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RUSSIAN VISITORS' PERCEPTIONS OF SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN TOURISM

Year-round resort Tahko

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<p>Abstract</p> <p>The aim of this thesis was to help Tahko resort to develop in the responsible tourism context. The study is based on Lakeland 2, a development project targeting to promote the international tourism in the Northern Savo region. The objectives of this thesis were is to find out how well Russians visiting Tahko resort are aware of sustainable tourism and to define the main characteristics of people, who travel to the region.</p> <p>As the central focus of this study was to analyze the awareness, perceptions and attitudes of Russian tourists regarding the sustainable tourism in the year-round resort of Tahko, material from literature concerning sustainable development of tourism and the current economic situation in Russia was summarized. Quantitative research methods were chosen to investigate the importance of economic, ecological and sociocultural aspects of sustainable development of tourism in Tahko.</p> <p>The results showed relatively high level of awareness of and satisfaction with sustainability of tourism among Russian tourists visiting Tahko. The findings indicate that public authorities are active in promoting the sustainable development of the resort. Nevertheless the Russian tourists consider that sustainable development should be promoted further. The results of this research improve the understanding of sustainable development of tourism in Tahko.</p>			
<p>Keywords Sustainable development, Tahko, tourism, customer satisfaction, Russian traveler</p>			

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1 INTRODUCTION

According to Statista (2020-03-13) Finland was the most popular winter travel destination among Russian tourists in 2019. Despite the number of studies in the field of sustainable tourism, an approach for the understanding of attitudes of Russian visitors regarding sustainability in Tahko is still needed. The central focus of this study is analysis of awareness, perceptions and attitudes of Russian tourists regarding the sustainable tourism in year-round resort Tahko. The subject is meaningful as understanding the awareness of international guests about sustainable development of tourism could improve this processes in the future.

The first area to be discussed in this study is sustainability principles which refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development. Material from broad range of literature concerning sustainable development was summarized in this study. Attention then turns to analysis of Russian visitors as an important group of tourists in Finland. An overview of current economic situation in Russia, including GDP and tendencies is presented in this research. The importance of Russia as a country of inbound tourism to Finland is presented with a help of charts. Factors that influence the number of visitors are discussed in this study. Such environmental factors as exchange rate fluctuations and inflation are demonstrated with the help of charts. As this research is focused on Russian property owners in Tahko, summarized information about real estate transactions made by Russians in Finland during last two decades is presented with a help of charts.

As the purpose of this study is to find out how many Russians visiting Tahko resort are aware of sustainable tourism and the characteristics of people, who travel to the region, quantitative research is conducted. The focus of this study is to learn from literature and to create a survey that could answer to the main research questions concerning economical, ecological and sociocultural aspects of sustainability in Tahko. The results of survey are followed by implications of sustainable tourism for development in Tahko. The main results received from the questionnaire are analyzed with a help of tables and graphs. In the end of this paper conclusions helping to develop a better understanding of sustainable tourism development in Tahko are made.

The motivation for this thesis comes from the author's personal interest in sustainability and professional interest in tourism in Tahko resort. The author has a professional qualification as a real estate agent and experience in a field of property management, providing services for Russian owners of the cottages in Tahko resort. The author finds that customer satisfaction in Tahko resort could be improved with the help of this research.

2 SUSTAINABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY IN TOURISM

Tourism is increasingly becoming a highly important economic activity. (Faure, Dharmawan & Arsika 2014, 2.) Responsible tourism was defined in Cape Town in 2002 during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Responsible tourism is an activity of taking responsibility for making tourism sustainable. Current situation requires that governments, operators, local people and tourists take actions to address specific challenges the world faces.

According to Cape Town Declaration (2002), having the following characteristics, Responsible Tourism:

- minimizes negative economic, environmental, and social impacts;
- generates greater economic benefits for local people and enhances the well-being of host communities, improves working conditions and access to the industry;
- involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and life chances;
- makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world's diversity;
- provides more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues;
- provides access for physically challenged people;
- and is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence.

The teaching handout by Korhonen (2020, 2) states that, the word sustainability is often overused and not understood, that's why responsible tourism has been adopted as a term used by industry.

The term 'sustainable tourism' has been widely discussed by tourism scholars. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) hence simply defines sustainable tourism as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities." (UNEP and UNWTO 2005, 11.)

In addition, the conceptual definition deliberated by the UNWTO is formulated as follows: Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability. (Faure et al. 2014, 2.)

In a joint working paper, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have outlined twelve specific aims for sustainable tourism, namely economic viability, local prosperity, employment quality, social equity, visitor fulfilment, local control, community well-being, cultural richness, physical integrity, biological diversity, resource efficiency and, lastly, environmental purity. (UNWTO 2011, 40-41.)

Sustainability in an organizational context applies to practices that 'contribute to sustaining and renewing the quality of life of their workforces and the community' as well as 'adding to the richness and diversity of the biosphere' (Dunphy & Benveniste, 2000, 3).

Despite the contentious nature of defining sustainable tourism, many scholars do agree that it should be the goal of tourism destinations to develop in a manner where the deleterious effects of tourism are minimized and the positive benefits are maximized. Sustainable tourism has been defined as tourism that considers current and future economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts, while fulfilling the needs of visitors, the industry, and the host communities. All tourism should thrive to develop sustainability, whether as an emerging or mass tourism destination. (Scott & Frew 2014, 75.)

The United Nations Environmental Programme and World Tourism Organization (2005) outlined 12 aims of sustainable tourism: economic viability, local prosperity, employment quality, social equity, visitor fulfillment, local control, community wellbeing, cultural richness, physical integrity, biological diversity, resource efficiency, and environmental purity. These aims could be used in sustainable development of Tahko.

The central focus of this work is the analysis of awareness, perceptions and attitudes of Russian tourists regarding the sustainable tourism in year-round resort Tahko. This work aims to achieve that goal by approaching sustainable tourism from various angles.

2.1 Social sustainability

Social sustainability refers to the ability of a community, whether local or national, to absorb inputs, such as extra people, for short or long periods of time, and to continue functioning either without the creation of social disharmony as a result of these inputs or by adapting its functions and relationships so that the disharmony created can be alleviated or mitigated. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 104.)

Some of the negative effects of tourism in the past have included opening of previously non-existent social divisions or the exacerbation of already-existing divisions. These can appear in the form of increasing differences between the beneficiaries of tourism and those who are marginalized by it, or of the creation of spatial ghettos, either of the tourists themselves or of those excluded from tourism. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 104.)

If we accept the premise that tourism sets up an intrinsically false and fabricated social division between the server and the served in the first place, it is of course inevitable that tourist developments (resorts, enclaves, condominium) will create such divisions. It is one of the purposes of the tools of sustainability, such as carrying capacity calculations, environmental impact assessments, and sustainability indicators, to minimize the effects of these divisions to a point at which they can be excused. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 104.)

Social impact analysis requires a set of baseline data relating to (1) social conditions prior to development, (2) the changes produced after the development is introduced into the system, and (3) a detailed examination of measures that can be implemented to ameliorate any negative effects of the

development, or alternatively entrench positive trends. If the third step can be accomplished prior to the initial change, then the proposed development can be altered a priori to minimize the negative impacts of the development and enhance the positive ones, reducing the necessity of corrective measures after the fact. (Reid 2003, 171.)

A social impact analysis should begin with a profile of the population of the community or area concerned. The statistics for this profile can usually be found within national census data, if they exist, or alternatively in other municipal plans particularly land use plans. Official land use plans usually contain population projections which estimate future population characteristics of the community based on historical data, and which should be taken into consideration in any proposed development to determine what demographic impact the proposed changes are likely to produce. If the population consists of young families, then a development catering to an older population segment is likely to have major implications in terms of the required changes to infrastructure, services and community facilities in general, like hospitals and other institutions. (Reid 2003, 171.)

In developing countries, this kind of data is often either absent or of a too general nature to allow detailed analysis at a local or regional level. Local population projections based on national statistics are fraught with difficulty, and prone to error, but in most cases it is better than no analysis at all. What planners are attempting here is to arrive at a basic understanding of the existing population structure, so that the potential impacts of proposed developments on that population can be estimated. It may be necessary to search church records or undertake a sample census in small communities where no organized database exists in order to make such an estimate. These latter methods usually produce crude results, but do supply some sense of a community's population structure. (Reid 2003, 172.)

In addition, such tools as Butler's Attitude/Behavior Index (Butler, 1974) and Doxey's Irritation Index (Doxey, 1976) are useful for organizing survey instruments or interview protocols to determine the local impacts of tourism development. These surveys provide anecdotal information about how local people are responding to the change in population makeup, or to other changes produced by tourism development, with all of its attendant stresses. (Reid 2003, 172.)

More sophisticated techniques, using computer programs, can also be employed to perform this type of analysis. Synthetic computer models can be used to introduce or remove various structural parameters in order to analyse different hypothetical scenarios. These models are particularly effective in understanding the impact of new construction in a particular landscape, or of the removal of such features as large tracts of forest. But such methods are costly, and remain unavailable to many countries, especially in the developing world. (Reid 2003, 172.)

2.2 Economical sustainability

The condition of economic sustainability is no less important than all others in any tourist development. Sustainability in these terms refers to a level of economic gain from the activity sufficient either to cover the cost of any special measures taken to cater for the tourist and to mitigate the effects of the tourist's presence or to offer an income appropriate to the inconvenience caused to the local community visited – without violating any of the other conditions – or both. As expressed thus,

it may appear as if the other aspects or conditions of sustainability are being 'bought off'. In other words, regardless of how much damage may be done culturally, socially and environmentally, it is perfectly acceptable if the economic profitability of the scheme is great enough to cover over the damage, ease the discontent or suppress the protest. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 105.)

2.3 Environmental sustainability

While human or social sustainability is no less important than ecological sustainability, it is appropriate to concentrate on the latter, while still recognizing that organizations can appear sustainable in some senses (e.g. human or ecological or economic) and not in others (e.g. ecological or economic or human) or may be achieving different levels of performance on each aspect of the concept. (Worthington 2013.)

The condition of ecological sustainability need hardly be stated as it is often the only way in which sustainability is publicly perceived. The need to avoid or minimize the environmental impact of tourist activities is clear. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 101.)

More and more organizations are beginning to regard environmentalism as a strategic business issue. Ecologically sustainable organizations can be defined as those that attempt to reduce their consumption of non-renewable energy and virgin materials and minimize their environmental hazards and emissions of pollutants, in short, pursuing their economic goals at the same time seeking to reduce their environmental impact (Dunphy & Benviste 2000, 3). Central to this definition is the idea that ecologically sustainable businesses are those that attempt to minimize the environmental damage caused by their operations and to reconfigure their relationship within the natural environment, by respecting the limits of its carrying capacity and avoiding degrading ecosystem services in order to protect their own long-term economic viability (Dyllick & Hockerts 2002).

Tourism is often thought of as a sustainable alternative to primary and extractive industries, such as mining, fishing and forestry, which transform raw material into finished goods and in the process, change those resources permanently. The input commodities are finite, and once used or permanently changed cannot be exploited again. Often this extractive process produces by-products which add to the levels of pollution of the water and air that humans depend on for their existence. Extractive industries also destroy habitats supporting a variety of species, thereby reducing biodiversity. However, there are fundamental decisions that society must make when confronted with competing interests in the use of resources. (Reid 2003, 173.)

2.4 Cultural sustainability

Societies may be able to continue functioning in social harmony despite the effects of changes brought about by a new input such as tourists. But the relationships within that society, the mores of interaction, the styles of life, the customs and traditions are all subject to change through the introductions of visitors with different habits, styles, customs and means of exchange. Even if the society survives, its culture may be irreversibly altered. Culture of course is as dynamic a feature of human life as society or economy; so the processes of cultural adaptation and change are not assumed by all in all cases to be a negative effect. But cultural sustainability refers to the ability of

people to retain or adapt elements of their culture which distinguish them from other people.
(Mowforth & Munt 2009, 104.)

Cultural influences from even a small influx of tourists are inevitable and may be insidious; but the control of the most harmful effects, emphasis on the responsible behavior of the visitor, and the prevention of distortion of local's culture might be assumed to essential elements of sustainable tourism. (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 104.)

3 RUSSIANS AS A GROUP OF TOURISTS

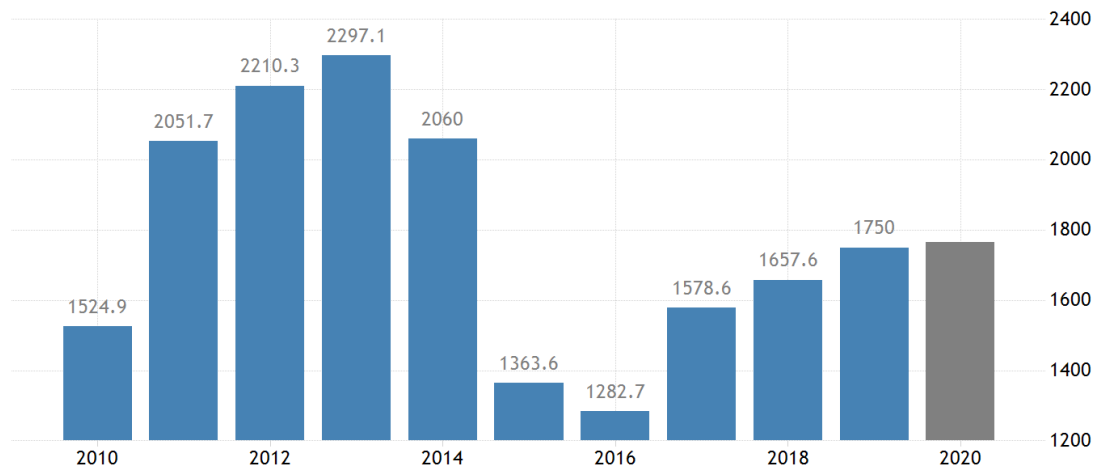
According to Statista (2020-03-13) Finland was the most popular winter travel destination among Russian tourists in 2019, accounting for 4.2 percent of the total outbound tourist flow from Russia between December 15, 2019 and January 15, 2020. Turkey and Thailand followed with a 4.1 percent share each.

Hence the purpose of this work is to analyze awareness, perceptions and attitudes of Russian tourists regarding the sustainable tourism in year-round resort Tahko. However, before discussing this topic some relevant information about Russian economy is presented in this chapter.

3.1 Russia country analysis

3.1.1 GDP

When discussing a country's economy and its prospects, it is essential to speak about statistics. It is no secret that Russian economy has not been very stable in recent years. Let us have a closer look at how the economy has been fluctuating over the years. The figure below demonstrates the changes in Russian real GDP from 2010 to 2020.



SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | WORLD BANK

FIGURE 1. Russian GDP, USD million (Trading Economics 2020)

According to Trading Economics (2020-03-30a) the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Russia was worth 1750 billion US dollars in 2019, according to official data from the World Bank and projections from Trading Economics. The GDP value of Russia represents 1.44 percent of the world economy.

Overall, we can see that the Gross Domestic Product in Russia was worth 1750 billion US dollars in 2019. However, this amount is rather low with comparison to the all-time high of 2297.10 USD Billion reached in 2013. Therefore, it is obvious that Russian economy has recently suffered greatly. Nevertheless, it started to grow significantly in 2019, so the situation is not as grave as it may seem. Moreover, according to the World Bank, Russia's economic recovery continues, amidst relatively high oil prices, enhanced macroeconomic stability, gradual monetary loosening, and ongoing momentum in global economic growth. Even though Russia's growth prospects for the period 2020-22 remain

relatively modest, global growth continued its 2019 momentum. Recoveries in investment, manufacturing, and trade continue as commodity-exporting developing economies benefit from firming commodity prices.

3.1.2 Tendencies

According to Trading Economics (2020-03-30a) GDP in Russia is expected to reach 1780.00 USD Billion by the end of 2020, according to Trading Economics global macro models and analysts' expectations. In the long-term, the Russia GDP is projected to trend around 1910.00 USD Billion in 2021 and 2080.00 USD Billion in 2022, according to econometric models.

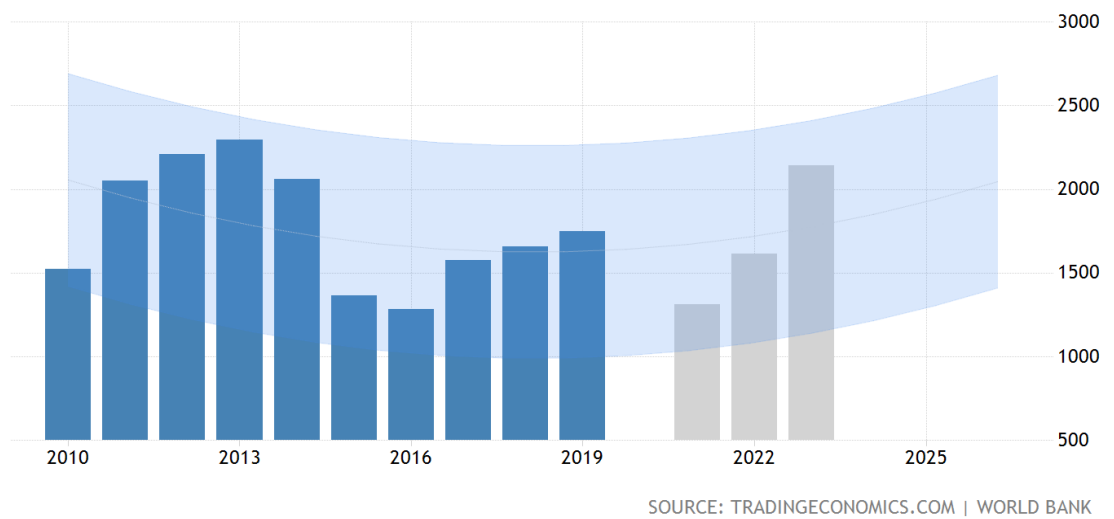


FIGURE 2. Russian GDP forecast, USD million (Trading Economics 2020)

According to the World Bank (2019-12-04) growth in Russia is expected to be 1.6 percent in 2020; and 1.8 percent in 2021.

The following chart illustrates the tendencies for Russian economic growth:

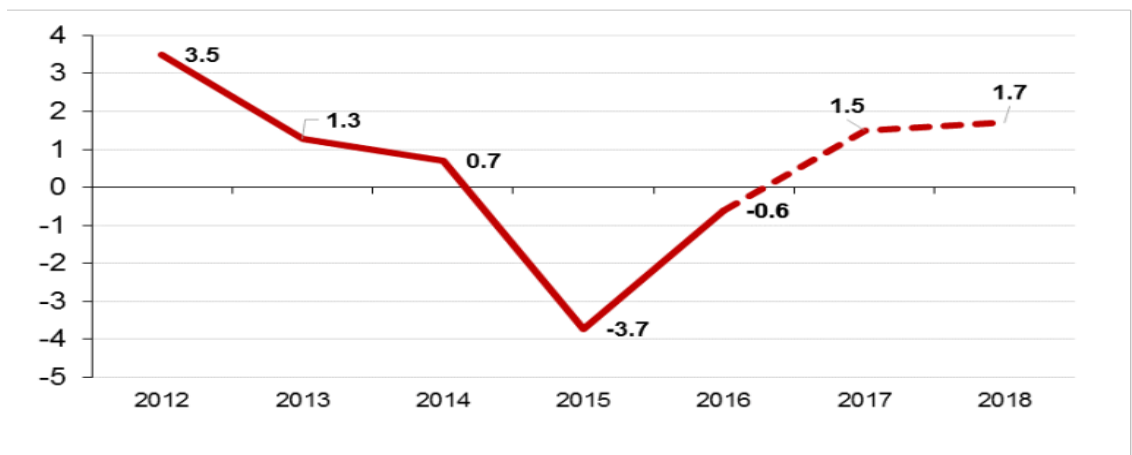


FIGURE 3. Russia's economic growth, percent/year (Trading Economics 2020)

In conclusion, it is safe to say that Russian market is worth to enter without much concern about the economic state of the country. As statistics confirm Russia's stable growth, more and more international companies begin exploring the market, so the prospects for Tahko year-round resort seem favorable.

3.2 Factors that influence the number of visitors

Number of visitors crossing Finland-Russia border is influenced by numerous factors. Decision-making questions such as why, how, where and when to travel are influenced by environmental conditions.

Environmental stimuli are beyond the buyer's control. There are several types of environmental factors: demographic, cultural, social, geographic, economic, historic, legal, political, technological, competitive stimuli.

The Russian Federation being the world's largest country by area, geography plays a large role in the travel decisions of its inhabitants. Internet searches for northern Europe are overrepresented in the western Russian Federation; for Asian and long-haul destinations in the east of the Russian federation; for warm destinations in northern cities; and for independent and niche travel in Moscow and St. Petersburg. (UNWTO 2015, 8.)

Economic factors affect purchasing and spending power of individual consumers as well as population. Such factors as inflation and the currency exchange rate are very important determinants of a country's relative level of economic health. Under conditions of stable economic growth in the country Russian travelers show the greatest interest in recreation and attractions outbound. Exchange rates play a vital role in a number of outbound tourists, which is critical to tourism market in Finland.

The figure below (figure 4) presents official exchange rate fluctuation of ruble against US dollar over a period of 5 years' time.

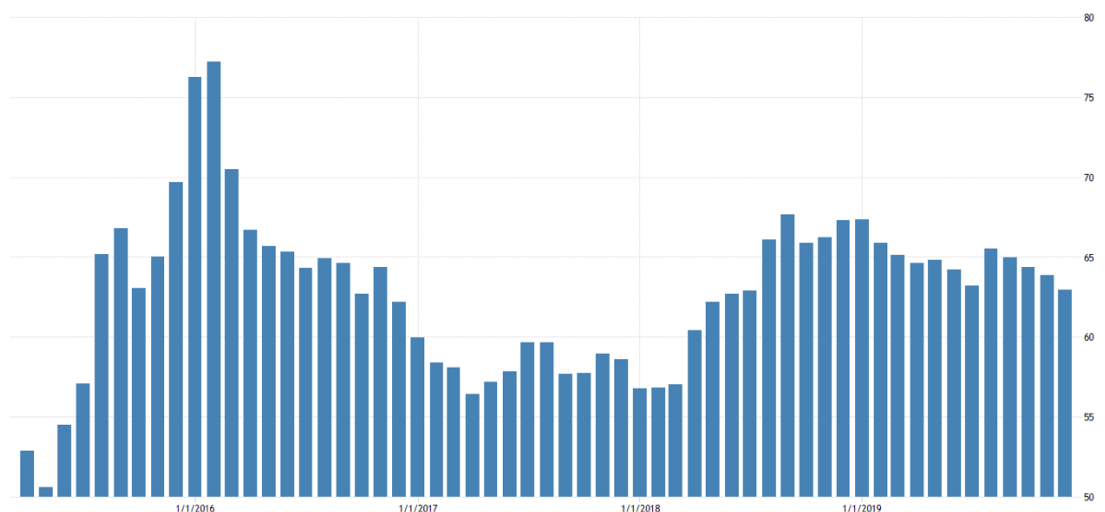


FIGURE 4. Exchange rate of ruble against dollar (Trading Economics 2020)

The figure below (figure 5) presents an inflation rate in Russia over a period of 5 years' time. According to Trading Economics (2020-03-30b) Russia's inflation rate edged down to 2,3 percent year-on-year in February 2020 from 2,4 percent in the previous month, in line with market expectations. That was the lowest rate since June 2018. On a monthly basis, consumer prices increased 0,3 percent, also matching forecasts.

Russia, a country with a consistently high inflation rate exhibits a lowering currency value, as its purchasing power decreases relative to other currencies. In Russia when inflation is high we can see depreciation in ruble in relation to US dollar.



SOURCE: TRADINGECONOMICS.COM | FEDERAL STATE STATISTICS SERVICE

FIGURE 5. Inflation rate in Russia (Trading Economics 2020)

Legal and political factors affect the number of visitors crossing Finland-Russia border. The 2014 Ukraine crisis severely impacted Russia outbound travel through a weakened rouble, official statements discouraging travel to Europe and fears of visa rejection and hostility at the destination. (UNWTO 2015, 8.)

The visa issue – both the high cost and the bureaucratic involved in obtaining a visa – is the most frequently cited subject of concern to Russia's inbound and outbound travel industry. There are reciprocal agreements between Russia and number of countries, and the Russian government and the European Union have also signed an agreement facilitating visa issuance for Russians travelling to EU countries (excluding the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark) in exchange for Russia agreeing to take back illegal immigrants. (UNWTO 2015, 17.)

3.3 Russia as an important country of inbound tourism to Finland

3.3.1 Overnight stays by Russians in Finland

According to Statistics Finland (2020-03-26) overnight stays by resident tourists at Finnish accommodation establishments increased by 10.1 per cent from last year and 1.23 million nights were recorded for them in February 2020. Overnight stays by foreign tourists increased by 1.9 per cent and 0.61 million overnight stays were recorded for non-resident tourists. Finnish accommodation establishments recorded a total of 1.85 million overnight stays, which was 7.2 per cent more than one

year before. These figures are preliminary data from Statistics Finland's statistics on accommodation establishments and they have been collected from accommodation establishments with at least 20 beds or caravan pitches with electricity connection.

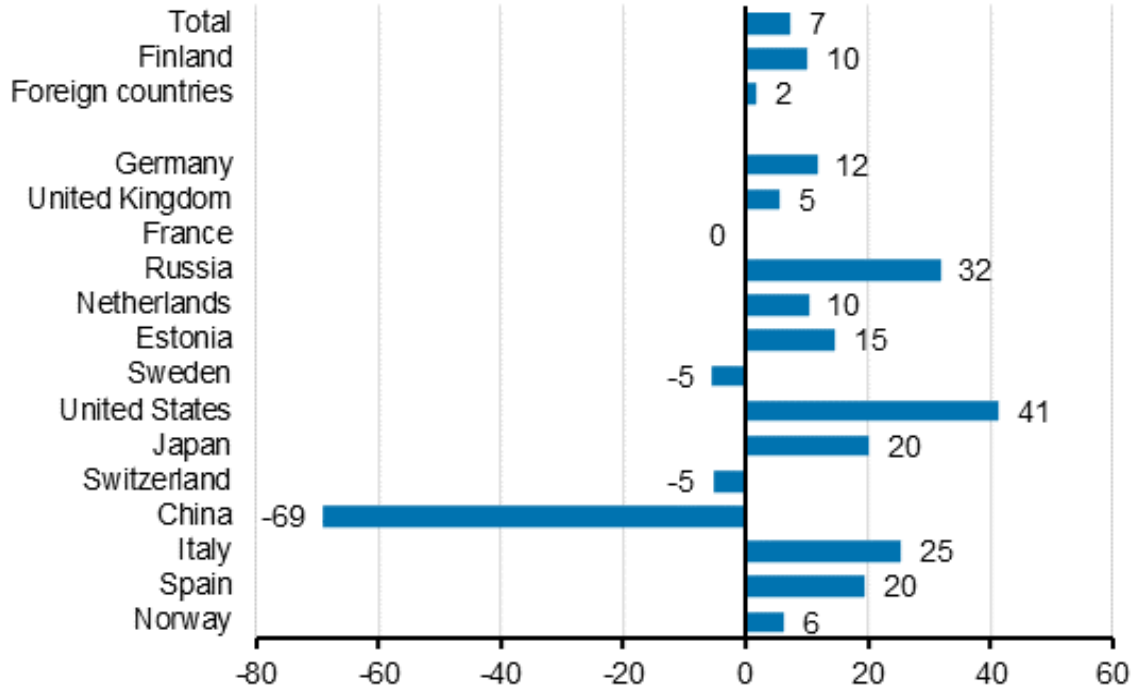


FIGURE 6. Change in overnight stays in February 2020/2019, % (Statistics Finland 2020)

Among the most important countries of inbound tourism to Finland, overnight stays by Russians increased most in absolute numbers, by 12,200 nights. This was 31.8 per cent higher than in the year before. The biggest drop was seen in overnight stays by Chinese tourists, down by 32,600 nights. Their overnight stays were 69.1 per cent down on February 2019.

The biggest group of non-resident tourists were Germans with 70,500 overnight stays. The second largest group was Britons with 65,900 overnight stays. The third largest group was French with 62,100 overnight stays, and fourth were Russians with 50,700 overnight stays. The fifth largest group was Dutch tourists (49,600 nights), sixth was Estonians (23,600 nights), seventh Swedes (23,300 nights) and eight U.S. tourists (22,900 nights).

3.3.2 Overnight stays in Finland examined by region

According to Statistics Finland (2020-03-26), examined by region, overnight stays increased most in relative terms in South Ostrobothnia, by 24.4 per cent, and second most in North Ostrobothnia, by 16.3 per cent. By contrast, the overall number of overnight stays declined most in relative terms in Kymenlaakso, by 6.6 per cent and second most in South Savo, by 2.6 per cent.

Accommodation establishments in Uusimaa recorded 178,000 overnight stays by non-resident tourists and accommodation establishments in Lapland 289,000. Overnight stays by non-resident tour-

ists declined by 1.6 per cent in Uusimaa. In Lapland, overnight stays by non-resident tourists increased by 1.9 per cent from one year ago. The share of Uusimaa in all overnight stays by foreign visitors was 29 per cent and that of Lapland 47 per cent.

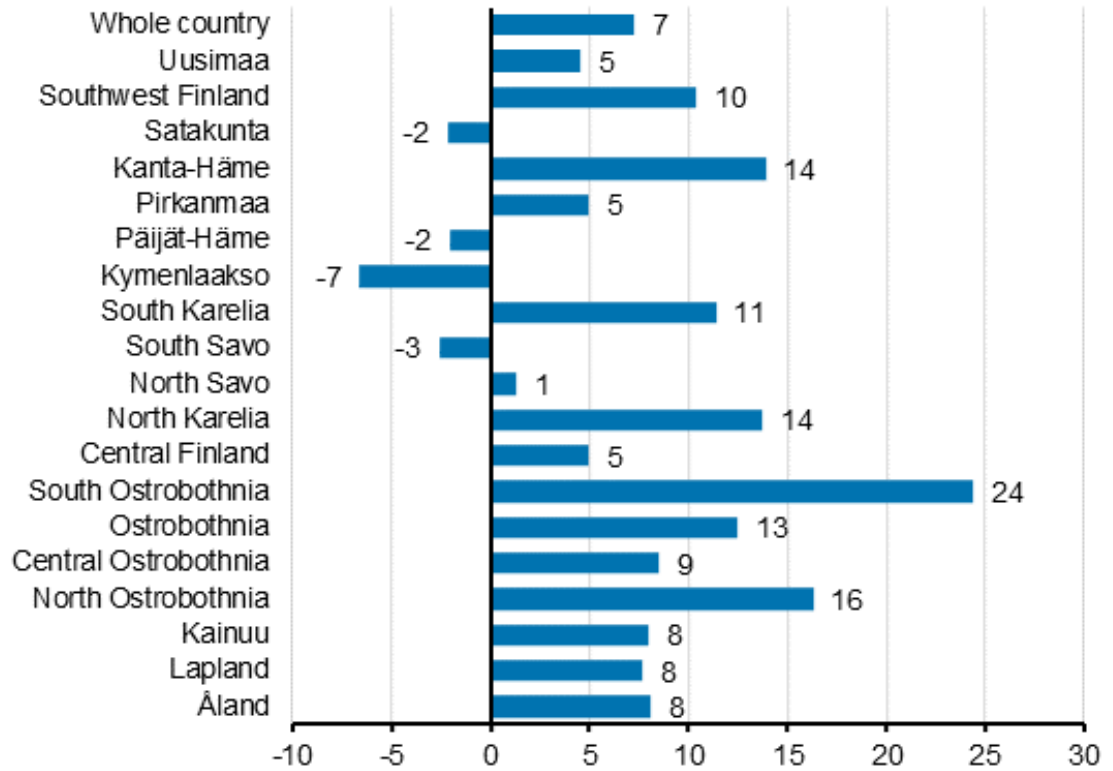


FIGURE 7. Change in overnight stays in February by region 2020/2019,% (Statistics Finland 2020)

3.3.3 Russians as the biggest group of non-resident tourists

According to Statistics Finland (2020-03-26), In January to February 2020, a total of 3.51 million nights were spent in Finnish accommodation establishments. This was 7.7 per cent more than in the corresponding period one year earlier. In all, 2.19 million overnight stays were recorded for resident tourists and 1.33 million for non-resident tourists. The number of nights spent by resident tourists increased by 10.3 per cent and nights spent by non-resident tourists increased by 3.8 from the previous year.

Among the most important countries of inbound tourism to Finland, overnight stays by Russians increased most in absolute numbers, by 31,500 nights. This was 17.1 per cent higher than in the year before. The biggest drop was seen in overnight stays by Chinese tourists, down by 18,100 nights. Their overnight stays were 21.1 per cent down on January to February 2019.

The biggest group of non-resident tourists were Russians with 216,000 overnight stays. The second largest group was Britons with 127,000 overnight stays. The third largest group was Germans with 117,000 overnight stays, and fourth were French with 115,000 overnight stays. The fifth largest group was Dutch tourists (94,000 nights), sixth was Chinese tourists (68,000 nights), seventh Swedes (48,000 nights) and eighth was U.S. tourists (42,000 nights).

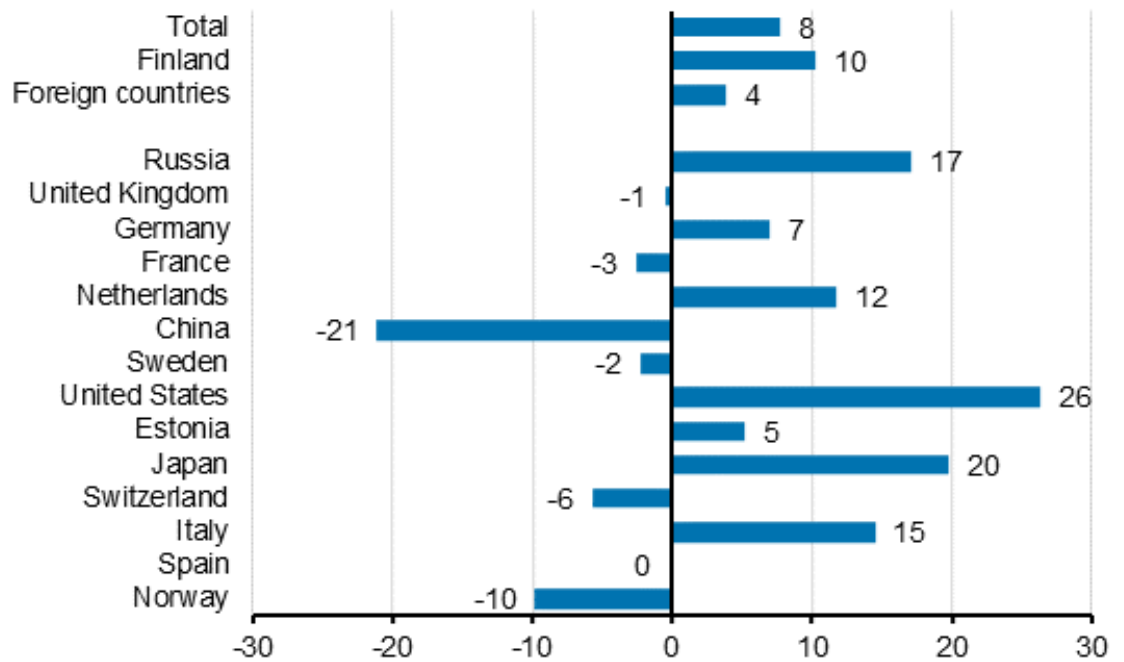


FIGURE 8. Change in overnight stays in January-February 2020/2019, % (Statistics Finland 2020)

3.4 Russian property owners in Finland

The main reason for Russians to buy a property in Finland is a need to have holiday home in safe and ecologically pure location. However, some people buy a property for investment, as a student home for children or as a place to live in retirement. One could see from figure 9, that the number of property transactions made by Russians in Finland in years 2005-2008 have been strongly increasing. In year 2008 Russians made almost 800 real estate transactions. After the financial crisis of 2008 the amount of transactions decreased to 400, and stayed almost stable for the next five years.

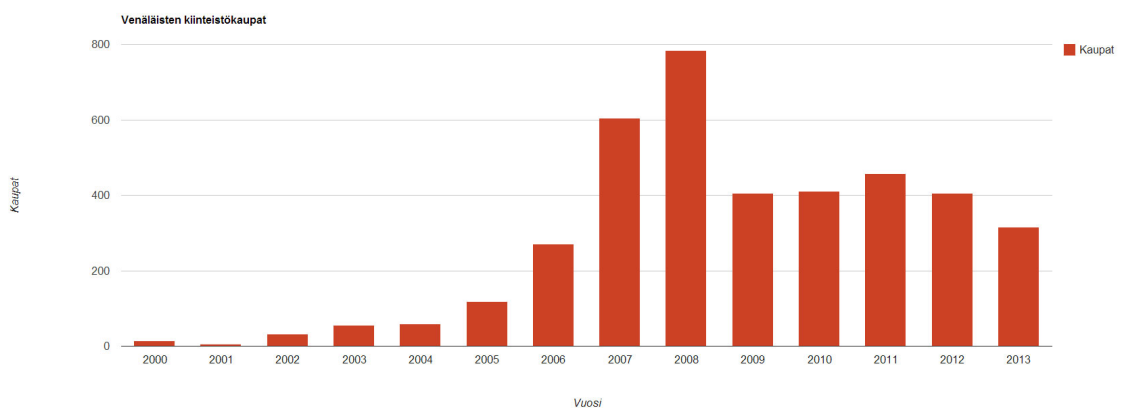


FIGURE 9. Property transactions made by Russians in years 2000-2013, (Rusgate 2013)

One can see from the figure 10 that Russians (Venäjä) are the biggest group of overseas property owners in Finland. However, the number of transactions made by Russians is constantly decreasing

from year 2011. In years 2015-2017 less than 200 real estate transactions per year were made by Russians in Finland.

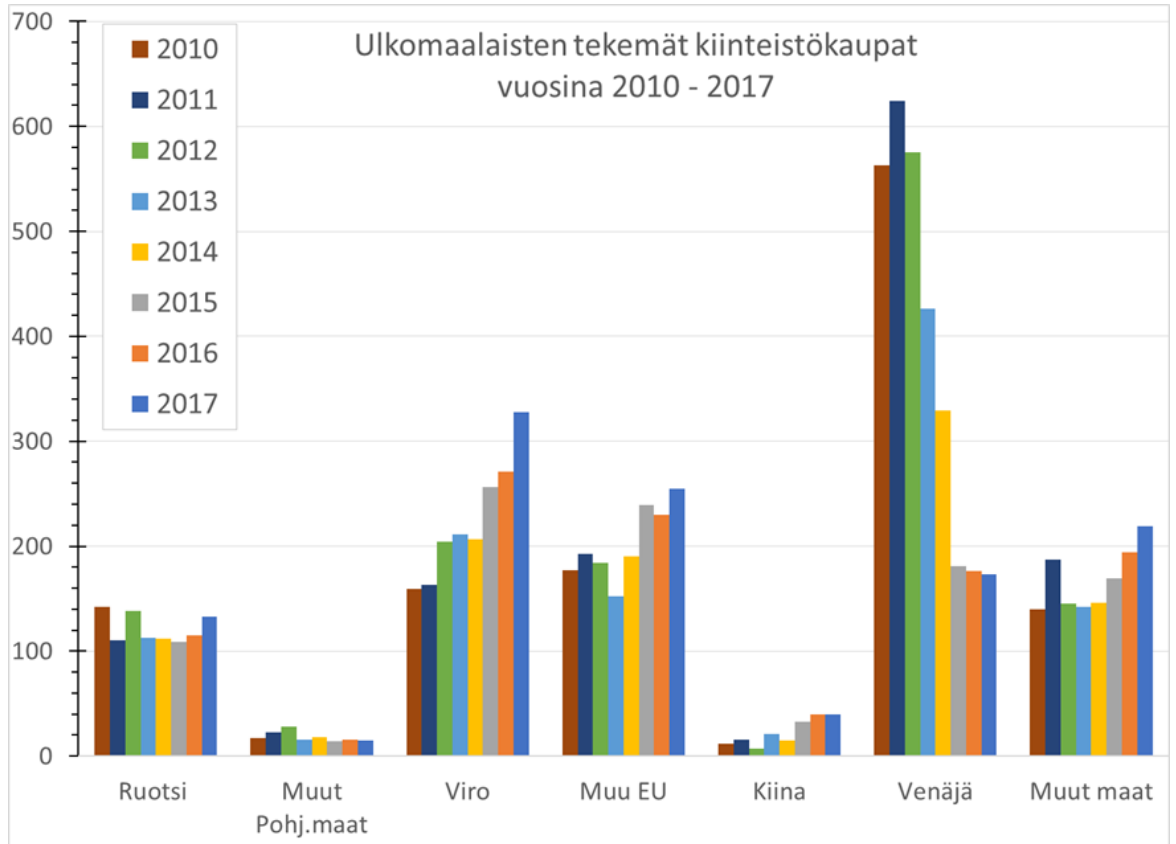


FIGURE 10. Property transactions made by foreigners in years 2010-2017, (Eduskunta 2019)

4 RESEARCH IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS

4.1 Description of the client

The growing concern for environment and natural resources through sustainability has also had increasing resonance in social and economic issues. Notions of sustainability are reflected in development strategy of cities in Finland. In a municipal context, strategy means a conscious choice of action in an environment with transformation and change. Strategy is defined as the choice of, and unanimous commitment to, the strategic priorities that will have the greatest impact on the desired future in the current environment.

Kuopio`s vision is to be the capital, where the good life lives. Health, vitality and happiness are the elements of good life. Strategic priorities of the vision of Kuopio in 2030 include among others intention of the city to be the center of sustainable growth for one million people in 2040, to develop progressive and international business life and business-friendly environments. Strategic priority of the vision of Kuopio in 2030 is also to be Finland`s fastest growing region of conventions, events and tourism. Mission of the City of Kuopio is defined as "Kuopio with its partners creates environments for sustainable growth and good life." (Kuopio 2020.)

Kuopio Region is a unique destination for tourism in all seasons. It combines the best of holiday village, urban life and untouched nature. In Kuopio Region one of the best Finnish Lakeland attractions – tourism center Tahko is situated. The fourth largest skiing resort in Finland Tahko is an hour away from Kuopio. Tahko is a part of Kuopio and belongs to Nilsia district. The area covers 848 km, 136 km of which is made up of water. Syväri and Vuotjärvi are the area`s largest lakes. Tahko ski resort has 24 slopes, the longest of which is 1200 meters long. The difference in altitude is up to 200 meters.

The teaching handout by Kuosmanen (2020, 2) states that, new competitiveness of tourism is sought from internationalization, attractive and high quality products and product packages to international markets. Lakeland 2 is a development project targeting to promote the international tourism in Northern Savo region. The aim of the project is to raise the profile of the Lakeland as an internationally removed tourist area. One of the goals is also to increase the share of international tourism from 10% now to 20% in the future. To achieve these goals systematic and extensive Lakeland cooperation is needed. It is also important to extend the tourism season and promote year-round growth.

4.2 Methods of research

The first and the most difficult step in the consumer research process is to accurately define the objectives of the research. As the purpose of this study is to find out how many Russians visiting Tahko resort are aware of sustainable tourism and the characteristics of people, who travel to the region, quantitative research is conducted.

There are five major approaches to research reviewed in this text: quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods research, arts-based research, and community-based participatory research. In actuality,

there may be overlaps between these approaches. For example, there are some methods (e.g., narrative inquiry) that are used by qualitative and arts-based researchers.² For another example, community-based participatory research may rely on quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, or arts-based methods. The differences between these approaches will become clearer throughout this book showing that despite overlap, projects can be categorized. (Leavy P. 2017, 9.)

4.2.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is generally characterized by inductive approaches to knowledge building aimed at generating meaning. Researchers use this approach to explore; to robustly investigate and learn about social phenomenon; to unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events, or artifacts; or to build a depth of understanding about some dimension of social life. The values underlying qualitative research include the importance of people's subjective experiences and meaning-making processes and acquiring a depth of understanding (i.e., detailed information from a small sample). Qualitative research is generally appropriate when your primary purpose is to explore, describe, or explain. (Leavy 2017, 9.)

The key methods used in qualitative research are interviews and focus group sessions. The personal interview, either face to face or through the telephone, is a popular and useful way to understand human attitudes and beliefs (Fontana and Frey, 1994). Interviews are one of the most commonly used tools in employee selection but the usefulness of this technique goes beyond hiring. Personal interviews, especially face-to-face interviews, tend to encourage a high degree of cooperation by participants. In addition, people are likely to answer an interviewer's questions rather than check the "Don't Know" box on a questionnaire. This should not be terribly surprising—after all, it is difficult to skip or ignore a question when another person asks you a direct question. Other advantages of this method of measurement are that the interviewer can ensure that the participant understands the questions and ask follow-up questions to clarify participants' responses. (Weathington, Cunningham and Pittenger 2012, 187.)

Personal interviews can yield a great deal of rich information. There is no single format for the personal interview. Interviews can be highly structured or unstructured. Similarly, the interview may be limited to two people or may involve a small group. Fontana and Frey (1994) have described many types of interviewing formats, each of which has a specific role for contemporary research. These formats take place in different settings, require different roles of the interviewer, involve different numbers of people in the discussion, and use different formats for the questions. (Weathington et al. 2012, 187.)

4.2.2 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research method has been chosen by considering the nature and objectives of this study. Quantitative research is characterized by deductive approaches to the research process aimed at proving, disproving, or lending credence to existing theories. This type of research involves measuring variables and testing relationships between variables in order to reveal patterns, correlations, or causal relationships. Researchers may employ linear methods of data collection and analy-

sis that result in statistical data. The values underlying quantitative research include neutrality, objectivity, and the acquisition of a sizeable scope of knowledge (e.g., a statistical overview from a large sample). This approach is generally appropriate because the primary purpose of the researches to explain or evaluate. (Leavy 2017, 9.)

Marketers use quantitative research to understand the acceptance of various products or specific brands, as well as the impact of promotional messages on consumers. In other cases, the objectives are to assist marketers in pinpointing consumers' level of satisfaction with products, service, distributor, or retailer, or possibly to attempt to identify areas in which the consumer has unmet needs, or even to attempt to better "predict" future consumer needs or behavior. The broad category of quantitative research includes experimentation, survey techniques, and observation. The findings are descriptive and empirical, and, if collected using appropriate sampling, can be generalized to larger population. Because of data collected are quantitative, they lend themselves to sophisticated statistical analysis. Next, we consider basic research designs: observational research and surveys. (Schiffman & Wisenblit 2015, 413.)

Survey research was used in this study, because this method provides the quantitative relationship between empirical observation and mathematical expression. Survey research is the most widely used quantitative design in the social sciences. Common uses of survey research include the census, polling on political issues or public opinions, and market research. In social science special-purpose surveys are used. (Fowler 2014). Surveys rely on asking people standardized questions that can be analyzed statistically. They allow researchers to collect a breadth of data from large samples and generalize to the larger population from which the sample was drawn. Surveys are typically used for ascertaining individuals' attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or their reporting of their experiences and/or behaviors. The data from these surveys are called subjective data, although that term is controversial, because they can be ascertained only from the respondents (Vogt, Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2014). Surveys may also ask for facts, which are termed objective data, because they can be ascertained elsewhere (e.g., age, place of birth) (Vogt et al., 2014). The data from survey in this study are subjective data.

The survey is the model of simplicity; give many people a few questions and ask them to mark their answers on a sheet of paper. This technique can also be used with open-ended questions that can serve, essentially, as written interviews. (Weathington et al. 2012, 189.)

The advantages of this method of data collection and measurement are obvious. First, the cost of photocopying and distributing a survey is a fraction of the cost of developing and conducting a personal interview. Second, surveys are relatively easy to distribute. We can mail the survey along with a stamped return envelope, hand them out to a class of students or some other well-defined group, or administer it through an Internet link. (Weathington et al. 2012, 189.)

The real costs associated with surveys arise with respect to the quality of the data they can provide. Many people are likely to ignore or recycle surveys they receive in the mail. Because of this, survey data may be biased if the responses that are returned only represent the perspectives of those who

are conscientious enough to respond to questions when asked (a special subset of the broader population, in most cases). In addition, the researcher has little control over a survey once it is first administered to a participant. There is often no feasible way to guarantee that returned responses come from the person who was actually targeted for the survey. (Weathington et al. 2012, 189.)

Although there are many potential liabilities with surveys, this method of data collection is extremely popular among social and behavioral researchers. In those situations where many people complete the survey this method can be a cost-effective means of obtaining data. (Weathington et al. 2012, 189.)

The aim of the survey was to inquire further into the current understanding of sustainable tourism in Tahko. The questionnaire in Appendix 1 was used to gather the required data from the research. The questions are designed according to the need of the research. The questionnaire consists of 16 questions.

The contents of the questionnaire are divided into three sections: the purpose of the first part is to give basic information about respondents, such as gender, age, background and so on. The second part is designed to investigate general awareness of sustainable tourism among Russian tourists. The last part is to inquire into economical, environmental, social and cultural dimensions of sustainable tourism in Tahko. The questionnaire included multi-choice and single choice questions. As the target respondents live in Russia, the questionnaire was delivered by e-mail. The advantage of distributing the questionnaire via e-mail is saving time and cost. The disadvantage of this method is high risk of misunderstanding of the questions by respondents.

4.2.3 Mixed methods

Mixed methods research (MMR) involves collecting, analyzing, and in some way integrating both quantitative and qualitative data in a single project. The phases of a research project are integrated or synergistic, with the quantitative phase influencing the qualitative phase, or vice versa (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2011). MMR may result in a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation because of the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. MMR is generally appropriate when your purpose is to describe, explain, or evaluate. MMR is also routinely used in applied social and behavioral science research, including that which seeks to prompt community change or social action.

4.3 Validity and reliability

A distinction can be made between internal and external validity. These types of validity are relevant to evaluating the validity of a research study. Internal validity refers to whether the effects observed in a study are due to the manipulation of the independent variable and not some other factor. (McLeod 2013). In this study the observed results represent the truth in the group of cottage owners and members of their family the researcher is studying.

External validity refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be generalized to other settings (ecological validity), other people (population validity) and over time (historical validity). The

results from a study can be applied only to a group of Russian owners of the cottages in Tahko, but the results can not be generalized to other groups of tourists. It was not possible to improve external validity by using random sampling to select participants. Due to Covid-19 pandemic situation starting from March 2020 it has been prohibited for citizens of Russia to visit Finland and it was impossible for the researcher to distribute the survey among random Russian tourists in Tahko.

The research is valid in measuring awareness, perceptions and attitudes of Russian owners of the cottages regarding the sustainable tourism in year-round resort Tahko. First-hand data was collected through questionnaire in this research. High validity was achieved by designing the questionnaire according to the purpose of the research. The researcher tried her best to avoid inaccuracy in conclusions.

5 RESEARCH RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Data analysis

During the research 30 questionnaires were sent to respondents by e-mail. In three weeks 22 completed questionnaires were received. Thus, the response rate is: $22/30=0.85$. The gathered data was analyzed by professional analytical tool in Webropol. The sample characteristics were outlined through respondents answers in the first part of the questionnaire.

5.1.1 Description of respondent according to demographic variables

The analysis of demographic variables presents basic information about respondents, such as gender, age, living place and how often do they usually visit Tahko. This data is illustrated with percentage on the charts.

The chart below gives general information about the respondents. One could see from figure 11 that there are 22 respondents from two major regions in Russia: Moscow and Saint-Petersburg. Analyzing the geographical region variable it can be seen that from 22 responses collected during the research 9 responses were from Moscow, 13 from Saint-Petersburg and no one from other region.

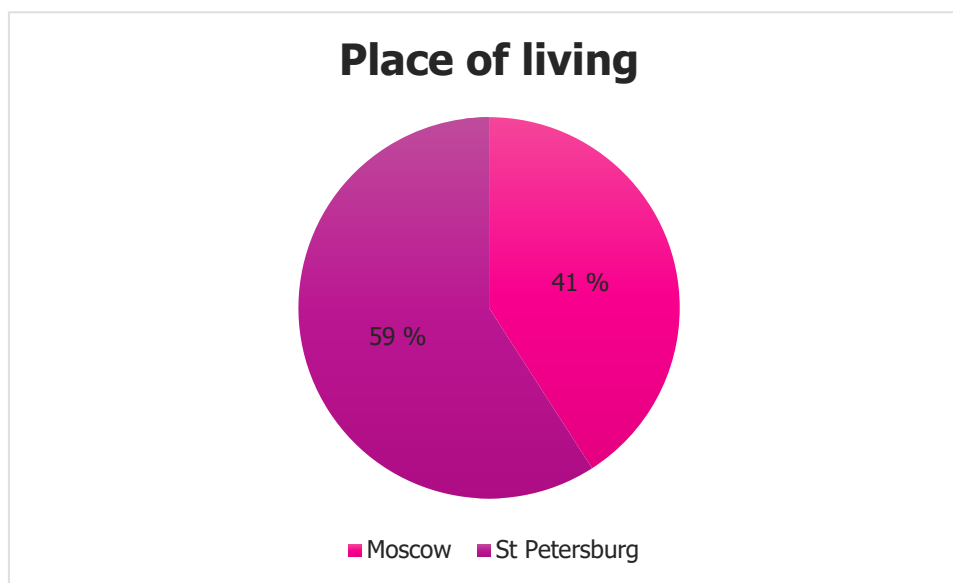


FIGURE 11. Place of living of respondents (n=22)

One could see from figure 12 that the majority of respondents are from 31 to 60, especially from 41 to 60. Most people in this age in Russia are employed which means that they can potentially buy a holiday home.

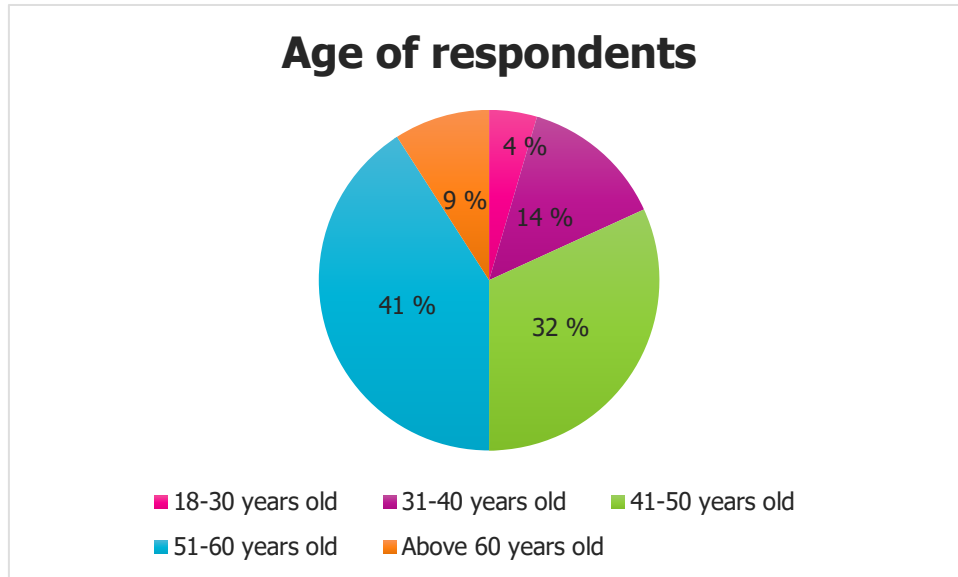


FIGURE 12. Age of respondents (n=22)

One can see from figure 13 a small difference in the quantity of male and female respondents, and the following analysis of gender was calculated in percentage.

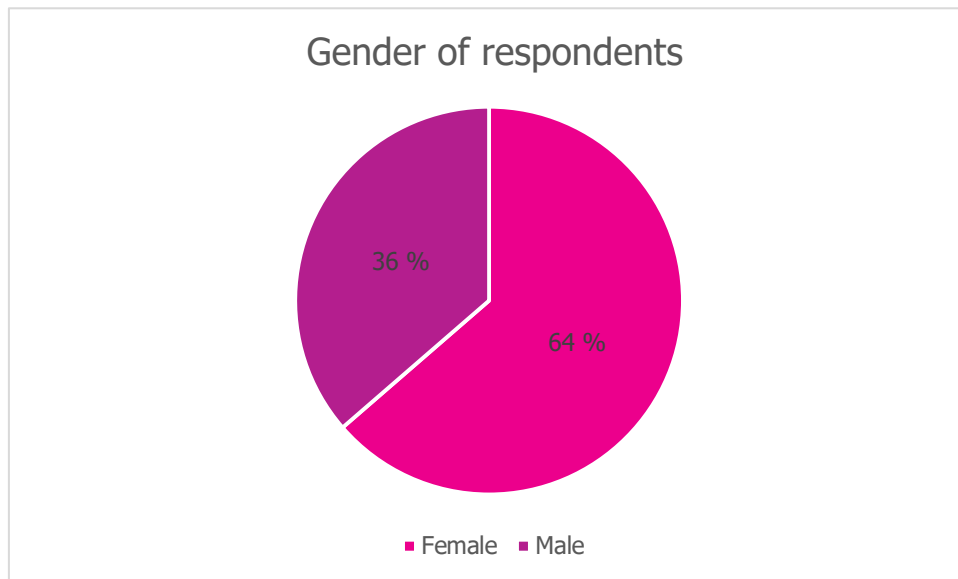


FIGURE 13. Gender of respondents (n=22)

5.1.2 Basic information about visits to Tahko

The figures below present basic information about the duration of visits to Tahko, the preferable season to visit the resort and also the source of information about Tahko for Russian tourists. This data is illustrated with percentage on the charts. One can see from figure 14 that the respondents usually visit Tahko more than once in a year. The majority of respondents (72,73%) visit Tahko resort 2-5 times a year. This result can be explained by the fact that the survey was sent mostly to the owners of the cottages in Tahko.

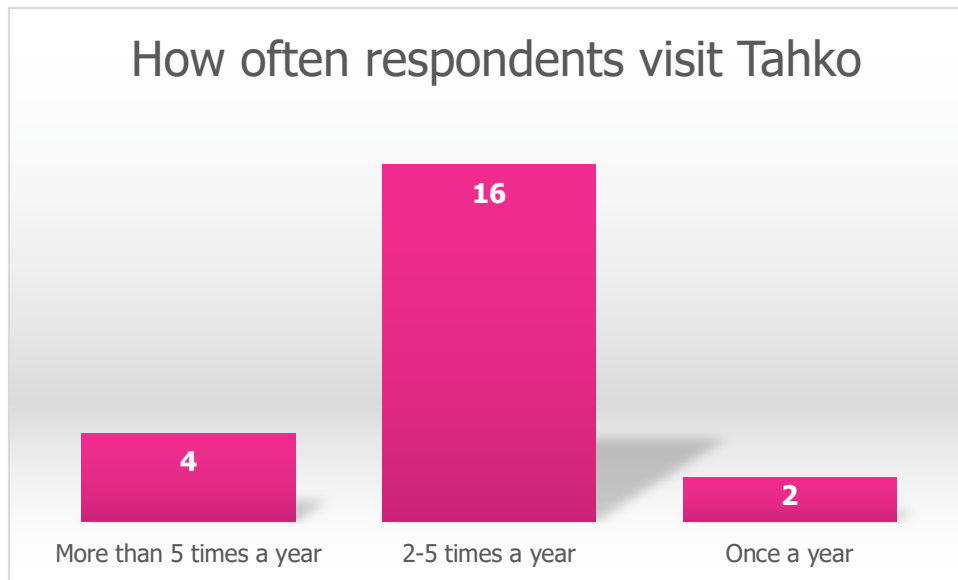


FIGURE 14. How often respondents visit Tahko resort (n=22)

One could see from figure 15 that the most popular seasons for visiting Tahko are winter, summer and spring. The result of figure 15 illustrates that most of respondents usually visit Tahko in summer and winter. This can be explained by summer vacations and New Year celebrations.

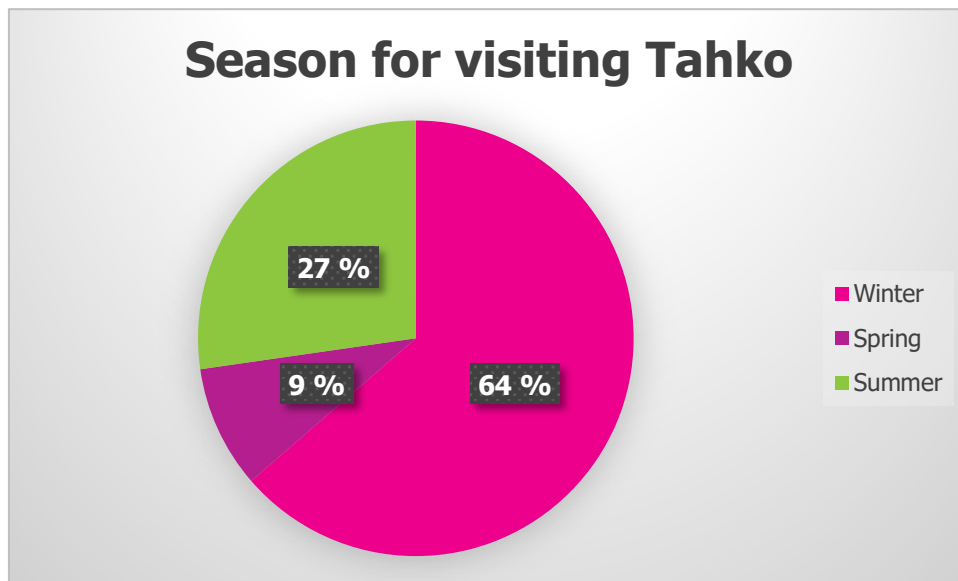


FIGURE 15. What season the respondents usually visit Tahko (n=22)

As it can be seen from the figure 16 approximately 59% of respondents have heard about Tahko from internet, the important source of information about Tahko for some part of the respondents is also social media (27,27% of respondents). Very few of respondents got information about Tahko from friend. None of the respondent got information about Tahko from a newspaper.

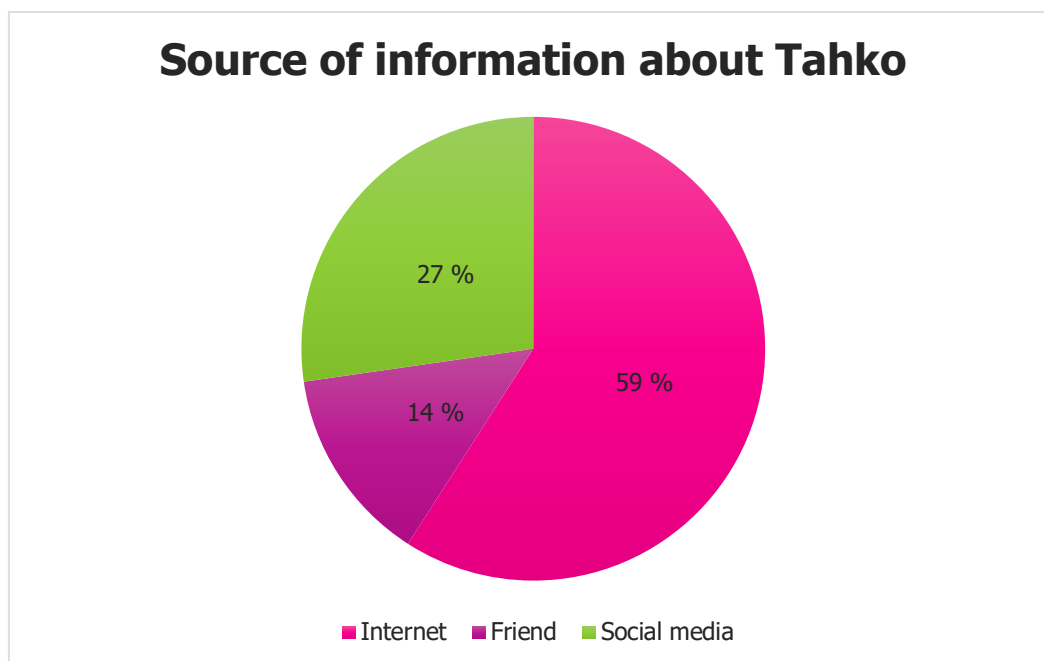


FIGURE 16. From which source the respondents hear about Tahko resort (n=22)

5.1.3 Age of respondents by awareness of sustainability in tourism

The majority of the 22 respondents were 41-60 years old which accounts 72,7% and younger respondents accounted smaller percentage than older respondents did. Table 1 gives a general outlook of different age categories of respondent spreading in different awareness levels. The result of table 1 illustrates that generally most respondents know about sustainability in tourism fairly well. In all age categories the respondents who choose fairly well account over fifty percent of respective numbers. Very few of respondents of age 41-50 know very much about sustainability in tourism, only 14,29% of respondents and 66,67% of respondents in 31-40 age category select this choice. One could see from table 1 that younger people have generally better awareness of sustainability in tourism. Besides, less 51-60 years old respondents (22,22%) know very little about sustainability in tourism than above 60 years old respondents (50%) did. Therefore generally younger respondents take a dominant status in knowing about sustainability in tourism than older.

TABLE 1. How well do respondents know about sustainability in tourism (n=22)

	All	Age									
		18-30 years old		31-40 years old		41-50 years old		51-60 years old		Above 60 years	
		%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
How much do you know about sustainability in tourism?	N=22		N=1		N=3		N=7		N=9		N=2
Very much	18,18	100	1	66,67	2	14,29	1	0	0	0	0
Fairly	54,55	0	0	33,33	1	42,86	3	77,78	7	50	1
Very little	27,27	0	0	0	0	42,86	3	22,22	2	50	1

5.1.4 Satisfactory of sustainability in Tahko by number in of visits

One could see from the table 2 that satisfactory of sustainability in Tahko was measured with the help of five degrees: Extremely well, Very well, Moderately, Slightly, Not at all. The majority of the

respondents, 15 of them visit Tahko 2-5 times a year, it can be explained by the fact, that the survey was sent to the owners of the cottages in the resort. Four respondents visit Tahko more than 5 times a year and only two of them visit the resort once a year. Table 2 gives a general outlook of different levels of satisfactory with sustainable development in Tahko according to frequency of visiting the resort. The result of table 2 illustrates that generally most respondents are satisfied with the sustainable development in Tahko. In categories More than 5 times a year and 2-5 times a year the majority of respondents choose Extremely well and Very well. Very few of respondents in all categories think that sustainability in tourism policy of Tahko is considered moderately, only 4,55% of respondents select this choice.

TABLE 2. Satisfactory of sustainability in Tahko by number of visits (n=22)

	All	How often do you visit Tahko resort?					
		5 times a year and more		2-5 times a year		Once a year	
		%	N	%	N	%	N
How do you think the sustainability is considered in the tourism policy of Tahko?	N=21		N=4		N=15		N=2
Extremely well	31,82	50	2	33,33	5	0	0
Very well	63,64	50	2	60	9	100	2
Moderately	4,55	0	0	6,67	1	0	0
Slightly		0	0	0	0	0	0
Not at all		0	0	0	0	0	0

5.1.5 Attitude to activity in sustainable development in Tahko

Respondents were also asked about their attitude to activity in sustainable development in Tahko. According to Figure 17 half of respondents think that public authorities are already being active in sustainable development of the resort. One could see from Figure 17 that 23% of tourists consider that sustainable development should be promoted. Very few of respondents (9%) think that sustainable development will not need to act on it.

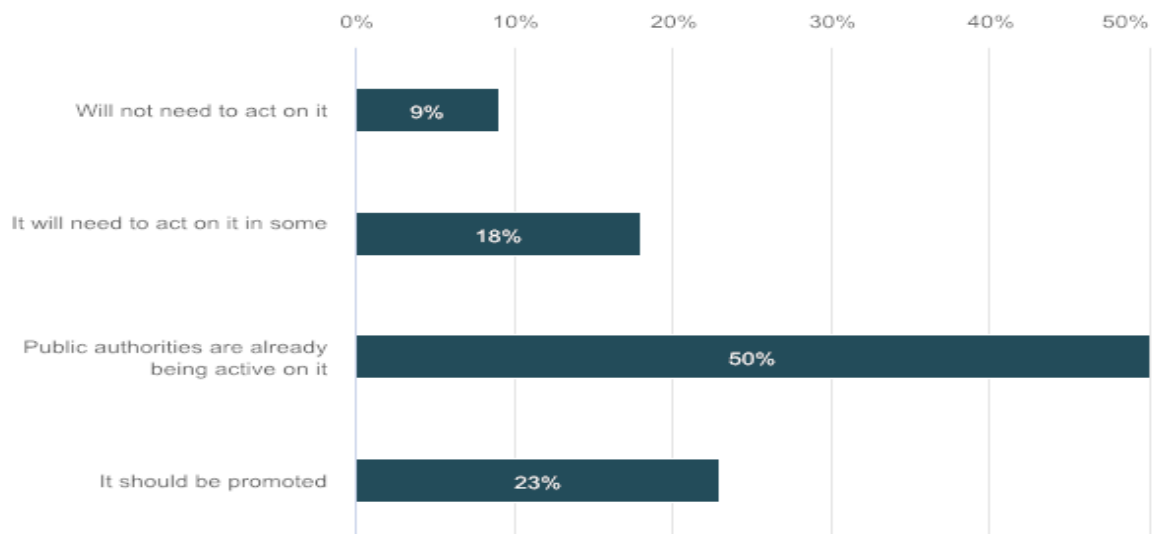


FIGURE 17. Attitude to activity in sustainable development in Tahko (n=22)

5.1.6 Evaluation of environmental impact of tourism in Tahko

The following section of the survey was designed to evaluate the importance of environmental aspects of tourism in Tahko. In this section the importance of four major aspects of environmental sustainability in Tahko is evaluated. The respondents were asked about their personal experiences during visits to Tahko. The first aspect chosen was Waste recycling and eight (36 %) of respondents find it Fairly important and seven (32%) of Russian tourists find recycling important. The second aspect was Water saving in the cottage, and 50% of respondents evaluated this aspect as Fairly important and 36% of respondents find it Very important. The third rating was Energy saving in the cottage. The majority of respondents evaluated this aspect no less important than the previous (Fairly important - 50%, Very important - 41%). However, the last section Skibus connection between Tahko and Nilsjä does not have high results compared to the previous aspects, only eight respondents found it Important, Fairly important or Very Important and other 18 identified it as Not at all important or Slightly important, thus in percentage is 36% and 27% respectively.

TABLE 3. Evaluation of the importance of environmental aspects (n=22)

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Fairly important	Very important	Total	Average	Median
Waste recycling	0	5	7	8	2	22	3.32	3
Water saving in the cottage	0	1	2	11	8	22	4.18	4
Energy saving in the cottage	0	1	1	11	9	22	4.27	4
Skibus connection Tahko - Nilsjä	8	6	4	2	2	22	2.27	2
Total	8	13	14	32	21	22	3.51	4

Several environmental aspects, such as to reduce consumption, to reduce waste, to manage natural resources, to maintain and enhance natural heritage and to minimize hazards are important for sustainable development of tourism in Tahko. The following section of the survey was designed to evaluate the importance of these environmental factors. According to the table 4 the most important environmental aspect (average 4,32) for Russian visitors is to reduce waste. One could from the table 4 that the second important aspect is to manage natural resources (average 4,18). To maintain and enhance natural heritage and to minimize hazards gets average 4,09. However, the section To reduce consumption does not have high results compared to the previous aspects, with the average only 4.

TABLE 4. Evaluation of environmental impact of tourism in Tahko (n=22)

	1	2	3	4	5	Average	Median
To reduce consumption	0%	4.55%	18.18%	50%	27.27%	4	4
To reduce waste	0%	0%	4.55%	59.09%	36.36%	4.32	4
To manage natural resources	0%	0%	13.64%	54.54%	31.82%	4.18	4
To maintain and enhance natural heritage	0%	0%	27.27%	36.37%	36.36%	4.09	4
To minimize hazards	0%	0%	18.18%	54.55%	27.27%	4.09	4

5.1.7 Evaluation of sociocultural impact of tourism in Tahko

In this section sociocultural impact of tourism in Tahko was evaluated. The level of importance of five aspects in sociocultural sustainability of tourism in Tahko was identified. The first aspect Accessibility in travel experiences had Fairly Important evaluation from 16 (73%) respondents and Important from 4 (18 %) tourists. The second category was about Local cultural events. The half of respondents marked as Important and only one tourist assessed as Not at all important. The third rating was Communicating with locals, and 7 (32%) Important, 5 (23%) Slightly Important and 5 (23%) Fairly important appreciated the communication with locals. The next section was Local traditions and a half of respondents find it Important. Eight (36%) of tourists marked local traditions as Fairly important. The last section Safety has significantly high outputs, 14 (64%) respondents answered this question as Very Important and eight (36%) others defined as Fairly Important, no one identified safety as not important.

TABLE 5. Evaluation of the importance of sociocultural aspects (n=22)

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Fairly important	Very important	Total	Average	Median
Accessibility in travel experiences	0	1	4	16	1	22	3.77	4
Local cultural events	1	3	11	6	1	22	3.14	3
Communicating with locals	1	5	7	5	3	22	3.19	3
Local traditions	0	3	11	8	0	22	3.23	3
Safety	0	0	0	8	14	22	4.64	5

The following section of the survey was designed to evaluate the importance of such sociocultural aspects of tourism in Tahko as to ensure stakeholders participation in decision-making, to promote intra- and inter-generational equity, to respect local community, to improve the quality of life for local community and to improve understanding among tourists and locals. One could see from table 6 that two most important sociocultural factors according to the Russian tourists are to ensure stakeholders participation in decision-making and to improve understanding among tourists and locals with the averages 4,5 and 4,45. Half of the respondents evaluated respect to local community as very important and 40,91% of them marked this aspect as fairly important. To improve the quality of life for local community was mostly considered as fairly important and important with the average 4,32. To promote intra- and inter-generational equity was marked by 54,5% of respondents as fairly important.

TABLE 6. Evaluation of sociocultural impact of tourism in Tahko is (n=22)

	1	2	3	4	5	Average	Median
To ensure stakeholders participation in decision-making	0%	0%	9.09%	31.82%	59.09%	4.5	5
To promote intra- and inter-generational equity	0%	0%	27.27%	54.55%	18.18%	3.91	4
To respect local community	0%	0%	9.09%	40.91%	50%	4.41	4.5
To improve the quality of life for local community	0%	0%	9.09%	50%	40.91%	4.32	4
To improve understanding among tourists and locals	0%	0%	4.55%	45.45%	50%	4.45	4.5

5.1.8 Evaluation of economic impact of tourism in Tahko

The next question was about economic impact of tourism in Tahko. The first category was Local food, and 32 % (Very important) and 64% (Fairly important) of respondents appreciated this aspect and one tourist found it Important. The second aspect Local activities had Fairly Important evaluation from 6 (27%) respondents and Important from 12 (55 %) tourists. The third rating Local furniture in cottages. The majority of respondents (55%) evaluated this aspect as Slightly Important. Only one respondent considered local furniture in cottages as Very important and one of the tourists thinks it is Fairly important. The last category was year-round activities, and (64%) Fairly important appreciated this opportunity. Four respondents find year-round activities very important, three find them Slightly important. No one thinks that year-round activities are not important at all.

TABLE 7. Evaluation of the importance of economic aspects (n=22)

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Fairly important	Very important	Total	Average	Median
Local food	0	0	1	14	7	22	4.27	4
Local activities	0	3	12	6	1	22	3.23	3
Local furniture in cottages	4	12	4	1	1	22	2.23	2
Year-round activities	0	3	1	14	4	22	3.86	4
Total	4	18	18	35	13	22	3.4	4

One could see from the table 8 that economic sustainability in Tahko was measured with the help of six aspects: finding new sources of income, boosting economic activity and growth, encouraging outside investment in infrastructure, increasing employment opportunities, increasing market for local producers and supporting local economy. The results of table 8 show that supporting local economy is the most important aspect chosen by the respondents. Second important factor (average 4,38) was increasing market for local producers. More than half (54,55%) of the respondents marked increasing employment opportunities as a fairly important. The next important aspect with an average 4,14 was finding new sources of income. Boosting economic activity and growth was evaluated as very important (33,33%), fairly important (38.1%) or important (28.57%) by the respondents. Encourage outside investment in infrastructure was also marked as an important factor of economic sustainability in Tahko (average 4).

TABLE 8. Evaluation of economic impact of tourism in Tahko is (n=22)

	1	2	3	4	5	Average	Median
To find new sources of income	0%	0%	0%	86.36%	13.64%	4.14	4
To boost economic activity and growth	0%	0%	28.57%	38.1%	33.33%	4.05	4
To encourage outside investment in infrastructure	0%	0%	31.82%	36.36%	31.82%	4	4
To increase employment opportunities	0%	0%	9.09%	54.55%	36.36%	4.27	4
To increase market for local producers	0%	0%	9.52%	42.86%	47.62%	4.38	4
To support local economy	0%	0%	13.64%	31.82%	54.54%	4.41	5

5.1.9 Feedback from the tourists about Tahko resort

Three respondents answered to question What kind of development would you welcome in Tahko? and provided extensive comments about sustainable development in Tahko. One visitor wishes information about sustainable development in Tahko in web sites of the organizations in Russian language. Another tourist suggests promotion of waste recycling and separate waste containers. Beach boulevard to enjoy beautiful views of Syväri lake was also suggested to construct by one of the respondents for a development of center of Tahko.

5.2 Implications of sustainable tourism for development in Tahko

The central objective of this study was the analysis of awareness, perceptions and attitudes of Russian tourists regarding the sustainable tourism in year-round resort Tahko. Furthermore, this work introduces sustainable tourism in Tahko from various angles. Four dimensions of sustainability: social, economical, environmental and cultural were approached in this study. Based on analyses in chapter 5.1, some conclusions about sustainable development of tourism in Tahko could be done. In this chapter several solutions for improving awareness, perceptions and attitudes of tourists regarding the sustainable tourism are provided.

5.2.1 Economical sustainability

According to conducted survey, economical sustainability of tourism in Tahko is dependent on a number of key factors, including: finding new sources of income, boosting economic activity and growth, encouraging outside investment in infrastructure, increasing employment opportunities, increasing market for local producers and supporting local economy.

In Tahko there is a demand for a wide range of supporting products and services, such as food, laundry, transport, construction, furnishings. Entrepreneurial activity and business development to support tourism may be stimulated.

The obtained results of this research designate that local Finnish high-quality food is very popular among Russian visitors of Tahko. There is a challenge in the region to make appropriate linkages between tourism and food providers. In particular it is important to create synergistic linkages between tourism and the agricultural sector by promoting local foods and beverages, rural hospitality and agritourism. The internationally esteemed European Region of Gastronomy Award given to Kuopio could be promoted among Russian visitors of Tahko. The Award is the first of its kind in Finland, of which North Savo region can be justly proud.

The goal of increasing employment opportunities may be achieved by providing advancement and training for local people. Although tourism is a labor intensive industry, seasonal job losses are typical to Tahko because of variations in vacation times, temporal attractions and weather conditions.

The results of the survey show that encouraging outside investment in infrastructure is necessary for sustainable development of Tahko. It is important to enable infrastructural development for the

benefit of the locals of the area in which tourism projects are being implemented. Attraction of private investment to finance infrastructure and supporting business development in Tahko is important, which may benefit local people.

5.2.2 Environmental sustainability

According to conducted survey, environmental sustainability of tourism in Tahko is dependent on a number of key factors, including: reducing consumption, reducing waste, managing natural resources, maintaining and enhancing natural heritage and minimizing hazards. These aspects are important for sustainable development of tourism in Tahko. Under the current circumstances it is necessary to both protect the values of Tahko and at the same time to promote environmentally responsible tourism.

The goal of reducing consumption and waste could be achieved by education of clients. Recycling and waste recovery is at the very primitive stage in Russia. The country has been facing huge problems with recycling for years now. Government still struggles to implement proper waste management, while many people have not even heard about separate waste containers. Despite the constant increase in the volume of recyclables, 96% of the waste is just disposed of without any further use. The problem is even more sophisticated in smaller regions of the country, as people use illegal landfills and do not care about environment that much both because of the lack of official dumps and environmental unawareness. Furthermore, in addition to the numerous landfills, incineration remains the most popular way of dealing with garbage in Russia. To avoid this type of behavior of tourists in Tahko appropriate and environment-friendly waste recycling could be promoted to Russian visitors.

The results of this survey show that minimizing hazards is important for sustainable development of tourism in Tahko. To minimize environmental impacts it could be promoted to Russian visitors that tourist area in Tahko is carefully designed to allow tourists safe and low-impact access to the landscape. This approach could effectively limit tourism impact. This goes some way towards making the activity sustainable in the longer term.

To maintain and enhance natural heritage of Tahko Ski buss connection and other transport services should be promoted. It will be important in the future for administrators to do all they can to maintain ecological integrity of Tahko by ensuring that it remains as pure as possible. If the environment is not protected, the very attributes that create the destination appeal may disappear over time. Nevertheless, tourism has not contributed to the degradation of Tahko environment because public authorities are already being active in sustainable development of the resort.

5.2.3 Sociocultural sustainability

Besides economical and environmental sustainability, sociocultural sustainability is a critical aspect of tourism development for Tahko resort. Sociocultural sustainability focuses on community participation and sharing of the economic benefits of tourism. This is an important criterion for development

of any resort. It is necessary to reduce inequity between individuals who profit directly from tourism and the local community

Encouraging local community participation in tourism development is necessary not only for socio-cultural, but also for economic sustainability. If local communities are not involved to a greater extent in tourism development, and their cultural identity is not preserved, the kindness and hospitality that so far has been an asset for the area, may erode.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to analyze awareness, perceptions and attitudes of Russian tourists regarding the sustainable tourism in year-round resort Tahko. Furthermore, the study introduced sustainable tourism from various angles. The aim of the quantitative survey was to gain answers to the research questions concerning economical, ecological and sociocultural sustainability in Tahko.

In summary, the thesis consists of five chapters: Chapter 1 introduced the target of the study, Chapter 2 illustrates sustainability principles which refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, in Chapter 3 information about Russian economy and Russians as a group of tourists is presented, but in the Covid-19 pandemic and current global financial crisis situation the information about tourism market is constantly changing. Chapter 4 introduced research methodology, Chapter 5 provided results of the research and implementations of sustainable tourism in Tahko and Chapter 6 provides evaluation and conclusions.

When evaluating work and output of the researcher, it can be concluded that the survey design was completed successfully. The nature of the survey was based on theoretical aspects of sustainable tourism. The questionnaire focused on three aspects of sustainable tourism: ecological, economical and sociocultural.

However, if qualitative methods would have been used in the research and interviews would have been included, it could have helped to understand better awareness, perceptions and attitudes of Russian tourists regarding the sustainable tourism in year-round resort Tahko.

While the results of this research improve the understanding of sustainable development of tourism in Tahko, there are few limitations to be considered. Firstly, the only group of respondents was Russian owners of the cottages in Tahko, as it was impossible to gain the answers from random Russian tourists. Secondly, only respondents from two major cities of Russia answered the survey questions.

When concluding the survey results, it can be seen that great job have been done to make tourism in Tahko more sustainable. This can be proofed by the results of the survey, that show relatively high level of awareness and satisfaction of Russian tourists with sustainability of tourism in Tahko. Nevertheless there are some improvements in services some of the recipients want to receive.

Therefore, it is strategically important to enhance activity in sustainable development in Tahko. According to conducted research public authorities are already being active in sustainable development of the resort. Nevertheless tourists consider that sustainable development should be promoted. Communication with visitors in their own languages could be improved. The researcher could suggest to add information about sustainability in different languages to the web sites of organizations in Tahko.

For the future, the researcher could suggest that surveys asking the opinion of international visitors would be done regularly. Statistical overview of experience of different clients' groups is very important. This method could improve tourism service and sustainable development in Tahko. This improvement could be implemented by sending brief surveys to international visitors of Tahko. To have a better chance that more tourists would complete the survey it could be designed in native languages of visitors.

When evaluating the professional growth of the researcher it could be concluded that new skills were gained in analyzing and summarizing information from literature. Experience in designing a questionnaire gained during the research time can help the researcher to reach a goal in her future career.

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APPENDIX 1: SURVEY

Survey. Sustainable development of Tahko.

1) Please specify your age

- a) Under 18 years old
- b) 18-30 years old
- c) 31-40 years old
- d) 41-60 years old
- e) Above 60 years old

2) Please specify your gender

- a) Male
- b) Female

3) Where are you from?

- a) Moscow
- b) St Petersburg
- c) Other region. From where?

4) What season do you usually visit Tahko?

- a) Winter
- b) Spring
- c) Summer
- d) Autumn

5) From which source did you hear about Tahko resort?

- a) Internet
- b) Friend
- c) Social media
- d) Newspaper
- e) Elsewhere, where?

6) How often do you visit Tahko resort?

- a) More than 5 times a year
- b) 2-5 times a year
- c) Once a year
- d) Rarely

In this survey by sustainability we understand meeting the needs of the present without the compromising ability of future generations to meet their needs.

7) How much you know about sustainability in tourism?

- a) Very much
- b) Fairly
- c) Very little

8) What do you think about sustainability of tourism in Tahko?

- a) Will not need to act on it
- b) It will need to act on it in some years
- c) Public authorities are already being active on it
- d) It should be promoted

9) How do you think the sustainability is considered in the tourism policy of Tahko?

- a) Extremely well
- b) Very well
- c) Moderately
- d) Slightly
- e) Not at all

10) Environmental impact of tourism in Tahko. Please evaluate the importance of these aspects during your stay in Tahko:

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Fairly important	Very important
Waste recycling					
Water saving in the cottage					
Energy saving in the cottage					
Skibus connection between Tahko and Nilsjä					

11) Sociocultural impact of tourism in Tahko. Please evaluate the importance of these aspects during your stay in Tahko:

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Fairly important	Very important
Accessibility in travel experiences					
Local cultural events					
Communicating with locals					
Local traditions					
Safety					

12) Economic impact of tourism in Tahko. Please evaluate the importance of these aspects during your stay in Tahko:

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Fairly important	Very important
Local food					

Local activities					
Local furniture in cottages					
Year-round activities					

13) Economic dimension. Please evaluate how important tourism in Tahko is:

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Fairly important	Very important
To find new sources of income					
To boost economic activity and growth					
To encourage outside investment in infrastructure					
To increase employment opportunities					
To increase market for local producers					
To support local economy					

14) Please evaluate the importance of these environmental aspects for development in Tahko:

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Fairly important	Very important
To reduce consumption					
To reduce waste					

To manage natural resources					
To maintain and enhance natural heritage					
To minimize hazards					

15) Social dimension. Please evaluate the impact of tourism in Tahko:

	Not at all important	Slightly Important	Important	Fairly Important	Very Important
To ensure stakeholders participation in decision-making					
To promote intra- and inter-generational equity					
To respect local community					
To improve the quality of life for local community					
To improve understanding among tourists and locals					

16) What kind of development would you welcome in Tahko?