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TRAVEL DESTINATION CHOICE, DESTINATION EXPERIENCE AND FULFILLMENT OF TRAVEL EXPECTATIONS IN LAPLAND

Multidimensional Tourism Institute, Destination Development Project

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Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tuottaa uutta tietoa matkailukohteen valintaan vaikuttavista tekijöistä, tyytyväisyydestä matkailupalveluihin sekä elämysten laadusta matkailukohteessa ja tukea Lapin kehitystä matkailukohteena.

Erilaisiin lähteisiin kuten akateemisiin artikkeleihin, kirjoihin sekä tilastotietoihin perehtymällä saatiin tietoa tekijöistä, jotka luovat matkailukohteesta menestyvän ja korkeatasoisen. Opinnäytetyön kysely toteutettiin hyödyntäen määrällistä tutkimustapaa. Lisäksi satunnaisotantaa on hyödynnetty sosiaalisen median sisällön analysoinnissa.

Tutkimus Rovaniemen lentoaseman kautta kulkevien kansainvälisten matkailijoiden ennakko-odotuksista ja elämyksistä osoitti, että Lapissa tulisi kehittää etenkin julkista liikennettä, kaupunkinähtävyyksiä ja ostosmahdollisuuksia. Tutkimustulokset osoittivat, että Lappi nähdään ja koetaan autenttisena luontokohteena, joka tarjoaa laadukkaita ja ainutlaatuisia luontoelämyksiä ja monipuolisia aktiviteetteja matkailijoille. Matkailijoiden tyytyväisyys Lapin hintatasoon oli kohtuullinen, vaikka Lappi koettiin odotettua kalliimpana matkailukohteena. Kuitenkin suurin osa Lappiin matkustaneista matkailijoista oli tyytyväisiä kokonaisvaltaiseen matkailuelämykseensä Lapissa.

Avainsanat: Lappi, matkailukohteet, kotimaan matkailu, matkailukohteen kehittäminen, kansainväliset matkailijat, tyytyväisyys matkailupalveluihin, matkailukohteen valinta

Abstract of Thesis

Lapland University of Applied Sciences
Bachelor of Hospitality Management

Authors	Sara Manninen Suvi Ylimartimo	Year	2018
Supervisor	Teija Tekoniemi- Selkälä		
Commissioned by	Visit Rovaniemi, Multidimensional Tourism Institute's destination development project		
Subject of thesis	Travel Decision Choices, Destination Experience and Fulfilment of Travel Expectations in Lapland		
Number of pages	74 + 10		

The aim of thesis was to provide new information on the factors affecting destination choice, travel expectations of Lapland as a destination and the quality of destination experience as well as separate travel experiences in a destination to benefit the development of Lapland as a tourism destination. To gain a good understanding of factors creating a successful and superior destination, many previous theoretical findings were used such as academic journal articles, books and statistical data. To achieve this aim different quantitative researches were made by executing handout survey and social media content analysis. Different quantitative methods and a sampling method were utilized.

The research results mapped the current quality of international travelers' experiences in Lapland and pointed the need of development in local transportation, shopping possibilities city attractions in Lapland. The research proved that Lapland is expected and experienced to be an authentic nature destination with high-quality extraordinary nature experiences and activities. Lapland's price level was expected to be reasonable but experienced as more expensive destination than expected. However, most travelers' holistic travel experiences in Lapland were successful and expectations were met.

Despite the high level of destination's total experience quality, Lapland should concentrate on developing the destination's weaknesses such as transportation and to promote the strong attractiveness of arctic nature by developing new sustainable and more personalized products and services in destination.

Key words: destination choice, fulfillment of expectations, destination experience, Lapland, destination development, tourism destination

CONTENTS

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

MTI	Multidimensional Tourism Institute
MTE	Memorable Tourism Experiences
SERVQUAL	Service Quality Model
DMO	Destination Management Organization

1 INTRODUCTION

The background of thesis topic was the personal interest to develop Lapland as a tourism destination. The objective of the thesis was to investigate the level of travellers' fulfilment of expectations and the main factors affecting the destination choice of Lapland. The aim was to discover how comprehensively expectations of international travellers are fulfilled during the trip. The aim was also to investigate travellers' destination experience and to gather information to develop Lapland as a vacation destination. The research target group was international travellers using Rovaniemi airport in March-April 2018.

Thesis will benefit tourism industry in Lapland by providing information on the factors affecting destination choice, traveller's destination experience and overall satisfaction in the destination. Based on customer satisfaction level handout survey research and social media content analysis, we collected data which may benefit local tourism actors in Lapland while developing and providing their tourism services and products.

Tourism industry and tourism entrepreneurships have an economic influence on local and regional wellbeing in travel destinations. Researching the satisfaction level of travellers and the destination experiences is crucial for the tourism destinations to provide successful tourism destination experiences. (UNWTO 2011, as cited in Marques & Santos 2017, 437.) Additionally, it is important to research and understand destination choice and its driving factors in tourism industry (Oppermann 2000, 80). Also, destination experiences are not widely researched so it is crucial to investigate the travellers' destination experiences. (Cetin, Kizilirmak & Balik 2016.)

The thesis will give insight into the knowledge of the travellers' interests concerning Lapland as a destination and widen understanding of different driving factors in successful destination experience and destination choice. Researching the travellers' satisfaction, motivation and loyalty is also important because it helps to increase the quality and visibility of destinations, as well as competitive advantage (Yoon & Uysal 2005, 45).

The thesis has two commissioners; The Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI) of Lapland University of Applied Sciences and Visit Rovaniemi. Thesis research was conducted by using a quantitative research method and it was executed as a handout survey. The handout survey was organized for international travellers at the Rovaniemi Airport. As a part of the research social media analysis was executed based on TripAdvisor online reviews.

The theoretical background of thesis consists of academic journal articles, books and statistical data. The formation of customer satisfaction is discussed and presented in the research also with a quality gap model that reflects the customer satisfaction level as the gap between quality expectations and perceived service quality. Also, it helps tourism organizers to meet the travellers' expectations more closely by providing more unique and targeted products as well as memorable experiences to different customer segments. Additionally, our wide perspective and results of the thesis are based on previous research results and theoretical grounds.

2 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF FINLAND 2005–2017

2.1 Tourism Development of Finnish Lapland 2005–2017

Lapland is one of the main destinations in Finland and it has been in the middle of continuous growth during the last previous years. Based on Visit Finland statistics, the number of overnight stays of international tourists has grown remarkably 33 per cent from 2 million nights to until 2,6 million nights between years 2005-2016. (Figure 1.)

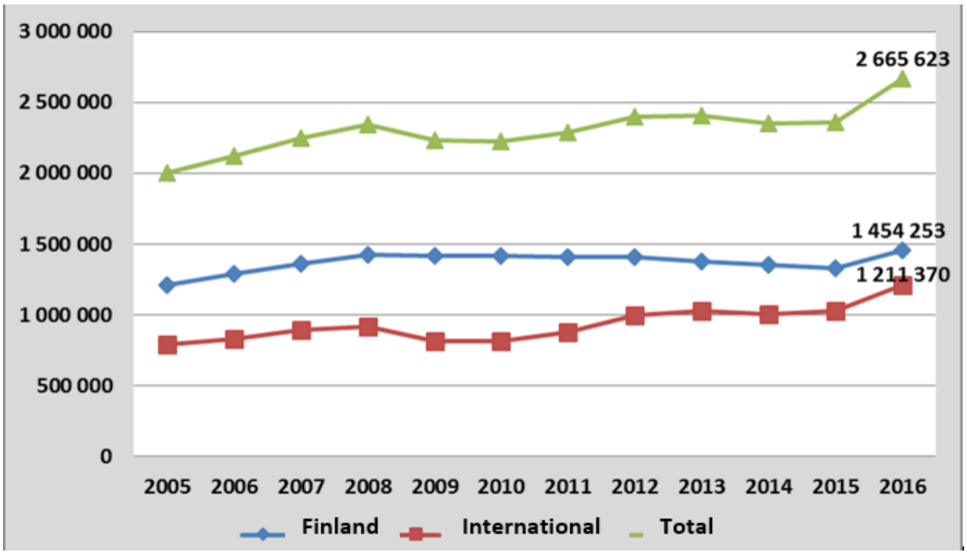

Figure 1. Registered Foreign Overnight Stays in Lapland 2005-2016. (Visit Finland 2005-2016)

There can be seen the strong continuous and visible growth of Finland as the destination. Also, after year 2016 there can be seen a strong 10 per cent growth in number of registered overnight stays in Finland when comparing December 2016 and 2017 (Figure 2.) (Visit Finland 2018b).

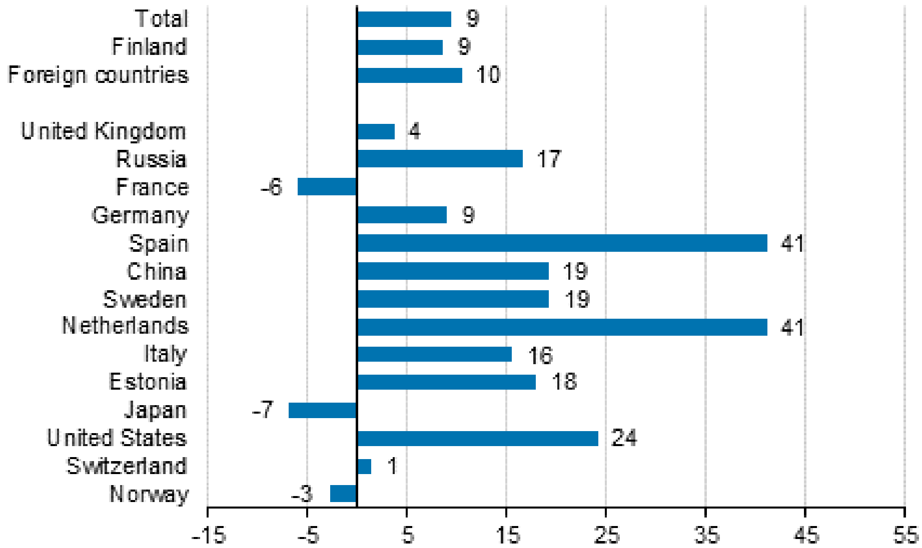

Figure 2. Change in Foreign Overnight Stays in December 2017/2016, % (Visit Finland 2018b)

When comparing Finland's top destinations most of the foreign overnight stays are spent in Helsinki. The three following top destinations are Archipelago and the coastal area, Lakeland and Lapland. Between years 2013-2017, Lapland's foreign overnight stays has increased mostly of the four top destinations. (Figure 3. Visit Finland 2018a)

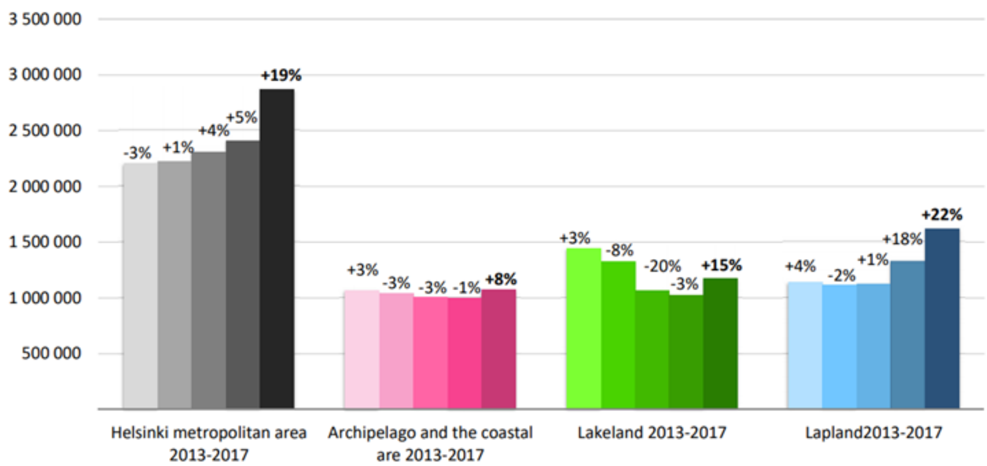

Figure 3. Foreign Overnight Stays and Change (%) to Previous Year in the Main Travel Areas 2013-2017 (Visit Finland 2018a).

As the tourism industry is very beneficial for the economic wellbeing, it is crucial to pay attention to developing tourism products and services to stay in a continuous growth in tourism business (Dritsakis 2004, 305). Lapland is a successful winter destination, but summer tourism is not so visible and developed compared to other Nordic countries. Therefore, we think that more focus should be concentrated on developing summer tourism in Finland and increasing the visibility of Lapland and Finland as a summer destination. (See Øian, et al. 2018, 31.) The visibility could be achieved by active product design for summer products as well as planning marketing campaigns for summer tourism products.

2.2 Tourism of Finland Compared to Norway, Sweden and Denmark

Based on the statistics of Visit Finland (2017), the minority of overnight stays of Nordic countries was spent in Finland when comparing to other Nordic countries; Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Most of the overnight stays have been in Sweden and secondly in Denmark and Norway. However, Finland had the biggest growth in the number of overnight stays between years 2016 and 2017. (Figure 4. Visit Finland 2016.)

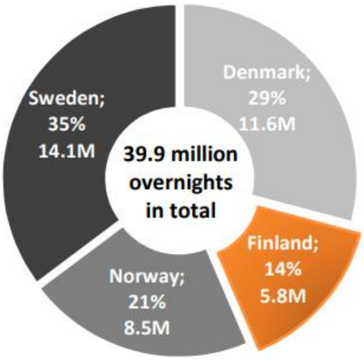

Figure 4. Foreign Overnight stays in the Nordic countries 2016 (Visit Finland 2016).

The number of international overnight stays spent in Finland differs remarkably between winter and summer seasons. Based on Visit Finland statistics foreign overnight stays in Nordic countries in winter time between December-April, the number of foreign overnight stays in Finland has increased remarkably from amount of approximately 172 thousand overnights to 247,5 thousand overnights in years 2009-2016. That presents visible continuous growth of Finland as a Nordic winter destination. When comparing to other Nordic countries Finland continued its strong growth as a winter destination. (Visit Finland 2017.) However, other Nordic countries as for example, Sweden and Denmark are strong competitors for Finland as Northern destinations (Figure 5, Visit Finland 2016).

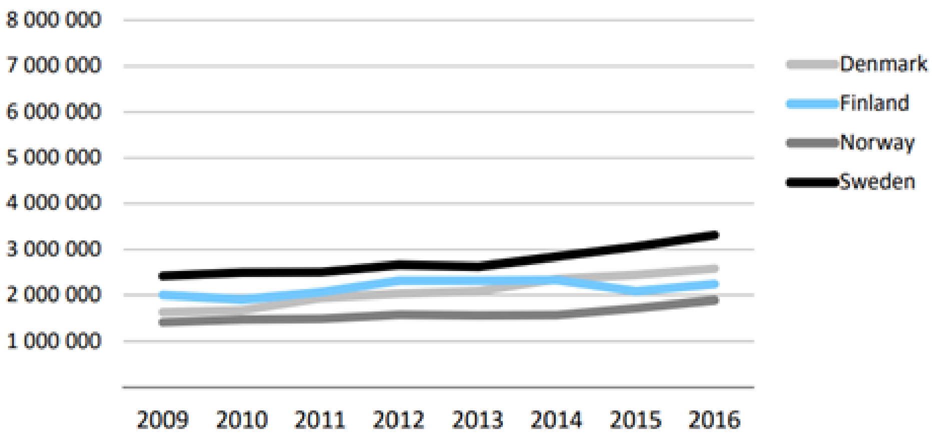

Figure 5. Foreign Overnight Stays in the Nordic Countries, Winter Season (Dec-Apr 2009-2016). (Visit Finland 2016)

Also, after year 2016 Finland maintained its strong growth as a tourism destination. Between months January and November 2017 Finland's total amount of international tourists' overnight stays registered grew up with 5 per cents compared to the previous year's 2016 months January-November. (Figure 6.)

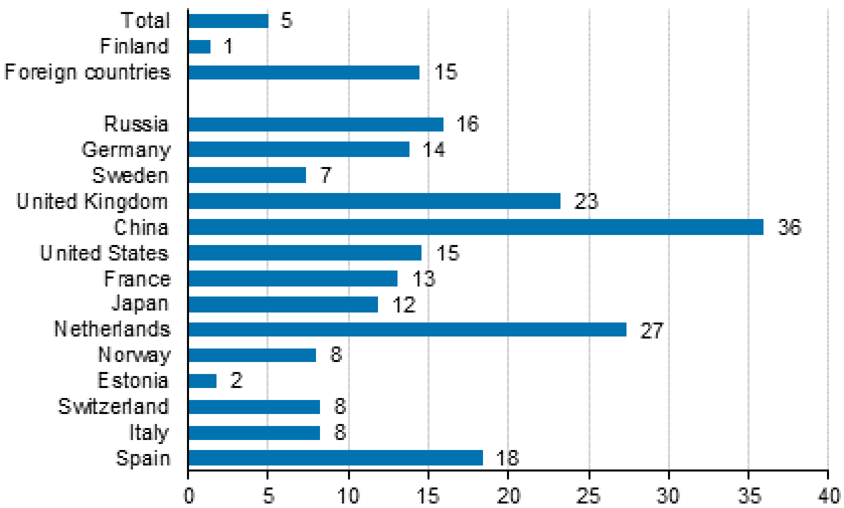

Figure 6. Change in Foreign Overnight Stays in Finland January-November 2017/2016, % (Visit Finland 2018c)

However, summer season in Finland remained low and compared to the other three Nordic destinations, Finnish summer season has been remarkably differing based on number of overnight stays. It shows the fact; Finland does not have yet as strong image as a summer destination as other Nordic destinations (Figure 7. Visit Finland 2016).

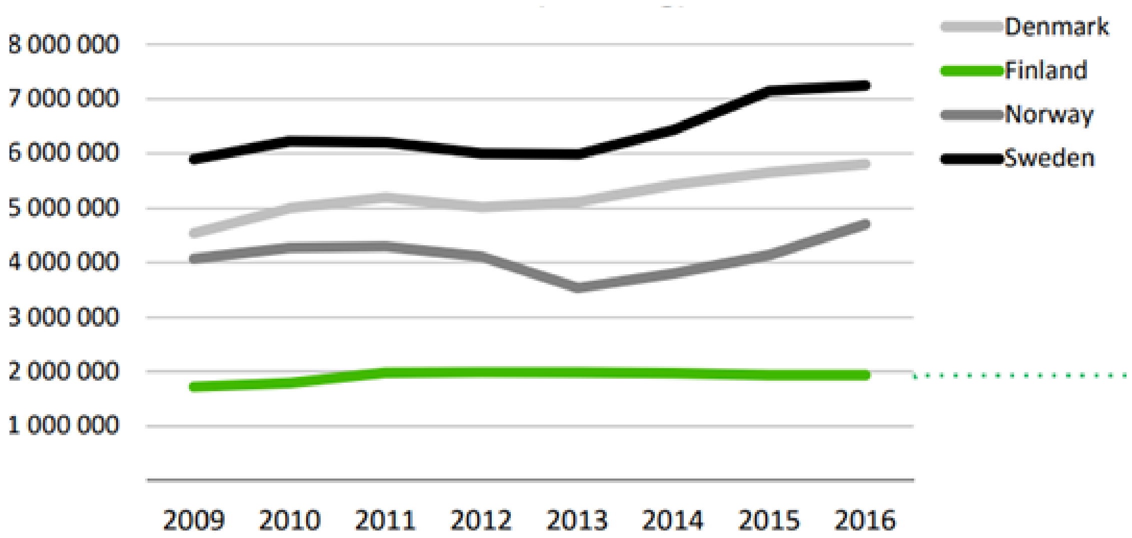

Figure 7. Foreign Overnight stays in the Nordic countries, Summer Season (Jun-Aug 2009-2016). (Visit Finland 2016).

3 FROM TRAVEL MOTIVATION TO DESTINATION CHOICE AND TRAVEL SATISFACTION

3.1. Travel Motivation

The decision of the destination is based on travellers' expectations towards the trip as well as about what they are interested in (Mihelj 2010, 1078). Travel motivation is formed when travellers realize specific needs and they discover a holiday destination which offer services and products according to their needs. (Lubbe 1998, as cited in Gassita & Kassean 2013,42.)

The motivation includes the aim or a reason of travelling to a specific place (Dann 1981, Yoon & Uysal 2005, as cited in Haahti et al. 2013 ,168). Also, motivation to travel is driven by different aspects of motivation. The aspects are physical aspect, cultural aspect, fantasy aspect and social aspect. The physical aspect can be defined as need to escape stress and to achieve relaxation. The social aspect can be defined as a need to meet friends and relatives. The cultural aspect refers to travellers' need to learn about different countries and their way of living. The fantasy aspect of motivation refers to need to have a break from the current life. (Goodall 1988, as cited inn Kozak 2002, 229.)

There occur push-and pull factors which affect to the travel motivation and to travel decision. The so-called push factors are considered as emotional and they exist in the inner part of the human. (Yoon & Hagnan 1993; Yoon & Uysal 2005, as cited in Gassita & Kassean 2013, 43.) Also, push factors can be defined as a need or a wish to escape the reality. Additionally, push factors can be defined for example as needs for relaxation, health and fitness and social interaction between humans as well as seeking adventures. (Dann 1977, Crompton 1979, as cited in Gassita & Kassean 2013, 43).

The pull factors are dependent on situation and they can be described as external and mental elements which urge travellers to travel to the destination (Yoon & Uysal 2005, as cited in Gassita & Kassean 2013, 45). Additionally, the travellers are fascinated by the destination through marketing which introduces the destination`s characteristics such as nature scenery such as beaches.

Additionally, the "pull factors" effect on the willingness to travel to a specific destination. (Dann 1981, as cited in Gassita & Kassean 2013, 45). The motivation for travelling can be also affected by specific limitations such as anxiety of travelling due to concerns of safety in the destination (Crawford & Godbey 1987, Crawford et al.1991, as cited in Haahti, Mlozi & Pesämaa 2013, 169).

The destination selection process and decision to travel might be affected negatively by limitations. However, the limitations usually disappear when the travellers receive more knowledge about the destination. Due to limitations which include anxiety and concerns of safety the customers choose the destination which have the smallest risk to have safety issues. (Haahti, Mlozi & Pesämaa 2013, 169.)

3.2. Factors Affecting Destination Choice

3.2.1. Demographic Factors

The age of the travellers has an impact on motivation and the decision to travel. The reasons for travelling are different among different age groups. For example, travellers from the older generation are interested to travel to fulfil the need to learn about local cultures and to interact with local people. Additionally, the vacations with a possibility to remove stress are considered important by older generations while the younger generations are more interested of activities such as sports in the destination. (Jönsson & Devonish 2010, 404.)

Additionally, also nationality has an impact to the motivation and the decision to travel. For example, in the study conducted for Barbados made by Jönsson & Devonish (2010, 406) it was found that travellers from Canada are interested in motorized sport activities on the water. In comparison, the British tourists travelling to Barbados are more interested in relaxing in the destination. (Jönsson & Devonish 2010, 406.)

3.2.2. Product, Price and Length of the Holiday

The price of a trip effects on destination selection. The destination which is not considered overpriced is very likely more attractive for the travellers. The price as an element which influence destination choice is connected to package trips and travellers who are organizing the trips themselves. Especially, the travellers' focus is on the prices of accommodation and the prices of accessing the destination. However, the price level of activities and food in this criterion are not often considered important. (Decrop 2006, 99)

The product offered in destination and the destination itself are also considered important. It is necessary that travellers can have a break from the stressful everyday life (Decrop 2006, 100). Additionally, the selling process of the product has an impact on the travel decision. The way how the holidays are sold influence customers. The customers are aiming to have affordable holidays. The holidays are bought for example when it is possible to receive discount. Furthermore, while the travellers are considering purchasing a trip, some of the travellers prefer face to face selling of trips. (Decrop 2006, 101.)

There are different characteristics which influences the destination choice and whether the holiday is going to be long or short. Safety issues and the price of the destination affects while choosing a short holiday destination. Additionally, the food quality as well as the culture and the value of money are affects to a short-term holiday destination choice. While considering choosing a long holiday destination the food quality, price level, relaxation possibilities, location, the level of accommodation and different accommodation possibilities are important. (Mussalam & Tajeddini 2016, 22.)

3.2.3. Word-of-Mouth Communication and Social Media

Also, the recommendations have an impact on destination choice. The travellers are affected by other`s and their previous travels to a specific travel destination. For example, travellers hear stories from their friends or colleagues and they get inspired also to travel to same destination. The stories heard from others are reliable because the stories are told by friends and colleagues and they are a "professional" due to their previous vacation to a certain destination. (Russell, Currie, Wesley & Sutherland 2008, 21.)

Social media impacts on travellers' decision to choose. For example, the social media affects while choosing vacation destination and lodging (Fotis, Buhalis & Rossides 2012, 7). The effect of social media on travellers' motivation and decision to travel can be defined by utilizing travellers' travelling cycle. The cycle includes the steps of dreaming, planning travel, booking a trip and sharing the experience. During the planning stage of a travel cycle the experiences and recommendations of other travellers' influences travellers' behaviour. Websites such as TripAdvisor and Holiday Check impacts on travellers' decision to travel. Additionally, sharing of the experience is necessary in formation of motivation.

The travellers with the help of the internet and technical solutions can read the feedback of others. Reading others' experiences is an important part of travel decision and destination choice. (Hall 2014.)

3.3. Travel Satisfaction

3.3.1. Understanding Tourist Expectations as Key to Travel Satisfaction

Wide range of different tourist products and services need to be offered to be able to personalize the offered travel experience and to fulfil the expectations and needs of different tourists. The customer expectations change continuously, for example, depending on new trends and increasing travel experiences. As tourists travel more, they gain knowledge of the destinations and cultural environments where they travel and become to expect more from their new experiences. Tourism companies and travel service providers need to be sensitive with the changes in tourist expectations. Travel is no longer a luxury, but part of life and it causes the travellers to make also decisions more spontaneous than before. (Mihelj, 2010, 1078.)

As a result, for growing global tourism and development of tourism products and services as well as growing selection of travel products and services, travellers have started to expect more personalized services. For example, accommodation providers need to invest more in online room selection, personalized beds, in room food and beverage offerings in the future to fulfil the travellers' expectations and needs. (Mihelj 2010, 1078.)

Nowadays tourism organizers are required to understand the formation of tourists' needs and travel expectations. Also, understanding, the external factors as travel trends and demographic factors as travellers' experience history are affecting expectations and is required (Mihelj 2010).

> Expectation is defined as the probability of a certain attitude that can lead to positive or negative advantages, therefore allowing the isolation of determining factors of behaviour and, moreover, identifying how expectation and value can be combined to make choices. (Fishbein 1967.)

Many previous studies have shown multiple factors impacting the formation of expectations. One of the best-known service quality models, The Gap Model (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml 1991, 335–364) illustrates three main factors forming the expected service: word-of-mouth communication, personal needs and past experiences.

Expectations can be divided into three categories: ideal, former and minimum expectations. Ideal expectations differ individually from each other and are formed by individual values and hopes. They are often high-level requirements and challenging to fulfil. (Rope & Pöllänen 1998, 30–31.) Former expectations based on company image, business field, marketing communication, and previous experiences are formed through individuals' values and attitudes. They can differ widely based on situation of individual customer. The third category, minimum expectations, can be described as must be-requirements that the customer expects to get fulfilled at least on minimum level of the expected service quality. They can be based on situation, company or individuals' values and background. (Rope & Pöllänen 1998, 30–31.)

According to Rope & Pöllänen (1998, 29–38), company image is one of the important factors affecting customer expectations. If the image of the company is good, the customer expects higher service quality and it sets higher requirements of service quality to company. Whereas, if the image is low, fewer customers are interested to use the company's services. (Rope & Pöllänen 1998, 29–38.)

According to Mihelj (2010), it can be claimed that the brand of the hotel affects the hotel choice stronger than the hotel's location. More than half of the decision choice is affected just by the company's brand. Hotel guests expect the brand promise to be fulfilled. If the hotel image is right, it will gain loyal guests, better incomes and performance. The brand of the company for example, a hotel's brand is expected by travellers to cover the full interaction during the whole experience in all levels: in pre-stay, stay and post-stay. So, customer not only expect the brand promises to consist the "moment of truth" experience but also the pre- and post-experiences.

The travel expectations and needs differ variously depending on the different travel destinations, travellers' personal ages and their previous travel experiences, values and lifestyles. Additionally, the different traveller segments expect differing experiences from the trip. For example, baby boomers' expectations are more met in destinations offering heritage tourism, adventure travel and ecotourism instead of extreme sports. (Mihelj 2010.)

The decision of the destination is based on traveller's expectations towards the trip as well as about what they are interested in (Mihelj 2010,1078).

Also, the global natural phenomenon as global warming and climate change affects to the travel expectations. More travellers are interested in environmentally-friendly products and services. Sustainable tourism has become one of the trends in tourists' expectations and needs. It means that tourism companies and destinations with more sustainable products and services can affect the travel expectations as well as choosing the destination. (Mihelj 2010.) New expectations called "mega trends" as environmental issues, political factors, safety and security as well as demographic changes as macroeconomic trends has been together making a huge change in world tourism in the last few years. (Mihelj 2010.)

3.3.2. Formation of Satisfaction

A research on customer satisfaction fulfilment requires a deep understanding of the formation of customer satisfaction. Numerous factors have affected to determine the level of customer satisfaction but as several studies have indicated, customer expectations are one of the most important factors in the formation of customer satisfaction level. (Rope & Pöllänen 1998.)

Because customer satisfaction is a key for success of company, it is important to understand deeper the formation of perceived experience quality. Expectations of service can be mirrored with experienced service creating a perceived service quality. Perceived service quality is the gap between expectations and experienced service quality. (Rope & Pöllänen 1998, 38–43.) The Service Quality Model (Grönroos 2014) supports the theory of the perceived service quality's formation (Figure 8).

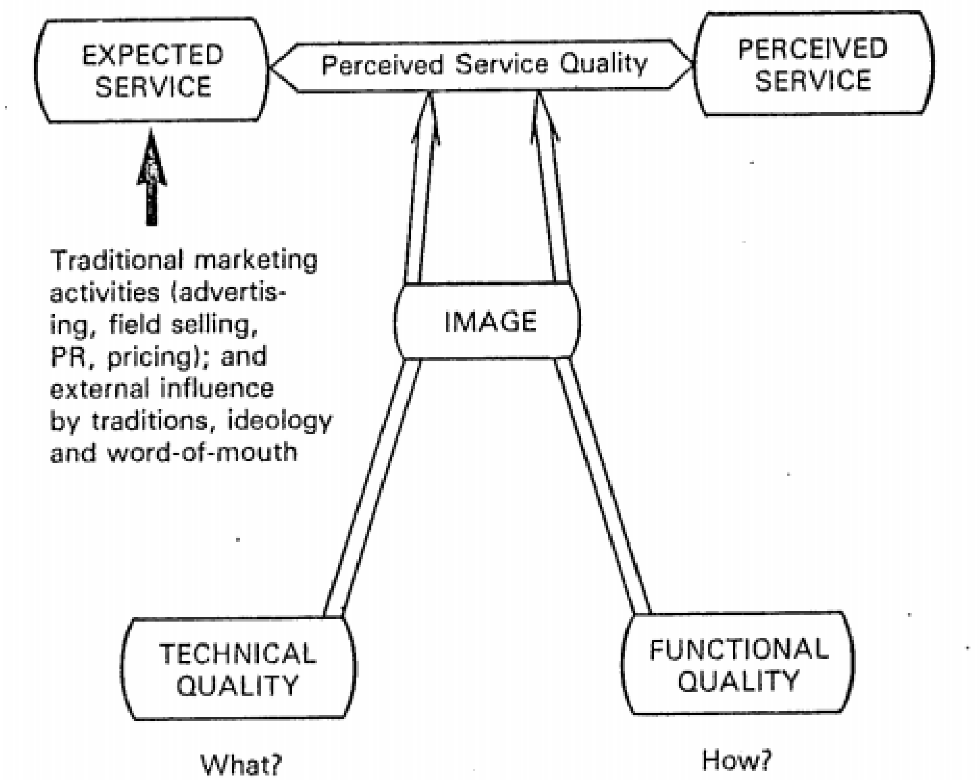

Figure 8. The Service Quality Model. (Grönroos 2014)

The customer mirrors expectations of service straight to the experienced service quality, and that comparing creates perceived quality. Customer expectations have the key role in the creation of customer satisfaction. According to Rope & Pöllänen (1998, 38–43) the more comprehensively the expectations meet the experienced service quality the more satisfied the customer is. Whereas, it means the larger the gap between expected and experienced service quality is that more unsatisfied customer is. (Rope & Pöllänen 1998, 38-43.)

3.3.3. Linkages Between Customer Loyalty and Revisit Intentions

Traveller's satisfaction is highly crucial topic of tourism research because it has direct impact on the future of the tourism destinations. Furthermore, the satisfaction has an impact on tourism decision choice and to revisit intentions. (Naidoo et al. 2010, as cited in Fayed, Wafik & George's 2016, 17.)

However, also destination loyalty is considered important, but it is not widely researched even though it is an important factor to indicate whether the tourism destination is successful or not (Dimanche & Havitz 1994, as cited in Yoon & Uysal 2005, 48).

There is a clear connection between the traveller's satisfaction, revisit intentions and positive feedback of the destination. In addition, satisfaction with accommodation, restaurant, attractions and climate affects satisfaction concerning the tourism destination. (Beego & Prentice 1997, Chi & Qu 2008; De Rojas & Camarero 2007, Oliver 1993, as cited in Frimpong, Nwankwo, Blankson & Tarnanidis 2013, 630.)

Attachment to a destination can be defined as a connection between an individual and the destination (Halpenny 2006, as cited in Reitsamer, Brunner- Sperding & Stockburger-Sauer 2016, 95). An attractive tourism destination offers a tourism product which is available in a specific area. (Buhalis 2000, as cited in Reitsamer, Brunner-Sperdin & Stockburger-Sauer 2016, 94.)

The connection between a traveller and a destination has an impact on destination loyalty and satisfaction. The connection is formed due to different characteristics in the destination. Characteristics as historical attractions or cultural attractions influences the formation of connection. Also, accommodation possibilities impact the formation of connection. Additionally, the fame of the destination as well as extraordinary nature of the destination are important. Furthermore, paying attention to possibilities to reach the destination is important. (Prayag & Ryan 2016, 353.)

Destination attractiveness has a crucial part in formation of the connection between travellers and a destination. The connection occurs when travellers visit the destination. Accessibility, accommodation and restaurant services as well as local community should function together to achieve connection on a destination. Therefore, it is important that the management of a destination provides accommodation and culinary services as well as maintains the accessibility of the destination. Furthermore, the interaction between the travellers and locals for example by hosting events is important. The interaction is important in achieving connection to a destination among travellers and to provide memorable tourism products and services. (Reitsamer, Brunner-Sperding & Stokburger-Sauer 2016, 99.)

Also, nature scenery influences attractiveness of a destination. Additionally, accommodation offerings, restaurants and accessibility of a destination have an impact on attractiveness of the destination. Furthermore, interaction between the local community and the travellers creates memorable experiences for the travellers and this way increases the attractiveness of the destination. (Kim, Ritchi & McCormik 2012, Kim 1998, Murphy, Pritchard & Smith 2000, Kim et al. 2012, as cited in Reitsamer et al. 2016, 94.)

Providing services such as attractions, historical places to visit or teaching about local culture helps to achieve " the connection" and the customers will become attached to a destination. (Prayag & Ryan 2011, as cited in Reitsamer et al. 2016, 93.)

The destination which can provide a connection between the destinations and travellers gets competitive advantage. The competitive advantage benefits the destination because the travellers are less likely to consider alternative destinations despite their offerings. (Yuksel, Yuksel & Bilim 2010, as cited in Reitsamer et al. 2016, 93.)

Also, the marketing of the destination' amenities have an impact on travellers' satisfaction towards the destination as well as loyalty. The image of a destination has also an impact on satisfaction level, connection between the destination and traveller and destination loyalty. The image for the destination can be increased, for example by marketing. (Prayag & Ryan 2016, 353.)

The quality of a destination has an impact on how travellers see the destination, which may lead to revisits. For example, the qualities for an island destination are beaches and the cleanliness of them. The success of these qualities is discussed to have effect on satisfaction of the travellers and willingness to revisit the destination. (Sangpikul 2017, 422.) There occur different aspects related to destination quality and traveller's satisfaction and destination loyalty. The aspects are natural attractions, people, destination`s services, infrastructure and safety. (Figure 9.)

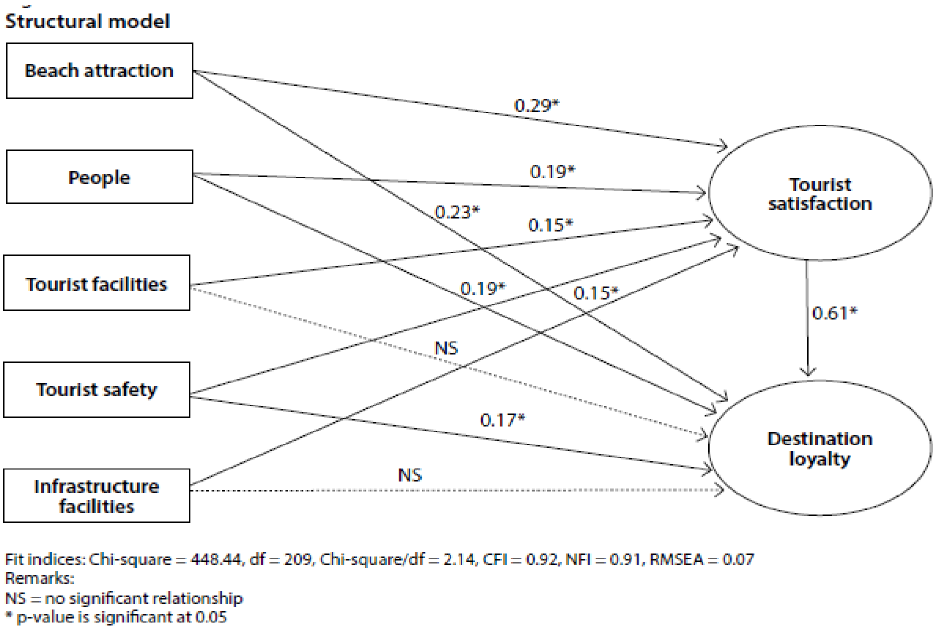

Figure 9. Dimensions of Destination Quality. (Sangpikul 2017, 430.)

One of the aspects effecting to destination loyalty is natural attractions such as beaches (Sangpikul 2017, 430). Additionally, the positive interaction with other travellers and locals has an impact on customer satisfaction. For example, if the locals and other people such as tourism industry employees are positive towards the travellers this is seen as an important factor which influence customers loyalty towards the destination. (Chi&Qu 2008, Mehmetoglu & Normann 2013, Thongkundam 2012, as cited in Sangpikul 2017, 431.)

Safety in the destination has an important role in formation of tourist loyalty. Safety issues may also affect negatively on customer loyalty. An example of this is Thailand which has been negatively influenced by terrorism and nature disasters. This kind of matters may affect negatively on travellers and they may decide not to return to Thailand because they are concerned of safety issues. (Thongkundam 2012, as cited in Sangpikul 2017, 431.) In conclusion, it can be claimed that when travellers are happy with quality aspects of the destination they become satisfied and satisfaction leads to becoming loyal for the destination and to revisit intensions. (Sangpikul 2017, 431-432.)

4. TOWARDS SUCCESFUL DESTINATION EXPERIENCE

4.1. Destination Experience

4.1.1. Formation of Destination Experience

Many previous researches have already discussed and analysed travel experiences, but research have been limited when analysing the destination experience from psychological, social or anthropological perspectives. Neither researches do not offer practical way of analysing destination experience and are not able to read without sophisticated system for data collection. (Cetin, Kizilirmak, & Balik 2016.)

A tourism destination can be defined as a combination of products and services which forms an ensemble for travellers in a specific place (Buhalis 2000, as cited in Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin 2012, 36). A tourism destination can be also defined as an environment in which the travellers decide to stay and try and experience specific attractions (Leiper 1995, 87, as cited in Saraniemi & Kylänen 2010, 3). In addition, tourism destination is also defined as an experience which is formed by utilizing transportation, information services and accommodation during the trip (Gunn 1988 as cited in Saraniemi & Kylänen 2010, 3).

Travellers' destination experience can be defined as a journey which is divided into three phases: pre-phase, on-site phase and post-site phase. Pre-experience consists of traveller's thoughts or feelings before the vacation. On-site experience refers to experiences in the vacation destination. On-site experience consists of peak-experiences, which can be defined as the "top" moment of the trip. Peak-experience can also be the actual reason for travelling to a specific destination. However, peak experience is not necessarily the reason for a trip, but peak-experience might also develop in the tourism destination. On-site experience also includes supporting experiences such as accommodation and culinary experiences which travellers experience in the destination. Supporting experiences support the peak-experience. Post-experience takes place after the trip. It consists of memorizing the experience and sharing the experience on social media or personally. (Multidimensional Tourism Institute 2015.)

4.1.2. Memorable Tourism Experiences as Pre-Requisites for Successful Destination Experience

The memorable tourism experiences (MTE) attract travellers to travel to tourism destinations. The memorable tourism experience concept includes ten different aspects. (Figure 10; Hyeong-Kim 2014, 41.) The aspects are activities, infrastructure, environment, service quality, accessibility, physiography, place attachment and superstructure, local culture and hospitality and destination management. It is crucial for tourism destinations to have knowledge about providing memorable tourism experiences to achieve competitive advantage (Hyeong-Kim 2014, 41.)

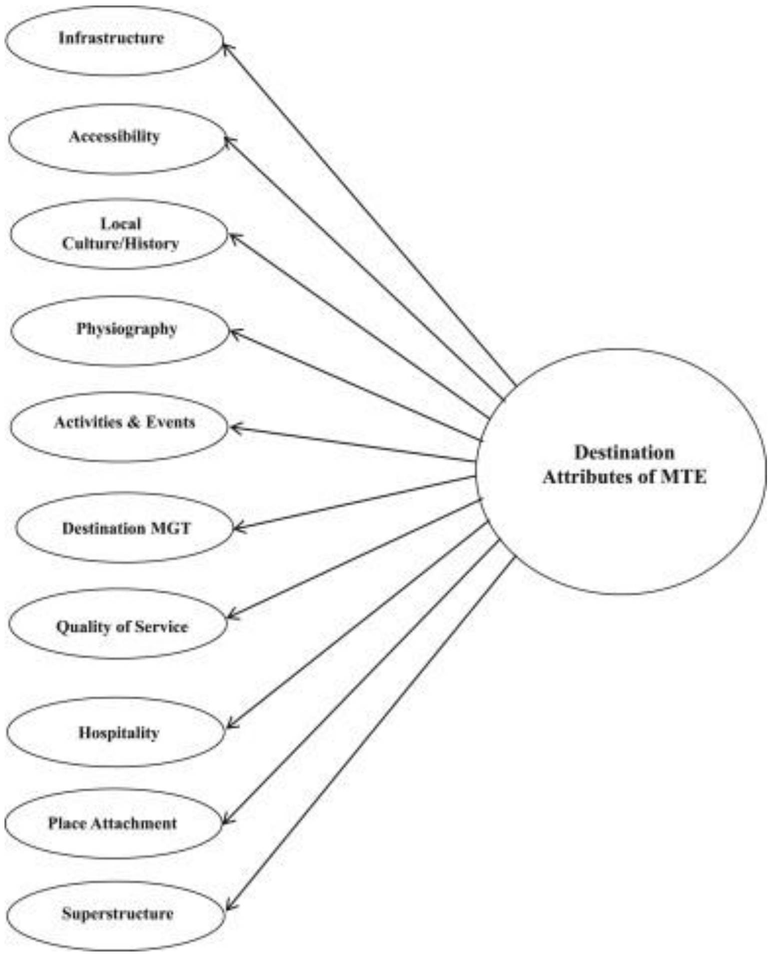

Figure 10. The characteristics of MTEs. (Hyeong-Kim 2014, 41).

Experiencing together with the local community have an impact on the formation of memorable destination experience. For instance, local events or learning about the local lifestyle create a memorable experience for the guests and they will get more attached to the destination. (Kim et al.2012, Kim, Ritchie et al.2012, Morgan & Xu 2009, Tung & Ritchie 2011, as cited in Hyeong-Kim 2014, 41.)

Furthermore, Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) claim as cited in Hyeong-Kim (2014, 41) that the behaviour of the locals has an impact on memorable tourism experiences. For example, if the locals are friendly, helpful or hospitable the travellers receive a positive image and memorable holiday memories.

There also occur negative features, which may lead into negative tourism experiences. For instance, the difficulties in accessibility while travelling to the destination or difficulties in terms of accessibility during the actual trip may lead into a negative destination experience. (Kim et al.2012, as cited in Hyeong-Kim 2014, 41.)

Additionally, tourism with an interest to co-operate is increasing and the travellers are aiming for travel experiences with co-operation elements. The destinations should create events, activities or tourism products such as cooking classes which would utilize the five senses of a human. The co-operation will increase the educational and entertaining aspect of the experience and this results as a memorable tourism experience. (Hyeong-Kim 2014, 42.)

Destination Management Organizations should consider recognizing and developing the characteristics of the destination which help to create memorable tourism experiences. The basic elements of every destination such as cleanliness and safety must function to create memorable experiences. (Hyeong-Kim 2014, 42.)

Additionally, the functioning management of the destination is crucial. The destinations must be managed in a way that there is for example well-organized infrastructure. Furthermore, it is important that travelling to the destination is made comfortable for the travellers. It should also include some unique elements and to recognize the elements which make the destination differ from other destinations. This would support the creation of memorable tourism experiences. (Hyeong-Kim 2014, 42.)

Memorable on-site destination experiences may also lead to revisit intentions among travellers. Destinations providing memorable tourism experiences will more likely get loyal travellers which have revisit intensions. (Zhang, Wu & Buhalis 2017, 4).

In terms of memorable tourism experiences, the country image and destination image have an impact. The better the image of a country or a destination is the more memorable tourism experiences the destination can provide. In providing the memorable experiences, the destination management should focus on improving the environments of the destination such as infrastructure, technology, economics and people. Furthermore, the destination marketing and branding have an impact on the destination image to create a good brand image in the minds of the potential visitors. (Zhang, Wu & Buhalis 2017, 9.)

Destination managers must have a knowledge and a good understanding of destination experience and formation of satisfaction to be able to fulfil the visitors' expectations. Being able to fulfil the expectations increases the satisfaction of visitors and creates a better performance of companies' tourism services and products in the destination. (Kozak & Rimmington 2000, as cited in Mlozi, Pesämaa & Haahti 2013 ,170.)

4.2. Successful Destination Experience

4.2.1. Role of Quality in Successful Destination Experience

Destination experience's quality is dependent of wide range of smaller travel experiences in the destination. The success of the destination requires the travel experience offerings to meet travellers' expectations and needs. (Cetin, Kizilirmak & Bali 2016).

Pizam & Ellis (1999, 330) claims referring to (Parasuraman et al. 1985, 1988, 1991) that there occur different aspects of customer satisfaction. The aspects are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles. Reliability means that the product offers the services promised. Responsiveness refers as needs to help the customers and to offer appropriate service. Assurance refers to know-how of the employees as well as to their trust and confidence. Empathy refers to taking care of the customers and the tangibles refers for example to equipment and to staff of the company.

When developing a destination, also the knowledge of the current situation is needed. According to Grönroos (1998) the company's competitive edge is most influenced by functional quality. Any development in tourism companies requires the tourism managers understand the importance of company's image and functional quality in building stronger the competitive edge. The research investigates the factors creating a superior competitive edge for a company based on earlier studies and theoretical researches. The superior competitive edge of tourism companies can lead to the growth of the destinations' competitive edge.

The study of Superior Destination Experience (Cetin, Kizilirmak & Balik 2016) compared inferior and superior destinations based on 20 experiential attributes and found out that 500 respondents had rated all the attributes higher for superior destinations. For example, all the attributes as tourist services, infrastructure, as wells as behaviour of the destination were all rated significantly higher in the superior destinations than in the inferior destinations. The study shows also, that the largest difference between some of the items is seen as the most important factors of the superior destination. For example, tourist services, variety of activities, service staff, entertainment, infra-structure and cleanliness had the highest difference between superior and inferior destination rates of the respondents. (Cetin, Kizilirmak, & Balik 2016.)

In opposite way, the lowest difference between rates were responded as accessibility, value for money, local hospitality, climate and relaxing environment. In the table inferior destination is marked shorted as "infra destination" and superior destination the same way as "supra destination". (Table 1), (Cetin, Kizilirmak & Balik 2016.)

Table 1. Differences Between Supra- and Infra- Destination. (Ceting, Kizilirmark & Balik 2016)

Attribute	**Supra destination** $\bar{x}$	**Infra destination** $\bar{x}$	**Supra** $\bar{x}$ – **Infra** $\bar{x}$
Tourist services	4,26	2,64	1,62**
Variety of activities	4,11	2,63	1,48**
Service staff	4,02	2,59	1,43**
Entertainment	4,17	2,75	1,42**
Infra-structure	4,30	2,92	1,38**
Cleanliness	4,37	3,03	1,34**
Lively environment	4,12	2,93	1,19**
Natural attractions	4,45	3,36	1,09**
Cultural attractions	4,17	3,08	1,09**
Local food	3,94	2,89	1,05**
Safety & security	4,32	3,30	1,02**
Authenticity	3,74	2,76	0,98**
Reputation	4,59	3,61	0,98**
Shopping alternatives	4,00	3,05	0,95**
Relaxing environment	4,18	3,26	0,92**
Climate	4,43	3,60	0,83**
Local hospitality	3,92	3,16	0,76**
Value for money	3,65	3,15	0,50**
Accessibility	3,69	3,31	0,38**
Behavior			
Loyalty	4,58	2,07	2,51**
Recommendation	4,53	2,22	2,31**
Overall experience	4,50	2,41	2,09**
Satisfaction	4,40	2,43	1,97**

** Significant at $p<0.01$ level

It can be inferred that, for example, climate or relaxing environment is not as an important factor as the variety of activities or cleanliness in forming a superior destination. It is still important to take a critical look at the research and to notice that the target group of the research was mainly local people and it might have influenced the results. Also, expectations and experiences of travellers are always dependent on individual travellers' differentiation and experiences.

Environmental factors have also impacted the results which should be taken in account also. (Cetin, Kizilirmak & Balik 2016.)

Based on a previous study of Superior Destination Experience (Cetin, Kizilirmak & Balik 2016.), it can be concluded that a superior destination owns specific characteristics or elements whose quality is higher than an inferior and less-successful destinations'. When defining a successful destination is essential to take a deeper look at today's top travel destinations and find out the elements and characters that make them for travellers unique, special and differing from inferior destinations.

Destination Experience Satisfaction Study^{SM} (Power 2016) has researched the satisfaction of travellers in different top 50 destinations. The research was conducted in the United States and measurement was based on the hotel room nights sold in the destinations inside the country. Interestingly the results show that travellers spent more money in the destinations they love, the difference in money use is directly connected how delighted or disappointed travellers were. Also, there is a connection between the amount of traveller's money spent in the destination and the level of travellers' satisfaction in the destination. The study also shows that the personal emotional connection with the destination also plays an important role for travellers, more money was spent in the loved destinations when comparing the money use between separate travellers. (Cetin, Kizilirmak & Balik 2016.)

The study assessed the experience of travellers in six categories as activities, cost and fees, food and beverage, infrastructure, lodging and travel/arrival. For example, New York was the highest scored of the Northeast/Mid-Atlantic Region's top destinations (Figure 11) and results show that its strongest factors were travel/arrival, lodging, food and beverage and activities.

Figure 11. Destination Experience Satisfaction Study. Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking. Northeast/Mid-Atlantic Region (Power 2016)

For example, highest score destination of Southwest top destinations was Austin and Columbus in Midwest Region. Based on the study that represents and proves at the same time the fact how the customer satisfaction impacts. In the destination exceeded expectations of travellers can lead to remarkable growth and real value. (Power 2016.)

The key findings of the study show that three of the main factors which are most affective for travellers in rankings of the top destination are food, fun and lodging. Good examples of top destinations are Las Vegas and New Orleans. Travelers also see destinations more than as a destination. Emotional connection with the destination and loved destinations were ranked higher than others. (Power 2016)

Also, independently booked travels with internet booking were more satisfied with their travel experience than travellers who had used traditional travel agent services. The money spending can also be9 one factor affecting the destination experience satisfaction, based on a study on business travellers who do not travel at own cost were more satisfied during their holidays than leisure travellers. The reliability of the study is good because of high number of participants, more than 26,000 answers of travellers visiting in the U.S. metropolitan area between December 2015 and July 2016. (Power 2016.)

4.2.2. Role of Co-Creation in Successful Destination Experience

Tourism with an interest in co-creation is increasing and travellers are aiming for travel experiences with co-creation elements. The destinations should create events, activities or tourism products such as cooking classes which would utilize the five human senses. Co-creation increases the educational and entertaining aspect of the experience and this results as a memorable tourism experience. (Hyeong-Kim 2014, 42.)

Co-creation is a part of service-dominant logic which aims to provide services instead of products. In service-dominant logic the customer is active and is part of the process which creates the value. The customer is part of creating products and services which creates the value. Also, the customer is part of creating products and services which provide more memorable experiences. (Vargo & Lush 2004, as cited in Buonincontri, Morvillo & Niekerk 2017, 265.) Co-creation in tourism is used by allowing the tourists to communicate with the service providers as well as by giving them an opportunity to be active participants of the experiences in the destination. By allowing the travellers to be active participants of tourism experience the main element of co-creation is achieved. (Mathis et al.2016, Peterson et al.2005, as cited in Buonincontri, Morvillo & Niekerk 2017, 274.)

Additionally, the co-creation may increase the spending of the travellers in the destination (Figure 12. Buonincontri, Morvillo & Niekerk 2017, 268). The increased spending and other benefits of co-creation are very beneficial for the destination´s entrepreneurs. The increased spending gives an opportunity to start designing more expensive tourism products and this will result as satisfied customers and the destination is able to get competitive advantage by utilizing and recognizing co-creation as a beneficial tool. Also, travellers become more satisfied and happier with their experience in the destination. (Buonincontri, Morvillo & Niekerk 2017, 274.) The communication between the service providers and the travellers is crucial in every step of the experience: in before the experience, during the experience and after the experience. Therefore, it is crucial that tourism destinations offer possibilities to communicate during the trip and offers a possibility for travellers being part of developing, planning and organizing their trip. (Buonincontri, Morvillo & Niekerk 2017, 274.)

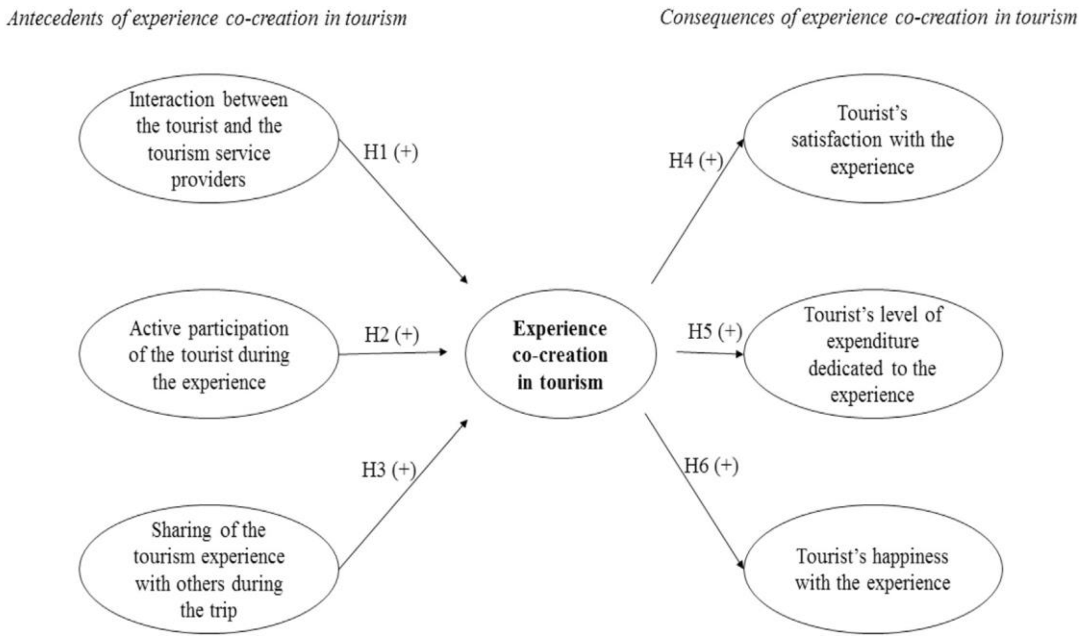

Figure 12. Co-creation and Its Benefits. (Buonincontri, Morvillo & Niekerk 2017, 268.)

4.2.3. Role of Technology in Successful Destination Experience

Referring to (UNWTO 2011,2) Applying technology in every part of a tourist´s experience will result as a successful destination experience. The technology enhanced experiences are defined into four steps dreaming, researching, booking, experiencing and sharing. (Figure 13.)

Figure 13. Stages of a technology enhanced experience (UNWTO 2011, 8).

During a dreaming phase travelers are looking for information and travellers are consuming different materials such as blogs, online review websites and searching for ideas what to experience or to do during their trip. It is necessary for Destination Management Organizations to be available in search engines to encourage the travellers.

Research stage consists searching for accommodation or activities in destination. Booking stage includes reservations in destination such as accommodation. Booking stage is becoming more into an online activity. In booking stage, it is highly necessary that tourism destination is available for booking online. The most critical part in technology enhanced tourism experience is an experiencing stage. During this part of the experience stage travellers utilize technology such as mobile phones or tablets to find information concerning activities within destination or information for renting a car. During the experiencing stage is important that destination offers information online for travellers concerning the destination. Last part of the technology enhanced experience is sharing which is considered very valuable for travellers. For example, travellers share videos or other content from their trip in social media. Sharing provides possibilities for new travellers to get inspired to travel to a specific destination. (UNWTO 2011, 1-2)

The technology can be utilized in every step of a destination experience; Pre-experience, on-site experience and post-site experience. For example, during the pre-site experience the destinations should utilize technology by providing videos, images and stories about the destination. This would help inspire the quests. Additionally, technology could be utilized in post-phase of an experience by providing possibilities to storytelling after the trip on the website. This allows the travellers to memorize their trip and to get new potential travellers inspired before their trip. Also, the on-site experience should be improved in tourism destinations. This could be organized for example, by offering applications which gives an opportunity to get information about attractions to visit according to specific needs and about the expenditure level. This kind of utilization of technology would give more customized products and services which would result as a successful destination experience. (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin 2012, 12.)

Achieving the communication between the travellers and destinations with the help of the smart technology is very helpful. To achieve the communication between the travellers and destinations smart technology is very helpful. The smart technology is not only helpful to improve the communication possibilities but also to support the tourism actors while designing unique and personalized tourism products such as interactive maps and gaming services. Furthermore, the technology is seen as a platform of sharing the experience and the travellers aims to share their experience with others such as friends and family. (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin 2015, Buhalis & Wagner 2013, as cited in Buonincontri, Morvillo & Niekerk 2017, 275).

5. THESIS PROCESS

5.1. Thesis Commissioners

The thesis has two commissioners, Visit Rovaniemi and the Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI). The research is part of the MTI's destination experience development project that is related to destination experience development and it aims to develop Lapland's destinations. The project is led by Project Manager Mirva Tapaninen. (Lapland UAS 2018.)

Visit Rovaniemi is Rovaniemi's Destination Management Organisation in Lapland, Finland. Its main tasks are to engage in image marketing, media visits, communications and PR, tourist information and congress marketing. The Rovaniemi Tourist Information provides information of local tourism services, attractions and destinations of Lapland area for the local and international visitors in the city centre of Rovaniemi. (Visit Rovaniemi 2018.) Visit Rovaniemi together with us is interested to map the satisfaction level of tourism services and products of international tourists in March 2018 in Rovaniemi. The thesis research is created together with our knowledge of tourism studies and personal interests, the commissioners' professionality and knowledge, theoretical research of previous studies, thesis handout survey and social media analysis.

5.2. Quantitative Research and Used Methods

The quantitative research method aims to investigate relations between variables. The quantitative research method is detailed and responds to questions of quantity and how regularly. For example, data collection can be based on surveys or questionnaires, structured interviews, case studies or structured observation. Analysis of data collected is analysed by utilizing statistics and the final report is statistical. (Mccrindle 2008.)

Also, quantitative research method´s aim is to define a phenomenon. The phenomenon is defined by utilizing mathematical data such as numbers. The data is mathematically presented. For example, quantitative research method may be statistics. Especially, quantitative research method is utilized when testing the hypothesis. Random sampling can be defined as a research tool which is utilized when it is not needed to analyse the whole database (Olken & Rotem 1986, 1).

The thesis' handout survey was executed by utilizing a quantitative research method based on wide perspective of the thesis topic. Utilizing a quantitative method allowed the effective comparison between handout survey results including questions which were essentially related to each other. Additionally, the high number of results was more descriptive to present in averages while utilizing quantitative research approach.

As a part of this thesis, TripAdvisor's social media content analysis was executed by utilizing a quantitative method based on numerous scale ratings due to low number of written customer feedback on social media. Also, sampling method was utilized while analysing customers' comments concerning accommodation services, restaurant services and activities in Lapland.

5.3. Thesis Process Schedule

Thesis Process Schedule was started in January 2018 by deciding the thesis topic. The thesis commissioners were contacted and agreed after topic discussed. (Table 2.)

Period of Time	Tasks
January	Deciding commissioners
February	Sorting out permits from Finavia and familiarizing with theory
March	Beginning of month: working with theory writings and handout survey template From middle to end of the month: Execution of handout survey at airport based on existing flight schedules
April	Moving the survey results in digital form manually by using Google Form -tool
May	Creating exel figures of survey results and theory writing
June	Starting social media analysis and continuing theory
July	Finalizing social media content analysis and handout survey analysis writing
August	Editing the Thesis structure and searching and utilizing additional sources
September	Transforming thesis structure in final form and handout suvey results with average calculatings
October	From beginning to middle of month: Finalizing theory and results part of thesis to preliminary evaluation Middle of month: Final editings of thesis to return it to final evaluation Prsesenting thesis on 24th October 2018

Table 2. Thesis Process Schedule

5.4. Limitations

There are certain limitations in this Thesis. Thesis handout survey was executed at the end of the tourism season between 15th and 26th March 2018 in the Rovaniemi airport. Most of the respondents were from Israel and Great Britain even though there were respondents from Japan, India, France, Switzerland, Italy, Thailand, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, the USA, Singapore, the Philippines and China. As the survey was conducted only in English, it may have had an impact on how the respondents understood the questions. As the result this research gives an overview of international tourists in southern Lapland in late March. More research is required to receive a fuller understanding of international tourists' choice of Lapland as a destination, expectations and destination experiences. Also, it is important that future research is executed in different season.

Furthermore, there were limitations related to social media analysis on TripAdvisor. For example, the hotels and restaurants were listed without logical order. Even though, the category was chosen to list hotels with 4 bubbles, it also showed hotels with 5 bubbles which have been earlier showed in the list of five bubble rated hotels, so it showed the same hotels again.

TripAdvisor also did not give reliable reviews of hotel bubble ratings because the hotels rated with 5 bubble ratings were based on customers' given ratings. That caused the situation that the hotels rated once with five bubbles, and hotels which were rated multiple times with five bubbles were shown in the same list of the five bubble rated hotels. Therefore, TripAdvisor's rating system as a base of information should be reconsidered in further research. Additionally, it was not possible to do only qualitative analysis in TripAdvisor due to the problem of receiving an overall feedback of specific category such as accommodation.

5.5. Reliability, Validity and Ethical Considerations

The research validity can be described as the content of the thesis is discussing about the same content it was measured to be. The research can be reliable without validity if research made is good and reliable, but the content of the research is not what it was measured to be. (Heale 2015.)

The wide number of sources such as academic journals and statistics utilized in thesis indicates the good thesis reliability. Also, the handout survey was conducted by Thesis authors being present at the airport with observation of participants. Social media content analysis' reliability was proved by using on actual customer ratings in TripAdvisor web pages. The possible limitations concerning reliability of this Thesis were possible misunderstandings because of limited English language skills of the participants while filling the survey template. Based on high reliability of Thesis it allows the continuation of the research by reusing the survey template. The main handout survey questions concerning thesis topic were planned and created by thesis Authors. Furthermore, the content of participant's background information questions in the survey template were partly similar with traditional survey questions as in a previous survey of animal welfare research in tourism.

Our research was searching the destination choice, destination experience and the fulfillment of travel satisfaction during trip in Lapland. The content of thesis by theoretical part is discussing the topics it was measured to be and it proves the good validity of thesis. During the research process the results presented answers for the travel satisfaction level in Lapland area and so on met the measured contents thesis was aimed to found. The research aimed also to gather new information to help tourism companies to develop their operations and to support developing Lapland as a destination. Based on the results found for example, the highest rated activities and services in Lapland are the new information found. The research questions and form together supported thesis to reach the results aimed. During the research process we also gathered some additional information that can also benefit local agencies and are also answering to our research topic that proves also good validity of our research.

Ethics were taken into consideration while executing Thesis. The theoretical sources utilized in thesis theory writing were referred accordingly and copyrights respected. The potential respondents were well informed about the handout survey at the airport. All the survey respondents were participating as volunteers and they had possibility to decline the participation. All the answers were given anonymously, and no personal data of respondents were published. Cooperation with airport personnel was made in good and professional manner so that airport operations were not disturbed. Survey author's attitude towards participants was appreciating, friendly and professional. Participants were not disturbed during participation and they were given help if needed. Also, participants were thanked and rewarded by offering chocolate. Companies mentioned in the handout survey research or in social media content analysis with received feedback in social media content analysis were not revealed. The results of thesis research including handout survey and social media content analysis as well as the executed survey template are stored by thesis authors and copyrights are existing.

6. KEY RESULTS OF TRAVELERS' DESTINATION CHOICE, DESTINATION EXPERIENCE AND FULFILLMENT OF TRAVEL EXPECTATIONS IN LAPLAND

6.1. Social Media Content Analysis in TripAdvisor

As a part of this Thesis the social media analysis was conducted concerning the traveller's satisfaction level in TripAdvisor's categories of accommodations, activities and food and beverage services in Lapland. The methods used were quantitative method and random sampling.

Our social media analysis is based on TripAdvisor's ratings from levels "2 or more bubbles" until total 5 bubbles. Total five-bubbles rating is corresponding excellent rating of the total quality and "4 or more than 4 -bubbles rating is corresponding higher than good quality until excellent ratings (Figure 14. TripAdvisor 2018.)

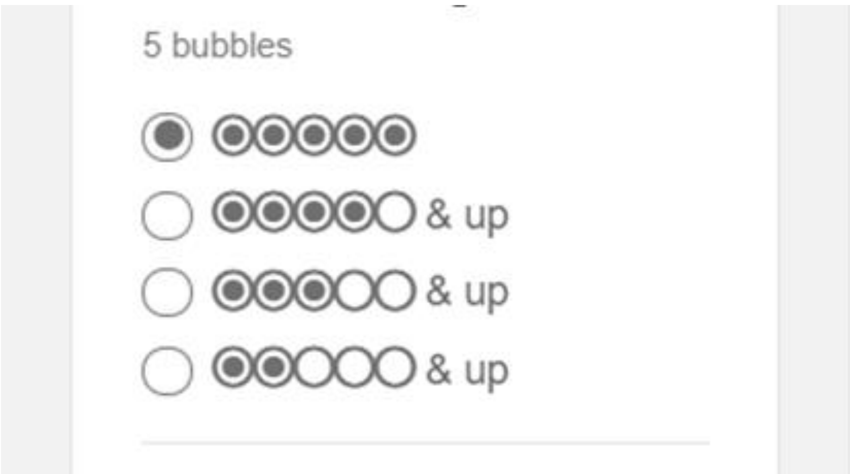

Figure 14. Traveller rating scale. (TripAdvisor 2018)

Furthermore, as a part of content analysis random sampling methodology was used to collect concrete examples of ratings in each researched service category on TripAdvisor. Random sampling can be defined as a research tool which is utilized when it is not needed to analyse the whole database (Olken & Rotem 1986, 1).

6.1.1. Accommodation

Based on our research on TripAdvisor's customer ratings taken on 19th June 2018, Lapland has more than 300 accommodation enterprises and the majority (77 per cent) were rated with the rating four or five. It can be concluded that the level of accommodation services in Lapland area is high-quality and meets the expectations of visitor. (TripAdvisor 2018.)

Based on random sampling concerning accommodation in Lapland, the accommodation has been atmospheric, and the atmosphere has affected overall experience positively. Also, locations have been near other services or activities. Additionally, service has been complimented as excellent and friendly.

> We stayed two nights at the Place 1. at the end of April. We found beautiful and stylish place to stay end enjoy a couple of nights as if you were in the middle of the Nordic nature, but still located in the middle of town! The beds were Super comfortable, and we slept well. All interior, furniture and tables represented Finnish or Nordic design, the atmosphere was fresh and harmonious. We did enjoy the sauna and the warm jacuzzi on the veranda very much. The bed sofa was also comfortable for our kids (6- and 10 -years old). The location is peaceful, but central and the family slopes start right next to the apartments, which was a huge plus for us! (Accommodation 1)

> Our Polar hotel room was perfect and stylishly decorated. The service personnel were friendly, professional and lovely and made the visit even more comfortable. As we travelled with a dog, we had a room with own entrance which we found useful when taking the dog quickly outside beside the river. Breakfast was filling and differed from normal hotel breakfast. They offered chia-puddings, smoothies, non-alcoholic sparkling wine, salmon in many different styles and rice porridge. If we are going to visit the city again, we will absolutely stay in the same place again! (Accommodation 2)

> Lovely Christmas themed cottage. Christmas theme continued nicely outside the cottage too. Car was easy to park next to the cottage. Nice well-

> equipped cottage! Short walking distance to the village area. Excellent play corner for children! (Accommodation 3)

> Extraordinary place with pure nature and warm people. If you are looking for peace, harmony and relaxation in pure nature, this is the place. Horses, dogs, cats, sauna, nature hikes and plenty of other activities or just chilling with good people who run this place. (Accommodation 4)

> Atmospheric hostel. The environment was very excellent for small atmospheric hostel. Public areas of the hostel were excellent, sauna was brilliant, and service was top quality. The premises of the hotel were full of small features. (Accommodation 5)

6.1.2. Restaurants

Lapland has 312 restaurants. There was 244 restaurants 78 percent of the restaurants have received four or higher as rating. It can be claimed that also food and beverage services satisfy the needs of the visitors. (TripAdvisor 2018.)

The restaurants have received comments concerning offering local Lappish food and had got excellent ratings and considered as delicious. Also, the service personnel have been friendly. Restaurants have been located near other services. Restaurant services also have received positive feedback as well as accommodation services concerning the atmosphere of the restaurants. The atmosphere has influenced overall dining experience. Activities in Lapland have showed the local lifestyle, history of Lapland and Lappish nature. Also, the activities in Lapland have been children and family friendly. (TripAdvisor 2018.)

> The restaurant offers very delicious Lappish food. The service is very friendly. The restaurant has wonderful Lappish décor which effects on the overall dining experience. I highly recommend visiting this restaurant. (Restaurant 1)

> Excellent, tidy and family owned restaurant. The restaurant has central location in the area next to the activities, reindeer rides and near shopping possibilities. (Restaurant 2)

> We tasted a reindeer dish for two. The dish was delicious. Everything was fresh and authentic. (Restaurant 3)

> A wonderful and cosy place for a dinner, having drinks or for hanging out. The food is very delicious, and the staff is friendly. The terrace was a lovely experience with the lamps and shadow. (Restaurant 4)

> The personnel were friendly, and food was delicious. The location is middle of the city, we accommodated in the same hotel as the restaurant. (Restaurant 5)

6.1.3. Activities

Most of the all Lapland's 194 activities rated by visitors in TripAdvisor have received good feedback. Most of activities rated were with four point -ratings or higher 75 per cent of all activities. It shows that activity service providers have met visitors' expectations and succeed in experience creation. Naturally, it should be noticed that not all places have received feedback or ratings through TripAdvisor, but the majority of received ratings have been positive. (TripAdvisor 2018.)

> Worth to visit. Good presentation of local minerals and looking for own treasure is good activity for children. Breath-taking views when the weather is good. (Activity 1)

> Nice destination for the whole family. The garden motivates children and adults to move. Absolut place to visit with children. Can be experienced many times. The climbing area is suitable for adults too and the area motivates to challenge yourself. Easily spent couple of hours. At the place there is something to do for younger and older children, sport equipment and instructions also for adults. (Activity 2)

> The place of attraction is an area, where it makes to think how huge power the nature has. The photos taken do not show unfortunately the real view, but in the area, you can see how huge attraction it is. Nice place to take a

walk, a possibility to rent a house from the town against small payment. (Activity 3)

A place for history lover. Feel the history of Lapland which lives from the forest. These are the real houses where lumberjacks lived while working in the old times. You can also see interesting historical equipment and tens of old log houses. If you love old buildings, this is a must-see place. P.S. There is a beach next from the museum, a perfect combination for the hot summer day. (Activity 4)

A good range of displays on a range of topics including environmental issues, and flora and fauna park history. Free entry. There are nature trails adjacent. Worth stopping as you drive by. (Activity 5)

In conclusion, all the categories have received positive feedback concerning the possibility to experience Lappish way of life, Lappish history, Lappish cuisine or Finnish atmosphere. Also, most of the categories have received positive feedback concerning service level. These findings correspond to the earlier findings. Experiencing with locals in the destination provides memorable experiences. For example, tourists participating in local events or learning of local culture have more memorable experiences (Kim, Hallab et al.2012, Kim, Ritchie et al.2012, Morgan & Xu 2009, Tung & Ritchie 2011, as cited in Hyeong-Kim 2014, 41.) Furthermore, referring to Hyeong-Kim (2014, 41) service level assists to provide memorable experiences for the travellers.

6.2. Handout Survey Results of Destination Choice, Destination Experience and Fulfilment of Travel Expectations in Lapland

6.2.1. Demographic Factors of Respondents

The survey reached 120 participants from 15 nationalities. Most of the respondents were from Israel, United Kingdom, Netherlands. The following nationalities of respondents were from Asia, India, France, Switzerland, Norway and Italy. Therefore, it is important to notice that the results of the research concern the perceptions of specific nations visiting Lapland. (Figure 15.) The nationality can affect the traveller's expectations of trip and the interest of experiencing different types of activities (Jönsson & Devonish 2010, 406).

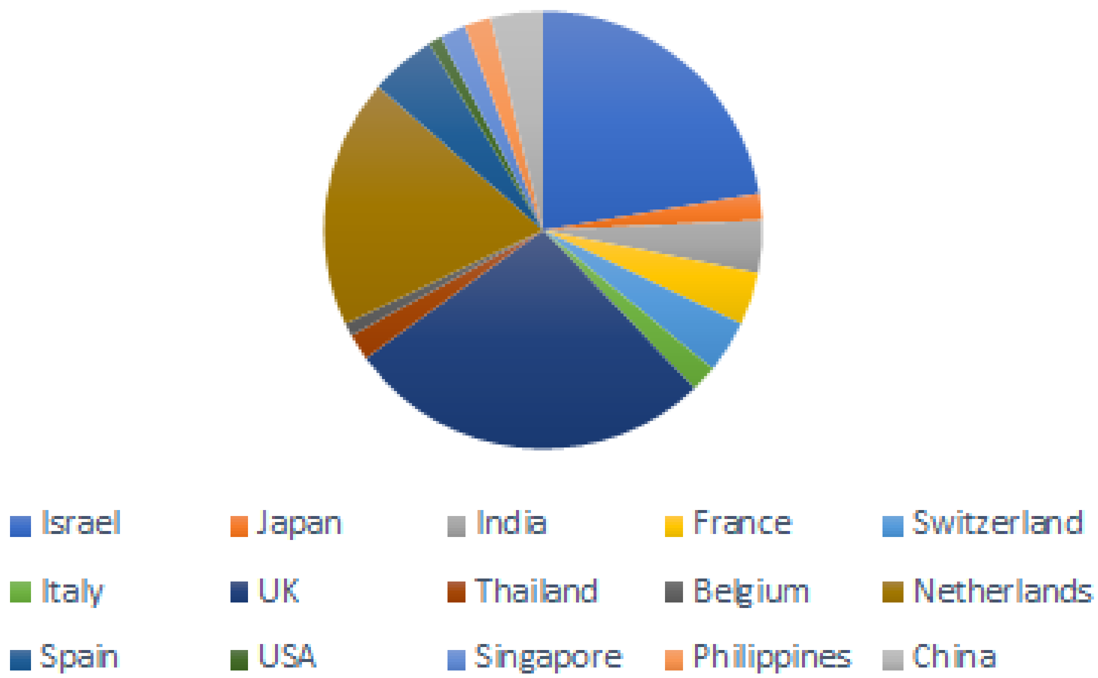

Figure 15. Nationalities of Respondents(n=120).

The respondents' age was between 15-80 years. Most of respondents' ages were between 28 and 41 years and secondly biggest group were between 54 and 67 years old. The age of travellers has impact on traveller's motivation and decision to travel. Age also affects the expectations of travel trip and can define the purpose of the trip. (Jönsson & Devonish 2010, 404.) (Figure 16.)

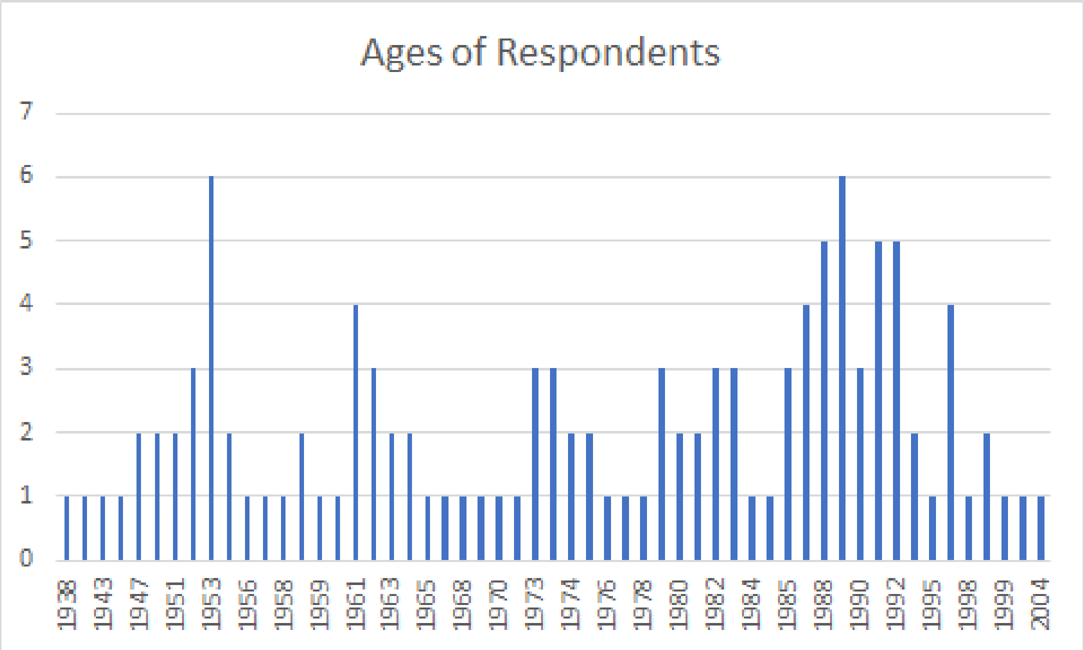

Figure 16. Age Distribution of Participants(n=120)

Most of the respondents were female but the division between women and men was equal. (Figure 17.) Majority of the travellers coming to Lapland had income from 2000-5000 euros and minority of the travellers` income was less than 2000 euros or more than 5000 euros.

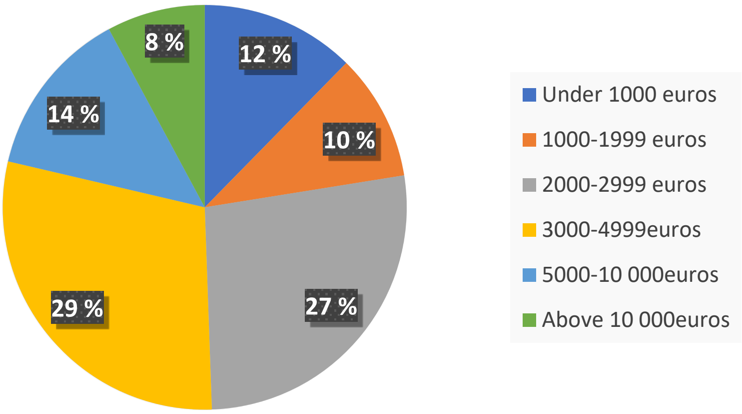

Figure 17. Personal Gross Monthly Incomes of Participants (n=89).

It can be concluded that Lapland's price level was average price level of destination. Furthermore, travellers with smaller income does not travel to Lapland so much as travellers with higher income. Also, in this research is found that travellers were not satisfied with price level in Lapland and therefore Lapland is considered as an expensive destination. This results as travellers with higher income. Additionally, based on theoretical research the price level of destination effects on destination choice and this can be seen while researching Lapland as a destination.

6.2.2. Travel Habits and Previous Visits to Lapland

Most of the survey respondents travel approximately two to three times a year outside their home countries. Eleven per cent of the respondents travel more seldom. Fourth of the participants answered they travel more than 5 times a year outside their countries. (Figure 18.) Majority of the participants were visiting Lapland for the first time and only a few participants have visited Lapland a couple of times before (See Appendix 1). The previous travel experiences and travel habits affect the expectations of new travel experiences. The more tourist's travel, the more they gain knowledge of different cultures and the more they expect from their new travel experiences. It can be claimed that the expectations can be set higher by tourists travelling more outside of their home countries. (Mihelj, 2010, 1078.)

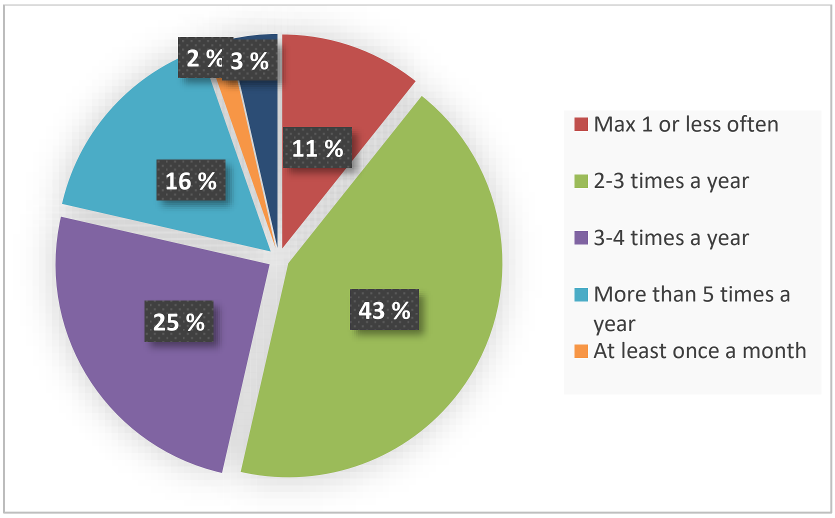

Figure 18. The Number of Travel Trips Made Approximately Outside of Home country (n=112).

6.2.3. Purpose of Visit and Travel Companion

For most of the participants the main purpose of the travelling was a holiday trip and just 5 per cent of the participants were travelling by business reasons and only few of the answerers were visiting friends or relatives. (Figure 19.)

Figure 19. Travelers Main Purpose of Travelling to Lapland (n=119).

Most of the travellers were travelling with spouse or partner. Secondly most with families and thirdly with friends and relatives. Rest of the travellers were travelling with families, group tour members or lonely travellers. (Figure 20.)

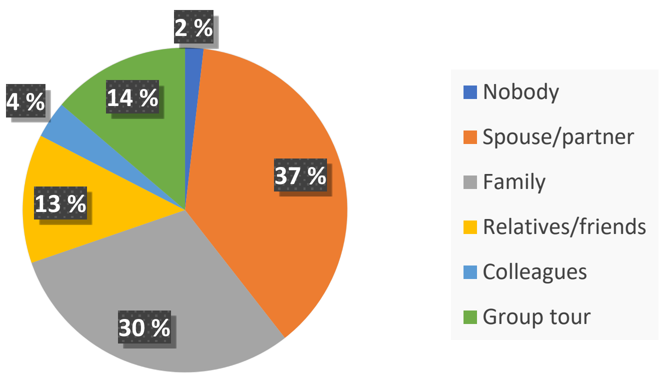

Figure 20. Travel Companion of Respondents During the Trip to Lapland. (n=119)

6.2.4. Used Information Sources and Tour Operators

Results show that many of the travellers had used various information sources while looking for information of the destination before the trip and destination selection. The most used information sources were local tourism companies, friends, relatives and acquaintances, also different search engines such as Google, Visit Finland and Visit Rovaniemi web sites had played a big role. (Figure 21.).

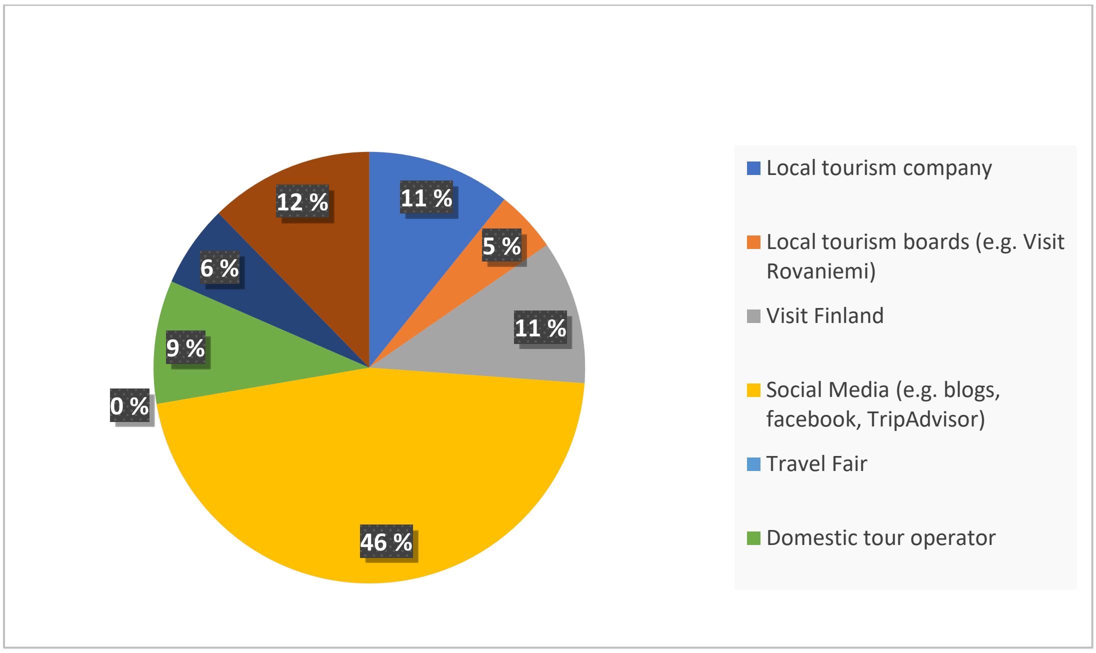

Figure 21. Primarily Used Information Sources while looking for information of Lapland Before Trip (n=109).

Referring to the creation of travel expectations, the company image of experience provider is one of the strongest factors affecting the expected service quality during the whole experience; in pre-stay, stay, and post-stay. The information sources used before trip via different social media channels and by word-of-mouth communication together affects also the image. If the image of expected service quality is met with the experienced service quality, the perceived service quality is good, and traveller is satisfied (Rope & Pöllänen 1198, 38–43).

Results of the main information sources used respond also to theories of Russell, Currie, Wesley & Sutherland (2008,21) & Hall (2014) concerning the impact of recommendations to destination choice which presents travellers paying attention on recommendations of friends and relatives, and co-workers as well as usage of social media channels by reading other feedbacks of experiences.

The recommendations of others were considered relevant and reliable based on previous life experiences made in the same the destinations. Furthermore, it is questionable to understand that based on the formation of perceived service quality of experience can differ variously between individual travellers. Because factors affecting the expectations as individual's personal needs, travel purpose, backgrounds and previous experiences as well as word-of-mouth communication can differ variously resulting the destination experience in the same destination is different. (Rope & Pöllänen 1198, 38–43).

Almost half of the participants had organized their trip to Lapland by buying a travel package for example, from TUI. Secondly most of the answerers had been using online engine booking in making the trip to Lapland. Rest of the participants had used direct local company to book their trip or made incentive trip to travel Lapland. (Figure 22.)

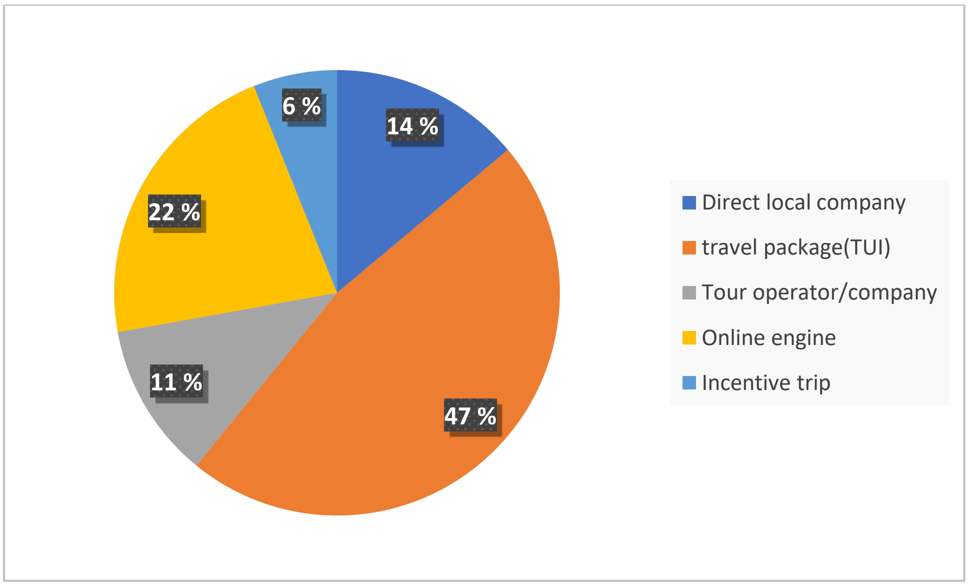

Figure 22. Tour Operators Used for Travel Arrangements While Organizing the Trip to Lapland (n=115).

6.2.5. Factors Affecting Destination Choice

In the handout survey, the factors affecting the destination choice were asked to rate based on travellers' interest and level how strongly they had affected the destination choice. The questions were shared in six different categories based on their themes as culture, products and services, activities in destination, nature experience, destination's safety, security and price level and word-of-mouth-and marketing communication. The total averages of each categories and averages of separate experiences inside each category are presented.

The results showed the category with highest average affecting destination choice was Nature Experience and secondly highest Destination's Safety, Security and Price Level. Thirdly highest average was given for Products and Services and after that for Culture and Activities. The lower averages were given for Activities in Destination, Culture and Word-of-Mouth and Marketing Communication. (Figure 23.)

Figure 23. Total Averages of Categories Affecting the Destination Choice.

Based on the factors affecting destination choice as need for learning new cultures and gain extraordinary and memorable experiences, the results support the theory (Hyeong-Kim 2014, 42). Lapland's authentic Nature has been a strongest factor making the decision of travel destination. Also, price level, safety and security has been important factors which is related to the theory that destination’s price level is often seen more as the price level of accommodation and transportations to destination. The activities in the destination does not affect that much of the expectations of destination’s price level and in this case to destination selection. (Decrop 2006, 99.)

The most wanted experience and the strongest category of experiences affecting the destination choice was Nature Experience. The clearly highest average was given for nature phenomena, including for example, northern lights. Secondly highest for arctic nature and landscapes and after that for experiencing arctic winter conditions. (Figure 24.)

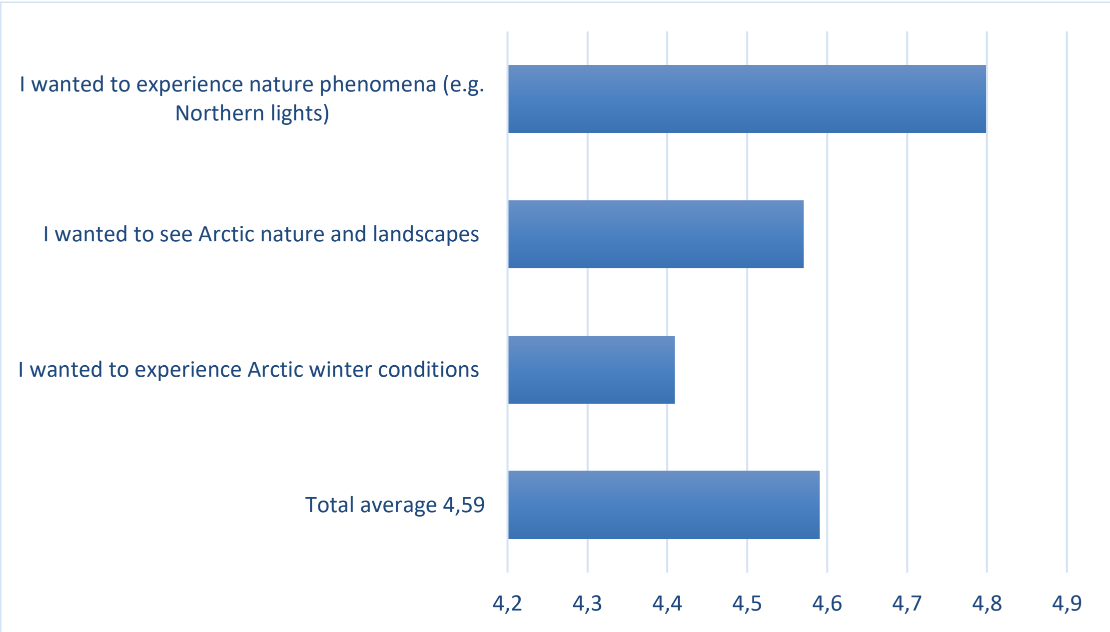

Figure 24. The Effect of Nature Experiences Impacting the Destination Choice in Averages (n=114).

Referring to Kim, Ritchi & McCormik (2012), Kim (1998), Murphy, Pritchard & Smith (2000), Kim et al. 2012 as cited in Reitsamer, Brunner-Sperding & Stockburger Sauer (2016, 94) nature scenery increases the attractiveness of a destination. Therefore, finding of nature being the highest factor impacting destination choice of Lapland is linked to theory of nature as an attractive factor in destination choice. It can be claimed that Lapland as a destination with unique nature attracts travellers to choose Lapland as a destination.

Secondly strongest rated category affecting the destination choice was Destination's Safety, Security and Price Level. Destinations safety and security were the highest rated factors affecting the destination choice and secondly the destination's price level. (Figure 25.)

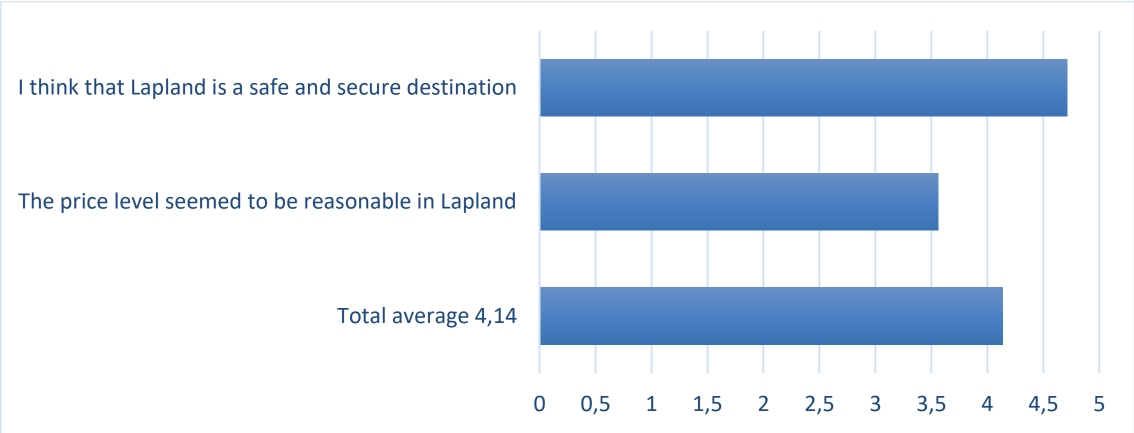

Figure 25. Effect of Destination Safety, Security and Price Level Impacting the Destination Choice in Averages (n=113).

Findings correspond to the earlier theory by (Decrop 2006,99) that price level influences destination selection and travel decision. The destinations which respond to the travellers' price expectations are considered as attractive destinations and they will become more likely chosen. Additionally, trips which are organized as packed trips are affected by the price level. The price of accommodation and transportation are affecting more than price of food and activities to the destination selection. (Decrop 2006, 99.)

The ratings about safety's high effect to choose Lapland as a destination is linked to the earlier research on safety as a part of tourism motivation. Additionally, referring to Haahti, Mlozi & Pesämaa (2013, 169) safety influences travel motivation and may also act as a factor which may result as a decision not to travel. Based on the perceived experience quality formation (Mihelj 2010), the individual background as the customary safety and security level in home country affect the expectations of destination's safety and security level. Also, the fact that Finland is ranked to be one of the safest countries in the world has might affected to create positive expectations of Lapland's safety and security level (Statistics Finland 2017). However, travellers visiting Lapland have expected

Lapland as really safety destination and consequently it can be stated that safety have also influenced travellers to choose Lapland as a travel destination.

Thirdly strongest category affecting destination choice was Products and Services in destination. The highest scores were given for extraordinary experiences and the accessibility to travel to the destination. After that next important were rated wellbeing services and convenient transportation options to travel to Lapland. Shopping possibilities in destination were not rated so important or strong factors affecting the destination choice. (Figure 26.)

Figure 26. The Effect of Destination's Products and Services Impacting the Destination Choice in Averages(n=106).

Referring to Decrop (2006,100) travellers are looking for experiences which results as decreased stress level and as a break from current life. Therefore, this theory supports our finding that extraordinary experiences have had an impact on travellers' decision to travel to Lapland. Travelers have perceived Lapland as a destination which would offer them a break from their lives and reduce their stress.

Wide range of different products and services options in the destination relate to higher satisfaction level. If destination is offering different products and services, tourists have possibility to personalize their travel experience based on their own needs and expectations that lead satisfaction. For example, transportation and shopping possibilities are affecting the total satisfaction of the trip. (Mihelj, 2010, 1078).

The Fourthly strongest category rated affecting the destination choice was Culture. In the category most of the separate cultural experiences were rated evenly, except meeting Santa Claus which was not rated so necessary or interesting activity. Whereas, learning Lappish way of life, tasting local food, and Lappish culinary as well as cultural attractions and Sami culture were rated as important cultural activities to experience in Lapland. Also, the locals' attitude towards tourists was expected to be positive. (Figure 27.) This finding supports the earlier theory by Goodall (1988) as cited in Kozak (2002, 229) about aspects of motivation. One of the aspects is cultural aspect which results as a wish to learn about different countries and their way of living.

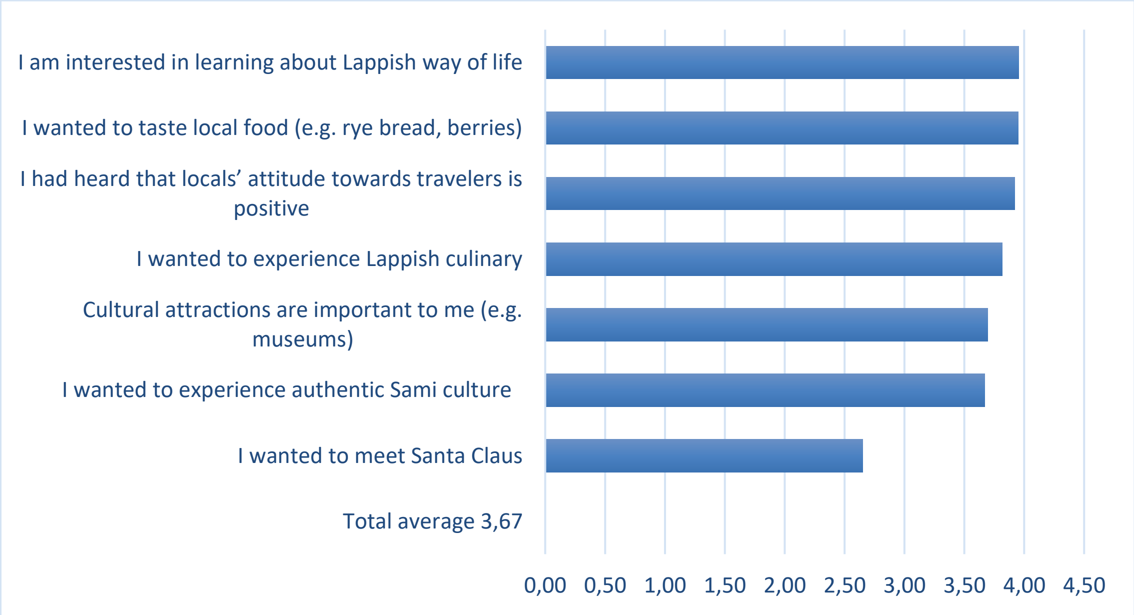

Figure 27. The Effect of Culture Impacting the Destination Choice in Averages (n=111).

As the cultural aspect of motivation includes the need of learning about different countries and their way of living. Therefore, it can be claimed that traveller's motivation to come Lapland is driven by needs for learning about Lappish way of life. The findings concerning interest for Lappish Culinary and cultural attractions mirrors the earlier theory by Goodall (1988, as cited in Kozak 2002, 229) concerning aspects of motivation.

The fifthly strongest category affecting the destination choice was Activities in Destination. Especially, activities with animals has received high interest to experience in Lapland. Almost that high interest was rated for motorized activities such as snowmobiling and followingly for non-motorized activities such as skiing, and ice skating. Lapland's city attractions, shopping and visiting friends and relatives were not that expected or interested from trip to Lapland. (Figure 28.)

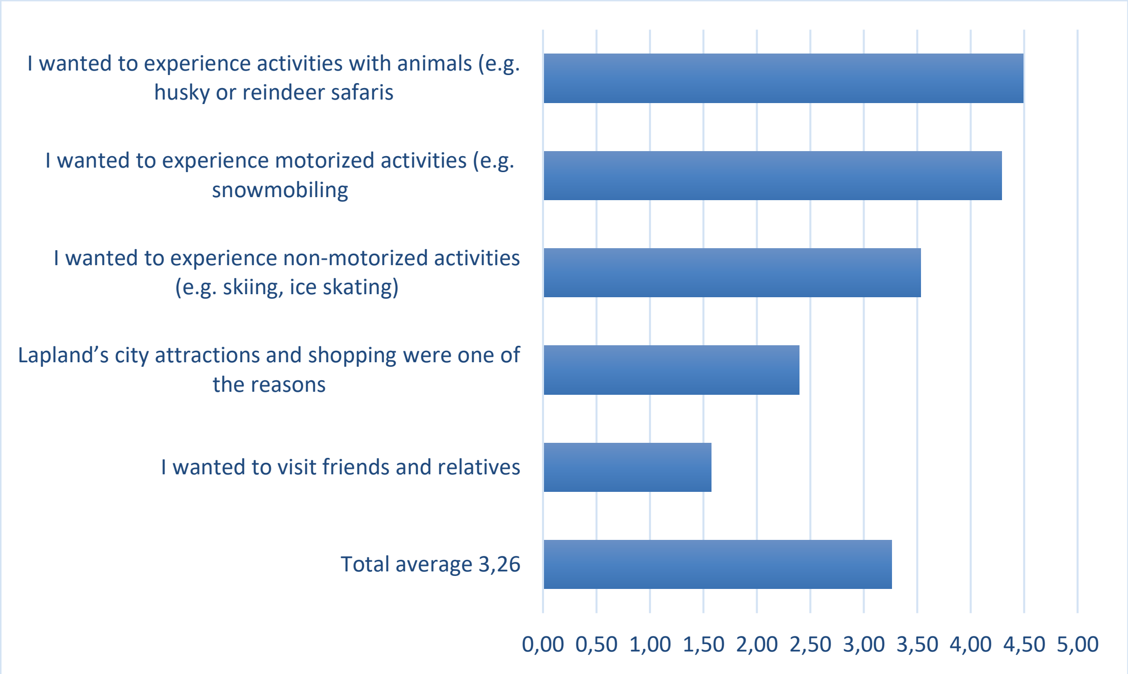

Figure 28. The Effect of Activities Impacting the Destination Choice in Averages(n=113).

The purpose of the trip and travel companion has also affected the destination selection and expectations of the trip and interest of specific activities experiences in destination. Also, word-of-mouth communication and destination marketing has impacted the expectations of the trip. According to Goodall (1988) as cited in Kozak (2002,229) social aspect of motivation for travelling includes a need for meeting friends and relatives. Therefore, it can be assumed that friends and relatives did not impact so widely on participants' choice of Lapland as a destination. However, it is noticeable that environmental issues as nature phenomena, global warming and climate change as well as the period of travel trip have affected in expectations and choosing the activities wanted to experience during the trip. (Mihelj 2010.)

The last category affecting the destination choice was Word-of-Mouth- and Marketing Communication. The most important factor was that the necessary information could be found easily before the trip. Secondly most, travel marketing has affected the destination choice and thirdly word-of-mouth communication. (Figure 29.)

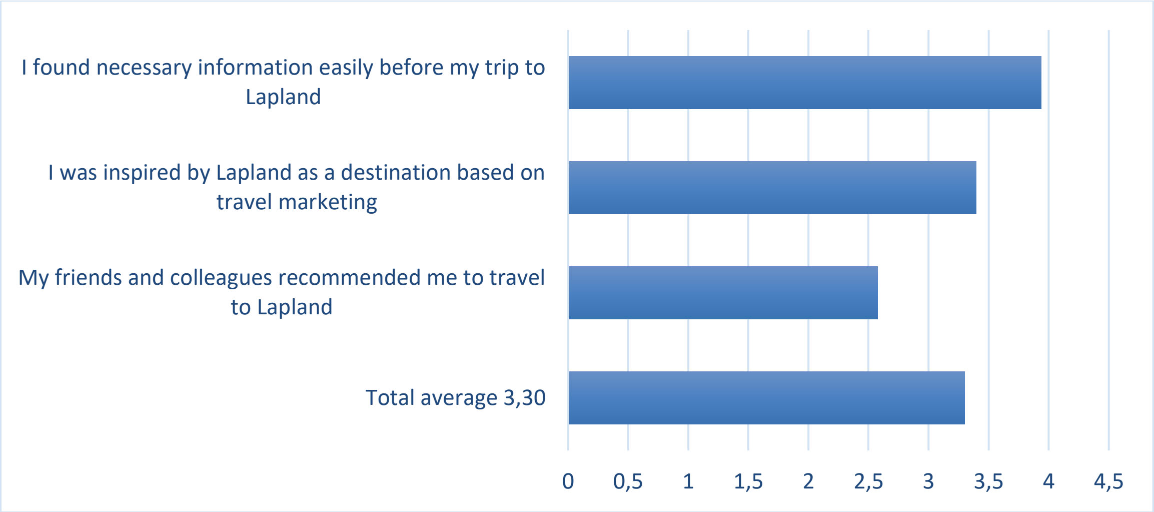

Figure 29. The Effect of Word-of-Mouth- and Marketing Communication Impacting the Destination Choice in Averages (n=113).

Also, finding that word-of mouth communication is in contradiction with earlier findings. Referring to Russel, Currie, Wesley & Sutherland (2008, 21) other's previous travels to a specific vacation destination have an influence on traveller's destination choice. For example, travellers pay attention on stories heard from friends or colleagues and get inspired to travel to a specific destination.

Survey included also a question concerning alternative destination choice instead of travelling to Lapland. Most of the participants did not have an alternative destination before their trip to Lapland. Minority who had considered alternative destination were mentioned destinations as Canada, Norway, Iceland, Siberia, Switzerland, Austria, Mediterranean destination, Sweden, Helsinki, Estonia, Greenland and Greece. (Figure 30.)

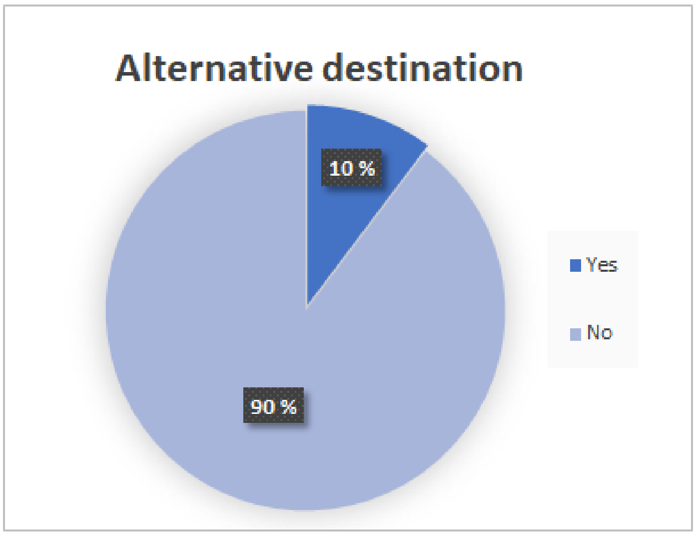

Figure 30. Percentages of participants having an alternative destination before the trip(n=68).

It can be referred that formation of destination expectations are strongly affected by image of the destination. It also indicates that Lapland is seen as a Nordic destination and its uniqueness and local specialties are well-known for travellers visiting Lapland.

6.2.6. Quality of Different Travel Experiences in Destination

The handout survey included questions of experienced quality of separate travel experiences during the trip in Lapland. Experiences are presented in the same five categories as in analysis of factors affecting to destination choice to allow comparing the fulfilment of travel satisfaction. (Figure 31.)

The highest quality ranking in Lapland were given for Nature Experience, secondly for Activities in Destination and thirdly for Destinations' Safety, Security and Price Level. Cultural Experiences and Products and Services in Destination were ranked bit lower by experience quality.

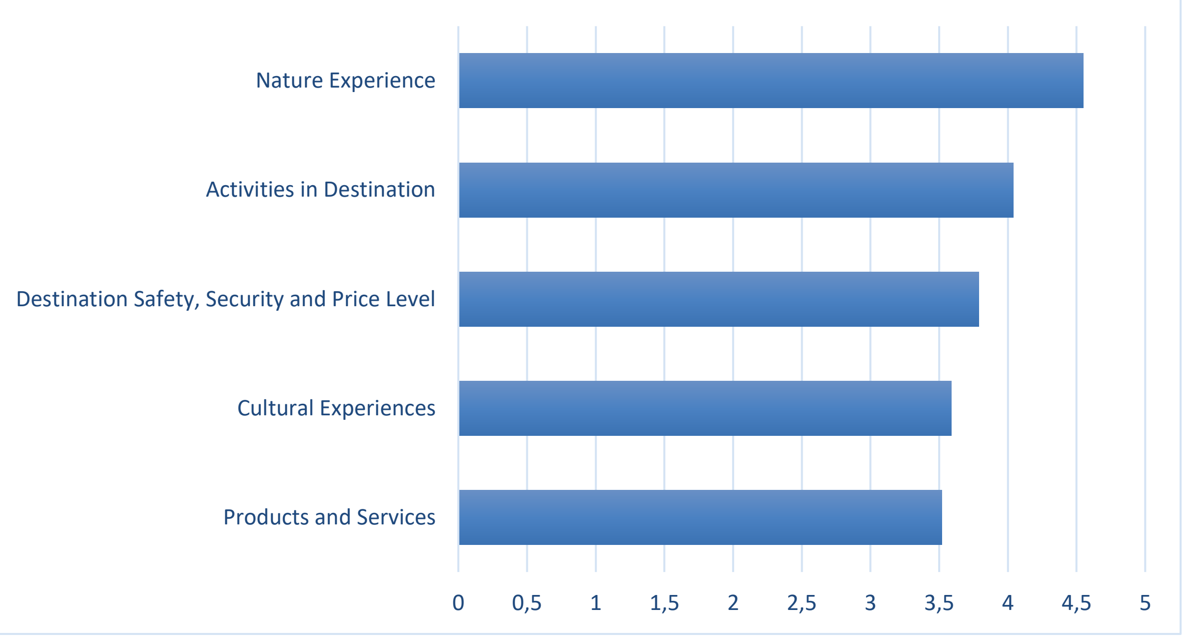

Figure 31. Total Averages of Qualities in Different Categories.

The highest quality average was given for Nature Experiences. Travellers have received successful destination experiences while experiencing Arctic Nature and Landscapes. Nature Phenomena experiences such as Northern Lights have been less successful.

Compared to survey results of question relating the expectations and interest of experiencing Northern Lights, it has been ranked with the highest average and travellers have wanted to experience them during their trip. Therefore, the environmental challenges as weather conditions have might affected their experience quality ratings if experience was not reached and expectations not fulfilled during their trip to Lapland. (Figure 32.)

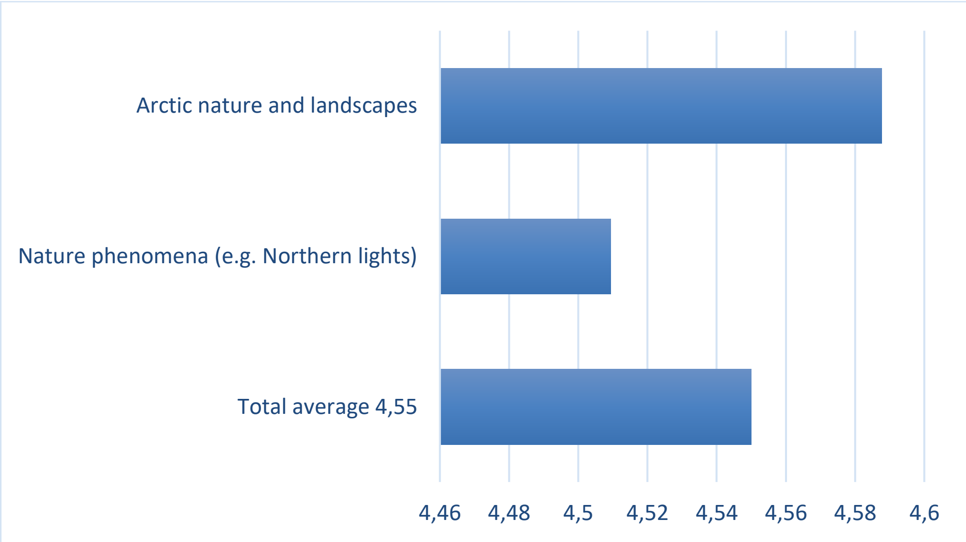

Figure 32. Averages of Nature Experience Quality in Lapland (n=110)

The country image of destination affects the destination’s ability to offer memorable experiences (Zhang, Wu & Buhalis 2017, 9). Marketing of Lapland and its Arctic nature and landscapes has might also affected the expectations and experienced quality of nature experiences. Also, most respondents’ purpose of trip was holiday that might affected their interest of experiencing nature and nature phenomena as their time of the trip was not that limited than for example, business travellers would have.

As different product and service options in the destination, also the range of different activities affects the satisfaction of experience. When tourists can personalize the travel experience more by choosing the activities they are mostly interested, they will be more satisfied. (Mihelj 2010, 1078.)

Wide range of different winter activities are offered year-round in Lapland by local providers but based on research results the highest interest was given especially for activities with animals, motorized activities and non-motorized activities. The highest quality rates of activities were given also for them that tells the travellers expectations were met and travellers satisfied. Lapland’s city attractions and shopping were less interesting and quality-rated lower than other activities in destination. (Figure 33.)

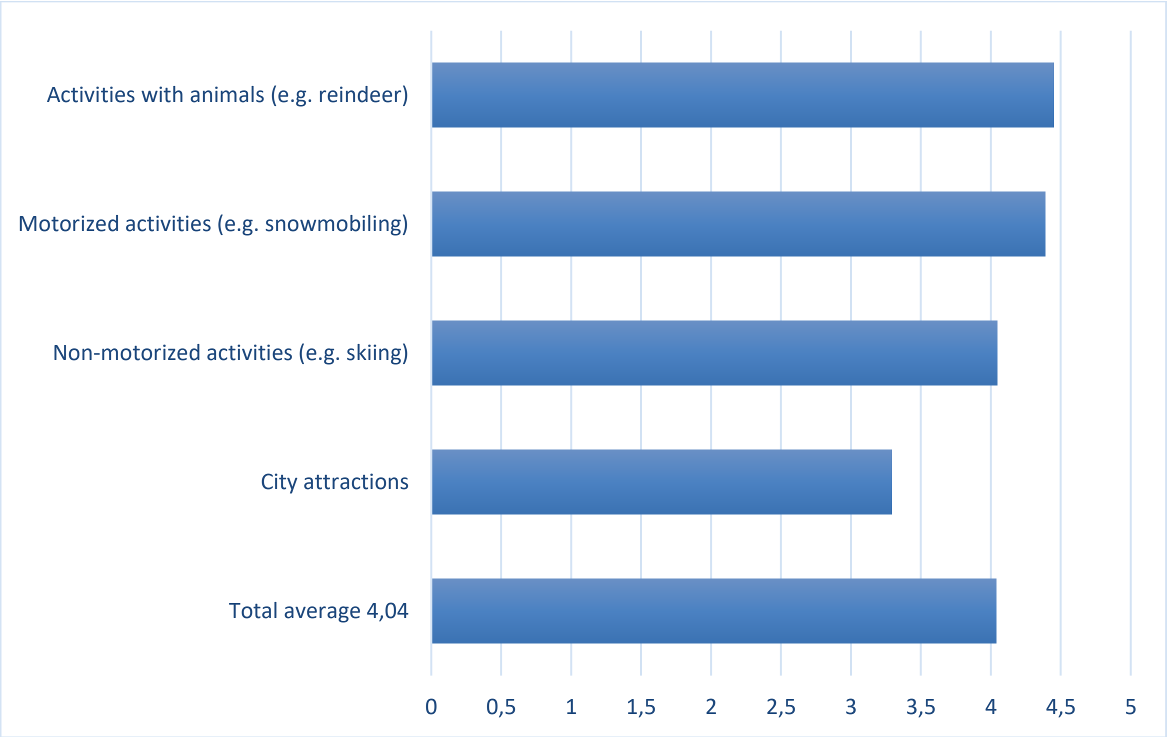

Figure 33. Averages of Quality of Activities in Destination(n=96).

The speciality of high-quality rated activities and "first in lifetime –experience" might have affected the ratings because many of the participants were visiting the Finland for the first time. Based on the results motorized activities have been one of the most important activities travellers want to experience in winter time in Lapland. The experiences were rated with high quality rates which indicates that expectations are met.

Thirdly highest quality ratings concerning travellers' destination experience was given for destination's safety, security and price level. Destination's safety and security were ranked as the highest and destination's price level secondly highest. (Figure 34.)

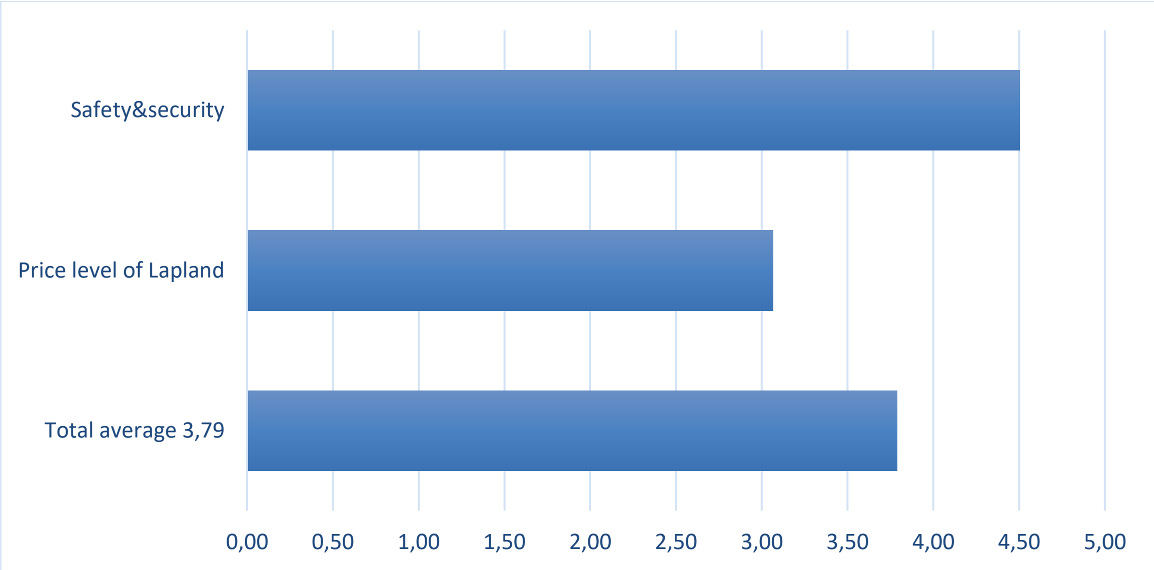

Figure 34. Averages of Quality of Destination Safety, Security and Price Level (n=110).

Safety and security are globally known to be high in Finland, so it should be taken in accordance that many of the survey participants were from countries where the safety level is not so high compared to Finland, that has might affected the quality rankings. Whereas, travellers' expectations of Lapland's price level were not met during the trip and travellers not satisfied. However, it should be recognized that travellers rate the price level based on their personal income and based on the price level in their home countries.

Based on survey results expectations of Lapland as an expensive destination have might affected negatively on traveller's decision to travel to Lapland. Also, price level during the trip have had impact to travellers' overall destination experience and quality of total destination experience. Furthermore, it must be noticed that the tourism industry does not have influence on high prices such as alcohol taxes or taxi fares. Also, based on theoretical research price level effects on destination choice. Destination which is not expensive for travellers is considered more appealing than expensive destinations. (Decrop 2006, 99)

Fourthly highest quality rating concerning destination experiences was given for cultural experiences. Local’s attitude towards tourists was received the highest rating of cultural experiences in destination. The division between local food, Sami culture, cultural attractions and local events was very even based on quality ranking. Visiting Santa Claus had received lower interest and quality ratings than other cultural experienced in destination. (Figure 35.)

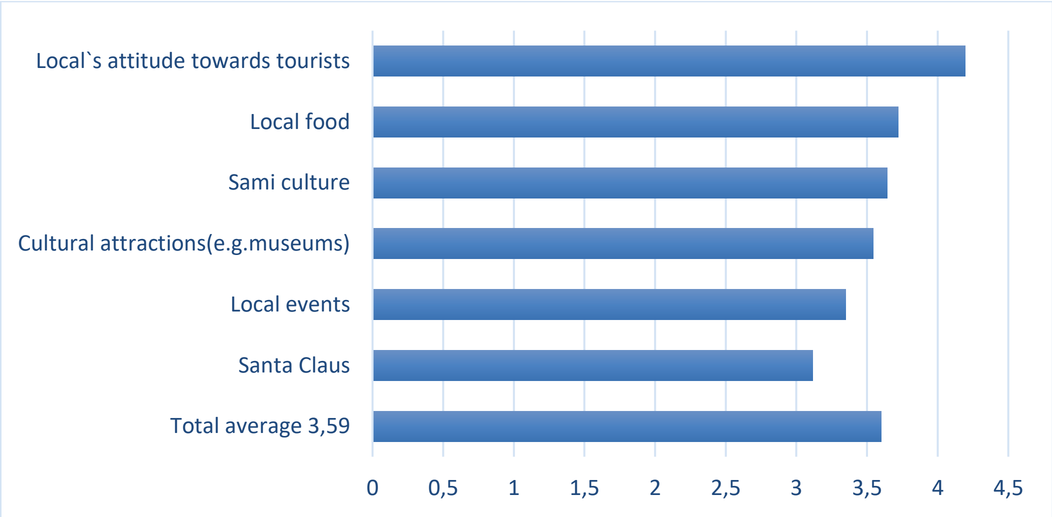

Figure 35. Averages of Quality of Cultural Experiences in Destination. (n=92)

It should be noticed that cultural attractions have received higher rating than city attractions. Therefore, it can be discussed that Lapland is more appealing as a destination to visit cultural attractions than for example, visiting Santa Claus. Also, it can be claimed that travellers are not only interested of Lapland as a Christmas destination but also as a cultural destination.

Whereas, based on the results the expectations of participant’s cultural attractions were on the same level with the cultural experiences’ quality ranking level. It proves that the expectations were met, and expected quality met the perceived quality of experience. Difference between cultural attractions quality has also been seen when superior and inferior destinations compared (Cetin, Kizilirmak & Balik 2016). Lapland has met the traveller's expectations of cultural experiences successfully even they had not been the priority or interest to experience for travellers during their trip in Lapland.

Findings of high-quality ratings of local's attitude supports the earlier findings of local's attitude's influence on formation of memorable tourism experiences. When locals are friendly, or they show hospitality for travellers they will get positive image of locals and positive holiday memories. (Chandralal &Valenzuela 2013, as cited in Hyeong-Kim 2014, 41.)

Following quality ratings were given for Products and Services in Lapland. The highest quality rated services were wellbeing services as Finnish sauna and accommodation services in Lapland. Also, high importance and quality rating were given for tourist information services and culinary and beverage services. Authenticity of products and services offered in Lapland was seen quite good also. Lower quality rankings were given for shopping possibilities and lowest for local transportation services in Lapland. (Figure 36.)

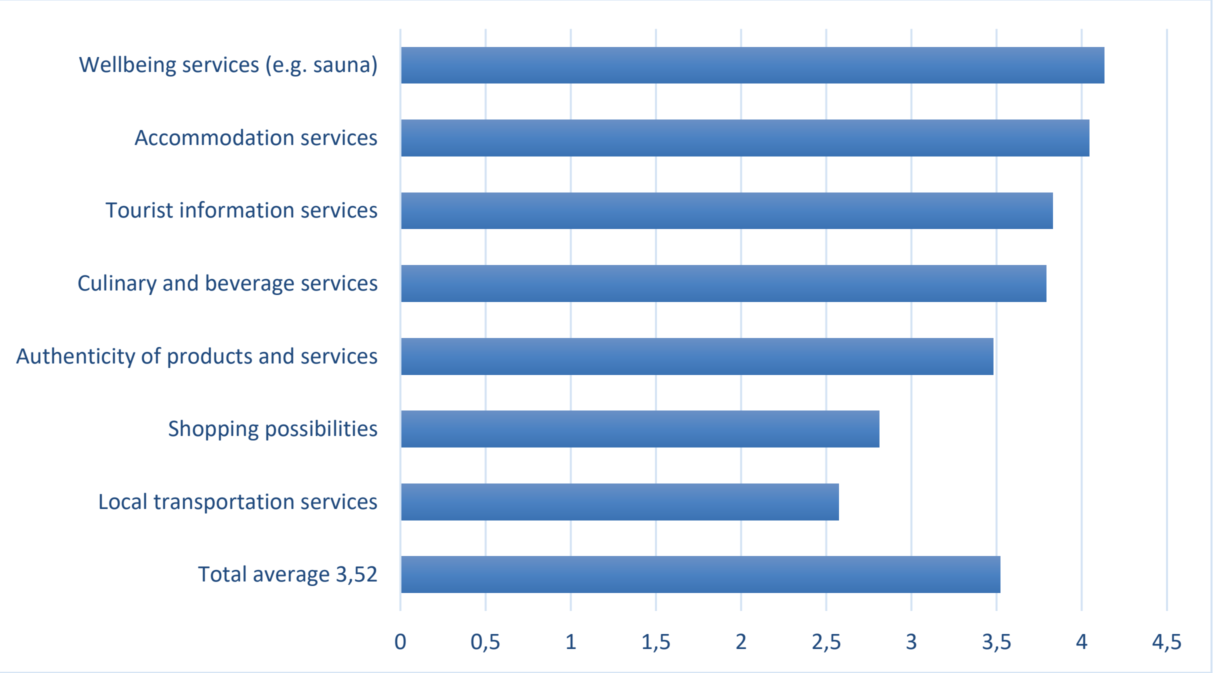

Figure 36. Averages of Quality of Products and Services in Destination(n=106).

It is important for destination to offer enough options of different services and products in destination to able travellers personalize their experience which leads higher travel satisfaction. Also, for example, accommodation providers need to pay attention more for personalization of their accommodation services to satisfy visitors. In Lapland the accommodation providers had succeeded to fulfil the needs and expectations of visitors successfully.

Based on J.D. Power (2016) the superior destinations have common factors which are better than in inferior destination which included tourist services, food and beverage services, lodging and infrastructure in destination. It can be claimed that Lapland have succeed to satisfy travellers by lodging, tourist information services and food and beverage service qualities. Still infrastructure has might affected in total experience quality rating and experiencing Lapland as superior destination.

In addition, it is important that tourism actors in Lapland concentrates on developing new products and services for winter tourism due to its importance as an attractive element for international travellers. However, it is vital that tourism actors also concentrate on developing the experiences which were quality rated lower as local transportation services and shopping possibilities. Especially developing transportation is necessary. Travel to the destination is a part of travellers' destination experience and effect on creation of successful tourism experiences (Hyeong-Kim 2014, 42).

6.2.7. Total Destination Experience and Revisit Intentions

Majority of the travellers have rated their total travel experience in Lapland as excellent or very good. It can be claimed that travellers' destination experiences have been successful, and experience are fulfilled. Also, majority of the travellers would revisit Lapland and recommend their experience in Lapland. The results indicate that the travellers have been able to fulfil their expectations mostly if not totally. Also, this indicates that the destination experiences have been successful in Lapland. (Figure 37.)

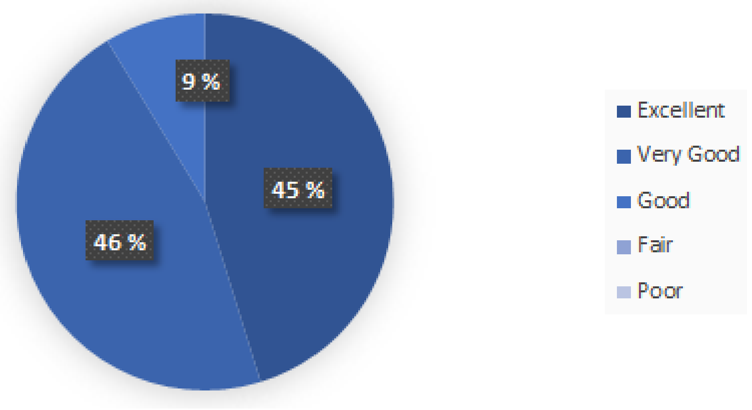

Figure 37. The participants Evaluation of The Travel Experience Quality in Total in Lapland (n=115).

Furthermore, it must be noticed that safety as part of travellers' experience have been rated high. This finding refers to earlier findings by Sangpikul (2017, 431) in terms of destination loyalty. Referring to (Thongkundam 2012, as cited in Sangpikul 2017, 431) Destination`s safety have an influence on destination loyalty. Safety may influence negatively on destination loyalty if travellers do not perceive the destination safe. Safety effects also on travellers' decision to revisit.

The perceived experience quality depends on the expectations of experience which also have affected by several factors as the backgrounds of travellers. (Rope & Pöllänen 1998, 38-43.) Most of the travellers taking part in survey were travelled to Lapland just couple of times before. More than half of the respondents were females and about 44% males. Also, ages, nationalities and economic situation as monthly incomes of the respondents might have affected the participants answer choices.

Majority of the results for question concerning dissatisfaction were accessibility, food quality, lack of evening activities, level of hotels and service and the missing atmosphere of real Finland. The travellers have faced problems accessing Lapland and they had problems with transportation within the destination. The food quality did not meet the expectations of the travellers and Lapland was considered less interesting in terms of evening programme as well as an expensive destination. Additionally, the service of the tourism employees was suggested to be improved.

When travellers are satisfied towards accommodation, restaurant, weather and attractions they are also satisfied towards the tourism destination (Beeho & Prentice 1997, Chi & Qu 2008, De Rojas & Camarero 2007, Oliver 1993, as cited in Frimpong, Nwankwo, Blankson & Tarnanidis 2013, 630). Therefore, it can be assumed that the minority of the travellers who were dissatisfied concerning level of hotels and service, food quality and lack of events might have rated their experience as not successful due to those factors. Therefore, it can be discussed that mentioned factors have affected on travellers’ total experience quality.

Additionally, it must be noticed that travellers have had problems in terms of infrastructure and city attractions have received negative ratings. Referring to (Sangpikul 2017, 430) destination`s attractions and accessibility are directly linked to destination quality, satisfaction and destination loyalty. Therefore, it can be claimed that travellers who were dissatisfied with accessibility and attractions might not become loyal and revisit Lapland. Therefore, it is necessary for Destination Management Organizations to develop the accessibility of Lapland as well as attractions.

Almost all the participants would recommend Lapland as a destination. Therefore, it can be claimed that travellers visiting Lapland have received quality destination experiences and they might become loyal customers for Lapland. Also, it can be claimed that travellers visiting Lapland have received memorable tourism experiences because they have ranked locals' attitude positive. Based on theoretical findings local`s attitude and behaviour had an impact on memorable destination experience. (Chandralal & Valenzuela 2013, as cited in Hyeong-Kim 2014, 41.) (Figure 38.)

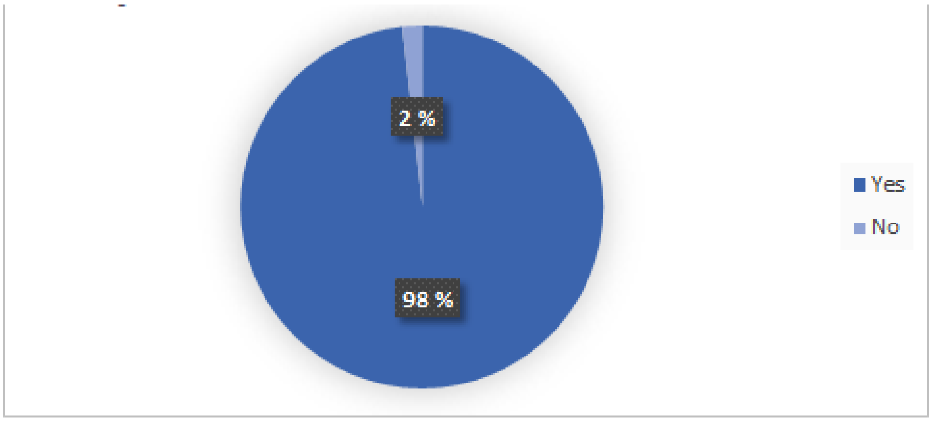

Figure 38. “Would You Recommend Lapland to Your Friends and Relatives? (n=112)”

Also, majority of the travellers would revisit Lapland and the results indicates that Lapland as a destination have fulfilled travellers’ expectations and their destination experience have been successful. This is a positive indicator for the tourism industry in Lapland that tourism products and services fulfil the expectations. (Figure 39.)

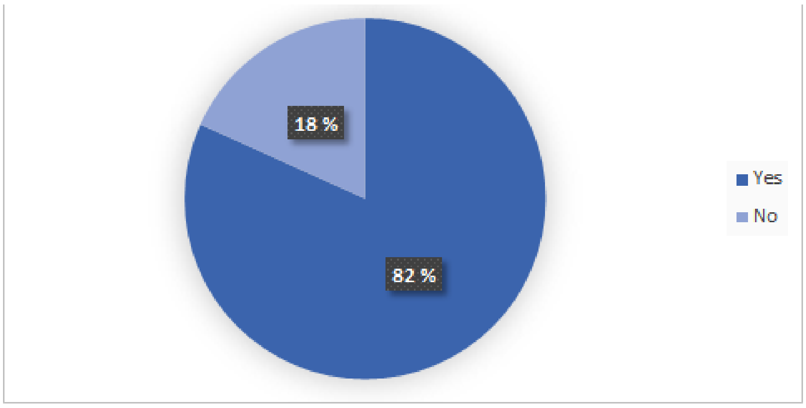

Figure 39. Percentages of participants willing to visit Lapland again (n=115).

7. CONCLUSION

The main outcome was to discover fulfilment of international travellers' expectations, the factors influencing destination choice and travellers' destination experience in Lapland. Also, the goal was to discover new information to help to develop Lapland as a tourism destination. Thesis research was executed by utilizing different quantitative research methods in handout survey and a sampling method in a social media content analysis. Additionally, multiple different theoretical findings as academic journal articles, books and statistical data were utilized to gain a good understanding of thesis topic.

Based on research key results, majority of the travellers visiting Lapland had been satisfied with their overall destination experience in the Lapland and expectations were met. Lapland as a destination was considered to be authentic nature destination offering high-quality nature experiences and activities. Majority of the travellers would also recommend Lapland as a tourism destination and revisit Lapland.

The most influential factors affecting traveller's decision to travel to Lapland were nature experiences, destination's safety, security and price level, products and services in Lapland as well as culture. The less influential factors affecting destination choice were word-of mouth and marketing communication as well as activities in the destination. The most wanted nature experience has been experiencing northern lights. Also, experiencing arctic nature and landscapes and experiencing arctic winter conditions have been considered important.

The most interesting products and services in Lapland have been extraordinary experiences and accessibility in terms of travelling to the destination have influenced destination choice of Lapland. Wellbeing services and transportations options to Lapland have been considered important while considering Lapland as a destination. Shopping possibilities have not influenced travellers' decision to travel to Lapland. In terms of culture experiences travellers have been most interested in Lappish way of life, local food, Lappish culinary, cultural attractions and Sami culture. The most interesting activities to experience have been activities with animals, motorized activities as snowmobiling and non- motorized activities as skiing. Visiting friends or relatives, city attractions or shopping in the destination have been considered as the least interesting experiences in the destination. The least effecting factors have been the easily accessible information about Lapland and travel marketing. The least effecting information source have been friends and relatives.

The most successful destination experiences in the Lapland have been nature experiences, activities in the destination, destination’s safety, security and price level. The less successful destination experiences in Lapland have been cultural experiences and experiencing products and services. Nature experiences which have been the most successful have been experiencing arctic nature and landscapes. Experiencing Nature Phenomena have been less successful experience for the travellers. The most successful activity experiences have been activities with animals, motorized activities, non-motorized activities. The least successful experience in Lapland have been experiencing city attractions. Travelers have experienced Lapland’s safety as higher than Lapland’s price level. From the cultural experiences in the destination locals’ attitude has been the most successful. Travelers have experienced local food, Sami culture, cultural attractions and local events very evenly. Visiting Santa Claus have not been very successful or interesting destination experience. The products with highest quality offered for travellers have been wellbeing services, accommodation services, tourist information services, culinary and beverage services and authenticity of products and services. Travelers have been less satisfied with shopping possibilities and local transportation services.

The thesis was successful in terms of reliability and validity. The reliability of the thesis was ensured by utilizing various different theoretical sources and previous researches. Authors’ observation of respondents supported executing reliable handout survey research. Due to good reliability of the thesis the research offers a possibility for continuation in the future. Validity of the thesis was succeeded because the thesis discussed the main topics which it was measured to be and the research results answered to the research topic. Furthermore, the Thesis also reached the goal of gaining new information to support the tourism development of Lapland. In the future possible similar researches may be more beneficial if several languages and time periods are utilized in handout survey execution. Additionally, social media analysis would reach a better outcome with a platform consisting higher amount of customer feedback could be utilized.

Based on the key results of research Lapland should concentrate on developing the destination’s weaknesses, especially local transportation, shopping possibilities and city attractions. Also, by investing in development of new sustainable and personalized products and services in the destination Lapland could keep the strong attractiveness as a Nordic destination. Tourism in Lapland is still winter based, and the destination management should pay attention to develop Lapland into a more year-round destination.

With personal interests, individual efforts and motivation during the long intensive thesis process, authors have widened perspectives of Lapland as a tourism destination and gained a better understanding of factors creating successful and memorable destination experiences. As a result of challenging thesis process authors have collected new knowledge of Lapland as a destination which was not researched and published previously.

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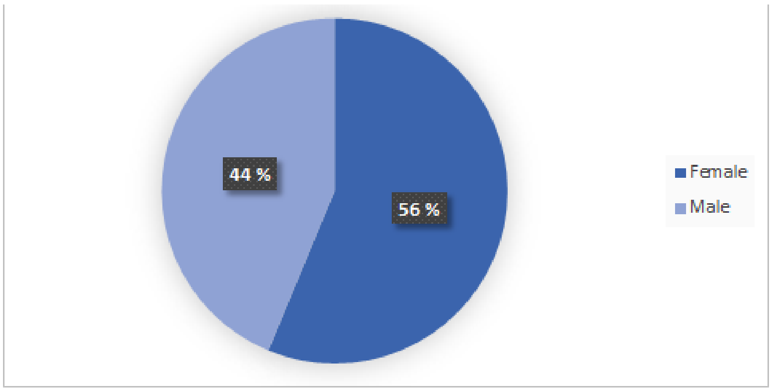
APPENDICES

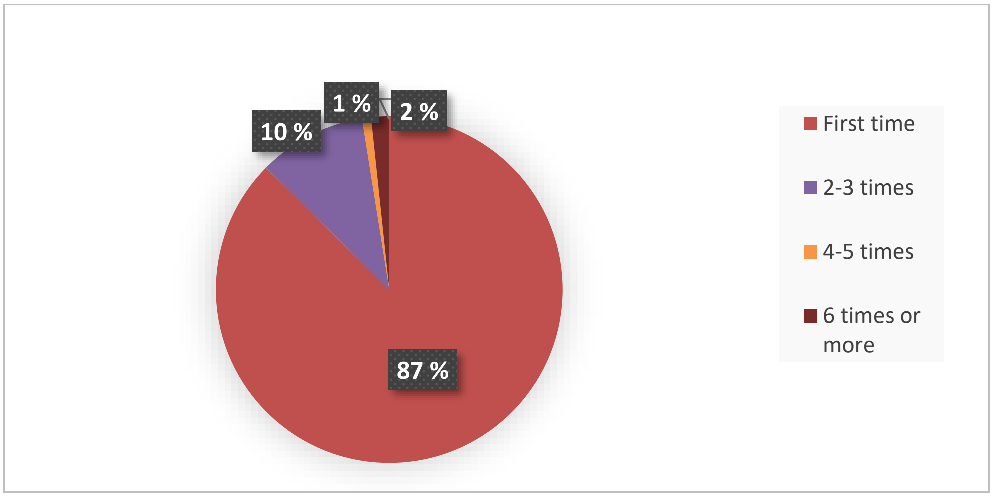
Appendix 1. Additional figures and tables handout survey results

Appendix 2. Handout Survey Research Template.

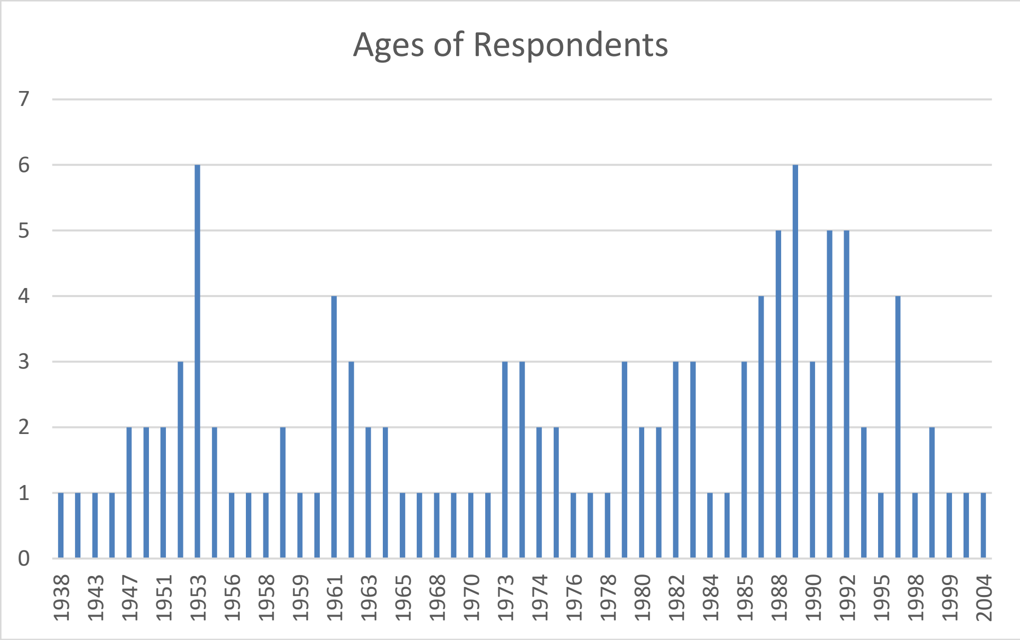
Appendix 1. Additional figures and tables handout survey results

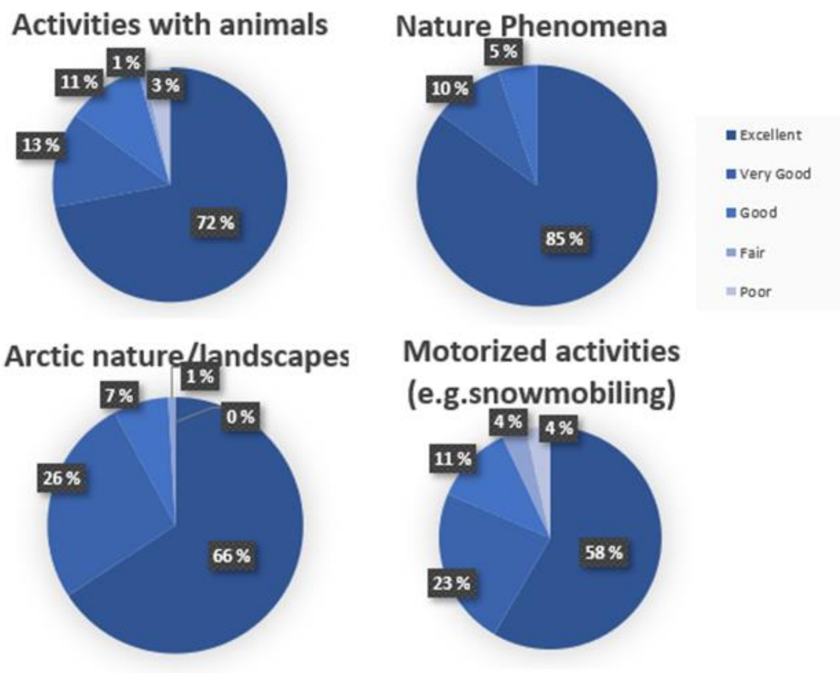


Gender of Respondents.



Participant`s previous visits to Lapland.





The Percentages of the Answers in the Question "I Wanted to Experience...During My Trip to Lapland"

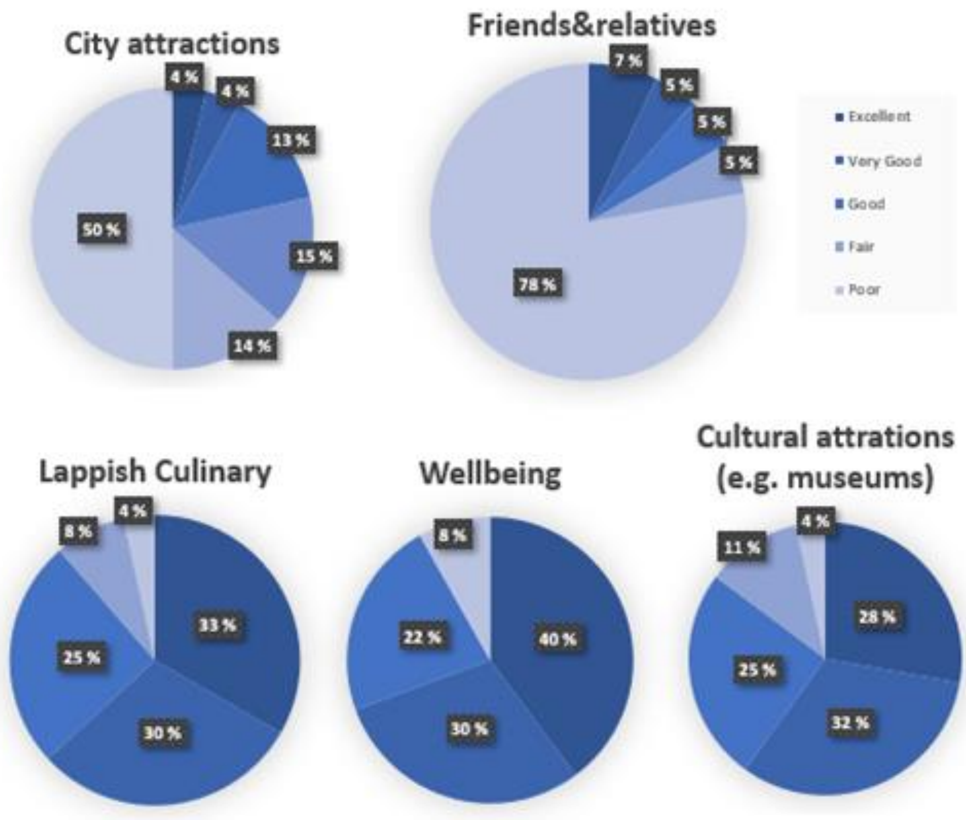
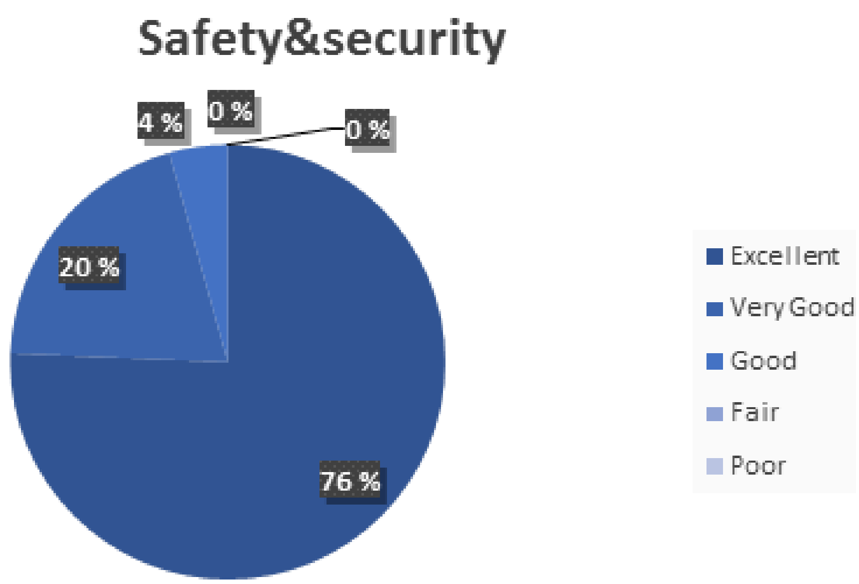
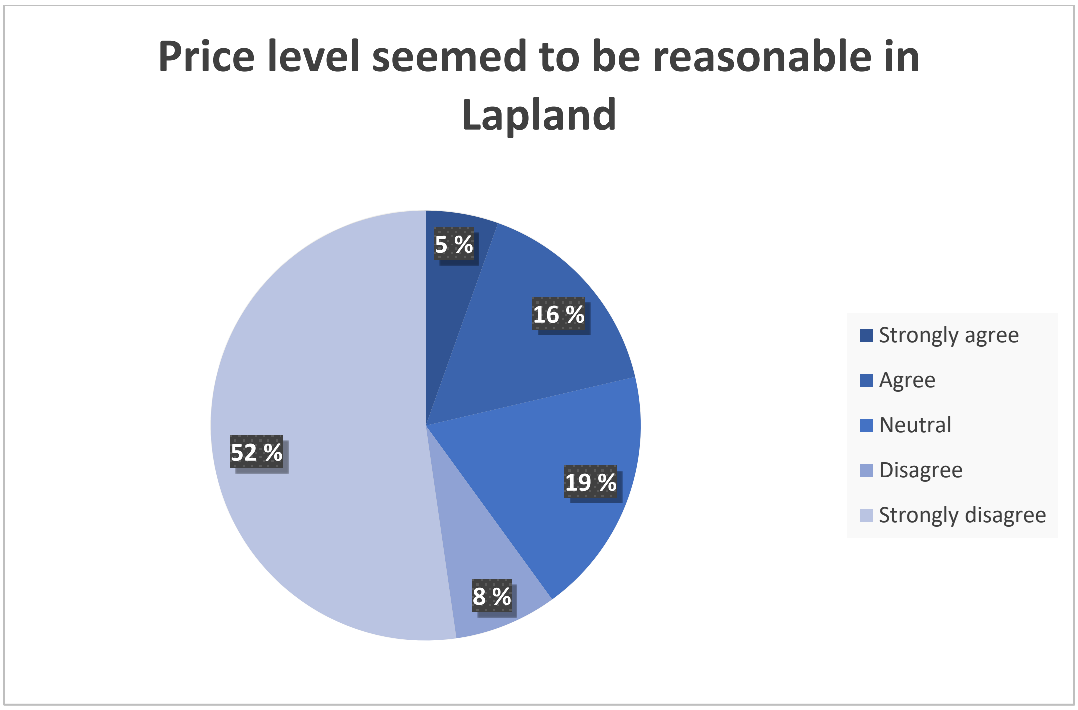


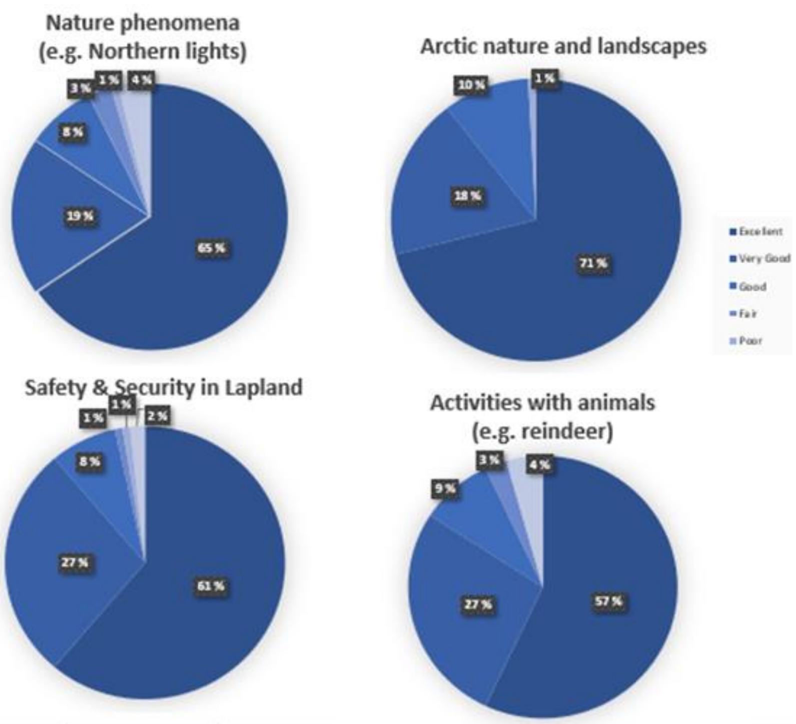
Figure 21. The Percentages of the Answers in the Question "I Wanted to Experience...During My Trip to Lapland.



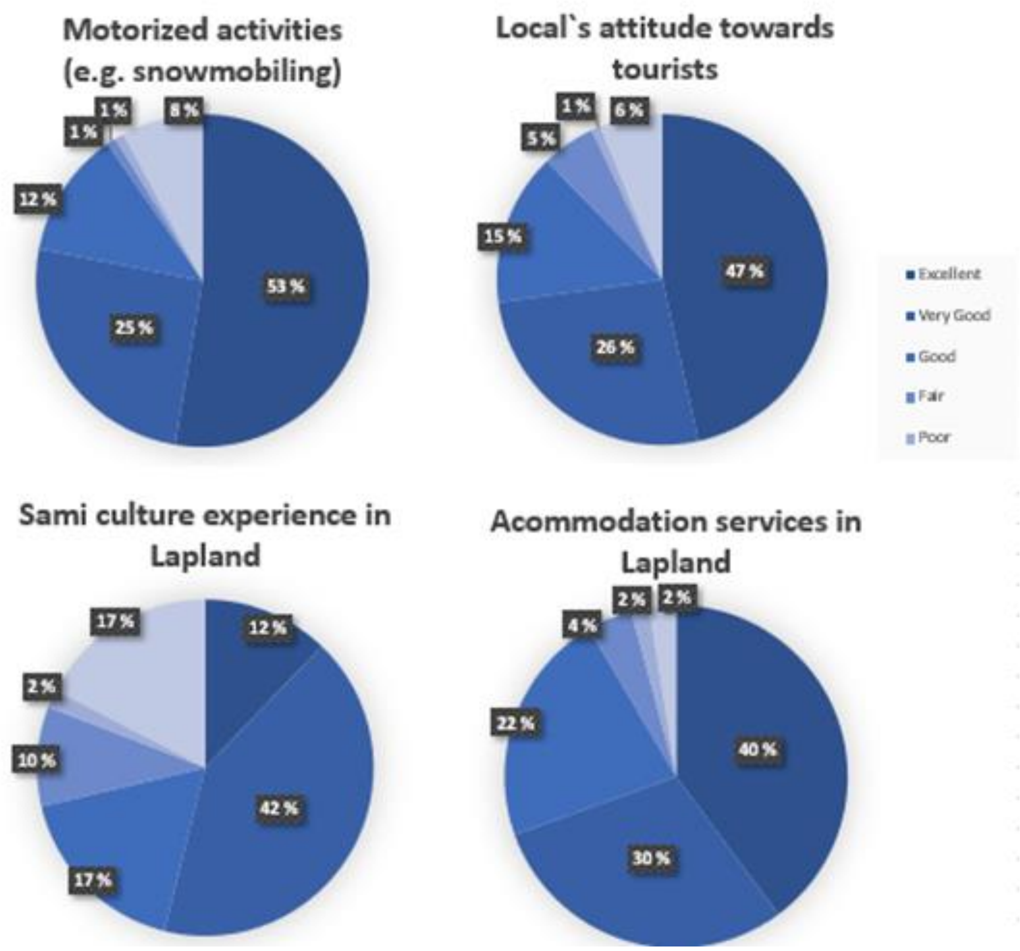
Effect of Lapland`s Safety on Decision Choice.



The Effect of Price Level on Destination Choice



The Quality Ratings Based on Visitors' Experiences in Lapland.



The Quality of the Experiences Rated by Traveller

Appendix 2. Handout Survey Research Template.

Dear Prospective Participant,

We kindly ask you to take part in a survey conducted by Multidimensional Tourism Institute(MTI). The research is part of MTI's Destination Development Project.

The survey aims to examine the factors affecting to destination choice, fulfillment of traveler expectations and destination experiences in Lapland. The data collected through this survey will be used in the Thesis project and MTI´s research activitites.

Your participation is completely voluntary and confidential. Participation is also anonymous, which means that no one(even the research team) will know what your answers are. So, please do not write your name or other identifying information on the form*. If you decide to take part in this survey just fill the enclosed form.The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.If needed,one of our research assistants can assist you with filling it.This will also take place in strict confidence.*

Our research assistants will be happy to answer any questions you have about the survey.You may also contact the persons involved to the project if you would like to have more detailed information about the study and the project. Please find contact informations below.

Project Coordinator, Mirva Tapaninen, Tel. +358 (0) 405276270 ,
Mirva.tapaninen@lapinamk.fi/ Teija Tekoniemi-Selkälä +358 407318054
Teija.Tekoniemi-Selkalaf@lapinamk.fi

With Kind regards

Sara Manninen & Suvi Ylimartimo

Multidimensional Tourism Institute(MTI)

Lapland University of Applied Sciences

www.lapinamk.fi/en

Please, complete the following questions to reflect your opinions as accurately as possible.
In some questions there is a free space reserved for writing the answer.

1. How many times have you travelled to Lapland (Choose only one)

○ This is my first time in Lapland ○ 2-3 times ○ 4-5 times ○ 6 times or more

2. What was the main purpose of travelling to Lapland this time?

○ Business trip
○ Holiday trip
○ Visiting friends or relatives living in Lapland
○ Shopping trip
○ Stop over (flying to another country via Finland)
○ Other, what? ______________________

3.How did you organise this trip to Lapland (e.g. accomodation, transport, activities)?

○ I am buying the services direct from the local companies
○ I am buying ready-made travel packages from a tour operator (e.g. TUI, Thomas Cook)
○ I am buying services from tour operator, but also direct from local companies
○ I am buying services through online search engines (e.g. Trivago, Booking.com), but also direct from local companies
○ My trip was organized and paid for by a third party (e.g. incentive trip)

4. Where did you primarily look for information about Lapland before this trip? (choose 1-3 options)

○ Local tourism company
○ Local tourism boards (e.g. Visit Rovaniemi)
○ Visit Finland
○ Social media (e.g. blogs, Facebook, Trip Advisor)
○ Travel fair
○ Domestic tour operator
○ Foreign tour operator
○ Relatives, friends and acquaintances
○ Other, what? ____________________

5. Who was accompanying you while travelling to Lapland?

○ Nobody
○ Spouse/partner
○ Family
○ Relatives/friends
○ Colleagues
○ Group tour
○ Other, who? ________________________

6. Please write below the most important things you absolutely wanted to see and/or experience in Lapland?

1. ______________ 2. ______________________ 3. _____________________

7. Please answer the below statements based on how they had impact to your decision to travel to Lapland.

	Strongly agree 5	4	3	2	Strongly disagree 1
• I found convenient transportation options to travel to Lapland	O	O	O	O	O
• The price level seemed to be reasonable in Lapland	O	O	O	O	O
• I had heard that locals' attitude towards travelers is positive	O	O	O	O	O
• I found necessary information easily before my trip to Lapland	O	O	O	O	O
• I am interested in learning about Lappish way of life	O	O	O	O	O
• My friends and colleagues recommended me to travel to Lapland	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to get extraordinary experiences	O	O	O	O	O
• I think that Lapland is a safe and secure destination	O	O	O	O	O
• Cultural attractions are important to me (e.g. museums)	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to meet Santa Claus	O	O	O	O	O
• Lapland has enough shopping possibilities	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to experience activities with animals (e.g. husky or reindeer safaris)	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to experience non-motorized activities (e.g. skiing, ice skating)	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to experience motorized activities (e.g. snowmobiling)	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to experience wellbeing services (e.g. Finnish sauna)	O	O	O	O	O
•					
• I was inspired by Lapland as a destination based on travel marketing	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to see Arctic nature and landscapes	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to experience authentic Sami culture	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to experience Arctic winter conditions	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to taste local food (e.g. rye bread, berries)	O	O	O	O	O
•					
• I wanted to experience nature phenomena (e.g. Northern lights)	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to experience Lappish culinary	O	O	O	O	O
• Lapland's city attractions and shopping were one of the reasons	O	O	O	O	O
• I wanted to visit friends and relatives	O	O	O	O	O
• Other, what? ____	O	O	O	O	O
• I found it easy to travel to Lapland (e.g. flights, train...)	O	O	O	O	O

8. Did you consider an alternative destination instead of Lapland while planning this trip?

____

____

9. Please evaluate the level of the travel experience quality in Lapland

	Excellent 5	Very Good 4	Good 3	Fair 2	Poor 1	I had no experience
Culinary and beverage services	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sami culture	O	O	O	O	O	O
Cultural attractions (e.g. museums)	O	O	O	O	O	O
Santa Claus	O	O	O	O	O	O
Tourist information services	O	O	O	O	O	O
Local transportation services	O	O	O	O	O	O
Accommodation services	O	O	O	O	O	O
Safety & security	O	O	O	O	O	O
Price level of Lapland	O	O	O	O	O	O
Authenticity of products and services	O	O	O	O	O	O
City attractions	O	O	O	O	O	O
Shopping possibilities	O	O	O	O	O	O
Local events	O	O	O	O	O	O
Local's attitude towards tourists	O	O	O	O	O	O
Non-motorized activities (e.g. skiing)	O	O	O	O	O	O
Motorized activities (e.g. snowmobiling)	O	O	O	O	O	O
Activities with animals (e.g. reindeer)	O	O	O	O	O	O
Arctic nature and landscapes	O	O	O	O	O	O
Nature phenomena (e.g.Northern lights)	O	O	O	O	O	O
Wellbeing services (e.g. sauna)	O	O	O	O	O	O
Local food	O	O	O	O	O	O
Other, what____________	O	O	O	O	O	O

10. Please evaluate the level of the travel experience quality in total in Lapland

Excellent 5	Very Good 4	Good 3	Fair 2	Poor 1	I prefer not to answer
O	O	O	O	O	O

11. Would you revisit Lapland?

Yes	No
O	O

12. Would you recommend Lapland as a travel destination to your friends and family?

Yes	No
O	O

13. If you were dissatisfied with anything concerning your trip to Lapland, Please describe shortly on the line below what and why?

____

____

____

____

Personal data

14. How many travel trips do you make approximately outside of your country? (Choose only one)

○ Max 1 or less often ○ 2-3 per year ○ 2-4 ○ More than 5 per year ○ At least one a month

○ I travel continuously by business reasons

15. Gender ○ Female ○ Male ○ Other

16. Year of birth ____________________

17. Citizenship ____________________ **18. Country of residence** ____________________

19. Personal gross monthly income?

○ Under 1 000 euros
○ 1 000-1 999 euros
○ 2 000-2 999 euros
○ 3 000-4 999 euros
○ 5 000-10 000 euros
○ Above 10 000 euros

○ **I want to participate the raffle of a Lappish souvenir. The winner will be contacted by email.**

Please write your email address here:____

Thank you for your participation for this survey!
We wish you a pleasant journey!