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Assessing the status quo of sustainable tourism in Phuket

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Sustainable tourism is an imminent term that is strongly correlated to the global age of increased mobility. This became further evident when examining publications concerning sustainable tourism combined with the general sentiment of international travelers. While there was an increasing interest in sustainable tourism, there was no research that claimed the current state of sustainable tourism in the mass-tourism destination Phuket in Thailand. Therefore, this research project aimed to close the identified knowledge gap accordingly.

On the basis of the identified knowledge gap together with the evident uptrend and general interest in sustainable tourism, the research purpose and motivation was formed. It further revealed that sustainable tourism at large received a great deal of attention in its current state and this research aimed to go beyond the common theme of sustainable tourism and conducted an in-depth analysis about the status quo in Phuket with regards to sustainable tourism and elaborate the current state of sustainable tourism in Phuket.

The research project was designed to conduct a case study with a focus group of industry experts in order to collect qualitative data. The qualitative data was used to conduct a thematic analysis in order to examine and analyze the current state of sustainable tourism in Phuket and subsequently answered the following research question: How do industry experts perceive status quo of sustainable tourism in Phuket?

The research and data collection was specific to Phuket and therefore the results of this research were not generalizable to other mass-tourism locations. Another limitation was the timing when the data was collected as it pertains to a period of steep economic recession that was driven by economic instability paired with the global fear of a novel coronavirus, i.e. COVID-19.

Four primary categories were identified through the analysis process that link to issues within the government related to policies and lack of accountability. Furthermore motivational factors from the stakeholders were identified. The theme of shortcomings formed the third category, which contained issues that need to be addressed in the future. Lastly, environment is the fourth category that referred to preservation of the nature as one of the most tangible assets that Phuket had to offer.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution and it is evident that the importance of sustainable tourism was recognized in Phuket, however the lack of accountability, leadership and consistency resulted into a high failure rate when initiatives were launched that aimed to improve sustainable tourism in Phuket. The findings of this study list recommendations that were split into short-term and long-term actions in order to tackle this problem.

Keywords Sustainable Tourism, Phuket, Thailand, Sustainability, UN Sustainable Development Goals

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1   Introduction

Sustainable tourism is an imminent terminology that is strongly correlated to the global age of increased mobility. It is argued that flying has become more affordable than ever in human history (Urry, 2016), but what role does sustainable tourism play in the context of international travel and more specifically, what is the current state of sustainable tourism for a mass-tourism destination like Phuket in Thailand? This exploratory study aims to analyze the status quo of sustainable tourism in Phuket through qualitative data collection and drawing from well-established theories related to sustainability in general and sustainable tourism in particular. The subsequent introductory chapter (chapter one) along with the literature review (chapter two) forms the conceptual framework for the study referring to the *what* and *why*. The section presenting the research design (chapter three) describes comprehensively how the study is conducted and the basis for the choices that were taken. Moreover, the empirical study (chapter four) explicates the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, wherein the discussion and conclusion (chapter five) completes the content of this thesis.

This chapter and its subsequent subchapters methodically discuss the relevance to conduct the research study and consequently elaborate on the research objective, problem setting and finally introducing the research question. Furthermore, the delimitations, limitations and assumptions pertaining to this study will be presented and justified.

1.1   Relevance of the research

A search in the academic database Scopus with the search term *sustainable tourism* generates exactly 3,761 results as of December 2019 out of which 437 where published in the same year (2019). This represents a share of 11,6% and suggests approximately one tenths of all scholarly articles pertaining to the subject of sustainable tourism were published in 2019. Although digitalization and other external influences contribute to an increased number of publications in the recent years, irrespectively, sustainable tourism has been on the rise in the academic community and professional publications approximately doubled over the past five years from 225 in 2014 to 437 as also illustrated in Figure 1.
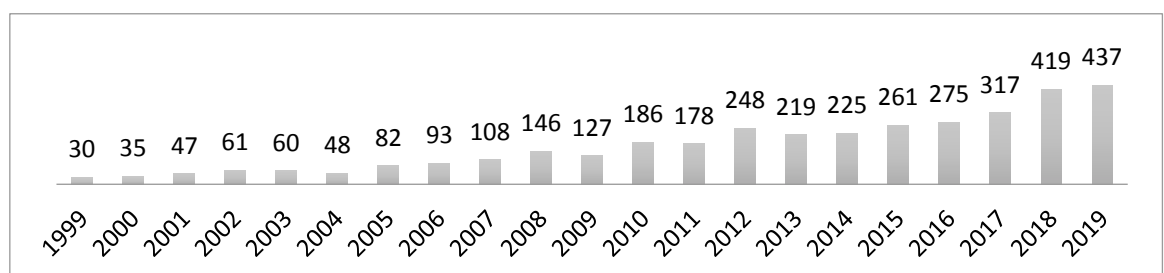

Figure 1. Counts of publications for term *sustainable tourism* (Scopus database, 2019)

Buckley (2012) claims that tourism will continue to growth in the foreseeable future and many industry-related corporations as well as various governments discuss about sustainability initiatives that should safeguard the interest of local communities and preserve tourism possibilities for future generations. However, it is argued that the majority of the improvement is almost entirely through regulation rather than market measures and the tourism industry as a whole is not even close to sustainability (Buckley, 2012). This bold statement is supported by Hall (2019) who adds that the problem about sustainable tourism is far more fundamental and the human perception needs to change at the core, wherein many believe that the application of more effort towards sustainability issues will result into greater efficiency, while he argues that there is a need to rather rethink the human-environment relation in order to solve the problem in the long term with more efficient means (Hall, 2019). Nevertheless, there are already many positive initiatives in the field of sustainable tourism that address and consider the preservation of the environment, while being economically viable to achieve (Scott, Hall & Stefan, 2012).

On the basis of the boosted number of academic publications paired with the increased interest by the general population, it reveals that sustainable tourism at large receives a great deal of attention in its current state and this research aims to identify and analyze the perspective of a purposefully chosen focus group. The case study anticipates going beyond the common theme of sustainable tourism and aims to examine in-depth about collective perspectives with regards to sustainable tourism in Phuket.

Barr, Shaw, Coles & Prillwitz (2010) claim that humans outside their natural environment practice a different kind of behavior with regards to sustainability as opposed to their regular environment. This would imply that national and international tourists are not possibly the best possible focus group to select for this study. Furthermore, Barr et al (2010) claim that expatriates can be considered semi-local, wherein they are not natural to the environment, but have likely adopted to local behavior and customs, while still offering a larger point of comparison when comparing sustainable tourism in the host country compared with their home country (Barr et al, 2010), yet it would lack the local perspective. Therefore a mix of foreign and local experts offers the most reliable choice for the data collection.

The importance of sustainable tourism can not be stressed enough and there is immense scientific evidence about the potential consequences, if sustainability in tourism is not tackled properly and forthright. Ranging from displacing local residents into suburban areas as the median rent level becomes unbearable for local residents to cope with (Cocola-Gant & Gago, 2019), over tourism in metropolitan areas that force municipalities to im-

plement a quota system in order to manage the influx of tourists (Koh & Fakfare, 2019) or to tropical paradises where beaches have been littered with plastic trash that severely impact and seriously harm the regional ecosystem (Asensio-Montesinos, Anfuso, Randerson & Williams, 2019).

1.2 Commission for Erasmus+ TOURIST Project

Another relevance and importance of this research project was the association with the Erasmus+ TOURIST project, which can be described as an international collaboration project between 10 universities that were located in Finland, Austria, Spain, Thailand and Vietnam that seek to increase the positive impact of local tourism in Thailand and Vietnam. The project was co-founded through the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union and the project lead is the University of Applied Sciences FH Joanneum located in Graz, Austria. Other members of the project are not limited to but include Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. In addition to increase the positive impact of local tourism in Thailand and Vietnam, the project lead described the program as Competence Centres for the Development of Sustainable Tourism and Innovative Financial Management Strategies. Furthermore there is a strong correlation and connection to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) and the project has an overall duration of 36 months, which started on 15th October 2017 and is expected to end of 14th October 2020 (FH Joanneum, 2020).

> "*Tourism that takes full account of its current and future (short and long-term) economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities*" (United Nations, 2020).

In order to provide a more tangible link between the commissioner and the research project, the project objectives were described as increasing the spread of knowledge that is related to sustainable tourism through so-called competence centers. Furthermore, the project lead states that another objective was to increase the quantity of projects concerning sustainable tourism and lastly to ensure that these projects will be funded by innovative financial management strategies to generate a long-term growth of sustainable tourism in Thailand and Vietnam (FH Joanneum, 2020).

On the basis of the objectives that were laid out for the Erasmus+ TOURIST project, this research project aimed to support the spread of knowledge that pertained to sustainable tourism, in particular to the tourist destination Phuket in Thailand. Furthermore, the anticipated results of this research project aimed to form a basis that supported long-term sustainable tourism growth in Thailand through continuous education of stakeholders and

actionable recommendations. The following subchapter will elaborate the problem setting, the exact objective of the research as well as present the associated research question.

1.3 Problem setting, objective and research question

While the relevance of the study has been introduced and justified in the previous sub-chapter, it is of particular importance to the province of Phuket in Thailand, which is one of the most frequently visited tourist destinations in the world with an absolute need to address sustainability issues. On the basis of the initial search inquiry that was introduced in the previous subchapter, which generated more than 3,700 search results of professional literature concerning sustainable tourism; the search inquiry was further tweaked to accommodate only search results relevant specifically for Phuket. This advanced search yielded totally six results out of which two can be excluded due to lack of relevance as they pertain to disaster management. In conclusion to the problem setting, sustainable tourism is a relevant and well-discussed topic within the tourism community, however given the dependence of Phuket on tourism and the degree of academic research (or lack thereof), it formulates the objective to conduct further research in this field of study.

There are numerous arguments and claims pertaining to the reasons that led to these issues and in return emphasize the importance of acting responsible and strive towards sustainable tourism in order to reduce and reverse these effects in the future. The objective of this research is to look beyond the facts why sustainable tourism is considered important. The aim is to gain more insights and learn about Phuket's current state concerning its sustainable tourism efforts.

It is implied that for the selected focus group of industry experts, which permanently reside in Phuket that a fundamental knowledge with regards to sustainable tourism exists as perquisite. Drawing back to the problem setting and objective of the research, the following research question can be formulated:

- How do industry experts perceive status quo of sustainable tourism in Phuket?

Through the means of primary data collection and thematic analysis, the author aims to gain an in-depth understanding of status quo in Phuket and use the results of the research to formulate actionable recommendations that can assist in an effort to improve sustainable tourism for Phuket. Furthermore answering the research question assisted consumers to assess the current state of sustainable tourism in Phuket prior to their travels.

1.4 Delimitation

In order to achieve trustworthy results and provide a research framework that is realistic to implement and accomplish, the author decisively set delimitations for this research. Furthermore, there are limitations and assumptions pertaining to this research that were argued in the following paragraphs. The difference between limitations and delimitations is that the latter is set purposefully by the researcher in order to narrow the focus of the research and create a realistic framework to carry out a research. The former, limitations, is a natural boundary that is beyond the direct control of the researcher, however as these limitations might affect the outcome of the research and should be considered for the research methods, it is important to mention them below. Lastly, assumptions can be considered as facts that are established and understood by the examiner of the thesis as well as other readers alike (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2003).

The first delimitation is referring to the data collection that is specifically relevant to Phuket and Thailand and therefore the results of the study may serve as benchmark comparison for similar mass-tourism destinations, however the results were not be generalizable to other locations. The author decisively chose to delimit the location to focus on Phuket only as it was assumed that a broader perspective with multiple locations may create a better overall perspective to compare locations, however it would lack specifics and a level of detail, which would be required in order to formulate specific actionable recommendations. Also expanding the primary study to other regions in Thailand would increase the need for funding and it would be not feasible to complete the research within the required timeframe.

Secondly there is an assumption that expatriates have a point of comparison with their home country and the host country with regards to sustainability efforts. While an international tourist could attend to the empirical research, it can be assumed that this group of demographics does not have sufficient knowledge about sustainability efforts in Thailand. Therefore using a mix of industry experts that are expatriates and locals offers the most versatile and reliable possibility to collect the data, while the perspective of the local population would add another valuable perspective, it has been decided to exclude non-expert locals due to language barriers, which potentially dilute the results of the study. A limitation of the study is that it is conducted in a time of economic recession in Thailand paired fear about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) wherein tourist arrivals are assumed to decline and the local currency has gained immense strength over other international currencies making Phuket more expensive, which could possible affect the sustainability efforts or perspectives (Nidhiprabha, 2017).

2 Literature Review

This chapter and its subsequent subchapters will systematically establish a research space that will provide a versatile and thorough review of previous academic studies pertaining to the subject and present the theoretical framework upon which the research will be based on. The first subchapter 2.1 will elaborate and argue the review process that was purposefully chosen by the author. Furthermore, the author will establish a common understanding with regards to the terminology in subchapter 2.2 as seen in Figure 4.

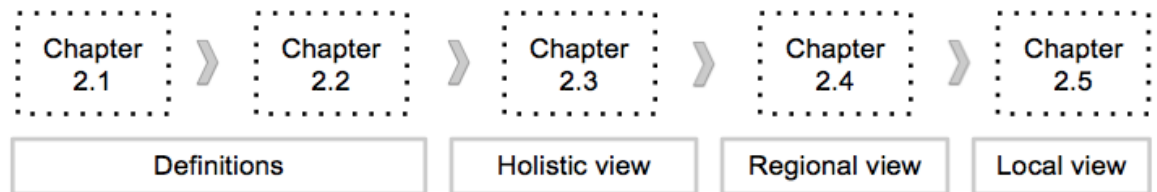| Chapter 2.1		Chapter 2.2		Chapter 2.3		Chapter 2.4		Chapter 2.5
Definitions				Holistic view		Regional view		Local view

Figure 4. Steps that form a hierarchical approach to this literature review (own Figure)

In subchapter 2.3 that is the third step of Figure 4, earlier academic studies, theories and models are linked with professional literature in order to provide context in the field of sustainable tourism, which forms a holistic view on the subject. After the definition as the base line and the holistic view have been established, the last two subchapters will subsequently introduce a regional view with regards to contemporary sustainability issues in Thailand and thereafter zoom in and discuss the local practice in Phuket.

2.1 Review process

The author decisively chose to use Scopus and IEEE Xplore as main scholarly databases for the respective research study opposed to for example Google Scholar, which offers a wide range of academic sources, however has limitations in the screening process of professional literature. In order to establish a sophisticated research space with reliable and trustworthy professional literature, the author decided to delimit the use of hyperlinks as sources as well as references found readily available on the Internet, not limited to, but for example articles in economic newspapers. These articles oftentimes represent the opinion of the editor without having scientific data to support their respective claim.

In order to be considered as eligible for this literature review, the data collection methods need to be presented and explained, which is the case for the scholarly research found on Scopus and IEEE Xplore. Additionally, the published articles within the Scopus and IEEE Xplore databases are limited to scientific journals, educational books, conference papers and PhD dissertations only, which offer a higher reliability and validate of the papers.

Upon commencing the review process with regards to the introduced research objective and problem setting and in order to answer the posed research question, the author decided to follow the review process suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff (2003) that claims to follow four individual steps in order to identify suitable literature for the inclusion in the literature review. In the following paragraphs, the author will subsequently elaborate the process while applying the steps of identification followed by screening, eligibility and inclusion as illustrated in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5. Simplified four-step literature review inclusion process (Podsakoff et al, 2003)

In order to identify contemporary literature with regards to sustainable tourism, the author chose to use the key words "sustainable tourism" in the scholarly database search. The search generated more than 3,700 results as of December 2019 that were considered eligible for the first stage of the identification process. On the basis of the inquired results, the subsequent step in the identification process was to apply additional filters. These additional filters assist to narrow the search and provide a limited list of relevant literatures that qualify for the next stage in the process (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The second step in the process is referred to as screening process, wherein the publication title will be examined. Consideration is given, if the title justifies to be selected to a shortlist or if the title is not deemed relevant to the research and respective literature review. Another criterion that was applied was the publication year in order to identify if the issue is current or possibly outdated. Established theories usually date back many years or even decades, wherein contemporary issues should be more recent and only few years old (Podsakoff et al, 2003).

Podsakoff et al. (2003) refer to the third step in the review process as eligibility; wherein the shortlisted publications will be examined by their abstract and similar criteria is applied as in the previous step. The selected literature needs to be relevant for the purpose of the research and supportive of the research question and elaborated problem setting.

The last step in the process is the inclusion step, which means that purposefully selected literature will be included for the literature review that is presented in the following subchapters (Podsakoff et al, 2003). An example of a literature review analysis sheet can be seen in appendix 1.

2.2 Terminology & Three Pillar Model

In order to further examine the problem setting and fulfill the research objective, it is important to elaborate on the most common terminology that is being used in this literature review, hence the this subchapter will establish a common definition and link it to latest theoretical approaches that are deemed relevant.

The Webster Dictionary (2020) defines the word sustainable as *using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged*. In addition, Webster Dictionary (2020) suggests the word defendable as possible synonym for the word sustainable, which ironically is oftentimes the case as communities, researchers or politicians often need to defend their theory related to an sustainable effort in order to preserve and protect for future generations.

Leicht, Heiss and Byun (2018) claim that sustainability can be described as the reaching our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations. Leicht et al. (2018) supplementary argue that sustainable development is apprehensive towards the development of a culture where the costs of the development are not transferred to future generations, which is a similar definition as given by Pearce and Atkinson (1993). The motivating and driving factors for sustainability are vary and often related to motives of an individual, community, region, business or country, however sustainability itself is a shared value by many individuals across the globe (Wilson and Post, 2013).

In an effort to increase awareness with regards to sustainability and sustainable behavior, the members of the United Nations agreed on an agenda that entails 17 sustainable development goals for the future (United Nations, 2020) as visualized in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. The UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (United Nations, 2020)

The United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda was established in 2015 with the midterm goal to improve 17 individual initiatives pertaining to sustainability within 15 years. The motivation to implement this agenda is described by the United Nations (2020) with a call to action in order to protect the planet, end poverty and improve the lives and future of everyone, everywhere in the world. This research study addresses some of the outlined goals from the sustainable development agenda, as sustainable tourism is an important segment towards achievement of some these 17 goals by 2030.

Now linking the definition and relevance of sustainability with a theoretical model in order to grasp a more in-depth understanding of the factors behind sustainability, it is rational to look at the three-pillar model that is often used in the context of sustainability issues. Barbier's (1987) model established the three pillars of sustainability that upon taking a closer look into the individual dimensions that affect and contribute towards sustainability. The three pillars can be namely identified as social, environmental and economic as seen in Figure 7 below. The model with its three pillars is supported by Wilson and Post (2013) who similarly describe the model and furthermore add that people, planet and profit can be used as synonyms for the three pillars social, environmental and economic.
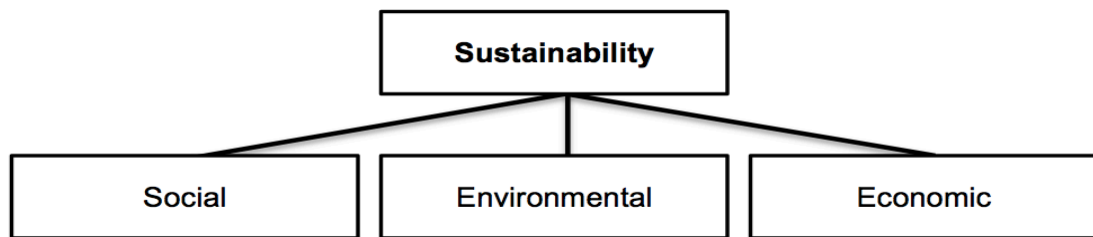

Figure 7. Pillars (social, environmental and economic) of sustainability (Barbier, 1987)

The social pillar refers to a variety of concepts such a laws, ethical principles, education, communal development, equal opportunity and quality of life as described by Purvis, Mao and Robinson (2019). Purvis et al. (2019) further claim that the environmental pillar that largely refers to efficient resource management, environmental protection and preservation and habitat restoration. Lastly the economic pillar entails economic smart growth, long term planning, cost of living as well as research and development (Barbier, 1987; Hansmann, Mieg and Frischknecht, 2012; Purvis et al., 2019). Barbier (1987) claimed that reaching the overall goals of environmental conservation, economic development as well as social well-being are not conflicting by default and at best should be mutually reinforcing, however oftentimes there are challenges by reaching or improving one or more pillars, that it can conflict with the remaining ones as also argued by Hansmann et al. (2012) who researched for synergies between the three pillars and instead found that only a well planned and executed strategy effectively improves all three pillars simultaneously without sacrificing the integrity of either pillar that defines sustainability.

2.3 Ideology of sustainable tourism

It is argued that without travel there is no tourism and tourism is indirectly responsible to contribute approximately ten percent to the global gross domestic product (Knežević-Cvelbar, Dwyer, Koman and Mihalič, 2016), hence tourism is of significant economic importance and value, however striving towards sustainable tourism should be considered the underlying goal for the future (Sorupia, 2005). The ideology of sustainable tourism is not a new topic that emerged in the recent years, however the attention that sustainable tourism is receiving is steadily evolving as the current approach is not longer viable and megatrends such as *Fridays For Future* are inspired by the need to act sustainable (Kühne, 2019). Sustainable tourism at its core can be described as a conception of making a positive impact on the three pillars environment, economy and society (Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins, 2013) as seen in Figure 5 above. However achieving sustainable tourism and applying the theoretical model into practice requires a more in-depth analysis.

The first time that the terminology of sustainable tourism gained attention in the academic community dates back to the 90's of the previous century, wherein Bramwell and Lane (1993); Hall and Lew (1998); Garrod and Fyall (1998) and Swarbrooke (1999) all concur about the importance of sustainable tourism in order to preserve the environment, improve the local communities and bring economic benefits to the region without sacrificing the former two points. On the basis of the previously introduced definition of sustainable tourism and linking it back to the previous subchapter that presented the terminology of sustainability in general, the model from Hunter (1997) can be used as theoretical model to link the both into the same paradigm as seen in Figure 8 below. Hunter claimed that the pillars for sustainable tourism are identical to the pillars introduced by Barbier (1987) that were elaborated in the previous subchapter.

The first pillar of social equity is equal to the social pillar and in the case of sustainable tourism, it is referring to benefits of local society, employment, income, quality of life, public participation, respect for socio-cultural values and personal development. Most of these terms are intertwined, which can be explained with the example of employment. If a tourism-related business starts its operations in a certain area, there should be benefit to the local society. The paradigm of social equity can be best explained with a relevant example, i.e. a new hotel that commences business. A benefit to the local society could be that through the influx of customers at the new hotel, the surrounding locals can open a small shop that sells food and beverage or a noodle restaurant. This could be considered a benefit to the local community, as the local community would have otherwise not had that opportunity. In the example of the hotel, employment and income are related employing

local staff and not hiring staff from another region or country. Another example of sustainable tourism for the paradigm of social equity could be respect for socio-cultural values, i.e. in a Buddhist country that observes strict non-alcohol policies on religious holidays, the hotel would adhere to this local practice and suspend the sale of alcohol on that particular day or limit the operations to certain hours as a gesture of respect to the socio-cultural values (Cohen, 2002; Byrd, 2007).
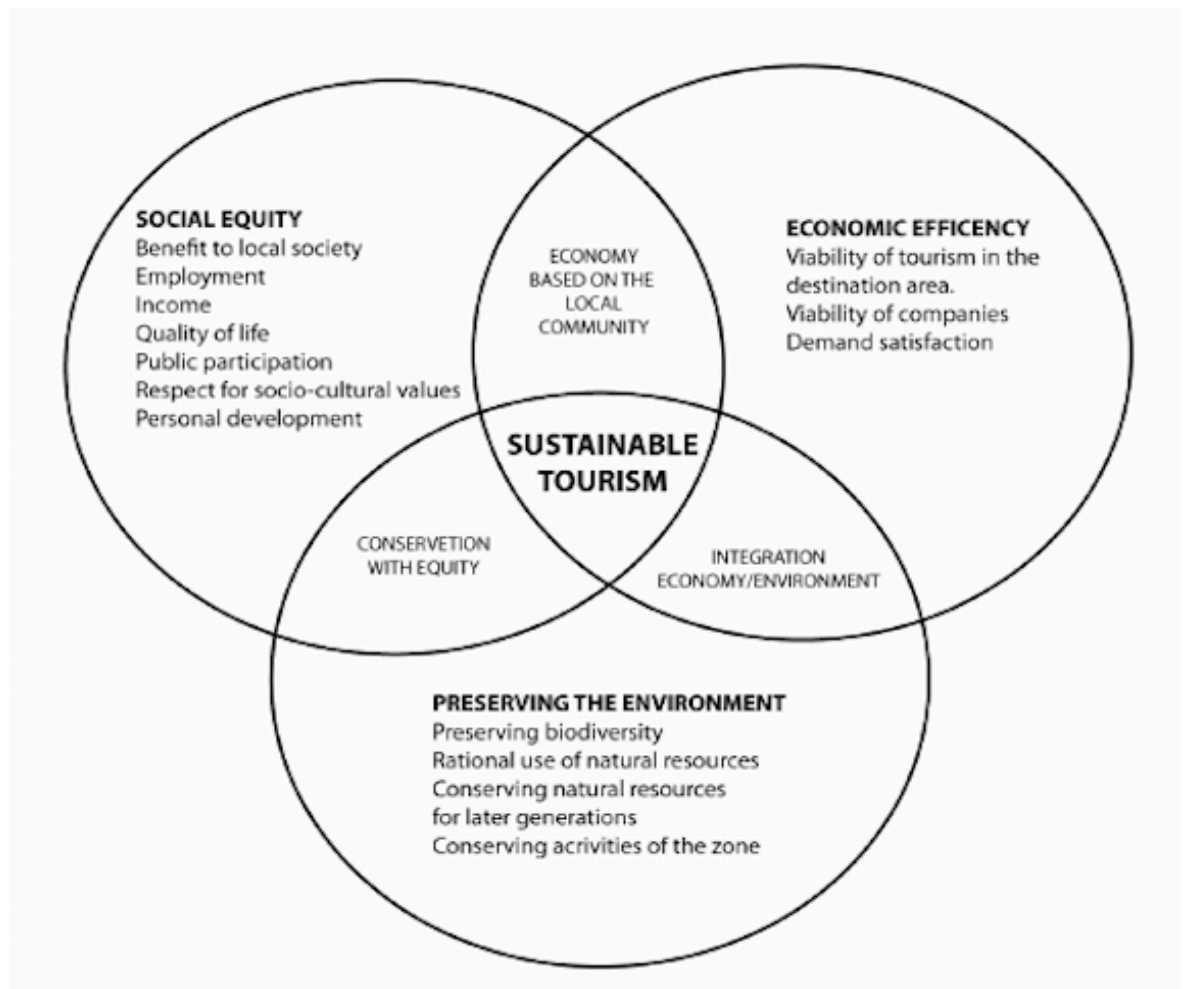

Figure 8. Paradigms of sustainability in the field of sustainable tourism (Hunter, 1997)

In a publication by Butler (1991) it is argued that the paradigm of preserving the environment, which is linked back to the environmental pillar, refers largely to preserving biodiversity, rational use of natural resources, conserving natural resources for later generations and conserving activities of the zone. Butler argues the described activities that preserve the environment meant to limit or ideally eliminate any negative impact on the environment. Butler's claim (1991) is further supported by Murphy and Price (2005) who argue that every business has the tenancy to leave a metaphorical footprint in the environment. Sustainable tourism is about managing the impact and reducing the effect on the environment, therefore drawing back to the example of the hotel and linking it to the model of sustainable tourism, it would mean that the hotel can not be build in a location which is a

breeding ground for a particular species unless an relocation of that species is a viable option. Another controversial topic is concerning drinking water in regions that experience (severe) droughts. Sunlu (2003) claims that there is a conception of tourists to feel entitlement of sufficient water supplies during their stay despite the environmental circumstances. The tourists expects to have tap water at their disposal, which in turn could mean that water reservoirs in the region could be used up without proper conservation of this natural resource, which could lead to unavailability of water to the local community (Sunlu, 2003).

Lastly the paradigm of economic efficiency that links back to the economic pillar is referring to viability of tourism in the area, viability of companies and demand satisfaction. By using the previous example of a hotel, viability of tourism in the destination area would refer to sufficient infrastructure that can support the transportation of tourists as well as a healthy balance between demand and supply. For example building a hotel in the rainforest on the basis of increasing demand could not be considered economically sustainable, if the supporting infrastructure is non-existent (Sunlu, 2003). However, on the same basis of the previous provided example, it should be noted that infrastructure can be improved and hence the measures and perception for sustainability can shift over time (Butler, 1991).

Though the implementation and adherence to sustainable tourism sounds plausible, there are several barriers when applying sustainable tourism principles into practice. A trivial reason that policies, which support sustainable tourism, fail can be traced back to lack of awareness. Some stakeholders lack knowledge or even cultural pride prevents them from acting accordingly. While this subchapter gives a clear definition and linked the theoretical model with practical examples, ambiguity is another reason why sustainable tourism can fail. In absence of a clear definition what is considered sustainable tourism can lead to unclear structures and roles to adhere to. Though the mindset of communities started to shift, economic priorities are another leading factor that can lead to failure.

Oftentimes economic values are driven by profit and growth and short term focus, which does not coincide with the economic values of sustainability, i.e. smart growth and long term focus. Another contributing factor to economic priorities are certainly the involved costs and political influence that also affect the success of sustainable tourism. Lastly, inefficient use of resources is another factor that is mentioned with regards to failure of sustainable tourism. It is mentioned that more money is spent towards marketing and advocating for sustainability than for appropriate actions that bear changes for the affected regions or communities (Dodds and Butler, 2009).

2.4   Contemporary issues in Thailand

This subchapter will examine the current role of sustainable tourism in the Kingdom of Thailand and what initiatives are presently applied. Arguably the tourism industry is a large supplier towards national and global gross domestic product with an estimated 10% contribution (Knežević-Cvelbar, Dwyer, Koman and Mihalič, 2016) on a yearly basis. Knežević-Cvelbar et al. (2016) further claim that also employment through direct or indirect tourism is an important factor for most countries economies. Theparaturl (2017) states that while the global gross domestic product benefits between 9-10% from tourism, the economy of the Kingdom of Thailand deeply relies on tourism as it is estimated that 2.53 trillion Thai baht (approximately 71 billion Euro based on 16.4.2020 conversion) contributed to the Thai GDP, which corresponds to approximately 17,7% (Theparaturl, 2017).

Through a variety of different campaigns, not limited to, but for example Amazing Thailand, 1999; Kitchen to the World, 2010; Discover Thainess, 2015, that the Tourism Authority of Thailand implemented with the aim to create a positive branding image for the country. The latest campaign is visualized in Figure 9 below. The campaign goal and branding strategy was fueled by the underlying motivation to steer clear of the negative image pertaining to sex tourism and other negative stereotypes for Thailand (Farrelly, 2016).

Figure 9. Tourism Authority's *Discover Thainess* campaign in 2015 (Theparaturl, 2017)

Sustainable tourism receives increased attention in Thailand over the last years, in particular since the early 2010's when neighboring countries started to open up for tourism and Thailand received increased pressure to provide a unique selling point and value proposition in order to preserve its tourism base that is imperative to the Thai GDP (Teerakapibal, 2016). The most recent initiative that was launched by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) and strongly supported by the current government was the *Travel Thailand in Style, Reduce Plastic Waste* campaign that aims to educate tourists about the usage of plastic products and their impact on the environment. At the same time, the government pledged to financially support local businesses in Thailand to offset part of the costs by replacing plastic packaging with more environmental friendly alternatives (Teerakapibal, 2016; Farrelly, 2016).

2.5 Tourism in Phuket

In order to put the matter into perspective, it is important to briefly introduce key information with regards to Phuket. Phuket is located approximately 862 kilometers south of Bangkok and located in the Andaman Sea as seen in Figure 2 below (TAT, 2020). According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (2020) there are only two seasons in Phuket, wherein the first season stretches from May through October and is referred to as green season, mainly due to blossoming of green-land due to the constant rainfall paired with tropical temperatures. The second season is called hot season and stretches from November through April respectively, wherein rainfall is very limited, though the climate and temperatures are more reasonable. Phuket is divided into three administrative districts that operate autonomous. Amphoe Mueang covers the southern part of Phuket, including Phuket Old Town as seen in Figure 3 below. The central district of Phuket is called Amphoe Kathu that covers the strategic tourist spot Patong Beach. Finally, Amphoe Thalang covers the northern part of Phuket, which also includes the airport as seen in Figure 3 below (TAT, 2020).

Figure 2. Location of Phuket, Thailand in South East Asia (Lonely Planet, 2020)

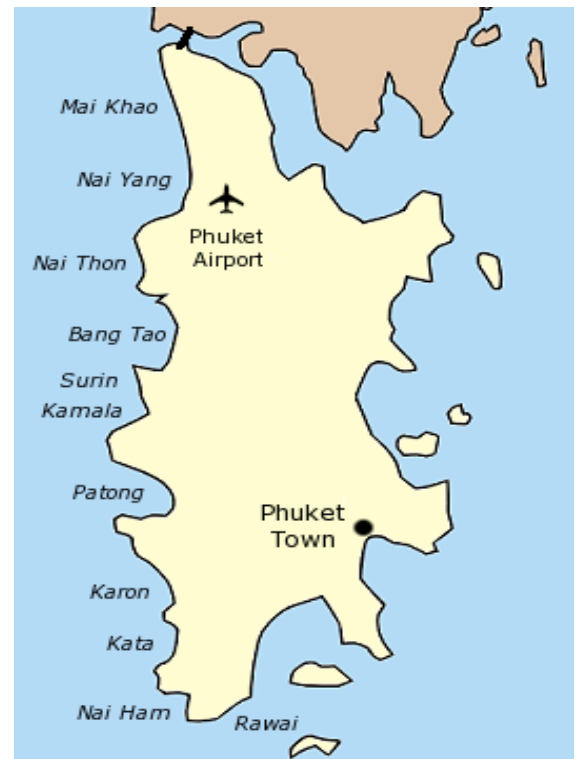Figure 3. Close-up map of Phuket in the south of Thailand (Lonely Planet, 2020)

Since the 16th century, Phuket has been renowned for its tin mining activities, whereas even nowadays the past of many islanders is still imminent in form of abandoned tin mines or the grand tin mining museum. After the tin mining was abolished in the 20th century and Phuket temporarily relied on production of Thai rubber through enormous rubber

tree plantation, whereas today, the main source of income is related to tourism (Pardomuan, 2014).

The following paragraphs will analyze the contemporary practice in Phuket and address some of the current issues as well as outline practices that have been implemented already in order to improve status quo. Going back to the year 2004, at the beginning of the current century Phuket was opposed to an enormous challenge to rebuild its infrastructure along the coastline after the Indian Ocean tsunami that devastated locals and tourists in Phuket alike (Henderson, 2007). Henderson (2007) claimed that it would have been an opportunity to rebuilding the tourist attractions and infrastructure in accordance with sustainable principles, however understandably the priority was given to other important economic factors at the time (Sharpley, 2005).

Looking at the arrival statistics since that time, it can be noted that Phuket encountered steady two-digit growth since 2003. Only 2005 noted negative arrival count, which is related to the Indian Ocean Tsunami. Furthermore, the years 2008-2009 as well as 2014 are the only years that had negative or marginal growth as result of the global financial crisis. However for the remaining 13 years out the listed 17, there has been always double digit-growth with regards to arrivals of domestic and international passengers at Phuket airport.

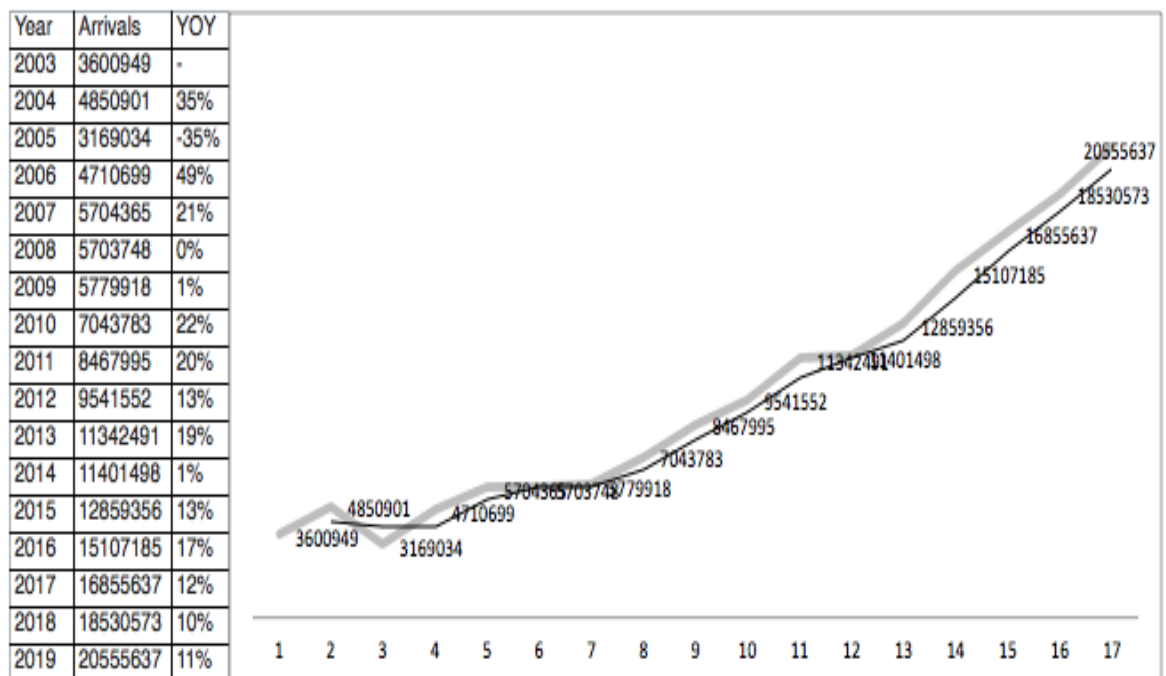| Year	Arrivals	YOY
2003	3600949	-
2004	4850901	35%
2005	3169034	-35%
2006	4710699	49%
2007	5704365	21%
2008	5703748	0%
2009	5779918	1%
2010	7043783	22%
2011	8467995	20%
2012	9541552	13%
2013	11342491	19%
2014	11401498	1%
2015	12859356	13%
2016	15107185	17%
2017	16855637	12%
2018	18530573	10%
2019	20555637	11%

Figure 10. Development of arrivals at Phuket airport between 2003 and 2019 (AOT, 2020)

The graph in Figure 10 above is a demonstration that the tourism in Phuket developed significantly over the last two decades; henceforth acting or achieving sustainable tourism

in this region has an even larger influence and significance as for smaller regions with less tourists and impact (Henderson, 2007; Sakolnakorn, Naipinit and Kroeksakul, 2013).

In order to facilitate a resourceful discussion with regards to possible influences towards sustainable tourism by different demographics and cultures, it is important to establish a referential basis for the discussion and provide context with regards to Phuket's main tourist market. Figure 11 visualized the corresponding main markets for Phuket, which can be split into seven main markets such as Chinese (24%), Russian (17%), Thai domestic (16%), Australian (13%), European excl. Russian (13%), Asian excl. Chinese and domestic (12%) and others (5%). While the scope of the research is not of economic nature and does not require an in-depth analysis of the respective customer segment, it should be noted that Chinese contribute almost one forth of total visitors and 70% of the inbound market is controlled by four economies (China, Russia, Thailand and Australia) and hence a high dependency on the these four countries (TAT, 2020).
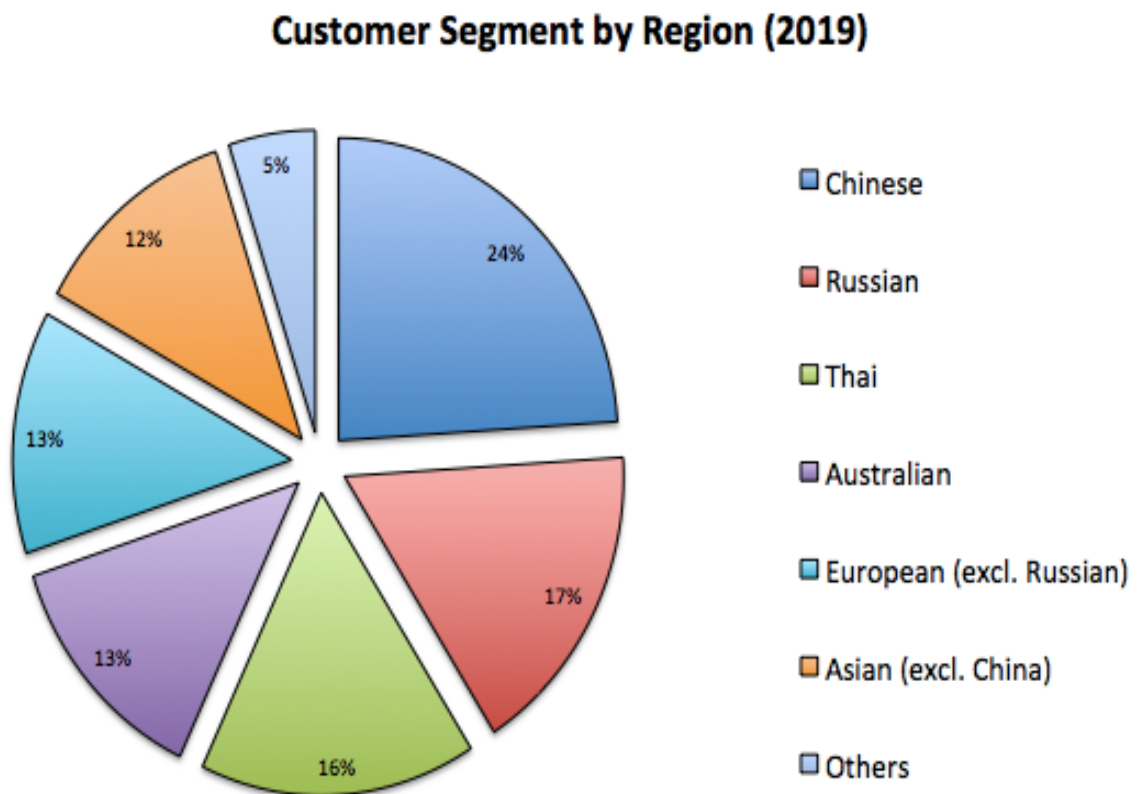

Figure 11. Phuket's customer market by region in 2019 (adapted from TAT, 2020)

Sakolnakorn et al. (2013) claim that the contributing factors of economic stagnation that lead to reduced activity of tourism in Phuket is related to a variety of internal factors as seen in Figure 12 below.
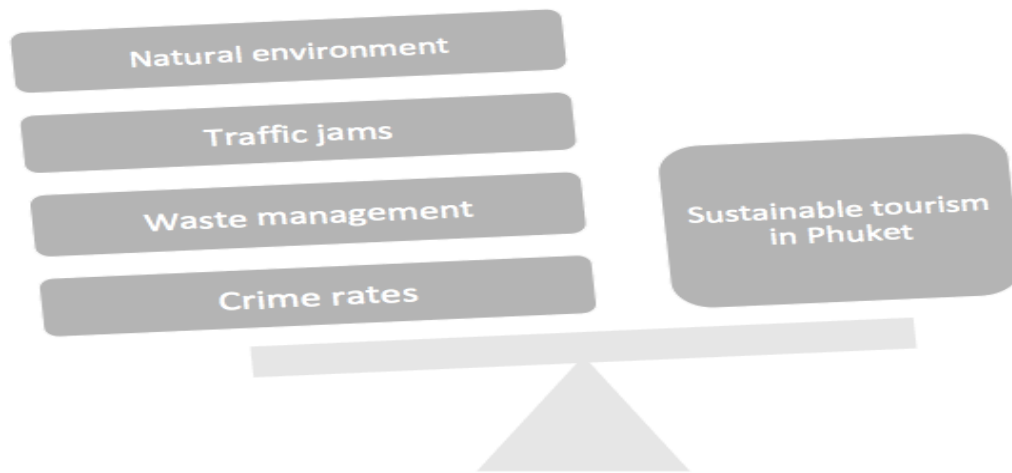
Figure 12. Issues regarding sustainable tourism in Phuket (Sakolnakorn et al. 2013)

These factors include extreme traffic jams during commute hours in the morning and afternoon, which coincides when local residents commence to work and tourists start and end their day activities that takes them from their hotels to the ferry piers across the island. Another internal factor as seen in Figure 12 above is the increased crime rate correlating to the increased number of tourists as many cases are concerning laborers from neighboring countries that come to Phuket for employment in the tourism sector. Destruction of natural environment in place of new hotel buildings, resorts or other tourism accommodation is another concern that leads to sustainability issues in Phuket.

The last factor visualized in Figure 12 is concerning waste management and allocation of natural resources remains a huge concern for the tropical island. With the influx of tourists and laborers, the waste management is yet to increase its effectiveness in order to keep up with the increased amount of waste that tourists create (Sakolnakorn, Naipinit and Kroeksakul, 2013). On the other hand, however, there are also positive developments concerning sustainable tourism in Phuket that should not be neglected. Shamsub and Lebel (2012) argue that there is still a lot to achieve in order to be gratified with the outcome of the efforts regarding sustainable tourism in Phuket.

Nevertheless, the progress to develop a region towards sustainable tourism behavior is the intermediate aim as it is a long journey to fully achieve sustainable tourism and completely eliminate any negative impact to the environment (Polnyotee and Thadaniti, 2015). Polnyotee et al. (2015) further claimed that some of the positive developments concerning sustainable tourism in Phuket are not limited to, the discussion to ban plastic bags in retail stores and supermarkets in order to reduce the impact to the environment or elephant camps that prohibit activities with the animal itself, but instead focus on educating tourists. Eventually, the plastic ban became effective as of 1st January 2020 (Thaiger, 2020).

3   Research Design

Creswell & Creswell (2017) argue that a research framework or research design is needed in order to provide guidance of all facets in the research. The research design is the methodical application of a structured order that guides the research. It entails the research approach, -strategy and methods and the harmonization of these parts. There is not necessarily a strict hierarchical order to follow in the application of these individual parts of the research design, however it is important that the individually selected components work well in sync and support each other based on the established theories (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The following subchapters will present further insight to the process of designing a research and link the theoretical framework to this research study in order to create a research design that allows conducting an effective and reliable study.

The research question is an important fragment that guides the individual parts of the research design, wherein the knowledge claim of the researcher, strategies of inquiry and research methods will collectively link to the research approach as shown in Figure 13 below.
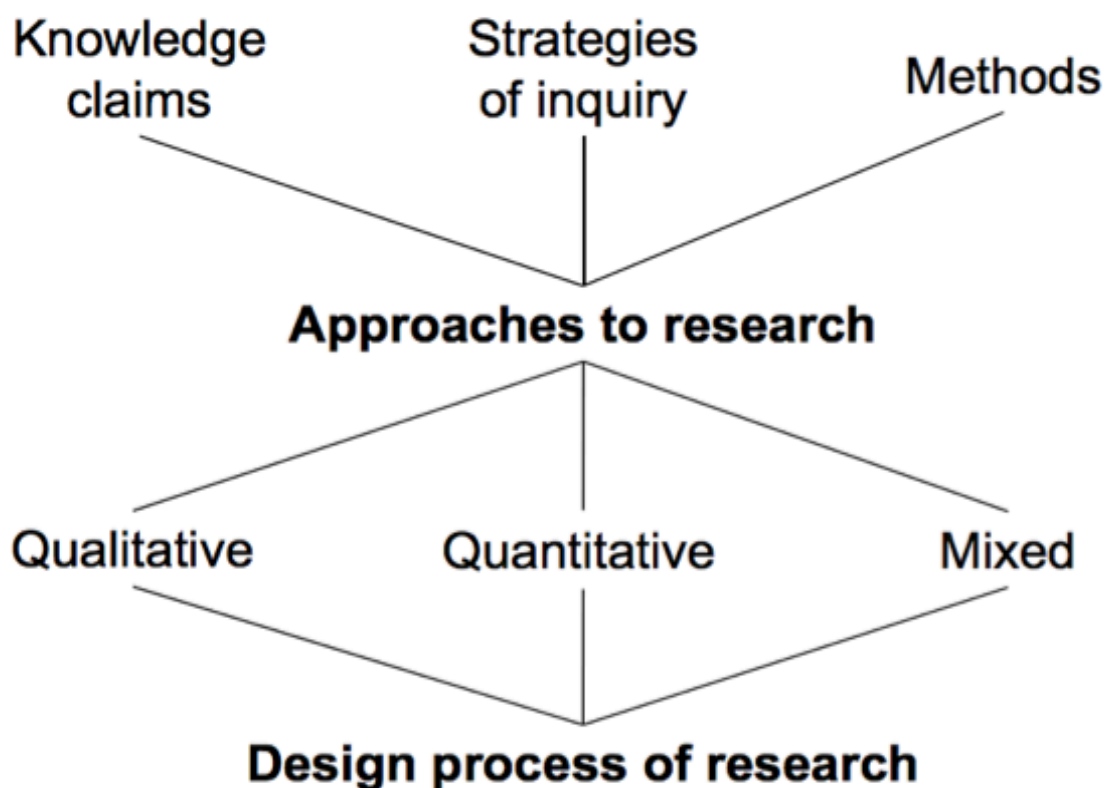

Figure 13. Illustration of the design process of research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017)

The following subchapters will introduce the theoretical framework, advantages and examples to each element and justify the selection of these elements for this research study.

3.1 Research strategy

There are a variety of strategies that can be applied when conducting a research study, wherein some strategies are more suitable than others largely depending on the nature of the research and also based on the personal level of experience by the researcher. The chosen research strategy also determined the suitable research approach that was accompanied by the strategy. In order to justify the choice of research strategy for this research, it is important to mention a few examples of strategies and their most suitable use in a research setting.

Creswell & Creswell (2017) state ethnographies as one strategy that can be applied in research design. Ethnography is referring to the study of a cultural group in a natural setting over time by collecting observations. This strategy can be applied to explain a phenomena or behavior, however it can be very time intensive as the data is collected over a longer period of time in order to draw reliable conclusions (Madison, 2011). Another strategy in research design is grounded theory, which according to Corbin & Strauss (1990) is referring to developing holistic theory of process or interaction grounded in the participant views. Narrative research means to study the lives of individuals through their life and present the research in form of storytelling. Spector-Mersel (2010) further claims that people's life consists of stories and as such it is the study of the ways humans experience the world. A case study is strategy to explore thoroughly an activity, event or a process concerning an individual, wherein individual is not referring to a singular person, but can refer to a specific demographics, for example an individual group of people. Next there is phenomenological research, which is often applied in studies that involve psychology. The study is conducted within a specific group of people that share a common experience (Wertz, 2005) wherein Creswell & Creswell (2017) add that essential goal of this approach is to reach a definition or description of the particular phenomenon.

Based on the presented research strategies, conducting a case study offers the most suitable characteristics in order to sufficiently answer the research question in depth. Avison, Baskerville & Myers (2001) claim that a case study is designed to gain a better understand of people's perspectives in cultural context. Furthermore Avison et al. (2001) state that the aim is understands the phenomenon from the point of view of the participants, which is the case in the introduced research question. Also, a case study in a qualitative setting is traditionally used when little to none research has been done in the field. While sustainable tourism is not a new research topic, the issue itself has not been studied in one of the most popular tourist destinations worldwide sufficiently.

3.2   Research method and approach

As presented in the preceding subchapter 3.1 regarding research strategies, this subchapter focuses on the research approach, which can be categorized into three different approaches that accompany and compartmentalize the various research strategies. Each of the three approaches has individual and unique characteristics that are advantageous in reaching the best possible research outcome.

The qualitative approach is the accompanying approach into which the chosen case study as research strategy belongs. According to Creswell & Creswell (2017) the advantages to select a qualitative approach are not limited to, but for example to understand a concept or phenomena. On the basis that the research aims to explore the perspective of industry experts on sustainable tourism in Phuket, the qualitative approach is suitable to understand this concept or phenomena. Creswell et al. (2017) further claims that this approach is appropriate for a new topic or a topic that has not been researched with a particular group of people. As stated in the literature review of this research study, the topic concerning sustainability and sustainable tourism has been explored and is considered contemporary and relevant, however it has not been addressed with specific demographics that reside in Phuket, therefore another verification is needed through the chosen case study, which is part of the quantitative approach and a valid way to design the research and answer the initial research question.

According to Creswell & Creswell (2017) the quantitative approach is used if the problem is to identify factors that influence or predict an outcome. Opposed to the quantitative approach, this approach is used to validate or disapprove a hypothesis that has been established earlier prior to the study. In quantitative research, the collected data is measured and presented often as numeric value or based on a numeric value. If the research question has the nature to measure and validate a hypothesis as well as gain an insightful grasp into a specific phenomenon, then the mixed method approach is most suited as it combines the qualitative approach with the quantitative approach and henceforth is referred to as mixed method approach (Creswell and Creswell, 2017).

The major difference between the qualitative approach and quantitative approach is that the former aims to create a hypothesis through the analysis of the collected data, while the latter approach aims to prove or disprove an established hypothesis that is part of the initial research question in a study. Furthermore, the qualitative research approach has the goal to examine questions concerning *how* and *why*, wherein the quantitative approach seeks to answer questions that usually concern with measuring the *what*.

The previous subchapters systematically elaborated each element that is deemed critical in the process to design the research and how these elements interact with each other. Furthermore, scientific examples were given that link the relevant theoretical framework to this research study. Moreover the choices to apply the presented research design were justified, which led to the following transitional chart that illustrates the applied framework.
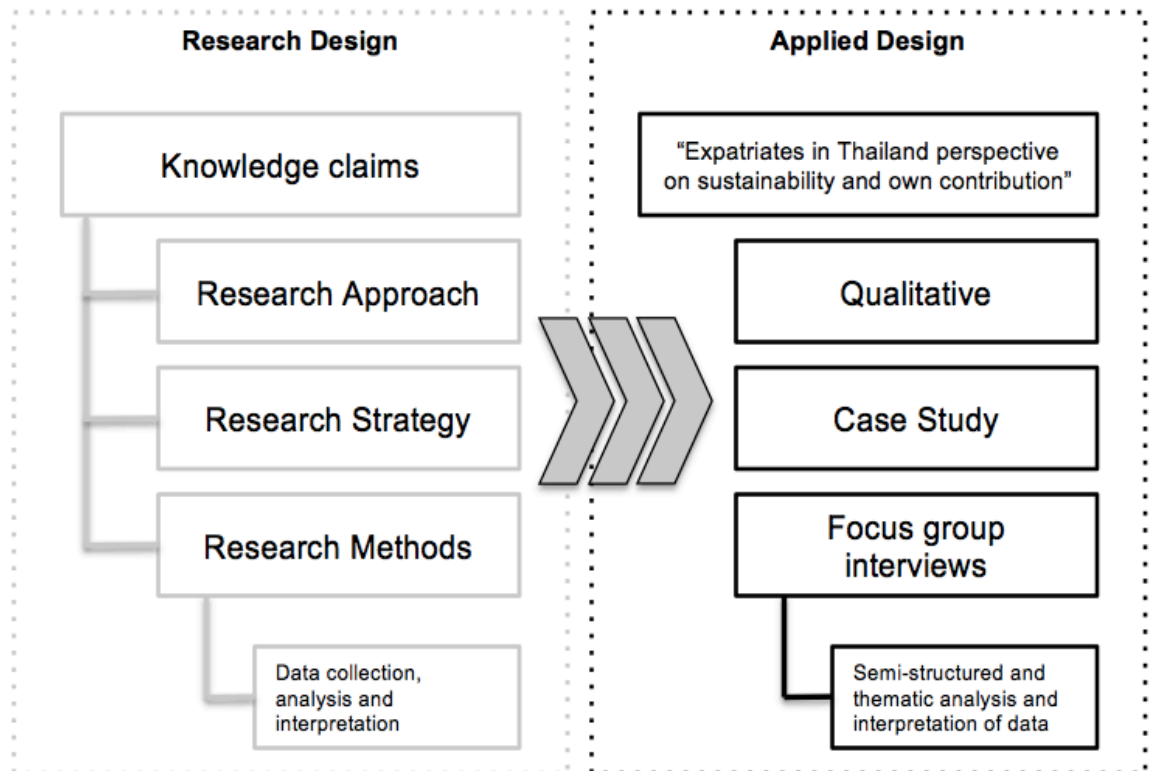

Figure 14. Applied research design based on theoretical framework by Creswell (2017) linked with chosen methods purposefully selected by the author of this degree project

By using the theoretical framework presented by Creswell & Creswell (2017) that is supported by supplementary academic literature as basis to apply the illustrated framework on the right side of Figure 14 above, the author created a research design that is deemed effective, relevant and reliable to address the initial research question and gain insightful data for further analysis and interpretation in order to answer conclude the research study.

As the topic itself has not been much researched before as mentioned in the introductory part of this thesis, this qualitative exploratory study is designed to understand how industry experts view sustainability efforts in Phuket, which is the knowledge claim of this study and serves as the basis for the research framework. The selected research approach is a qualitative method, which is best suited to answer the research question. The research strategy is a case study and the chosen method to collect the data is semi-structured interviews with relevant professionals that are able to provide insightful data and context.

3.3 Data collection

This subchapter elaborates on the data collection method and justifies the focus group of selected experts for this case study as well as introduces the basis for the semi-structured question catalogue and how it connects to the established theory from chapter two.

The data for this qualitative study is collected through the means of semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of sustainable tourism that have the ability to provide versatile and reliable information about the current state of sustainable tourism in Phuket. The focus group consists of five experts that have an accumulated experience of more than 100 years in the field of tourism, wherein more recently with a specific focus on sustainable tourism. While ethical considerations did not reveal their identities, however the participants agreed to disclose that their professions range from doctorate of philosophy in the field of sustainable tourism, senior lecturer at tourism faculty in higher education, general manager at an international chain hotel, hospitality entrepreneur as well as restaurant chain owner. Other criteria for selecting these specific participants are a balanced gender ratio (three men and two women) and all of them reside permanently in Phuket for a minimum period of five years. Lastly all of the participants engage in social activities that have a direct relationship to sustainable tourism. In order to ensure confidentiality of their identity, these social activities were not be described in further detail, however it added to their expert profile about sustainable tourism in general with a specific perspective on Phuket.

Next to the justification of the chosen focus group that was interviewed for the qualitative data collection, there was the open-ended questionnaire sheet, which aimed to relate back to the three main pillar of sustainability as seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Cluster of questions linked with theory (based on model from Hunter, 1997)

Theory	Pillar	Sub-pillar	Cluster of questions
Sustainable Tourism	Social	Social Equity	Closed questions: Q1 (and A1), Q2 (and A2), Q3 (and A3)
	Economic	Economic Efficiency	Primary questions: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11
	Environment	Preserving the Environment	Follow up questions: F1, F2, F3, F4

In order to facilitate an in-depth interview, the participants received a brief theoretical summary as seen in Appendix 2. Furthermore, before the start of the interview, the participants were verbally guided by the model, wherein the author mentioned the three main pillars and that each question had a correlation to the original pillar. Though, it can be assumed that the participants have a good understanding how sustainable tourism is defined based on the fact that they are experts in the field, which presumed fundamental knowledge as a prerequisite to the interview.

Before introducing the three clusters of questions, the choice to conduct semi-structured interviews is further justified and explained. Generally it is argued that conducting interviews with open-ended questions is an appropriate method to collect reliable data while giving the participant the opportunity to freely express their opinion (McIntosh and Morse, 2015), which the fundamental requirement of this study. The chose to carry out semi-structured interviews opposed to structured interviews is to avoid leading with bias. For an exploratory study where the outcome of the research is relatively unknown, it is more suitable to conduct semi-structured interviews as they leave a border room to navigate between the responses and not create a biased perspective from the beginning by leading with structured questions that allow relatively little deviation (McIntosh and Morse, 2015).

With regards to the design of semi-structured interview questions, Cridland, Jones, Caputi and Magee (2015) ague to keep the question simple and avoid technical language. As already claimed by McIntosh and Morse (2015), the use of open-ended questions is the best method to receive descriptive responses. Additionally, questions should not be phrased as a negative, which is also supported by Cridland et al. (2015). Furthermore, McIntosh et al. (2015) and Cridland et al. (2015) agree that qualitative data collection through interviews should not exceed more than seven participants as it is claimed that any participant exceeding this number would not add any further value to the data. The cluster of questions are of SWOT (strength-weakness-opportunity-treats) nature that are phrased in a way to reflect and facilitate the data collection for the private sector as well as government, even though non of the participants works in the government sector. In order to receive representative results for a reliable comparison, Cridland et al. (2015) suggest asking the questions to each participant in the same order. Further it is claimed that starting with the most important questions is deemed more effective as the participant of the interview is the most focused in the beginning of the interview and with further duration, the focus may decrease (Cridland et al., 2015). The questions are shown in Appendix 3 and consist of three closed questions with pre-coded responses to gauge a general sentiment on the topic. Furthermore, the open-ended question cluster contains 11 questions and possible six follow-up questions that can be utilized as needed based on the re-

sponses. The open-ended questions from the question cluster lead the semi-structured interview. The subsequent follow-up questions offer an opportunity to gain more insight or another perspective. The participants of the interview was asked to reserve between 45 – 60 minutes time for the interview.

3.4 Data analysis

The five interviews were scheduled to take place between 16th March and 27th March 2020 and with the prior consent of the participant, the interviews were audio recorded for the purpose to facility a more fluid two-way communication between the author and the participant. The audio recording was used for the sole purpose to script the interview. The author shared the written script with the respective participant and upon the approval of the participant, the audio recording was permanently deleted and the scripted interview remained as primary data source for the extraction of data and subsequent thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is the most common form of analysis in qualitative research. The aim of a thematic analysis is to label the data with codes and to identify corresponding themes and patterns in the data, which can be used to describe the phenomena. This description of the phenomena would be imperative to answer the initial research question (McIntosh et al., 2015).

With regards to sustainable tourism, the collected qualitative data offers multiple codes that can be formed into several categories, which ultimately form the theme. For example the codes in the interviews could pertain to *dirty beach, unclear water* and *plastic in the sand*. These hypothetical codes could be linked back to the pillar of environmental state, which is connected to sustainable tourism and further analysis allows determining the current environmental state of Phuket with regards to sustainable tourism (McIntosh et al., 2015).

McIntosh et al. (2015) further claim that the best results in the analysis process can be achieved when pre-selecting subthemes based on the theoretical framework and then associate the data to the themes. However it is further suggested that the pre-selected themes would be further adjusted in the analysis process as the data is labeled and grouped. This offers the benefit to establish broader criteria to organize the data, while at the same time allowing the themes to be adjusted during the process based on the findings during the analysis process. For this research project, the pre-selected themes could be translated from the three pillars of sustainability and later more defined into specific themes.

3.5 Reliability, validity and ethics

The following subchapter elaborates the meaning of reliability, validity and ethics in the context of this research report as well as provides examples how the author ensured that these three factors were taken into consideration when the data was collected.

Reliability is referring to the consistency of data, which in qualitative research suggests replicating the results by following the identical process that the author has introduced (Tharenou, Donohue and Cooper, 2007). Tharenou et al. (2007) argue that it is very difficult to replicate a qualitative study and receive identical results, therefore it is of utmost importance to strive towards consistency, which refers to using the same data collection method with the same consistency through out the entire research process in order to limit the deviations from the original result, if the research would be repeated at a later stage. Validity is referring to the trustworthiness of the data. Tharenou et al. (2007) also describe it as appropriateness of a study, which refers to using suitable research approach, strategy of inquiry, data collection method and method for analysis in order to answer the initially stated research question.

Lastly, there is ethics that can also be described as ethical considerations in research. Tharenou et al. (2007) argue that ethical considerations can be seen as an intangible code of conduct when conducting research. The primary objective for ethics in research is to avoid any academic misconduct, ensure the safety of participants, and allow a common understanding when collaborating with other researchers or doing peer-reviews. Also ethics are there to differentiate sciences from pseudoscience or to identify false research.

With regards to this thesis, the author can not guarantee anonymity as he is aware of the identity of the participants, however the participants of the interview were guaranteed with confidentiality in order to protect them from any possible repercussions based on their answers. Additionally, the participants were given informed consent prior to the beginning of the interview. Informed consent explained the participant that their participation is entirely voluntary and they could decide to stop their participation in the interview or research at any given time. Furthermore, the participants were asked, if the author is allowed to record the interview for the purpose to document the responses with the highest degree of accuracy. Finally, the participants were granted insights into the transcript of their recorded interview before using the data to report the findings and transition into the discussion of the study. Additionally, the author did not plagiarize any part of the thesis or took credit for work that is not the intellectual property of the author. Any claims that are not the authors were cited with in-text references.

4 Empirical Findings

This chapter with its subsequent subchapters reflects on the collected data collected through the semi-structured interviews and organizes the findings by themes that are represented in individual subchapters respectively. Furthermore, the discussion part will link and argue the collected information to the reviewed literature and establish a connection.

The following subchapters present the relevant findings based on the thematic analysis in the sequence they were collected from the participants during the interviews.

The interviews were carried out between 16. March and 27. March 2020 and to reiterate the professions of the selected experts range from doctorate of philosophy in the field of sustainable tourism, senior lecturer at tourism faculty in higher education, general manager at an international chain hotel, hospitality entrepreneur as well as restaurant chain owner. Furthermore, the participants agreed to disclose the below stated demographic information as seen in Table 2, whereas the order of professions was not arranged in a specific order or had any correlation to the demographic profiles as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Demographic profile of the participants (based on own empirical data collection)

Participant	Date of interview	Gender	Years in Phuket	Nationality
No. 1	16th March 2020	Male	More than 5 years	Foreign
No. 2	20th March 2020	Female	More than 20	Thai
No. 3	24th March 2020	Male	7-8 years	Thai
No. 4	24th March 2020	Male	15-20 years	Foreign
No. 5	27th March 2020	Female	4 years	Foreign

During the interviews, the nationalities were asked, though later one participant asked not to specify the country, wherein the author decided to differentiate the label of nationality only between Thai and non-Thai, i.e. foreign and not based on specific country-level.

4.1 Participants sentiment on sustainable tourism in Phuket

Based on the question catalogue as shown in Appendix 3, the interviews started with a small cluster of closed questions in order to gauge the participants sentiment with regards to their perception on sustainable tourism in Phuket. The sentiment analysis aimed to add to the reliability and validity of the findings as it suggests the current state of the participants' perception with a measureable and numeric value. Though the underlying reasons

that correspond to the results of the sentiment analysis as shown in Figure 15 below would be identified through the thematic analysis of the opened-ended interview questions.
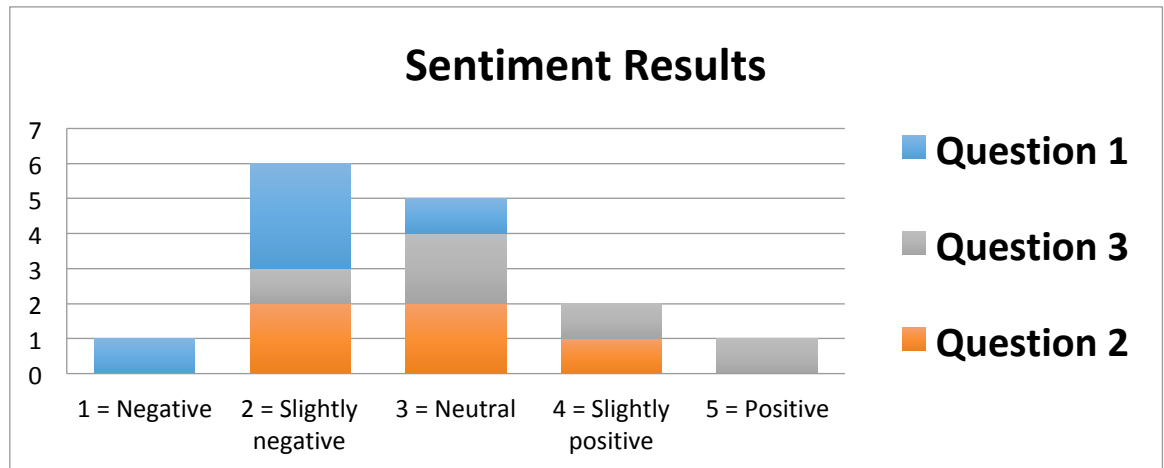

Figure 15. Sentiment results from participants (based on own results from data collection)

The results shown in Figure 15 correspond to the questions that the participants were asked at the beginning of the interview. The pre-coded responses were defined on a scale from 1 to 5, whereas 1 represents the lowest value and five the highest. The differentiations between the levels can be seen in Figure 15 above. Question 1 asked the participant to rate the current state of sustainable tourism in Phuket. The results are shown in blue. One participant perceives the current state of sustainable tourism as negative, three participants as slightly negative and one participant as neutral.

The next question asked the participants if they would say that sustainable tourism was recognized as priority in Phuket. The results to that question were visualized in Figure 15 with orange color, wherein two participants perceive it as slightly negative, two perceive it as neutral and one as slightly positive. The last question asked the participants if the efforts to support sustainable tourism improved in the last three years. The results were shown in Figure 15 in grey color. One participant answered slightly negative, two responded with neutral, one with slightly positive and one with positive.

The mathematical basis for the sentiment analysis is to add up all points for each question and later divide them by the amount of answers that were given. i.e. 15. If the average value is below 3,00 then the sentiment is negative, while a value above 3,00 indicates a positive perception. The points for question 1 correspond to 10, question 2 results to 14 and question 3 results to 17. The aggregated amount of points adds up 41, which results to an average value of 2,73, which is slightly below the average of 3,00 (Pang and Lee, 2008).

4.2   Participants perspective on sustainable tourism in Phuket

The following subchapter presents the relevant findings that were collected from the participants of the interviews. Their perspective concerning the current state of sustainable tourism in Phuket is presented in this subchapter without any bias or judgment.

Participant 1 thinks that his organization has a direct involvement that affects sustainable tourism in Phuket based on his company's activities. He also states that he feels morally obligated to engage in those Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) events in order to give back to the community and avoid exploiting local resources.

"*You see, every manager should feel a sense of responsibility to host or engage in these type of events. We do a lot. Not only out of moral obligation, but also to help the local community, which is the backbone of our operation.*"

Furthermore, participant 3 adds that sustainable tourism plays an active role in his daily work routine and the pressure from society has been increasing to do more, in particular government agencies urged his company to engage more in activities that support sustainable tourism. Though he further states that sustainable tourism should not be seen as an operational burden, but as a necessity to improve the life's' of local people.

"*I see and feel it every day. It is a big part of my job. I would not say that we are reactive, but if we do not support sustainable tourism enough, we will get the heat from above. But it is not really because of that. Mostly we work with locals and therefore we should do our part to support their everyday life's.*"

Participant 4 added that sustainable tourism is recognized on the surface, but the underlying motivation to actively engage in sustainable tourism still lacks consistency.

"*We are actively supporting sustainable tourism initiatives, but often the initial enthusiasm is very high, but quickly declines after launching an event or a specific activity.*"

With regards to effect on daily life, Participant 2 tells that the lack of available trash bins is a big problem in Phuket. She claims that tourists are not willing to walk around with (plastic) trash for a prolonged time until they can spot a waste bin to dispose the plastic trash.

"*It really bothers me to see tourists throwing away their garbage onto the sidewalk. But what is even more bothersome is the fact that we do not provide much alternatives for*

them. It is so difficult to spot a trash bin within reach and you really can not expect a tourist to wander around in the heat to look for a trash can with anyways does not exists. I often try to educate them that this behavior is not okay, but I am not sure how effective it really is."

Further to the comment from Participant 2, Participant 3 added that the lack of effective measures with regards to sustainable tourism can be felt and seen anywhere in Phuket.

"*If you drive along the beach road or the way into town, you can see the flashing neon lights everywhere. All of these establishments are there for the tourists. Do you really think that a local business owners cares about waste disposal when his operating margins are so thin that he can barely sustain his business? I think that most of them do not really care and therefore do not really educate the tourists either.*"

Participant 1 and Participant 4 shared a similar view with regards to the government involvement on sustainable tourism. Both commented that the government implemented a variety of sustainable tourism initiatives, but failed to establish these successfully due to lack of consistency, control and follow up.

"*The government is great to come up with all kinds of creative ideas to affect sustainable tourism, however their involvement is very superficial. There is no control or consistency. They announce and do not even consider how their initiative can be implemented in reality.*" (Participant 1)

"*It feels at times that the government does not care about sustainable tourism [...]. They randomly announce new policies just to tick off a box that allows them to blame others if the initiative failed.*" (Participant 4)

Participant 2 shared the view that sustainable tourism has not improved in the recent years, but the terminology of sustainable tourism is used more frequently over the years.

"*It feels that using the word sustainable tourism is an universal remedy to improve your image, but unfortunately there are only few organizations that really follow through on their promise.*"

An opposing view from Participant 4 highlighted that some improvements have been achieved over the last years compared to over a decade ago. He also added that the

younger generation seemed to recognize the importance of sustainable tourism for Phuket.

 "*When I arrived here many years ago, people just dumped the waste water directly into the ocean. And no one cared. But now the tourists doubled and we are in serious trouble. I can see some improvements over the last years. Especially the younger generation seems more receptive to the ideology of sustainable tourism.*"

Participant 1 mentioned that many larger cooperation's were actively involved in community work and promoted sustainable tourism as part of their CSR. Participant 2 concretely mentioned that local running events are received popular amongst locals and tourists and also projects that aim to remove garbage along the coastlines gained more popularity with tourists. Participant 4 stated he had a positive experience with tourists in particular from developed countries with regards to supporting local businesses effort to engage in sustainable tourism.

"*There are some tourists that leave the air conditioning running all day even if they left the room and then there are some that even ask how we generate our electricity for the hotel.*"

Participant 1, 2, 4 and 5 agreed that culture has an impact on the behavior of the tourists towards sustainable tourism. Participant 1 and 4 claim that the higher the star rating of a hotel, the higher the probability that the guests would actively engage in sustainable tourism. Participant 2 said that it is difficult to put a cultural label on sustainable tourism, but stated that sustainable tourist behavior is closely correlated to their level of education and how well informed these tourists are about the cause and effect of sustainable tourism in Phuket. She further claimed that local behavior and behavior of the surrounding likely affected the behavior of the tourists despite of their own believes and values.

Participant 5 said that hiring local staff from the region, i.e. Phuket, Phang Nga and Krabi; is a priority in the hiring process in order to support the local economy. She claimed that hiring someone from another region oftentimes results into displacement of the money into another region. However emphasizing on local hires bears a positive economic side effect according to her. Participant 1 added that many small and medium sized hotels started to promote campaigns that towels would only be washed on request and some small hotels started to supply room amenities (shower gel, shampoo, toothbrush and soap) on request only though without an extra charge.

"I am not sure if the primary motivation for withholding room amenities or washing towels daily is driven by financial motives rather than environmental, but it's a step in the right direction." (Participant 1)

Participant 2 and Participant 3 mentioned that the biggest challenge with regards to sustainable tourism is the support of the government and local municipalities. They both claimed that if tourists would like to act upon sustainable tourism, there were still barriers that they could not overcome without the support of the government. One example that was mentioned was public transportation and green energies to reduce the environmental impact.

"Even if a tourist would like to take a public bus, good luck finding one." (Participant 2) and *"Taxis have a monopoly in Phuket and the government does not interfere. If there would be a good network of public transportation, then the tourists would have an alternative to support."* (Participant 3)

Participant 1 commented that the amount of inbound tourism has overwhelmed the system in Phuket. He claimed that hotels and restaurants were build at record speed in order to cater for the amount of tourists that visit Phuket, however largely at the expense of sustainable tourism development. He said that financial motives and short-term gains are considered more important that long-term development. Participant 3 mentioned a similar example and argued that building drainage to recycle wastewater does not generate money for the business owner, but increasing the room capacity however does.

"I do not want to stereotype most Thai's, but many grew up in poor conditions and now seeing striving capitalism makes us opportunists to seize and squeeze the moment. If you offer a local business owner a $100 note today or $10 monthly for the next 12 months, 99% of us will take the $100 today, because nobody knows what will happen tomorrow." (Participant 3)

Participant 1, 2, 4 and 5 agree that based on the theoretical model of sustainable tourism, the primary beneficiary is the social equity pillar, wherein Participant 1 and 5 claimed that the economic efficiency also improved, however both were uncertain if it is improved on all counts that contribute towards economic efficiency. Participant 4 commented that the environment has been the neglected the most when it comes to developing tourism in Phuket. Participant 2 also commented that the development of all three pillars that are related to sustainable tourism is considered equally important. She claimed that if some pillars

developed faster than others, it could pose an overall risk for the sustainable tourism effort.

"*It is the most tangible attribute we have. People come to Phuket for the sun, sand and sea. If we do not start to treat it better, we will start to loose income from tourism and that will make it even harder to become sustainable.*" (Participant 4)

"*Employment improved. Income improved. Quality of life improved. And because of that, the economic development improved, but at the expense of our nature. If we do not preserve it better, then we will start to develop backwards again.*" (Participant 2)

Participant 4 claimed that Phuket is not an exception with the current state of sustainability with regards to inbound tourism and further claimed that other major cities such as Chiang Mai, Bangkok or Pattaya were opposed to the same challenges as Phuket. Participant 5 said that benchmarking Phuket and Thailand's performance with regard to sustainable tourism against neighboring countries is not challenging enough given the economic differences with Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia. She claimed that if the government sincerely would like to progress, then benchmarking against more developed economies such as Japan, Korea or Taiwan would be necessary.

Furthermore Participant 3 mentioned that Phuket's situation with regards to sustainable tourism was not unique in Thailand. He further claimed that it is not considered unique for a developing country compared to other developing nations. According to him, the interest for developing countries was often of financial nature in order to achieve short-term improvements opposed to sustainable long-term planning and implementation.

"*If you look at other countries that went through the same developmental stages in the past, then you will see that they eventually recognized the importance of sustainability and sustainable tourism. Though Thailand has been stuck in their developmental phase for a long time and everyone is eagerly waiting for the next step, which also includes sustainable tourism.*"

All Participants agreed that the lack of common strategy is the largest hurdle to become more sustainable in the future. Participant 1 claimed that the driving factors and motivators were secondary, if the stakeholders can not agree on a strategy and common goals. Participant 2 said that the main drivers of this change need to be a delegation of local residents, government and business owners and their joint effort would enable to motivate the many tourists that visit Phuket on an annual basis. Participant 3 further stated that the

diversity of different tourists bears opportunities to adopt some practices from abroad, but at the same time, he claimed that any sustainable tourism effort would clash based on different cultural beliefs if there is not enough guidance, rules, regulations and also follow up.

"*How can we expect tourists to support sustainable tourism, if the local authorities and residents do not start to act sustainable themselves. Be the change you want to see.*"

5   Discussion

The following subchapter is organized with linkage towards the three pillars of sustainability that are the fundamental basis for sustainable tourism. The previously presented findings were linked to the introduced literature review and their connection was further argued.

The first part of the findings presented the participants sentiment results as seen in Figure 15 above. The participants were given three questions pertaining to sustainable tourism in Phuket. The first question aimed to understand the participant's perspective with regards to Phuket's current state of sustainability. The second question was seeking to gauge if sustainable tourism is recognized as priority in Phuket and lastly if any improvement was made in the last three years. The aim of these questions was to get a concise perception of the participant's sentiment towards sustainable tourism in Phuket in order to effectively address the interview questions and subsequent follow up questions effectively.

The findings revealed that the participants had a slightly negative perception towards sustainable in Phuket as the weighted average resulted into 2,78 on a scale from 1,00 to 5,00, wherein 1,00 is considered the lowest value and 5,00 is considered the highest. While the sentiment analysis does not aim to reveal any underlying reasons for the corresponding score, it reveals that the participants have a relatively neutral perception of sustainable tourism in Phuket. Even though the perception towards sustainable tourism seemed slightly negative, no extreme perception on either end of the scale was recorded, which suggests a lower probability of bias of the participants during the interview process (Pang et al., 2008; Piaget, 2013).

The findings of the data collection from the open-ended questions were analyzed and the key words were labeled with codes as described in subchapter 3.4. concerning the methods for data analysis. Based on the thematic analysis, the results were further grouped into sub-themes and then themes, which ultimately formed four categories for the discussion. The hierarchical interconnectivity of codes to themes to categories can be seen in Table 16 below.

The first category that was established based on the findings is labeled as *government*. The support of the government or lack thereof was mentioned multiple times by all five participants, which indicates a high degree of importance and influence towards the degree of sustainable tourism in Phuket. The primary reasons mentioned were lack of support and superficial initiatives and no corresponding follow up on any of the initiatives

that were launched in the past. As claimed by Wilson and Post (2013), sustainability and sustainable tourism is a collective effort and every stakeholder needs to effectively contribute in order to improve all three pillars of sustainable tourism with a long-term effect.
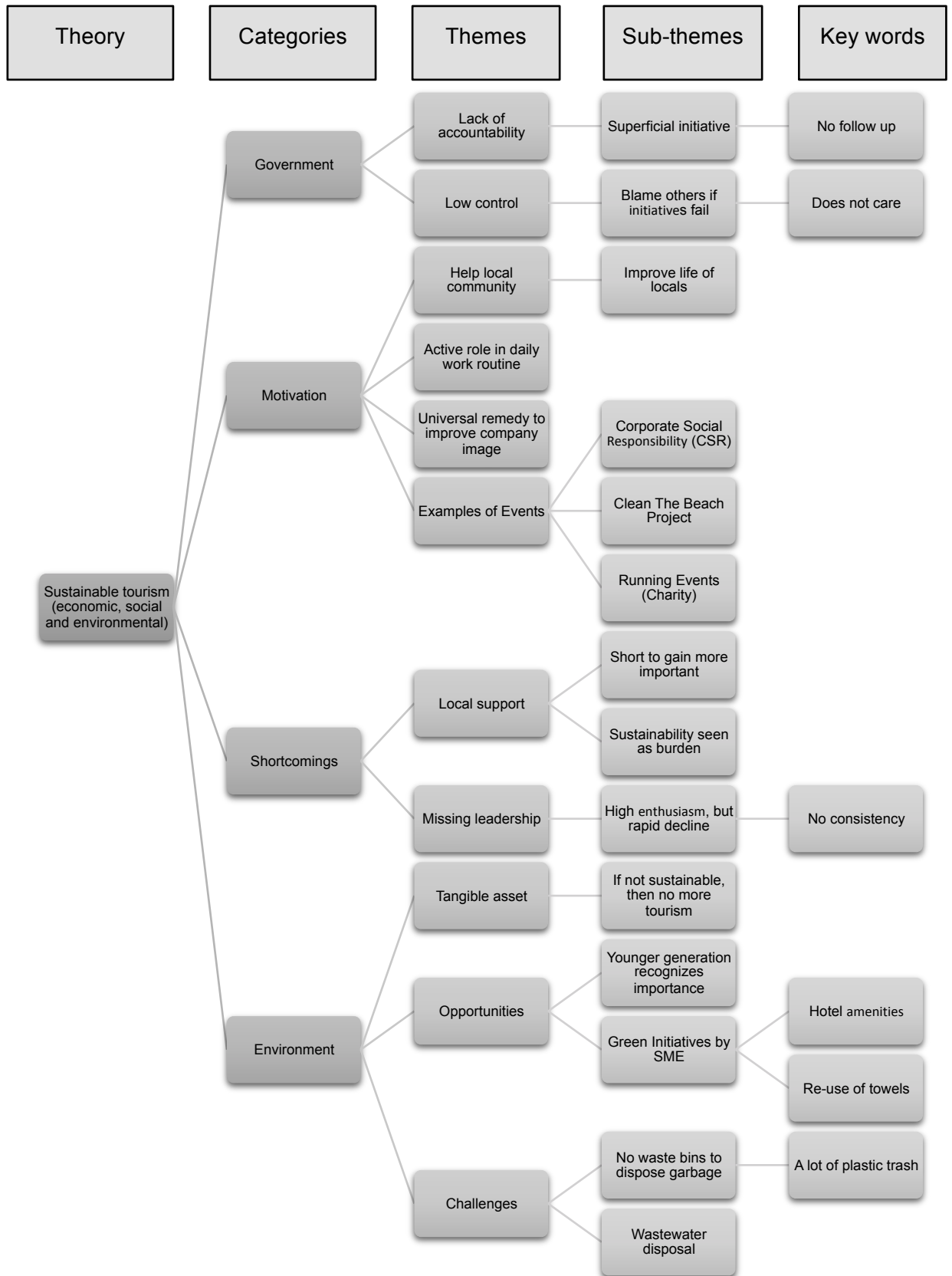

Figure 16. Interconnectivity of coded findings (based on own results from data collection)

Dodds and Butler (2009) already claimed that successful examples of sustainable tourism were only achieved with full support from government agencies. The described barriers of municipalities in Phuket and government in Thailand by the participants could be one reason that sustainable tourism does not succeed entirely.

The second category that was identified in the analysis is labeled as *motivation*. Motivation in this respect refers to factors that were identified, which positively or negatively affect sustainable tourism efforts in Phuket. As argued by Wilson et al. (2013) that every individual has their own motives however achieving sustainable tourism is a shared value, therefore support from all stakeholders would be required. Based on the comments from the participants, it can be stated that there is an effort towards sustainable tourism through local events and education by larger cooperation, however it was also claimed that there is a superficial involvement from local residents, local government and tourists alike. They commented that sustainable tourism is often used as a universal remedy to improve the image of a business underlines these statements.

The label *shortcomings* is the third category that was identified in the analysis process. Shortcomings is mostly referring to identified flaws or recent failures that attempted to increase the level of sustainable tourism in Phuket. An example that was mentioned was that sustainable tourism is often regarded as a financial burden by locals. On top of that, if any initiatives were launched, the enthusiasm was high initially, but declined rapidly thereafter. Similarly, Hall (2019) argued that the lack of consistency might be related to the fundamental relationship between human and their environment, which requires a transformation on the top layer in order to improve sustainable tourism at local level.

The last category that was identified can be regarded as *environment* as it refers to many issues that concern the environmental development and natural resources in Phuket. Barr et al. (2010) claimed that people behave and act differently outside their natural environment, which could be a possible explanation that some tourists do not support sustainable tourism with regards to preserving the environment. Though it was mentioned that lack of available waste bins, to preserve the environment, could be another factor that support this behavior from tourists. Sunlu (2003) argued that tourists also have a sense of entitlement, which could be another explanation.

On the other hand it was mentioned that tourists supported initiatives to reuse towels in hotels or be mindful about the use of hotel amenities as their usage produces a lot of plastic waste. Additionally, it was mentioned that the natural resources are seen as Phuket's most tangible assist and as such require more protection. Littered beaches or decline of

natural habitat was already one of the reasons for unsustainable tourism as identified by Asensio-Montesinos et al. (2019).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that were presented in Figure 6 on page 9 are an important part in the analysis and evaluation process of the empirical findings. The United Nation stated 17 individual sustainable development goals that it seeks to improve by 2030 (United Nations, 2020) and on the basis of the empirical findings of this study, many of the development goals were mentioned in this context. One finding revealed that hiring staff from within the region would contribute to economic well-being and therefore improved the first three goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda, no poverty, zero hunger and good health and well-being, that is.

However it was also claimed that exponential growth of inbound tourism lead to shortcomings regarding the infrastructure of wastewater disposal, which links to the sixth goal, i.e. clean water. Another claim from the participants stated that education of locals would lead to improved sustainable tourism as it would increase the awareness, therefore the fourth goal, quality education, could be considered of direct impact towards reaching other goals. In other words, improving the education would have a positive effect on other subsequent goals that the United Nations mentioned in their Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030.

While the United Nations claimed the 17 goals as individual objectives, it can be stated that there is a possible correlation amongst the majority of these goals. As stated earlier, improved education would eventually lead to a more sensible behavior that improves climate action, i.e. goal number 13. Furthermore it could be argued that based on the findings, climate action will improve the life below water and life on land, which are sustainable goals 14 and 15 respectively. While there is no specific or chronological order, though it is evident that there is a correlation and link between many of the goals.

The following chapter concludes the key findings of this research and forms actionable recommendations, which are closely related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that were discussed in this chapter.

6   Conclusion

The following three subchapters discuss the consideration of key findings of this study, which is a compact summary of the previous chapter. Based on the key findings, actionable recommendations were formed and presented in the second subchapter accordingly. Finally, the last subchapter is a process evaluation by the author and reflection on own learning and is written in the first person based on the authors' personal experience. The entire last chapter does not contain any specific in-text citations as any claims that were made are based on earlier discovery and the facts presented in this chapter are able to stand on their own without any further scientific support.

6.1   Consideration of key findings

The primary findings of this research can be labeled as government, motivation, shortcomings and environment as visualized in Table 3 below. The collective result of these four categories shares insights into Phuket's current state of sustainable tourism and on the basis of the provided findings and discussion in the previous chapter, the initial research question can be answered with the collected data of industry experts.

Table 3. Key findings of the empirical research (based on own thematic data analysis)

Finding (Category)	Sustainable tourism pillar (Economic / Social / Environmental)	Importance (Low / Medium / High)
Government	Economic, Social, Environmental	High
Motivation	Social, Environmental	Medium
Shortcomings	Economic, Environmental	Low
Environment	Environmental	High

The nature of the open-ended research question does not allow a response that can adequately answer the research question with a statement that Phuket is achieving sustainable tourism or Phuket does not achieve sustainable tourism. However, the collected data and analyzed results allowed insights that the overall importance of sustainable tourism is widely recognized in Phuket. Nevertheless, there is a lack of consistency to follow through on initiatives. Moreover lack of accountability and to get the three main stakeholders, i.e. residents, tourists and government; further involved would be the key towards Phuket's sustainable tourism future. It can be stated that it is not the lack of ideas, however the lack of constant follow up that prevents Phuket from becoming more sustainable with regards to its inbound tourism.

6.2 Actionable recommendations

This subchapter presents recommendations that are based on the theoretical framework paired with the empirical findings. These recommendations aim to improve the sustainable tourism effort in Phuket and are separate by two types of recommendations. Firstly short-term initiatives will be presented and afterwards long-term actions that require more a extensive study to implement them effectively.

Short-term recommendations seek to have an immediate boost of sustainable tourism in Phuket, while long-term recommendations have a more strategic nature and require long-er planning. For the former, it would be recommended to add recycle bins at crowded are-as and touristic sights in order to reduce the negative effect on the environment through littering. Furthermore, more educational campaigns would be needed in order to educate the stakeholders. It was claimed that the government does not follow up on sustainable initiatives. However educating the residents and tourists would bear the side effect that sustainable behavior becomes more self-directed provided sufficient education is provid-ed.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that the younger generation appears to be more involved in topics that relate to sustainable tourism; therefore it would add value to involve the younger generation at an early stage in the planning process through the government for the next round of initiatives. It was claimed that the government lacks leadership and ac-countability with regards to sustainable tourism; however involving the younger generation could shift part of that leadership towards a group that has already an active interest.

Another recommendation that could be considered on the basis of this study is to add more recycle bins, especially in crowded areas. It was mentioned that the lack of recycle bins prevented tourists and locals to dispose any (plastic) waste and adding more recycle bins would enable a positive contribution to the environment, which was claimed as se-verely impacted pillar of sustainable tourism in Thailand. Additionally and on the basis of the identified interest from the younger generation, this could be implemented as a project with high schools and universities wherein the local government provides the funding and the educational institutions are involved in planning and execution of the project.

Based on the comments concerning wastewater disposal, it would be recommended to provide education to the concerned stakeholders. The empirical findings revealed that there is a lack of interest and financial motivation to implement changes that address the challenge of wastewater disposal. Therefore financial incentives from the government to

transform current wastewater disposal could lead to an improvement, if this initiative would be linked to educating the concerned parties. For example, the respective business owner would receive a tax break, if installing a wastewater filtration systems and this project would be accompanied by educational videos that are mandatory to watch before receiving the financial incentive from the government.

The economic impact of the novel coronavirus, i.e. COVID-19 can not be exactly predicted at the time when this research was conducted, however there is little doubt that the impact would leave more than a dent on Phuket's inbound tourism. With regards to sustainability, this can be seen as an opportunity and threat at the same time. Tourism scaled back substantially, which bears the opportunity to rebuild it more sustainable once the amount of incoming tourists starts to rebound. Based on the findings and discussion, Phuket needs measurable long-term initiatives and it was suggested that the government would get involved more intensively.

On that basis, it could be recommended to implement a mid-term plan that contains specific and measurable initiatives. More importantly, the responsible person that follows up on these initiatives should be mentioned and penalties for any violation of the initiatives could lead to higher discipline and better success rate. At the same time, the temptation is there to gain a quick economic benefit at the expense of sustainable tourism when rebuilding the inbound tourism post COVID-19, therefore appointing a task force consistent of local business representatives and government officials could be a suitable solution to reach a better outcome of sustainable tourism for Phuket.

6.3 Process evaluation and reflection

This subchapter evaluates how the initial project plan has been implemented and how the author improved his own learning during the thesis process by critical self-reflection.

It should be stated that this thesis corresponds to my second Bachelor's degree at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and therefore the thesis process is not entirely novel to me. Based on my earlier experience, I have specifically asked for distance supervision and self-directed the implementation of the thesis process. In late January 2020, the project plan was presented to the thesis advisor with an initial time line of five months that would stretch through out the summer months. The thesis was largely dissected into three individual phases. Upon completion of each phase, a meeting with the adviser and advisee would take place to discuss the previous phase as well as talk about the next step. The first phase consisted of the research introduction and literature review, which corresponds to chapter one and two of the thesis. The second phase was the research design,

i.e. chapter three and the last phase consists of findings, discussion and conclusion, which corresponds to chapter four and five. All three phases were completed ahead of time.

Generally, I would say that this thesis was easier to implement due to my experience with my previous Bachelor's thesis. I enjoyed to critically evaluating the different methods that could be considered in order to comprehensively answer the research question. Also through the means of reviewing various publications that are related to sustainable tourism, I was able to gain a comprehensive insight into the field of sustainability, which enables me to apply it do different fields in the future as the same fundamental core values are shared across industries.

My previous thesis used a quantitative approach and this time I was able to learn more about qualitative research and especially the data analysis enabled me to critically reflect on the responses and organized them in a meaningful way. The primary driver to conduct research about sustainable tourism was my personal interest in sustainability and at the same time improving my research skills; in particular for the qualitative research approach and thematic data analysis. Therefore I gained not only knowledge about the topic, but also increased my expertise with regards to research.

Overall, I am pleased how the initial plan was implemented and how the corresponding results of my thesis were presented. Last but not least, I would like to thank my thesis advisor for her encouraging feedback and continuous support from the very first moment. I was able to further foster my competencies in academic research thanks to her support and I am grateful for the great cooperation during the thesis process.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Example of the authors analysis summary when reviewing literature

Feature of the paper	Author's comments
Author(s)	Hannarong Shamsub (RMIT University Vietnam) and Louis Lebel (Chiang Mai University)
Year of publication	Volume III Issue 1(5) Summer 2012
Article's title	Identifying Tourists with Sustainable Behavior: A Study of International Tourists to Thailand
Motivation for the research / targeted research gap	Sustainability and sustainable tourism receives more attention, but motivators for certain tourists groups why they act sustainable or not sustainable are still unclear
Research question(s) / objective(s)	Identify if any difference in sustainable behavior with different group of tourists.
Concepts and theories used	Pillars of sustainable behavior as defined by Powell (2008)
Methods, data collection and analysis techniques	Quantitative research through survey. At the Chiang Mai International Airport, 410 questionnaires were collected between 9 - 14 January 2006. At the Phuket International Airport, 91 questionnaires were collected between 13-18 March 2006
Key findings	Independent tourists have higher chance of behaving more sustainably than group tour counterparts
Knowledge contribution / Filled knowledge gap	To attract visitors with high sustainable behavior into the country, the tourism policy should promote long duration of stay, increase the number of independent visitors, and place more emphasis on promoting the country as a destination for cultural and ecotourism
Limitation(s) of the research / Future research	Tourism in Phuket and surrounding areas had not fully recovered from the Tsunami devastation in late 2004.
Own reflections	Good level of detail for the quantitative data collection and interesting insights on tourist motivators that lead to sustainable behavior for one focus group, but less so for the second focus group

Sustainable tourism in Phuket

(*below stated information are extracted from interviewers thesis*)

General Definition

[...] defines the word sustainable as *using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged* [...] suggests the word defendable as possible synonym for the word sustainable, which ironically is oftentimes the case as communities, researchers or politicians often need to defend their theory related to an sustainable effort in order to pre-serve and protect for future generations.

Academic Definition

[...] sustainability can be described as the reaching our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations [...] sustainable development is apprehensive towards the development of a culture where the costs of the development are not transferred to future generations [...] The motivating and driving factors for sustainability are vary and often related to motives of an individual, community, region, business or country, however sus-tainability itself is a shared value by many individuals across the globe.

Theoretical Model

Appendix 3. Question catalogue for the semi-structured interviews

<div align="center">
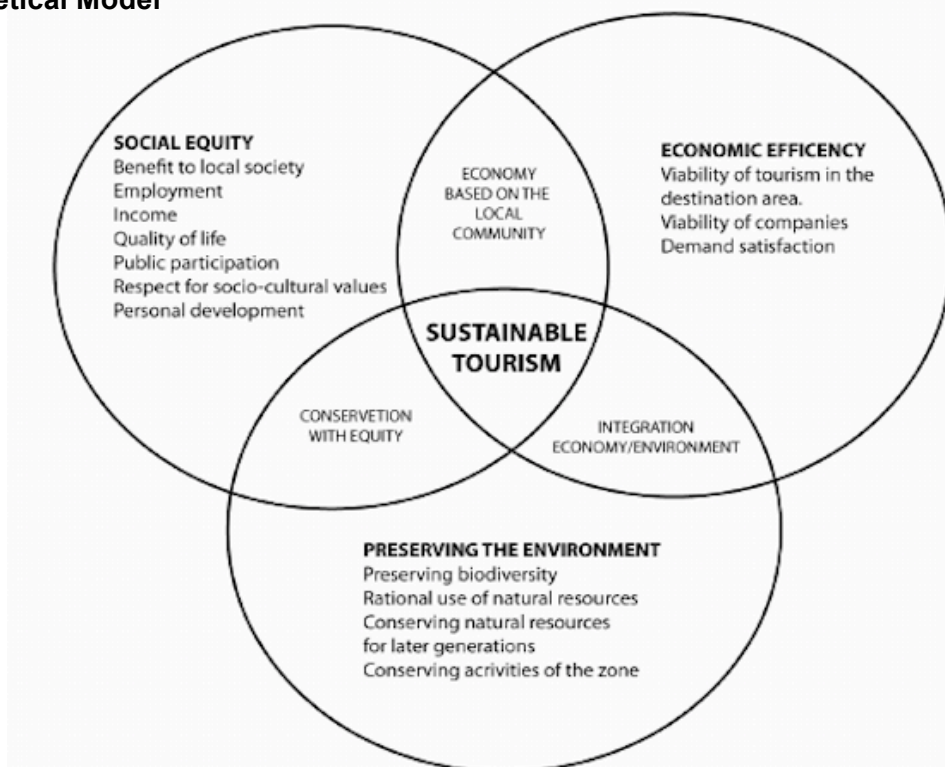
Question Catalogue

</div>

Closed question cluster:

...Q1: How would you rate the current state of sustainable tourism in Phuket?

...A1: 1 = Negative, 2 = Slightly negative, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Slightly positive, 5 = Positive

...Q2: Would you say that sustainable tourism is recognized as priority in Phuket?

...A2: 1 = Disagree, 2 = Slightly disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Slightly agree, 5 = Agree

...Q3: Have the efforts to support sustainable tourism improved in the last three years?

...A3: 1 = Disagree, 2 = Slightly disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Slightly agree, 5 = Agree

Open-ended question cluster: Please tell me...

Q1: [...] about your organizations role in sustainable tourism?

Q2: [...] does sustainable tourism affect your daily life?

Q3: [...] how you view the influence by the government on sustainable tourism?

Q4: [...] if sustainable tourism has recently improved or declined and why?

Q5: [...] how do locals support/not support sustainable tourism efforts?

Q6: [...] if there are any examples of local companies that do it really well?

Q7: [...] how different cultures of tourist affect sustainable tourism?

Q8: [...] how it has changed from five years ago compared to today?

Q9: [...] what has been the biggest ongoing challenge and why?

Q10: [...] how to visitors react towards sustainable tourism efforts?

Q11: [...] how would you rate Phuket compared to the rest of Thailand?

Follow-up questions for open-ended questions:

F1: Can you share a recent example?

F2: What else you would consider relevant?

F3: Why do you think is that so?

F4: What could change the situation?

F5: What could be a best-practice example?

F6: What could be a negative example to support your claim?