measure sustainable tourism are summarized in table 1 below.

Tools
Environmental Impact Assessment EIA
Industry regulations (CSR, A code of conduct)
Visitor management (Carrying capacity, TDM)
Travel Information System (TIS)
Sustainability Indicators SI
Eco-certification programs (Fair trade)
Ecological Footprint EF
Carbon budget analysis

Table 1. Tools for assessing and measuring sustainable tourism (Abegg, B. 20 Mar 2014)

3   Theories from business perspective

3.1   Tourism product

Tourism product as a concept is complicated nature because it is consisting of many different components which are dependent on each other when providing benefits and total experience for the tourist. This bundle of components is dependent on the activity in the destination and means the same as total travel experience. Even though there are different types of tourism products the distinction should be made between total tourism product which is combining all the elements tourist needs and consumes during the stay in a destination and specific products which are the different components that form the total tourism product. (Koutoulas 2001, 2.)

Tourism product is not just a single service, but accommodation, transportation, dining and entertainment as well as attractions and tours are the elements which build a tourism product. Tourism product is a set of different concepts which will have to meet the needs of tourists who are attracted by the area. Rarely only one company is able to offer the whole tourism product. Therefore co-operation between service suppliers is important. When defining a tourism product it can be divided into two sides which are the supply side and the demand side. When various elements that form the product are defined, distinction is made between individual tourism services and the whole tourism system. (Lazzeretti & Petrillo 2006, 123) Different elements of tourism product are shown below in figure 2.

Supply	1. Territory product	2. Service product
Demand	4. Experience product	3. Benefit product

| **Tourism system** | **Tourism services** |

Figure 2. Different elements of tourism product (Lazzeretti & Petrillo 2006, 123)

Territory product means all those natural attraction factors that a certain area can offer to a specific tourist type. Service product is a whole set of all services and goods which are differently provided to tourists during the whole time they are staying in a destination. Benefit product again is a set of different activities, services and benefits that affect the level of tourist satisfaction. Experience product refers to the overall experience of the destination and what the tourist will get after staying and interacting with the attractions in the area. (Lazzeretti & Petrillo 2006, 123.)

All the elements in tourism product refer to interaction between demand and supply and a set of resources that will affect tourist´s mental system. From available resources tourists choose the ones which are best matching their way of thinking and motivations and link them to their coherent experience framework. Various resources in same tourism product make it a product that has a systematic nature and is bale to create synergies. (Lazzeretti & Petrillo 2006, 123.)

When tourism product is marketed as sustainable it is seen beneficial for both local community and tourists. **Sustainable tourism product** which is well-developed will give tourist a better understanding of destinations history, culture, heritage and arts yet local people can be proud of the product that is reflecting their values in own culture, heritage and environment. Well-managed tourism activities can enhance maintaining and protecting both natural and man-made attractions while at the same time giving access to environment and cultural heritage. (Edgell 2006, 30-31.)

Tourism attractions can be developed by creating new sustainable products, paying attention to carrying capacity and with co-operation between private sector and the government. Today tourists are more environmentally and ethically aware and they demand more sustainable tourism products. By sustaining the environment with suitable environmental protection policies and marketing and promoting products with partnerships tourism businesses can form a future to their sustainable tourism product as well as earn economic benefits. (Edgell 2006, 30-31.)

When talking about sustainable tourism product the whole life cycle must be considered including environmental, social and economic benefits. At the same time public health and environment should be protected. Every company is responsible of their own products. Companies will have to ensure that all aspects going into or affecting their products are sustainable. Companies are creating sustainable strategies

and operations to meet the needs of sustainable development. The aim of these strategies is to minimize environmental impacts and increase social and environmental benefits to consumer. (TOI 2004, 5.)

The variety of tourism-related services and long supply chains have brought attention to controlling supply chains and knowing the environmental and social impacts of products and provided services. Consumers expect the knowledge from companies and are willing to know the origin of the product they are buying and how sustainable it is. Customers request quality in service and products as well as in implementing the whole travel. When developing sustainable tourism product it is important that all parts of supply chain operate according to sustainability principles. If one part in the chain is not filling the requirements it will affect the whole chain negatively. Therefor co-operation between all parties in the supply chain is important. This includes tourism entrepreneurs, tourism industry as well as public sector. (TOI 2004, 3.)

3.2 Tourism businesses and sustainability

Environmental impacts of service businesses are not very visible and therefore they have less pressure from government side. Tourists as consumers are part of environmental practices. When they visit a destination they are using energy and water and that way they are connected to production and consumption. This has formed a pressure for tourism businesses to create more advanced environmental programs. Every tourism business is already using some kind of technology, but the key is to find technology that is suitable, but at the same time will promote the business. Technology can help managers in destinations to make profit and create useable and practical sustainability principles. (Ali & Frew 2013, 73-74.)

Tourism businesses have started to take action for sustainable development due to growing awareness of environmental impacts of their operations. Majority of tourism businesses have potential to implement strategies for sustainable development and receive more income. But sustainable development among tourism companies is a slow process. Awareness of sustainable tourism is more acknowledged among larger firms while smaller companies and supplier groups are left outside this field (UNEP 2011, 415). Well-managed environmental program have many advantages like improved

competitive advantage, saving in costs, increased awareness and satisfaction from consumers and all stakeholders. To encourage tourism businesses and governments to take action towards environmentally responsible tourism, many indicators and certifications for sustainable tourism have been set by the international, national and regional tourism organizations. (Ali & Frew 2013,3-4,72-74,116; Buckley 2009, 286-287;UNEP 2011, 414-415.)

With suitable environmental program tourism businesses would be able to handle environmental challenges more efficiently and include environmental issues as a part of whole business process. It means considering sustainability in designing and development phases as well as in procurement, operations, communication and monitoring. Functioning environmental policy and program throughout the company will require support from the top management with systematic approach and goals. Advantages that well-managed environmental program have brought to the company are competitive advantage, ability to recognize the risks cause to the environment, savings in costs (energy and water consumption), increased awareness and responsibility, more efficient organizational progress and development, controlled waste management, sustainable use of surrounding natural resources, trust and satisfaction from consumers and all stakeholders, increased credibility and commitment to continuous sustainability process and ability to allocate resources properly. In general Finnish tourism businesses consider sustainable tourism development very important. (Finnish Tourist Board 2014.)

3.3   Challenges

Majority of tourism businesses have potential to implement green strategies and receive more income (UNEP 2011, 415). Lack of knowledge and understanding of the aspects of sustainable tourism and its fundamental nature is slowing down sustainable tourism development and influencing tourist behaviour negatively. Tourism businesses are lacking know-how, they have concerns, financial difficulties, lack of support and they are not able to transform theoretical research into workable form. Implementing sustainable development means improving efficiency in destinations and involving local communities which will support the local economy. (Ali & Frew 2013.)

Tourism entrepreneurs have difficulties in interpreting criterion independently without a comparative framework for minimal-impact. Combining different criteria is difficult and there is uncertainty about the degree that all criteria must be satisfied. In some destinations focus is too strongly in nature-based products while at the same time communities, conservation, education and management are forgotten. It is also unclear how performance is quantified against the criterion and what is significant improvement in environmental management. Benchmarks for comparison is experienced complicated because different countries have different levels for environmental standards. Instead of evaluating achievements against the minimum legal standards, performance could be compared to best performed company somewhere else. (Buckley 2009, 286-287.)

3.4   Strategy for sustainability

Corporations are seen more powerful than governments in responding to social, economic and environmental challenges in the world. The corporate sector has know-how and some of the largest economies in the world are corporations. Global corporations are aware of how limitations in resources affect communities and residents, customers and markets and this is an opportunity for them to take a lead. Business leaders must take action to maintain their markets and growth in society. In order corporations to survive, national health system for citizens and employers must be maintained as well as resources for producers and consumers. Business strategy should not concentrate only on environment and economy, but also long-term social and cultural consequences. (Werbach 2009, 3-4.)

Sustainability is in a need of modern business strategy because of the becoming structural changes in demographics, the global economy environment and political institutions. Sustainability strategy means determining the goals and actions to be taken in order to mobilize people, having open information and communication channels and making sure that the whole network of suppliers, customers and community will be engaged. So the strategy for sustainability will need transparency, engaged employees and network support before implementation. First step is to open up information for employees and all who is part of the network in order them to analyse

the business. Second step is to engage employees with different long-term programs and third step is to manage the input of the network. (Werbach 2009, 36.)

Tourism enterprises are not able to work alone when implementing sustainable development, but will need an informative, managed and practical approach in order to determine own sustainability objectives and measurements for their business activities. By creating networks, smaller tourism businesses could improve efficiency and co-operation with local community. Small businesses benefit from the internet also because they can contact customers directly and that way compete with large firms about market shares. In order to do that small tourism businesses should form partnerships with internet providers and online intermediaries. Companies should be proactive in building networks and contacting such companies who are being innovative and developing new products. (Dwyer et al. 2009, 72-73.)

3.5 Networks and small businesses

Tourism industry is no longer controlled by individual organizations, but so called territories that first become supply systems and ultimately tourism destinations. Destinations can be considered as networks where co-operation and collaboration will ultimately create a tourism product. Networks of suppliers create more profitable destination as well as improve destination and product development. Today tourism networks are more like virtual networks where the role of Destination Management Organizations (DMO) is slowly decreasing. Internet has brought suppliers and consumers together. Shared actions with local community improve the competitive advantage and convergence with other industries. It is all about an ability to arrange and co-ordinate the resources on multi-level. Due to competitive advantage and improved product quality focus in tourism destinations has changed to networking. (Lazzeretti & Petrillo 2006, 1-3.)

The benefits of networks, if we look at it from the supply side, are lower costs per unit in production, better market coverage and competitive advantage which may lead to market dominance. Benefits of networks are also learning and exchange, for example sharing knowledge and education or improving the development stage of smaller enterprises. Networks increase business activity by improving for example visitor

numbers or as mentioned before increasing the co-operative activities like marketing, purchasing or production. Community as a benefit of networks means support in destination development, promoting common purpose and focus and engaging small companies in developing the destination. According to many studies, the core of the network is inter-organizational learning, sharing and exchanging knowledge, common purpose and community. All these factors may create a learning community. (Morrison, Lynch & Johns 2004, 198, 201; Wittmer, A. 27 Feb 2013.)

For tourism businesses, co-operation, networks and partnerships will also mean implementing changes in management. It is necessary to analyse the competitive environment and manage efficiently relationships and resources. Maintaining and achieving a competitive advantage is dependent on company´s ability to include its product or service in the local area, co-operation with other local stakeholders and to offer tourism experience that is unique and differentiated. In tourism industry local knowledge may have an important role when a destination is formed into tourism product and a territory can become a local system of innovation (LSI). (Lazzeretti & Petrillo 2006, 1-3.)

Besides the innovation system, the clusters, their central position in the global system and internal appeal, have an important role when the competitiveness or innovativeness of a destination is defined. Tourism clusters improve the quality and efficiency of the companies that complement each other and improve the quality of visitor experience. Since tourism sector is sensitive to continuous changes in global market, networks and partnerships are used as a tool against challenges in the market. Especially rural areas are lacking of efficient infrastructure and due their location and the small size of many companies the private sector is not willing to invest in them. (Lazzeretti & Petrillo 2006, 1-3; Wittmer, A. 27 Feb 2013.)

Networks of small tourism companies are usually social networks with economic significance which involve marketing channels, employees and customers who all are part of the one big family network. Potential partners for small companies could be wholesalers, retailers from private or public sector and a voluntary partnership. In all strategic alliances costs and benefits needs to be considered. (Tinsley & Lynch 2001, 368-369,371.)

4   Indicators for sustainable tourism

Interpreting the instructions for sustainable development is criticized to be difficult. Therefore the idea of indicators is to give information in an understandable form where information is direct and numerical. "Many international organizations and governmental and non-governmental organizations have developed indicators. For example UNWTO 2004: Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destination and European Union 2013: ETIS for Sustainable Management at Destination Level." (Abegg, B. 20 Mar 2014.) The best indicators for tourism are the ones that enable sustainability and respond to threats. Indicators can be used to assess condition or need for action and policies in the need of closer evaluation or modification. (Ali & Frew 2013, 50-51.)

Different criteria and indicators are created and used to improve tourism management practices and decision-making in sustainable tourism development in destination planning and management. "Indicators are also used to monitor tourism system; measure and analyse changes and resultant impacts on the tourism system and improve the goal placed for sustainable tourism." (Ali & Frew 2013, 50.) The aim of indicators is to ensure the long term development where social, environmental, economic and cultural needs of stakeholders are taken into consideration. With the help of indicators destinations can determine objectives for sustainable development as well as design and prioritize development for the future. (Abegg, B. 20 Mar 2014; Ali & Frew 2013, 50-51.)

Indicators for sustainable tourism are actively used as a measurement and many approaches have been taken in use of indicators for sustainable tourism development. Indicator systems have been created in order to evaluate tourism in rural areas of cultural destinations. Some indicators have been developed also for tourists. They can use the indicators when they select own holidays. Also new approaches to indicator development have been taken by The World Tourism Organization. UNWTO created a guide-book for tourism managers to help them in developing the best indicators for their destinations. The book includes baseline issues and indicators which are useable in almost every destination and comparable internationally. Indicators have many benefits, but some researchers have also criticized the use of indicators in sustainable tourism development because of interpretation, adequate measurements and because it

is time consuming and expensive. However these indicators improve awareness of sustainable tourism and encourage destination managers to do decisions and take actions for development. (Ali & Frew 2013, 51.)

4.1   Certifications and criteria

Several criteria have been created worldwide in order to develop sustainability in tourism. It can be said that created criteria are the result of searching a common language and meaning to sustainable tourism development. (GSTC 2014.)

International and national tourism associations worldwide have set criteria for their members. The most famous international association is The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) which is the agency of United Nations and responsible for promoting sustainable tourism worldwide. Organizations on international level have an important role in supporting and helping local authorities and stakeholder groups with sustainable development and tourism management in destinations. Criteria for sustainable tourism development in each country should respond to legislation, culture and regional conditions as well as type of the company. (UNEP 2003, 26-27.)

National authorities are responsible in creating conditions where sustainable development of domestic and incoming tourism is possible and offer their support for local destinations. Aim of national tourism associations is to improve awareness, give information and tools and promote sustainable tourism policies as well as educate and train people. Local authorities should take care of sustainable development in their communities according to level of tourism, general desires, location, resources and market circumstances. Government actions should take place in international, national and local level. (UNEP 2003, 26-27.)

In order a businesses to act responsibly there has to be certifications which will ensure the basic principles the company can reflect to so that their business processes will meet the certain requirements and standards. The role of criteria is to show the company what is important when they consider their business activities. Agenda 21 and ISO 14001 are maybe the most famous action-plans which form a basis for the most known certification criteria. When sustainable tourism was brought into wider discussion in 1996, Agenda 21 was released by The World Tourism Organization, The

World Travel and Tourism Council and The Earth Council. The aim of this agenda was to outline the key priorities that tourism industry and also governments could use in the name of sustainable tourism development. (Worldwatch Institute 2013.)

Agenda 21 determines action plan to encourage not only governments, but also tourism businesses to take action towards environmentally responsible tourism. This plan prioritize nine areas which area useable in tourism development at local, regional, national, international and state level. These nine areas (Edgell 2006, 117-118) are the following:

1. Assessing the capacity of the existing regulatory, economic and voluntary framework
2. Assessing the economic, social, cultural and environmental implications of the organization´s operations
3. Improving training, education and public awareness
4. Planning for sustainable tourism development
5. Facilitating the exchange of information, skills and technology between developed and developing countries
6. Providing for the participation of all sectors of society
7. Designing new sustainable tourism products
8. Measuring progress in sustainable development
9. Creating partnerships for sustainable development

Successful sustainable tourism development requires participation of all stakeholders. There should be political leadership to ensure agreement and participation between stakeholders. Developing sustainable tourism requires continuous monitoring and measurements of impacts while at the same time it should keep tourists satisfied, improve awareness and encourage sustainable tourism practices. Therefore UNWTO included the following additional principles for managing sustainable tourism: Optimal usage of environmental resources, respect towards host communities and ensuring long-term economic operations. (Edgell 2006, 118-119.)

All tourism products should be responsible and acceptable both locally and on international level. According to Agenda 21 businesses in tourism industry should monitor specific principles (Edgell 2006, 118-119) presented below:

-   Energy use

- Water consumption
- Sparing use of natural resources
- Waste reduction
- Improved and intensified recycling and reuse of waste
- Purification of waste water
- Encouragement towards recycling and reuse of all materials
- Usage of environmentally friendly materials and products
- Enhancement of environmental awareness of staff and customers
- Cooperation with local communities, tourists, small and medium size business and local administration and governments

Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is a global tourism organization with multiple stakeholders. GSTC is a member-based and non-governmental organization. Members are businesses, academies, individuals and communities. All members are practicing small or large company operations by following the principles of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and making an effort in increasing awareness of sustainable tourism practices. When partners under the umbrella of the United Nations created an alliance, GSTC was born. It is supported by the UN Foundations, the UN Environmental Program and the UN World Tourism Organization. GSTC offers education, but also gathers and develops tools and resources in order to encourage sustainable tourism practices. The goal is also to increase demand for sustainable tourism products and services. (GSTC 2014.)

GSTC has launched own sustainable tourism criteria. These global guiding principles represent the minimum requirements which travel and tourism businesses need to reach so that natural and cultural resources are sustained and protected while at the same time meeting all the potential as a tool for protection and mitigating poverty. Each business and destination should achieve these minimum requirements in order to achieve social, environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability. The criteria are created so that they can be adapted to each region and industry sector while the key issues for sustainability will be emphasized differently based on differing conditions. (GSTC 2014.)

The criteria have been divided into four topics and four main themes. Focus in these criteria is on social and environmental responsibility and impact of tourism towards economy and culture. The four topics and themes are listed below.

Topics:

- Sustainable management
- Socioeconomic impacts
- Cultural impacts
- Environmental impacts (including consumption of resources, reducing pollution, and conserving biodiversity and landscapes)." (GSTC 2014.)

Themes:

- Effective sustainability planning
- Maximizing social and economic benefits for the local community
- Enhancing cultural heritage
- Reducing negative impacts to the environment." (GSTC 2014.)

The criteria are adaptable to local circumstances and completed with additional criteria based on location and activity. GSTC has set own criteria for hotels, tour operators and tourism destinations. Criteria for destinations are created to guide managers, specialists, communities and businesses in destination. List of the last criteria are listed below.

- Demonstrate sustainable destination management
- Maximize economic benefits to the host community and minimize negative impacts
- Maximize benefits to communities, visitors, and culture; minimize negative impacts
- Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts." (GSTC 2014)

The Nordic Ecolabel is used in the Nordic countries as the official Ecolabel and it was founded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The aim of this label is to encourage sustainable consumption and production by offering the consumer environmentally-friendly products. The ecolabelling scheme is voluntary and once the company has granted a licence it can market the Nordic Ecolabelled product or service. All is managed by the national offices. Product lifecycle and environmental impact will be considered. (Nordic Ecolabel 2014.)

The label guarantees many things, but it has emphasis on climate and environment. It guarantees that climate requirements and CO_2 emissions as well as other gasses are considered and minimized. The Swan logo is a symbol used to mark these environmentally friendly products. There are around 60 product groups under the ecolabel consisting of daily products to hotels and restaurants. Each group has its own criteria document where the requirements and other instructions are mentioned. Each product must follow the certain criteria in order to carry the Swan label. In order to monitor that criteria are fulfilled, the Nordic Ecolabel use certificates and samples from independent laboratories and perform control visits. (Nordic Ecolabel 2014.)

The format of criteria document is mainly the same for every product consisting of introduction of the Nordic Ecolabel and information how to apply it. The document include general description, limit values and environmental requirements with information of marketing, future criteria, how long the label is valid and about regular inspections. (Nordic Ecolabel 2014).

When a new product group is chosen, experts from the Nordic Ecolabelling organizations create criteria and propose them to other experts, environmental organizations, governments or the industry. The Nordic Ecolabelling Board decides the final criteria and sent them out for public review. The new product group is then analysed to check that it is suitable and relevant for the scheme with potential and how it can be directed and controlled. Criteria documents are reviewed in certain time period to make sure the products are improved and reduction of environmental impacts continue with the new requirements. (Nordic Ecolabel 2014.)

5   Sustainable supply in Finland

Tourism is economically important to Finland. It has positive employment impact and it provides income. In 2012 tourism amounted to 2.7 per cent of Finland's GDP being larger than food, agriculture or game industry. In 2012 13.3 billion euros was spent in tourism including consumption expenditure of both foreign and Finnish tourists. 32% of total tourism consumption accounted to foreign tourists. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2013.)

Finland´s Tourism Strategy to 2020 is a national tourism strategy. It defines the key objectives: Strengthening tourism clusters and networks, supporting the growth and development of enterprises and improving the infrastructure of travel destinations and tourism areas. (Finland's Tourism Strategy to 2020, 4.) The strategy is to pay attention to Finland´s image in practicing sustainable tourism where attention is paid to sustainable development in processes and services supply among tourism businesses. Demand for ecosystem services like nutrition, regulation and culture is growing. Therefore the strategy is focusing also on energy efficiency and environmental decisions like waste reduction and new technology. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2013, 20-21.)

The image of Finland as a tourist destination is based on high quality in service and clean nature. Tourism businesses are obliged to manage and be aware of their own environmental challenges. In addition to successful environmental management, functioning environmental management system is seen important in being a reliable and responsible business. In Finland the Ministry of Environment is handling sustainable development concerning the built environment, housing, communities, biodiversity and natural resources while protecting environment making it favourable for tourism and sending all suggestions to the Government for decision making. Tourism development is getting public support from the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY) which in addition provides also advisory services to tourism businesses, from regional councils and Finnvera PLC which is developing domestic operations of businesses in Finland and giving financial advices. Online service called Enterprise Finland offers information regarding internalization and development of businesses. Sustainability in tourism industry has been discussed considering that

tourism in Finland is mostly nature-based. The Finnish Tourist Board (MEK) has led several environmental quality programs concerning sustainable environmental management. As a result of one of their biggest projects, YSMEK (Ympäristöä säästävän matkailun edistämis- ja kehittämishanke) in 1990´s, environmental management system was created for hotels and restaurants. (Finnish Tourist Board 2014; Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2014.)

Tourism product´s sustainability in Finland is controlled relatively well by the national legislation. Also in operation management environmental issues have been quite well considered by taking action in saving water and energy and recycling. Yet sociocultural development should be improved. The most visible non-governmental sustainable tourism organizations in Finland are Green Tourism of Finland® and ECEAT Finland. Each organization have introduced own certification program for companies that are willing to practice tourism according to sustainable development principles. Additionally worth mentioning are Reilun matkailun yhdistys, WWF Finland, the Nordic Ecolable with Swan-logo and the EU flower Ecolable. The EU flower Ecolable identifies products and services that focus on reducing environmental impacts during the whole lifecycle. (Ikonen, H. 2012, 20-21; European Commission 2014.)

5.1 Sustainable Tourism Organisations and associations in Finland

In Finland there is a registered trademark called **Green Tourism of Finland®** which represents a network of Finnish companies who practice nature tourism according to sustainable development principles (Green Tourism of Finland® 2013). GTF is a trusted network for environmentally conscious travellers and the network offers nature tourism products for both group and individual travellers. Tourism products include accommodation, transport, activities and nutritional services which are safe, good quality and environmentally friendly. All the nature tourism products are inspired by the Finnish nature, art, culture and countryside and are produced in ecologically, socially and culturally sustainable way. (Green Tourism of Finland® 2013.)

Green Tourism of Finland® has created own criteria for its member companies to fulfil if they wish to join the network. Criteria are mainly based on globally accepted criteria for sustainable tourism which are then applied to Finnish legislation

considering also regional conditions of the businesses. Controlling is done with annual and semi-annual reports or when some essential changes occur in the company´s services. GTF has created and is actively using the model which is modified and more appropriate for companies. Green Tourism of Finland® do not have actual environmental program for the company with accommodation capacity less than 20 customers due to high costs. (Yuval, P. & Ikonen, E. 03 Dec 2013.)

The criteria which are set for the members of Green Tourism of Finland® are shown in the following list.

- Environmental quality program and standards (energy, raw material, water conservation, recycling and acquisitions)
- Safety plan
- Exploitation of local resources
- Professional and sustainable communication
- Networking and planning as a basis of business
- Support and use of public transportation
- Non-motorized local transport in activities
- Minimization of environmental impact and respect of nature
- Principle of experiential environmental education." (Green Tourism of Finland® 2013.)

Economic sustainability in GTF certificate is addressed in use of local resources. Service provider should prioritize the use of local products, services and aim to employ local people when possible. Social sustainability is reflected in supporting local culture with information sharing and education. History and local stories should be part of tourism products. Environmental sustainability is addressed in environmental quality program and standards, respect for nature and minimizing environmental impact. Favouring public transportation and using non-motorized local transport in activities is emphasized. (Green Tourism of Finland® 2013; Ikonen, H. 2012, 34-36.)

According to Green Tourism of Finland® several sustainability criteria which are created globally helps their implementation according to legislation and culture in each country. North America and Northern Europe have very similar criteria, but when moving to Central Europe and other countries on a same latitude deviation is already bigger. In Southern Europe the criteria are very different and at the same time the content and meaning of sustainable tourism changes. (Yuval, P. & Ikonen, E. 03 Dec 2013.)

ECEAT Finland maintains and develops network created by the Organic and Sustainable Tourism Project. This network consists of Organic and biodynamic farms, ecologically responsible guest-houses, B&Bs, eco-villages and other places offering accommodation or programs of interest. Aim is to protect nature and local, ecological and cultural quality. (ECEAT 2013.)

ECEAT stands for European Centre for Ecological and Agricultural Tourism. Its Finnish association, concentrated on Eco-Agrotourism was founded in 2005. The aim of ECEAT is to improve and encourage tourism which is supporting organic agriculture, sustainable land use, protection of nature and the environment, and protection of cultural heritage and traditional rural landscapes. They also encourage environmental education. ECEAT is doing international co-operation and projects in order to encourage environmentally responsible tourism. (ECEAT 2013.)

ECEAT has created quality criteria for its network concentrating on ecological and cultural sustainability of tourism services. There are ten goals any tourism business belonging to ECEAT network should aim for. These goals are listed below.

- Provide relevant "eco" information to its guests
- Support of environmental friendly agriculture
- Use water and energy in an efficient and conscious/responsible way
- Follow the green building policy
- Reduce production of waste
- Support soft mobility
- Contribute to nature protection
- Contribute to sustain cultural heritage
- Contribute to support the local economy
- Improve the environmental performance." (ECEAT 2013.)

Economic sustainability in ECEAT Finland's certificate is addressed in encouraging resort hosts to favour local stores and make co-operation with local product or service providers. All products in destination should be primarily locally produced and local work force, products and suppliers should be used. Social sustainability is addressed in good maintenance of buildings and work methods and materials that are traditional including technique and style. New buildings are built considering history and environment in the destination. Cultural heritage is preserved actively and culturally valuable buildings are restored. Travellers are educated about the destination and its cultural sights and events. Environmental sustainability is considered in supporting

ecological farming and building, saving water and energy, reducing waste, using ecological transportation and continues work towards sustaining the local landscape, biodiversity and inhabited areas. (ECEAT 2013; Ikonen, H. 2012, 34-36.)

Reilun matkailun yhdistys was founded in 2003. It is a Finnish foundation that aims to stimulate discussion about ethics and impacts of tourism in Finland. The Foundation is encouraging sustainable tourism by sharing information about sustainability principles in tourism and encouraging tourists and all different players in tourism industry to follow the principles of sustainable tourism. The aim of their actions is to invent and publish principles for sustainable tourism which they define the form of tourism that is considering environmental impacts and have respect towards local socio-cultural values and is improving equally spread economic benefits and costs. Individuals or communities who are willing to voluntary enhance the sustainability principles set by Reilun matkailun yhdistys can become members. (Reilun matkailun yhdistys 2014.)

Table 2 below summarizes the economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability criteria determined by Green Tourism of Finland® and ECEAT Finland.

Certification	Economic sustainability Criteria	Socio-Cultural sustainability Criteria	Environmental sustainability Criteria
Green Tourism of Finland® GTF	- Local resources (products/services) - Networking and planning	- Support of local culture and employment - Safety plan - Professional and sustainable communication - Principle of experiential environmental education	- Environmental quality program and standards - Public transportation - Non-motorized local transport - Reduction of environmental impact and respect of nature
ECEAT	- Active influence to the local economy and cooperation - Local producers - Local work force	- Buildings are kept in good condition - Traditional work methods, building techniques and material - New buildings are built according to tradition and capabilities of the environment - Active participation in fostering cultural heritage - Culturally significant buildings are restored - Travelers are informed about local cultural sights and events	- Responsible water and energy usage - Supporting ecological farming - Ecological construction and transportation - Decrease of waste - Wellbeing of local landscape, habitat and biodiversity

Table 2. Summary of economic, socio-cultural and environmental criteria of Green Tourism of Finland® and ECEAT Finland (Ikonen, H. 2012, 34-36)

6 Research approach and methods

In empirical research data is used to answer research questions. Simplified and more systematic model of research include framing of research and forming research questions, deciding necessary data to answer the questions, planning a research in order to collect and analyse the data in question and finally using the collected data to answer the research questions. (Punch 2009, 10.)

The main approaches for a research are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research is used when the best way of describing a phenomena or research objectives is through numerical variables. Researcher collects numerical data and uses statistics in the analysis. Yet the aim of qualitative research is to get a wider understanding of phenomena or meaning of the topic. Collected data is based on views and words of participants which are then analysed. Chosen method is dependent on the problem, aim and philosophy of the research in question. Mixed methods approach is used when quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other in one research. (University of Jyväskylä 2014.)

Nature of data makes a distinction between qualitative and quantitative approach together with used methods and way the studied social reality is conceptualized. Useful questions to consider in planning the research would be whether the desired data will be numerical or non-numerical and if the research will include measuring the variables. (Punch 2009, 4.)

6.1 Qualitative approach

Qualitative research is empirical research where data is not in form of numbers (Punch 2009, 3). In most cases this means that collected data will be in the form of words. Qualitative is much more than just a research where non-numerical data is used. It is an approach or way of thinking where collection or clusters of methods are used. Full definition of qualitative research would include the way of how studied social reality is understood, how it is approached and conceptualized and what kind of designs and methods are chosen to present the way of thinking and how non-numerical data is

collected. As an approach qualitative research is very versatile in its thinking, methods and data. (Punch 2009, 3-4.)

Qualitative research approach was chosen to this study because the data will be non-numerical and formed from people´s understanding, opinions and attitudes.

6.2 Semi-structured interview

The methodological approach in this research is deductive, based on extensive theory which is supported by company interviews.

When making a qualitative research, many types of data collection can be used. Main ways to collect qualitative data are interview, document analysis and observation. The interview is the most prominent tool for data collection because it is a good way to understand others, access people´s perceptions and meanings of reality as well as see how individual people or groups think about certain issues. (Punch 2009, 144-146.) As stated by Jones (1985, 46), "In order to understand other persons` constructions of reality, we would do well to ask them."

Interview is a method used to collect primary data where certain sample of people is interviewed. Aim of the interview and set questions is to find out respondents thinking or feelings. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 195.) There are many types of interviews where individual interview is the most used type. Interview can also be done in the form of face-to-face group interview, self-administered or mailed questionnaires or telephone interview. Interview can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured and it is suitable for many different purposes like marketing or gathering political opinions. Interview can be used for measuring or understanding individual or group perspective. The type of interview should be selected based on the purpose of research and research questions. The chosen type will affect the practical side of the interview and how it is managed. (Punch 2009, 144-146.)

When interview method is used, it is important to avoid interviewer bias. All interviews should be performed in the same way, meaning that same questions should be asked and posed the same way to all interviewees. It is important that all respondents will understand the questions similarly. Interviewer should act as neutral as possible in

order to avoid bias, but also interviewees´ behaviour might distort the data. Respondent might have certain expectations about the interview and then only answers that are considered to be correct are given. Also some recent event might affect the respondent´s behaviour and given answers. It is also necessary to recognize interviewees' personal opinions from policy statement. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 196.)

In this research data will be collected by using semi-structured interviews. However it is necessary to recognize that the interviewer is inexperienced which may result to interviewer bias.

Semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method. It is a combination of open ended questions, that are decided beforehand, and a possibility to study the topic under certain themes. (Evaluation Toolbox 2010.) Semi-structured interview is the most suitable method when respondent's opinions and perceptions are seen important for the research. It allows researcher to explore more information and ask clarifications to given answers. Semi-Structured interview respect the variation in respondents personal histories and educational backgrounds. Received data is richer and deeper compared to structured interview. Semi-structured interview is usually based on interview guide made by an interviewer. Interview guide is formed from certain topics or themes which are necessary to cover during the interview. The focus is in themes rather than in standardized questions in order to maintain flexibility in the interview. (Barriball & While 1994, 330.)

6.3 Sample and participants

Sample is a chosen group; a subset drawn from the target population which will be studied in order to make generalizations about the target population. "It is impossible to study the whole population so the sample must be chosen." (Punch 2009, 359.) Sampling is important when planning a research due to the fact that it is impossible to study everyone everywhere. Sampling type which is most often used in qualitative research is deliberate sampling also called purposive sampling. It means that sampling is done intentionally with certain purpose. Sample strategy concerns the overall validity of the research and there should be an internal consistency and logic between all the components of the study and sampling. (Punch 2009, 162-164.)

In this research sampling is done deliberate way. Target group chosen to this study represents small Finnish nature tourism businesses and tourism business that offer organic or ecologically responsible tourism services and which are located in different parts of Finland. They follow sustainability principles in all operations and have environmental certificate admitted by Green Tourism of Finland® or ECEAT Finland. Only one respondent is representative of Finnish sustainable tourism organization. Green Tourism of Finland® and ECEAT Finland were chosen because they are the biggest tourism networks in Finland and therefore a good data source for contacting tourism businesses with sustainable tourism products, knowledge and interest in sustainable tourism development. Decided sample size includes 10 tourism businesses.

6.4 Validity and reliability

When conducting an empirical research, it is recommended to consider credibility of the research results. Credibility of the study can be measured with validity and reliability. Validity of research means the extent to which research results describe the studied factors, phenomena. Validity can be weakened with research errors like incorrect research procedures and poor samples or when measurements are incorrect or misleading. Research is reliable when same results can be repeated in different, but similar situation. In qualitative research reliability is not emphasized as strongly as in quantitative research. Reliability of results can be explained with different procedures confirming the authenticity of the results. (Collis & Hussey 2009, 64-65.)

6.5 Conducting the research

Semi-structured interview with certain themes was ultimately chosen as a data collection method to this research. It seemed the most flexible way while still staying in certain themes that were important considering the research problem, research questions and desired result. Respondents´ perceptions and opinions and an opportunity to receive new information were seen very important in this research.

Interview framework was divided into three main topics: 1. Criteria for sustainable tourism products, 2. Sustainable supply in Finland and 3. Mobile Services. Topic 4

included concluding question where respondents could bring out additional information that they thought could be important. Altogether interview included seven prepared open-ended questions. Same questions in same order were asked from all respondents. During the interviews some specifying questions were asked. Interview framework with prepared questions was considered easier for inexperienced interviewer which also guaranteed that all important topics would be handled.

Telephone interview seemed to be the most practical way when location of each tourism business was considered. In the end two interviews were made through email and one interview was performed face-to-face. Respondents were informed that this research is confidential and all responses will remain anonymous. Telephone interviews were performed with interviewers own mobile phone and all phone calls were recorded in order to make transcription easier. Before interviews all respondents approved the recording. All interviews were conducted in Finnish because interviewees represented smaller Finnish tourism businesses and it felt more natural to interview them with their mother tongue. All replies were then translated into English.

 Interviews were implemented in separate phases. First all the respondents were contacted by phone or email and asked whether they would be interested in taking part of this interview. At the same time questions with cover letter was sent by email so that respondents could become familiar with the questions before the actual interview. Next interview schedule was organized. Timing of the interviews was challenging because majority of the interviews were carried out during end of July and August which is still high tourism season in Finland and respondents were very busy. Some interviewees refused to take part in the interview because of the timing which might affect the quality of results. Altogether 8 interviews out of 10 were conducted during July, August and September 2014. Number of responses was considered valid since nothing new or significant data was no longer appearing.

It was important to guarantee the anonymity of all respondents so all the interviews presented in data analysis are coded and name of the company or organization is not mentioned. All interviewees worked as business owners or deputy.

Interview coding is illustrated in table 3 below. It shows type of the company, date, form and length of the interview.

	Company	Date	Form of interview	Length, min.
R1	Accommodation & Restaurant	28.7.2014	Phone	8:52
R2	Tourism business network	29.7.2014	Phone	33:14
R3	Accommodation B&B	7.8.2014	Phone	14:47
R4	Accommodation B&B	11.8.2014	Phone	10:10
R5	Accommodation cottages	19.8	Email	-
R6	Accommodation cottages	20.8	Phone	23:35
R7	Nature Experience	1.9	Face to face	11:02
R8	Accommodation cottage	1.9	Email	-

Table 3. Interview coding

7 Data analysis

7.1 Analysing qualitative data

In qualitative research data analysis is an important phase and it is prepared already during data collection. There is not a clear separation between data collection and data analysis. The aim of qualitative analysis is to describe what is happening and how people are involved. It seeks to discover certain patterns and explain them. Here two explanation logics can be found which are inductive and deductive. Inductive approach is reasoning generally accepted theories and explanations which are based on assembling findings from observations from similar circumstances. On the contrary deductive approach is explaining certain situations by concluding generalizations from similar circumstances. The form of analysis is detailed which gives an understanding and final analysis of the studied issue. Analysing data in qualitative research is most commonly based on text analysis where all gathered data is changed in such form that it can be analysed as text. This can be interview transcription, different documents or taking field notes from observing target group. Qualitative analysis includes large volume of data that has to be organized and original data saved. Therefore coding and categorizing are used to manage the data. (Gibbs 2007, 1-5.)

7.2 Key results

The idea of implemented interviews was to encourage respondents to share their expertise and ideas related to criteria that determine sustainable tourism products based on their experience as the owners of sustainable tourism business. The aim was also to get insight about sustainable products or supply existing in Finland and opinions on mobile devices as enhancing sustainable tourism purchases. Received data is considered realistic and useable.

This chapter will outline the key results of the interviews and answer the research questions. It will suggest the criteria for sustainable tourism products and describe currently existing sustainable supply in Finland. The structure of this chapter follows the three main interview topics: 7.3 Criteria for sustainable tourism products, 7.4

Sustainable supply in Finland, 7.5 Mobile Devices and sustainable tourism products and finally 7.6 Conclusions and recommendations. Interview questions are shown in the beginning of each topic. Interview framework can be found from attachments.

7.3   Criteria for sustainable tourism products

Tourism product as a concept is complicated nature because it is consisting of many different components (Koutoulas 2001, 2). All tourism activity and parts of tourism products have an impact on natural environment because there are different types of tourism products in different locations (Buckley 2009, 150-151).

-    *How would you describe sustainable tourism product?*

Sustainable tourism product is a local product that is environmentally friendly and does not harm nature in anyway. In this product all three aspects of sustainable development (environmental, economic and socio-cultural) are considered. All respondents emphasized environmental issues and value of nature.

> It is a local product, supports local entrepreneurs and activities in food and services. It is environmentally friendly, ecological and responsible product. (R7, 1.9.2014.)

> Sustainable tourism product fills in the criteria concerning cultural, ecological and social sustainability. (R8, 1.9.2014.)

In the theoretical part of this research sustainable tourism product was described as a quality product. It is well-developed and beneficial for both local community and tourists by giving a better understanding of destinations history, culture, heritage and arts. Local people are proud of the product which is reflecting their values in own culture, heritage and environment. (Edgell 2006, 30-31.) According to Tour Operators´ Initiative for Sustainable Tourism, it is important to consider the whole life cycle of the tourism product (TOI 2004, 5).

Respondents agreed that sustainable tourism product supports local culture, traditions, local people and local production. Also facilities and infrastructure respect old values and authenticity shows in tourist activities and services. Sustainable tourism product

has a long lifecycle during which recycling, waste management, organic production and energy and water conservation is continuously regarded in all operations. Respondent 5 emphasized the importance of innovation in sustainable tourism products while respondent 8 mentioned the social sense of community which keeps the area vibrant and has a positive impact on employment.

All tourism products and activities should be responsible and acceptable on both local and international level. Agenda 21 has set globally accepted criteria for businesses in tourism industry which among others include sparing use of natural resources, environmental awareness of staff and customers and co-operation with local communities, local administration and governments. (Edgell 2006, 118-119.) The Global Sustainable Tourism Council has set own criteria for hotels and tour operators and tourism destinations which are adaptable to local circumstances with additional criteria based on location and activity. Criteria for destinations are created to guide managers, specialists, communities and businesses in destinations. (GSTC 2014.)

- *Which criteria in your opinion define sustainable tourism product?*

Respondents mentioned criteria like energy and water conservation, usage of renewable energy, recycling and waste management. Recycling minimizes waste production and transportation costs. Using local resources was kept very important criterion. Co-operation with local food producers and service providers and favouring organic food guarantee the quality of tourism product, improve local employment and minimize transportation costs.

> Criteria are global and globally approved; general principles. Importantly they must be applied to national legislation and from there to local environment where tourism business is operating. Problem is the global legislation and how it can be applied into operating environment of tourism companies. (R2, 29.7.2014.)

> Nature tourism product has always criteria. (R7, 1.9.2014.)

When acting responsibly, service providers will gain a positive image and when added to good service quality it will improve the amount of customers. Additionally

consumers expect the knowledge from companies and are willing to know the origin of the products they buy and how sustainable these products are. (TOI 2004, 3.)

Customer education and respect towards local culture are also important criteria for sustainable tourism product. Traditions and heritage should be valued in all processes including maintaining old buildings, choosing sustainable building materials and including traditions into tourism activities.

> Customers should be connected to sustainability in all operations. Instructions for recycling and advising are an essential part of the experience in the destination. (R5, 19.8.2014.)

> Respect towards traditions in nature conditioning procedures, simultaneously educating customers. Knowledge about heritage and traditions. (R6, 20.8.2014.)

- *Which criteria does your own business have?*

Every business should follow some kind of sustainability criteria, have a bottom line. Sustainable tourism development was kept very important and respondents followed almost completely the same criteria in their own businesses which they thought are defining sustainable tourism product.

Environmental criteria and ecological aspect was considered the most important followed by socio-cultural criteria. Economic criteria were seen important, but ideology and showing good example were considered even more important. Respondent 2 emphasized the different starting point in setting the criteria when it comes to tourism sector. Tourism services should be assessed in long-term because the lifecycle of tourism businesses is usually much longer compared to businesses in other sectors. It is also notable that practicing sustainable tourism is challenging and expensive.

> Tourism businesses are struggling to fill in all the criteria because it is impossible for them economically. They should have started this process much earlier so that there would not be surprises or 60% growth in their invoices which they cannot survive from. (R2, 29.7.2014.)

Criteria for sustainable tourism development in each country should respond to its own legislation, culture and regional conditions as well as type of the company (UNEP 2003, 26-27).

- *How does Finland differ from other countries?*

Globally used and accepted criteria which are applied according to Nordic and national legislation and which are considered from entrepreneurs' point of view, values and location were emphasized by the respondents. The goal of sustainable tourism development in global level is the same and there are certain quality marks and labels which are commonly considered reliable.

Finland does not differ so much from other Nordic countries when it comes to sustainability criteria, clean nature and potential for nature tourism activities. However there might be some differences in legislation. Respondents thought that in Finland and Nordic countries sustainable development is well managed. Geographical location and climate conditions are different compared to other European countries, which is affecting energy consumption and prices. Also reachability, seasonality, food production and prices for travel services were considered distinctive factors. Finland has good opportunities for ecological food production which could be exploited even further.

> In Finland there is certain sensitivity in setting regulations and restrictions concerning sustainable tourism. On the contrary Finnish should be at the forefront demanding genuinely ecological tourism and better conditions in environmental protection. (R5, 19.8.2014.)

Aim of globally accepted criteria is to outline the key priorities that tourism industry and governments could use in the name of sustainable tourism development (Worldwatch Institute 2013). In Finland tourism products´ sustainability is controlled relatively well by the national legislation. Non-governmental tourism organizations have also created certification programs and criteria for tourism businesses that are willing to operate according to sustainability principles. These criteria are developed based on globally accepted principles. (Ikonen, H. 2012, 20-21.)

- *Do you find current criteria useable or is it necessary to create new criteria for Finnish tourism products?*

Tourism is a global phenomenon and globally set criteria are considered to define meaning of sustainable tourism worldwide. All respondents agreed that globally assigned criteria are useable also for Finnish tourism products and there is no need for new criteria. Respondent 7 noted though, that global criteria could be more practical.

Respondents thought that in Finland people are aware of environmental issues and have right values which perform as good example for customers. People who use sustainable tourism products are already committed to follow certain sustainability principles valid in destinations. Entrepreneurs acknowledge their responsibility and respect the certificate they hold. Criteria which are set by the Finnish non-governmental tourism organizations were considered good because the criteria are built from Finnish point of view.

> There is nothing unclear of how tourism business and services with criteria are evaluated. About 40% of the companies operating in the country side belong under sustainable tourism circle. (R2, 29.7.2014.)

7.4 Sustainable supply in Finland

In Finland tourism is mostly nature-based and as a destination Finland has clean nature and high quality in service. Finland has a national tourism strategy called Tourism Strategy to 2020 which is defining the key objectives. Aim of the strategy is to pay attention to Finland´s image in practicing sustainable tourism where attention is paid to sustainable development in processes and service supply among tourism businesses. (Ministry of Employment and the Economy 2013, 20-21.) In addition sustainable tourism is getting public support from governmental organizations and non-governmental tourism organizations.

- *How would you describe sustainable supply in Finland?*
  - *What kind of products or supply there exists and is there demand for it?*

There is sustainable supply in Finland, but it is more an ideological thing. Sustainable tourism products are based on own values and way of life. How these products, ideologies and values are marketed depends on entrepreneurs skills. Sustainable tourism businesses are small and many of them offer only few activities like run a hotel, cottages, restaurant or camping.

> Sustainable tourism services in Finland are formed when local resources are exploited. Emphasis is not economic yet important. Companies who supply sustainable tourism products and services see it as their life style. (R2, 29.7.2014.)

Overall respondents thought that there is demand for sustainable tourism products, but it is still relatively low. Correct values in business operations and investments to sustainable development and products will be noticed by environmentally aware customers rather than price driven customer. It was considered whether Finnish people are ready to pay for tourism businesses being sustainable. Respondent 8 mentioned that it is hard to estimate how much being sustainable affects buying decisions. Price level in Finland might also reduce international tourism.

> There is much talk about sustainable tourism development, but how many times people actually choose it. People choose a place or holiday based on their interests and desires. Nobody has asked what kind of electricity is used. (R6, 20.8.2014.)

> In Finland there would be more interest towards sustainable tourism, services and products, but price is often the problem. Entrepreneurs cannot include all the expenditure into room price so rest is taken from their own pockets. (R3,7.8.2014.)

It would be important to improve Finland´s competitiveness compared to central Europe where respondents thought that sustainable tourism is easier due to lower

prices. In order a business to be sustainable it must be first profitable. Sustainable tourism in Finland should be invested much more than it is today. Ideology is already there, but funding is still a big concern especially in marketing sustainable tourism products. Many tourism businesses are not able to recognize themselves in sustainable tourism sector. Entrepreneurs are missing courage and willingness to be different in the market. One respondent pointed out that all entrepreneurs are concentrating only on their own products and without a true chance in atmosphere it will be impossible to produce decent joint marketing.

> General tourism marketing in Finland is concentrated only on accommodation services and larger marketing figures. Local travel marketers and actors who are approved by the government distort the field and even reduce sales of some smaller tourism businesses. They force sustainable tourism businesses into certain template where they are not approved or differentiated. (R2, 29.7.2014.)

7.5 Mobile Devices and sustainable tourism products

The tourists use technology such as mobile devices in many ways during their trip. They look for information and services specific destinations or locations which has increased the usage of different applications through smartphones. (Ali & Frew 2013, 116-118.) Companies must adapt to new technologies in order to be competitive and get closer the consumer (Car et al. 2013, 1, 7-8).

- *Do you think that sustainable tourism purchases could be enhanced through mobile devices and specific applications? Why, why not?*

E-marketing is very useful and improving element in selling any kind of product. People use electronic channels like internet, map services and social media for bookings and information search. Respondents thought that mobile devices will be an important marketing channel in the future and therefore majority of them considered that one day mobile devices could also enhance sustainable tourism purchases. Respondent 2 mentioned that mobile devices and growing number of mobile

applications would be a potential tool if the frame and requirements are carefully considered and information is in reasonable form.

> Absolutely, everything is nowadays mobile so there has to be services and products. If the product is sold through mobile devices, they must be productized and priced properly. (R7, 1.9.2014.)

> Mobile devices will be a remarkable channel in marketing and introducing sustainable ecotourism. There is all the potential and conditions, but workability of the platforms is still monitored. (R5, 19.8.2014.)

However in small tourism businesses personal contact with customers is still considered relatively important and taking a bigger marketing effort would take years.

- *Should the criteria be different if sustainable tourism products were sold through mobile application?*

Respondents did not find any differences in criteria if sustainable tourism products would be sold through mobile devices because the basic idea of sustainable tourism is the same worldwide. Respondent 2 stated that implementing a mobile service for sustainable tourism purchases in Finland would however need a clear and accepted quality management system.

7.6 Conclusions and recommendations

The aim of this research was to create criteria for sustainable tourism products and find also existing products or sustainable supply in Finland. In this chapter the findings will be concluded.

As the key results showed, globally accepted criteria are generally useable in Finland and there is no need for new specific criteria. These criteria should still be modified according to Nordic and Finnish legislation as well as be considered from

entrepreneurs' point of view and companies operating environment. Same criteria could be also used if sustainable tourism products were sold through mobile devices.

Criteria for sustainable tourism products should reflect all three dimensions of sustainable development: Environmental, economic and socio-cultural. Following criteria were created based on the theoretical framework and research data:

- *Environmental development*
  - *Environmental program and standards*
  - *Recycling, waste reuse*
  - *Energy and water conservation*
  - *Waste management and reduction*
  - *Usage of local resources, organic and local food*
  - *Pollution reduction*
  - *Minimized transportation in all areas, support of public transport*
  - *Environmentally friendly products and materials*
  - *Sparing use of natural resources*
- *Economic development*
  - *Co-operation with local stakeholders, small and medium size businesses and local administration and governments*
  - *Local products and resources*
  - *Increased vitality of the area*
  - *Improved employment*
- *Socio-cultural development*
  - *Environmental education for customers and staff*
  - *Safety plan*
  - *Involving local communities and tourists*
  - *Respecting local heritage, history and traditions in all operations*

Applying different criteria to own business is relatively challenging and expensive. Therefore it would be recommended that the government would offer better support for tourism businesses that follow the principles of sustainable tourism in Finland. Before sustainable tourism products could be sold through mobile applications tourism businesses require more information and education about the topic.

Sustainable supply in Finland is mainly offered by small tourism businesses in the countryside. Sustainable tourism products are natural and can be different forms of accommodation, food or meeting services, organic farms or outdoor experiences like different nature, wellness or cultural activities. In Finland sustainable supply is considered more a lifestyle which is based on own values, way of life or agricultural purposes.

Beside the interest of entrepreneurs also demand for sustainable tourism products is increasing. Niche tourism could continue to grow if marketing would be done correctly and sustainable tourism in Finland would be better invested. At the moment practicing and marketing sustainable tourism has been left mainly on entrepreneurs shoulders. It is recommended that co-operation between stakeholders and marketing would be improved remarkably in sustainable tourism sector. Collaboration could be improved through networking or different projects which would bring small tourism businesses together. Marketing and promoting sustainable tourism products should be supported more by the government and marketing strategy should be improved so that it would benefit and encourage differentiation in tourism sector. Entrepreneurs could create proper channel for joint marketing and increase visibility in social media. Due to high price level in Finland it would be essential to improve Finland´s competitiveness compared to other European countries.

7.7   Final reflection

Overall the research process was considered successful. Objectives were reached and results were considered realistic. In the beginning of this research it was not clear how these small tourism businesses would react to this research and if they had any interest in being part of the study or Haaga-Helia´s project.

In the end majority of the respondents were very interested in the topic and enthusiastic about their own sustainable tourism products. However it was surprising how different knowledge respondents had about different criteria in sustainable tourism even though these tourism businesses were deliberately chosen due to their efforts on the sector. Some businesses were very aware of sustainability criteria and followed them strictly while others were obviously lacking decent information. Many

respondents were also struggling with livelihood and visibility which left a feeling that there is still much to be done on the sustainable tourism sector in Finland. Future studies could address issues such as marketing sustainable tourism products in Finland and tourists' expectations and knowledge of sustainable tourism products.

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Attachments

Attachment 1. Interview questions in English

1 Criteria for sustainable tourism products

- How would you describe sustainable tourism product?
- Which criteria in your opinion define sustainable tourism product?
- Which criteria does your own business have?
- How does Finland differ from other countries?
- Do you find current criteria useable or is it necessary to create new criteria for Finnish tourism products?

2 Sustainable supply in Finland

- How would you describe sustainable supply in Finland?
    - What kind of products or supply there exists and is there demand for it?

3 Mobile Services

- Do you think that sustainable tourism purchases could be enhanced through mobile devices and specific applications? Why, why not?

- Should the criteria be different if sustainable tourism products were sold through mobile application?

4 Conclusion

- In conclusion is there anything important you would like to bring out considering the interview before?

Attachment 2. Interview questions in Finnish

1 Kriteerit kestävänkehityksen mukaiselle matkailutuotteelle

- Miten kuvailisitte kestävänkehityksen mukaista matkailutuotetta?
- Mitkä kriteerit mielestänne määrittävät kestävän matkailutuotteen?
- Mitä kriteereitä teillä yrityksenä on käytössä?
- Miten Suomi eroaa mielestänne muista maista?
- Ovatko olemassa olevat kriteerit mielestänne käyttökelpoisia vai tulisiko suomalaisille matkailutuotteille luoda uudet kriteerit?

2 Kestävien matkailutuotteiden tarjonta Suomessa

- Miten kuvailisitte kestävän matkailun tarjontaa Suomessa tällä hetkellä?
    - Minkälaisia tuotteita tai tarjontaa on ja onko sille mielestänne kysyntää?

3 Mobiilipalvelut

- Näettekö, että mobiililaitteille kehitetyt palvelut ja sovellukset mahdollisesti edistäisivät kestävien matkailutuotteiden ostoja? Miksi, miksi ei?
- Tulisiko kriteereiden olla erilaisia, jos kestäviä matkailutuotteita myytäisiin mobiilisovelluksen välityksellä?

4 Yhteenveto

- Lopuksi, haluatteko vielä tuoda esiin joitakin tärkeitä seikkoja liittyen edellä käytyyn haastatteluun?