

# **Studying the indicators of destination competitiveness in Finland**

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DEGREE THESIS	
Arcada	
Degree Programme:	International Business
Identification number:	19034; 20347
Authors:	Sabin Adhikari; Pratikshya Mulmi
Title:	Studying the indicators of destination competitiveness in Finland
Supervisor (Arcada):	Christa Tigerstedt
Commissioned by:	
<p>Abstract:</p> <p>This thesis involves the study of Finland's strategies on tourism and the major indicators of its destination competitiveness.</p> <p>The studied indicators of destination competitiveness were chosen from Dwyer and Kim's 'Integrated model of destination competitiveness' and World Economic Forum's 'The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index'. Semi-structured interviews with 3 experts were conducted and Finnish government's newly formed tourism strategies were studied to gather data. Thematic analyses were performed to procure findings of the study.</p> <p>The analyses suggested that sustainability, digitalization, accessibility and co-operation are the strategic foci of Finland's government when it comes to tourism and they are also the significant aspects of Finland's indicators of destination competitiveness. Few other indicators have also been identified and recommendations have been made to improve the destination competitiveness of Finland.</p>	
Keywords:	Destination competitiveness, Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, Finland, Thematic analysis, themes, sustainability, digitalization, cooperation, transportation
Number of pages:	61
Language:	English
Date of acceptance:	18.12.2020

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>T&amp;T</b>	Travel and Tourism
<b>TTCI</b>	Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index
<b>UNWTO</b>	World Travel and Tourism Council
<b>WEF</b>	World Economic Forum
<b>WTTC</b>	World Travel and Tourism Council

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis is titled “Studying the indicators of destination competitiveness in Finland”. As the title states, this thesis is an effort to comprehend the major indicators of destination competitiveness in the context of Finnish tourism. The authors’ motivation to conduct research on this topic resulted from attending numerous lectures on tourism and destination management that were part of their degree programme.

## 1.1 Background

Travel & tourism industry is one of the fastest growing industries and has a significant impact in world economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, “travel and tourism sectors alone contributed 8.8 trillion US dollars in 2018” and supported 319 million jobs worldwide in the same year (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). The statistics of 2018 suggest that there were total of 1.4 billion overnight stays of visitors worldwide, which was a substantial 6% increase as compared to the previous year (UNWTO, 2019).

In the global tourism context, Finland is still a small player but carries a potential market. Despite being a relatively small player in the tourism industry, the tourism market in Finland is experiencing an upward shift. Tourism roughly makes up around 3% of the total share of country’s GDP (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in Finland, 2018). The total demand for tourism in 2017 was €15 billion, of which €4.6 billion was the share of foreign tourists. The tourism-generated gross added value surged by 8% (€5 billion) from 2016 to 2017. The industry also employs hundreds and thousands of people. In 2017, 5.5% of the total employed population worked in tourism related industries. The notion of travel and tourism has flourished throughout the Finns in recent times as Statistics Finland (*Tilastokeskus*) recorded 8.2 million of outbound leisure trips made by the Finnish residents in 2018. The domestic leisure trips accounted for 38 million (Statistics Finland, 2019).

With the worldwide growth in tourism industry, the competition is fierce than ever. In such environment, everyone wants to hold a competitive edge over others to claim their supremacy and to flourish their tourism industry. Destination competitiveness is the ability of a destination to provide satisfying tourism experience (Vengesai, et al.,

2013). The concept of destination competitiveness has encroached nooks and crannies of the globalized world, and tourism destinations are focused on being more competitive. Many models and theories have been proposed regarding destination competitiveness and numerous indicators of it have also been identified. This thesis is an attempt to explore the destination competitiveness of Finnish tourism market and the indicators associated to it. Along with it, the authors also want to shed light on the tourism and destination management strategies of Finnish government and the current scenario of destination competitiveness of the nation.

## **1.2 Aim and Research Question**

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the indicators of destination competitiveness in Finnish tourism sector and the current scenario of destination competitiveness. The authors believe this study will aid further research in destination competitiveness of Finland.

Following are the research questions that will drive forward this thesis:

1. What are the tourism strategies adopted by Finland in terms of destination competitiveness?
2. What are the major indicators of destination competitiveness in Finnish tourism sector?
3. What is the current scenario of Finland in terms of destination competitiveness and what can be done to improve it?

## **1.3 Limitations:**

This research is based upon the Dwyer and Kim's Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness which consists of 135 indicators of destination competitiveness. Delving into these many indicators would have cost a lot of resources for the authors and seemed to be the major limitation to this study. The study is limited to a reasonable number of selected indicators. The 10 major indicators that were used in this study are derived from the conjunction of Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index and Dwyer and Kim's integrated model of destination competitiveness.



There are 14 components in the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (TTCI) used to measure destination competitiveness. These components are also the part of 'Integrated model of destination competitiveness' proposed by Dwyer and Kim. 'Air transport infrastructure' and 'ground and port infrastructure' under Subindex C 'Infrastructure' of the TTCI have been discussed under the merged index 'Transport infrastructure'. 'Human resources and labour market' (Subindex A 'Enabling environment'), and 'International Openness' (Subindex B 'Policy and Enabling Conditions') of the TTCI have been conversed as parts of destination management and marketing framework and strategy. The 'Tourist Service Infrastructure' (Subindex C 'Infrastructure') of the TTCI has been discussed as components of both destination management and cultural and creative resources. 'Environmental sustainability' (Subindex B 'Policy & Enabling Conditions') has been studied under Finland's tourism strategies in both the theory and the interviews. It has also been discussed in concurrence with other indicators of competitiveness.

The indicator 'Visitor satisfaction' is a component of Dwyer and Kim's model but is not a part of TTCI. However, it has been studied as a vital measure of destination competitiveness in many researches. Thus, the authors felt the need to include it in their study.

Furthermore, the occurrence of COVID-19 posed challenges for the authors to find the experts in Finnish tourism to conduct their interviews.

## **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis consists of different sections, namely, introduction, theoretical background, research methodology, thematic analysis and findings, discussion, and conclusion. The introduction part consists of the background and context of the research, its aim and research questions, limitations, and the structure of thesis. The theoretical framework confers the theories, concepts, and models relevant to the research considering literature sources. Similarly, the methodology section discusses the method applied in carrying out the research and the data collection. The analysis and result section entail the description of analyses of the previously collected data and the results obtained from them. Finally, the discussion part deliberates the implications of the result, its conformity with previous research and its usefulness for future research.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Tourism and destination**

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (2019) defines tourism as “a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes”. Tourists are the people engaged in tourism. Simply, destinations are the places where tourists plan to visit. In general sense, ‘tourism destination’ refers to a geographical unit. They are often understood as the “fundamental units of analysis in tourism” (Zemla, 2016).

Tourism destination has been defined in different contexts. In the classical approach, one of the prominent definitions was given by Ritchie and Goeldner. In their words, “tourism destination is a particular geographic region within which the visitor enjoys various types of travel experiences” (Zemla, 2016). Destination in a tourism context is considered as a geographic area that concludes all the services and infrastructural development for a tourist and tourism segment (Beritelli, 2011). Destination, as a product in tourism, is one of the integral parts. It is a fundamental unit of competitiveness in tourism. Therefore, it is an essential in comprehending a competitive destination image.

### **2.2 Finland as a tourist destination**

Finland as a country, holds its own significance from its northern heritage, therefore is listed in top rankings in terms of quality of life and quality of air. Finland consists of numerous attractions for the wide range of visitors. Finland has mostly flat land, is covered 70 percent by thick forest, and is a home to wilderness (Finlandtoolbox, 2020). Finland is rich in natural resources such as lakes and forests. Natural beauty is the core element of Finland that catches the attention of tourists. Despite all the dark days and winter, Finland has managed to offer a wide range of outdoor and indoor activities to all age groups that include, hiking, skiing or snowboarding, ice-fishing, snowmobiling, dog

sledging, snowshoeing, sail on an ice breaker board, ice-floating, ice-karting and many more (Finlandtoolbox, 2020). Sauna is one of the popular cultures and carries its own importance. Finland has worth-seeing and well-preserved historical architecture, monuments and culture combined with entertaining outdoor and indoor activities (Finlandtoolbox, 2020).

## **2.3 Popular tourist destinations in Finland**

This section provides a general overview of the popular tourist destinations in Finland.

### **2.3.1 Helsinki**

Helsinki, the capital of Finland, is an appealing city. Helsinki city has gained popularity among tourists and managed to become one of the cultural hotspots in northern Europe. Being a modern capital of the country, it has still managed to reflect its historic values through architectures, museums, and art galleries (Oliver, 2017). Home to hundreds of small islands, intriguing to youngster, Helsinki organizes entertainment and potential events every now and then. Helsinki city is influenced culturally from the east and the west, making it uniquely rich from cultural and historical aspects. Helsinki is open in every way possible to healthy tourism (Oliver, 2017).

Nordic capitals are considered to be competitors of Finland in tourism industry. Tallinn, Oslo, Stockholm and Copenhagen are considered as the rival cities of Helsinki. Tourists make several countries' trip in a single visit to Europe. Hence, these countries' capitals share the same tourist demand. Comparatively a small tourism market, Helsinki has managed to well-position itself in a competitive setting. According to the survey held by The Economist Intelligence Unit, Helsinki ranked as the sixteenth most liveable cities in the world (City of Helsinki, 2018). Finland experienced an increase in overnight stays in 2017. Registered overnight stay increased by approximately 8% compared to previous year. There was a 4% increase in the Finnish visitors while an increase in 17% of the overnight stays were attributed to foreigners (Mustonen, 2018). Drastic increase in percentage of overnight stays by foreigners was observed in Lapland, which was an increase of 22%. Total registered number of overnight stay was accounted 22 million. Same year, Helsinki noticed a vital increase of overnight stays and experienced the

record of 4 million for the first time. Total of 4.2 million overnight stays were accounted, 16% were made by Finnish visitors whereas 18 percent were by foreign visitors. Meanwhile, 17% of increase was accounted compared to 2016. Out of Finland's total number of overnight stays, 19% was accounted to Helsinki. 13% of Finnish visitors and 33% of foreigners stayed overnight(s) in Helsinki (Mustonen, 2018).

### **2.3.2 Tampere**

The third largest city of Finland, Tampere, established in 1779 by Swedish king Gustav III, is standing itself head held high on an isthmus between lakes Pyhäjärvi and Näsijärvi, possessing 200 lakes and ponds, and a total of 450 in the entire region. Positioning itself in world's highest gravel ridge, 160m above sea level, and formed by the action of ice and sea more than 10,000 years ago, Pyyrikki is another attraction in the region (Tampere.fi, 2020). Between January and August 2020, 519,000 bed nights were recorded of which domestic tourists and foreign tourists had the share of 472,000 and 46,800 respectively. In total, there was a decrease of 35,2% bed nights than the previous year with domestic tourists' and international tourists' share of 91% and 9% respectively. It was a decrease of 30,7% and 60,8% respectively when compared to the same period in previous year. United States topped the list in international tourists' number with 1,000 in its favor. However, it was a decrease of 5,7% than previous year. The market share was 4,7% in an average out of total bed nights between January to August. Total registered sales between those time intervals was 33,4 million euro which was a decrease of 20,6 million euros than previous year (Visitatory, 2020).

### **2.3.3 Lapland**

The home of Santa Claus with his reindeers and accumulation of northern lights along with very cold weather, sled dogs, snow, forests, and igloos has described Lapland as one of the magical places in Finland to be. The area known for its sub-Arctic wilderness consists not only of the natural phenomena like aurora but as well midnight sun that has attracted the global eye towards Lapland as a tourist destination. The Sami areas in

northern Lapland offer outdoor and indoor activities around the year bridging close connection with the unique culture of the Sami- the only indigenous people of the EU (VisitFinland, 2020).

Lapland witnessed its growing popularity as a tourist destination with a record high number of 3,1 million registered overnight stays in 2019, which was a 3,8% increase in 2018's data. More than half of the visitors were foreign who were staying overnight in Lapland, of which, the majority had arrived from the United Kingdom with those numbers reaching 270 thousand. However, it was a drop of more than 5% compared to 2018. The next major visitation to Lapland after the United Kingdom was France with about 178 thousand overnight stays which was an increase of 12% than 2018. Germany acquired third position with 173 thousand followed by Dutch with 106 thousand visitors (yle, 2020). Rovaniemi and Inari presented themselves as the most popular destinations in Lapland with a record of more than 738 thousand and 471 thousand overnight stays respectively. Rovaniemi successfully attracted an 11% increase in tourists in 2019 than the previous year (yle, 2020).

#### **2.3.4 Turku**

The old capital of Finland, Turku has a long history of staying on the map by the Aurajoki river since 1229. Riverbank is lively with activities during summer where people eat, drink and listen to music. The accessibility for international tourists is easier due to the Turku harbor across the Baltic to Sweden (VisitFinland.com, 2020). The main attractions include Turku Castle, Forum Marinum maritime centre, Qwensel House and so on. The symbol of Turku cathedral which is considered to be the important religious building in Finland has witnessed important events in nation's history. Rich culture accommodated with accessibility and nature has attracted the domestic and international tourists (VisitFinland.com, 2020). The registered bed nights in 2020 from January to August was 377,000 which was a decrease of 35,9% than previous year. The domestic tourists occupied with 91,5% and international tourists with 8,5% of the share. The domestic tourists decreased by 26,4% whereas the international tourists stepped down with 73,2%. The market share of Turku was 4,7% in 1,7 million registered bed-night (Visitory, 2020).

## **2.4 Finland's tourism strategy**

Compared to the other industries around the globe, tourism industry is changing drastically and growing in a fast pace. With increasing demand, industries' offering has extended to a vast dimension, meanwhile, allowing people to experience broader range of services. On top of that, greater demand comes with a greater responsibility. Sustainable tourism is key in the competitive environment of tourism.

Being sustainable is not only limited to environment, but also related to every aspect involved in tourism activities, plans and operations. UNWTO defines Sustainable Tourism as, "envisaged as leading to management of all the resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic need can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support system" (UNWTO, 2020).

In Finland, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for tourism related subjects. The ministry sets the priorities for tourism policies in Finland and cooperates with other ministries and tourism actors for development of the tourism sector. The responsibility for promoting Finland as a tourist destination in international market lies with an expert agency named Visit Finland. Visit Finland is a part of Business Finland and receives fund from the state budget (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2020).

## **2.5 Finland's tourism strategy 2019-2028**

Finland updated its national tourism strategies for 2019-2028 under the coordination of Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The new updated strategy was named as 'Achieving more together – sustainable growth and renewal in Finnish tourism'. The previously introduced roadmap for growth and renewal in Finnish tourism 2015-2025 formed the basis of this newly updated strategy (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2020). The updated tourism strategy recognized four priorities that would be vital in achieving the tourism goals of the nation. They are:

### **2.5.1 Supporting sustainable development**

Finland highlights major strategical development which includes sustainability as a core part. It wants to be the most sustainably growing destination among its Nordic counterparts (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Tourism in Finland is aimed to be developed by making responsible choices that ensure sustainable growth in the areas of economy, ecology, society, and culture (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Sustainability came as Finland's key measure to uplift its tourism when Finnish Tourism Board (Visit Finland) introduced Sustainable Travel Finland. It aims to grow its tourism with its existing natural condition, cultural heritage, art, culture, and lifestyle with a responsible mindset (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Transition to sustainable practice seems challenging but not impossible. However, Finland encourages its tourism enterprise and area to adapt and offer a responsible choice to its consumer. Hence, whatever enterprise offers, consumer gets influenced with that. Promoting tourism enterprise to continue operations by social, cultural, economic, and environmental consideration is crucial. Furthermore, education, awareness, research and finding play a significant role for the development of sustainability, safety, and security of the nation.

Finland aims to secure competitive position in global tourism market through sustainability (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Special emphasis and trainings will be provided to tourism bodies, tourism areas, and tourism enterprises on subjects like climate change, carbon-emission and its environmental impact, waste management, recycling, waste reduction, water efficiency, safety, regulation and so on. Visit Finland aims to make Sustainable Travel Finland recognizable among tourists and locals, national and international market through communication and technology. Further, it aims to engage and promote consumers to sustainable utilization of resources and service, while taking account of culture, environment, and host communities.

Moreover, domestic tourism is also prioritized, and further plans and implementation are made to invest in domestic marketing for domestic tourism. Tourism services exposure within reach to its targeted customers and accessible website are other foundations. Development of thematic tourism is another measure under sustain-

ability. Offering year-round activities will not only benefit tourism economy of the nation, but it will also create job opportunities in host community (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020).

### **2.5.2 Responding to the digital transformation**

Digitalization is one of the key components in tourism sector. The measure aims to promote global visibility of Finland, Finnish tourism, offerings, and services (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Competitive edge of tourism demands digital optimization in order to hold a competitive balance with other players. This measure also aims to upgrade the technology as per demand and trend (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). E-services will promote everything online, cutting off mobility and charges of transport. This will have a positive impact in humans and environment at the same time by reducing carbon footprint. Creating experience with the help of AI and virtual reality will minimize the traffic, preserve the fragile tourist destination, and ease the access to product, services and purchasing method (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020).

### **2.5.3 Improving accessibility, taking into account the needs of the tourism sector**

The new tourism strategy emphasizes accessible transport to tourism destinations which will promote the development of railways, roadways, sea, and airways to ensure smooth travel (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Meanwhile, a significant consideration of environmental impact from carbon emissions produced from transport systems is considered. Undoubtedly, travel increases the carbon emissions and harms the environment, but tourism opportunities can offset the maintenance cost to reduce the carbon footprint, whereas travel standard is also improved at the same time for both tourists and locals (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Maintenance includes safety measures and ap-



appropriate signposts, ensuring safety and road guides to tourism destinations. This will reduce the accident rates and strengthen mobility opportunities for residents, businesses, and tourists. Measures like developing connections between national and international air-routes is also considered key to improving traffic and accessibility (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). However, authorities are responsible to implement these measures alongside enterprises.

#### **2.5.4 Ensuring an operating environment that supports competitiveness**

Finland aims to improve its image and attractions by providing an operating atmosphere that supports competitiveness. To ensure this, Finland aims to follow certain measures such as building the country's tourism image in an international market by increasing its anticipation and networks with administration and enterprises in the field of tourism (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Meanwhile, investment in the research department is also underlined. Proper and relevant planning on political decision making and strategic management is only possible with skilled manpower and knowledge-based management. Therefore, Finland drives its attention towards investing in resourceful manpower and innovations. Inputs in digital marketing are assessed and monitored to see the reach and outcome, promotions in the digital platform are improved accordingly (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Measures also highlight some legislation upgradation. Focus on paving opportunities for new ventures is enhanced. Employment increases as business ventures increases; similarly, the public authority is in charge of providing information and legislation instruction to foreign entrepreneurs to boost and operate their business safely. Finland aims to level its consumption tax as per European standards to make sure it's competitive (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020).

## **2.6 Destination competitiveness**

Destination competitiveness is linked with the ability of the destination to provide better services and facilities and the ability to utilize the resources effectively in a long run

than the other destinations, meeting the tourism experience expectation of tourists (Vengesai, et al., 2009). For a destination to possess competitive advantage(s) in tourism sector, it must make sure its offerings in terms of total experience and appeal are better than that of alternate destinations for probable tourists (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Tourists comparing the destination experience based on destination attractiveness leads to destination competitiveness (Vengesai, et al., 2009).

“Competitiveness” has been defined by different individuals and one of many definitions is “the destination’s ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors” (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Other studies have suggested that destination competitiveness relies on sustainability with respect to not only economy and ecology but also other different facets like society, culture and politics (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

## **2.7 Integrated model of destination competitiveness**

With the increment in tourism research, there has been a trend of exploring the significant features pertaining to destination competitiveness to optimally manage the limited resources possessed by the destination. Having a destination competitiveness model allows the tourism stakeholders to realize major areas of strengths and weaknesses, to identify opportunities in tourism and develop strategies to exploit those opportunities, and also to counter the potential threats to tourism in future (Vengesai, et al., 2009). Primarily, there are two models developed to identify, measure, evaluate and rank the determinants and features of a tourist destination. Such models facilitate the comparison of specific attributes between competing destinations (Berdo, 2015). The Conceptual model for destination competitiveness was developed by Ritchie and Crouch. Later, Kim and Dwyer further developed this model into an Integrated model of destination competitiveness (Armenski, et al., 2011). These two models can be applied to any destination because of their general nature (Berdo, 2015). Dwyer and Kim, in their integrated model, theorized destination competitiveness as a function of 6 categories of characteristics, which are:

1. Inherited resources
2. Created Resources
3. Supporting factors and resources

4. Destination Management
  5. Demand conditions
  6. Situational factors
- (Dwyer & Kim, 2003)

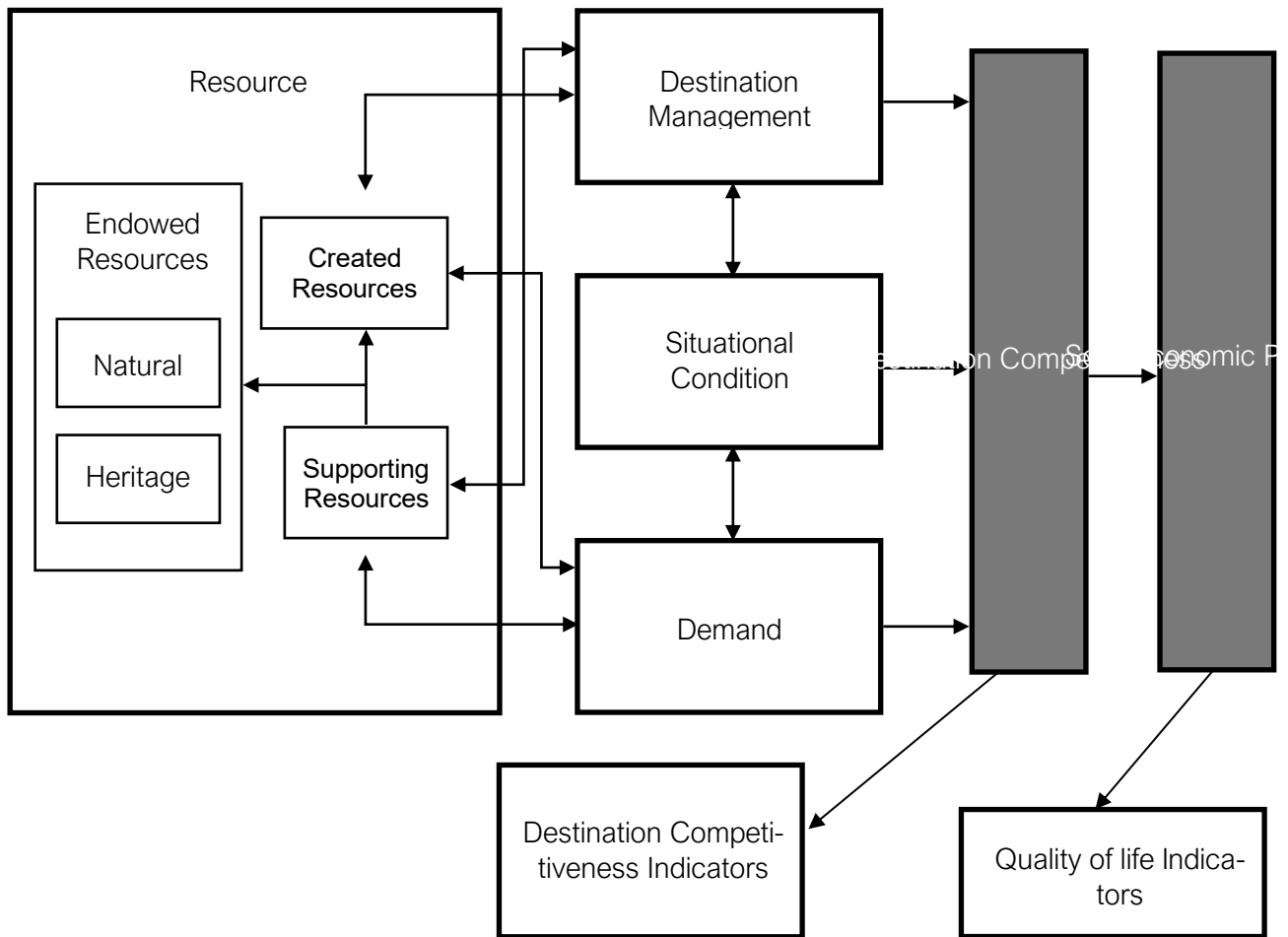


Figure 1: Dwyer and Kim's Integrated model of destination competitiveness (Zsofia & Raffay, 2011)

### 2.7.1 Inherited/Endowed resources

Inherited resources consist of natural and cultural components. This determinant is instrumental in gauging the attractiveness of the destination by specifying the basic elements of attractiveness. The components that are considered in inherited or endowed resources are nature, natural parks, mountains, lakes, beaches, plants and wildlife, cli-

mate, historical sites, cultural heritages, traditional art and other inherited works of art and architecture (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Berdo, 2015). Generally, these components also influence the tourists in choosing one tourism destination over another (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Berdo, 2015).

### **2.7.2 Created Resources**

Created resources represent attributes such as nightlife, festivals, events, accommodation, restaurants, entertainment and recreational activities, shopping, resorts and spas, rural tourism, conference tourism, community support, efficient transportation, airport, casinos and other similar things (Dwyer, et al., 2010; Berdo, 2015). These are also considered as the further elements of endowed resources and have vital significance in enhancing the destination's market position (Berdo, 2015).

### **2.7.3 Supporting factors and resources**

The supporting resources, also known as enabling factors or resources, add value to the tourism experience thus enabling visitation. According to Crouch and Richie, the supporting resources have derived effects in destination competitiveness as they provide a base for creating a successful tourism industry (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Supporting factors consist of general infrastructures, exchange facilities and financial institutions, telecommunication system, facilities of health service for the tourists, hospitality of residents, visa requirements, quality of tourism service, accessibility of destination, behaviors of customs and immigration officials and such (Dwyer, et al., 2014; Berdo, 2015).

### **2.7.4 Destination management**

In simple words, destination management is the ability of the destination to execute a tourism strategy (Berdo, 2015). The attributes of destination management are those factors that aid in effective management of endowed and created resources, in bolstering the supporting factors' quality and effectiveness, and in adapting to the constrictions inflicted by situational factors (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). The components under destination management contribute to enhancing the attractiveness of the destination. The 'Integrated model of destination competitiveness' has made distinction between destination

management activities undertaken by the private sector and the public sector. The public sector's destination management activities include "development of national tourism strategies, marketing by national tourism organization, national and regional manpower programs, environmental protection legislation, climate change mitigation and adaptation policies, etc." (Dwyer, et al., 2014). The private sector's activities include activities undertaken by associations of tourism and hospitality, industry involvement in destination marketing and funding for the same, training programs, green tourism operations, environmental certification programs and such (Dwyer, et al., 2014). The products and services that are created to meet tourists' preferences are largely influenced by the cumulative destination management activities of private and public sector.

### **2.7.5 Demand conditions**

There are three key components of demand in tourism, namely, awareness/information, perception/image, and preferences. These components determine the extent of popularity and desirability of the destination. Awareness can be created through different means such as destination marketing activities and market ties (religious, ethnic, sporting and so on). Perception of tourists on destination is often influenced by the destination image, and the actual visits of the tourists, to the destination, depends upon the synchronization between their preferences and the destination's offerings (Dwyer, et al., 2010; Berdo, 2015). It is in fact, the demand conditions such as tourist preferences and travel motives manipulate the types of products and services created within a destination.

The variables attached to demand conditions include compatibility level of the products and services regarding tourists' preferences, international awareness of destination and destination products, general image of the destination and so forth (Berdo, 2015).

### **2.7.6 Situational factors**

Situational factors represent the forces acting in a broader environment that portray the threshold or influence the potential of destination competitiveness. These factors leverage or limit the competitiveness and are also known as qualifying or amplifying determinants. Such factors may be within social, economic, political, demographic, technological and environmental scope. The situational factors are found within one of operat-

ing or remote environment. The operating environment is related to firms' conduct and performance, and the industry structure at the destination. The remote environment consists of factors that are not within the destination and restrict the strategic options of organization managers. The management has no control over such forces (Dwyer, et al., 2004). Some examples of such uncontrollable factors are exchange rates fluctuations, government policies, global economy and so on (Dwyer, et al., 2004). The sub-factors of situational conditions include location, safety and security, cost/value, interdependencies, awareness and image, and carrying capacity (Dwyer, et al., 2004).

In Fig. 1, the endowed resources, created resources and supporting resources are pooled together justifying the essence of resource base for competitiveness. The supporting factors are identified as special set of skills that are usually unique to a destination and provide it a competitive edge over its rivals (Dwyer, et al., 2004). The unidirectional arrows from supporting resources to each of endowed and created resources explain that the mere presence of those resources alone is not adequate to bring in tourists at the destination, and they need to be backed by supporting resources to ensure actual visitation. The two-directional arrows linking created and supporting resources to demand and destination management illustrate two-way relationship between them. These resources influence demand, while the demand factors direct what goods and services need to be produced. Similarly, some specific attributes of created and supporting resources affect destination management in achieving and maintaining sustainability, while the destination management activities of private and public sector define the types of tourism products and services to be offered to the tourists.

The arrows linking the situational conditions to resource base, destination management, demand conditions and destination competitiveness indicate the social, economic, political, demographic, technological and environmental scope of the situational factors. For instance, the economic factors may influence created resources, political factors may affect destination marketing and so on. Destination competitiveness is linked backwards to various determinants of competitiveness and it still is not the final goal. It is an intermediate goal and is linked forward to socioeconomic prosperity, which is the ultimate goal (Dwyer, et al., 2004).

## 2.8 The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI)

World Economic Forum (WEF) produces the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI). It assesses the indicators and policies that promote investment in the travel and tourism sector of a nation (World Economic Forum, 2019). TTCI acts to evaluate nation's performance by using sub-indices and their elements. These indices are representative of general quality, future possibilities and long-term sustainability of a nation's tourism industry (World Economic Forum, 2019).

The three sub-indices that form the basis of measuring competitiveness are Regulatory Framework, Business Environment and Infrastructure, and Human, Cultural and Natural Resources. These three sub-indices have been divided into 14 "pillars" of Travel and Tourism competitiveness (World Economic Forum, 2019)

The figure below lists the pillars under their respective sub-indices.

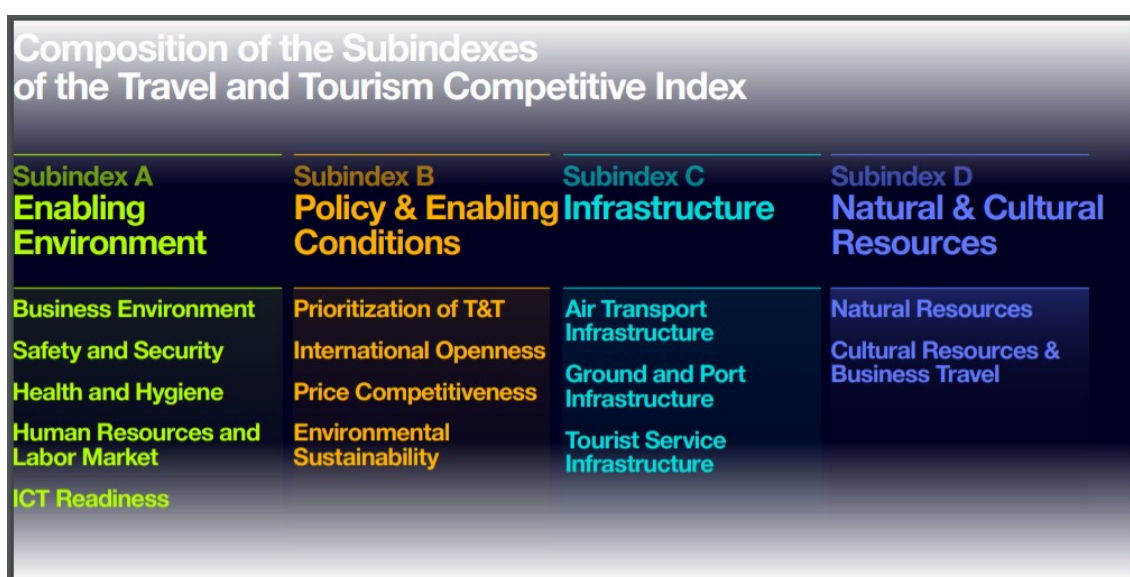


Figure 2: Composition of the Sub-indices of the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (Ocean Health Index, 2019)

Fig. 2 illustrates the sub-indices and the 14 pillars within them that are used as the basis for assessing competitiveness. In the figure, the Regulatory Framework sub-index has been segregated into Enabling Environment, and Policy and Enabling Conditions sub-indices. Each of these listed indices were used to analyze competitiveness of 140 nations, which was then recorded within the range of 1 to 7, where 1 and 7 were the minimum and maximum score for competitiveness, respectively.

## 2.8.1 Finland in TTCI 2019

The 2019 TTCI rankings encompassed 140 countries. Out of these nations, Finland was able to secure 28<sup>th</sup> position, receiving the TTCI score of 4.5 out of 7. This was an increase of 5 position from the previous ranking and also 2.7% growth in score (World Economic Forum, 2019). Finland ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in safety and security owing to minimal impact of crime (2<sup>nd</sup>) and terrorism (2<sup>nd</sup>) on business costs, and 1<sup>st</sup> rank on reliable police services (World Economic Forum, 2019)

The ensuing table presents the Finland's TTCI scores of each pillar against the regional average.

*Table 1: TTCI scores: Finland vs Northern European Region (World Economic Forum, 2019)*

<b>Pillars</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Northern European Region</b>
Business Environment	5,7	5,2
Safety & Security	6,7	6,1
Health & Hygiene	6,4	6,4
Human Resources & Labor Market	5,5	5,4
ICT Readiness	6,1	6,1
Prioritization of T&T	5,0	5,0
International Openness	4,1	4,1
Price Competitiveness	4,7	4,7
Environ. Sustainability	5,6	5,2
Air transport infrastructure	4,9	4,2
Ground &Port Infrastructure	4,5	4,4
Tourist service infrastructure	4,7	5,0
Natural Resources	2,9	2,9
Cultural resources & Business travel	2,0	1,9



## 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

Research has been defined by many and one of many such definitions is that research is a systematic manner of data collection and extraction of knowledge from such data sets using a methodology, with a view to use such derived knowledge in decision-making (Sachdeva, 2008). It is normally understood as a systematic and unbiased way of finding solutions to the problems (Bacon-Shone, 2015)

The research methodologies are categorized as qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Daniel, 2016). The authors decided the use of mixed method approach in their study. Both qualitative methods and desktop research were used in their research to understand the indicators of destination competitiveness of Finland. In qualitative research, non-numerical data is collected and worked with. The purpose is to provide these data with some meaning to comprehend social life by the study of target population or places. Denzin and Lincoln have discussed qualitative research as “multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives.” (Denzin and Lincoln, cited in Aspers & Corte, 2019). Similarly, The authors chose to apply qualitative research methodology in their study for the reason that the indicators of destination competitiveness are of social, cultural and environmental aspects as well, and they are perceived and non-numerical, thus requiring a qualitative study for deeper understanding.

The authors conducted, as a primary research, a semi-structured interview with the experts on the field of travel and tourism in Finland. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer is not required to follow a specific sequence of questions and there are opportunities to ask further questions in response to significant replies (Bryman, 2008, p. 196). Due to these reasons, the authors expect the semi-structured interview to provide

flexibility and facilitate in deeper understanding of the intended study (Bryman, 2008, pp. 438-39).

The authors also utilized secondary sources such as the World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report, and the publications of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland in their research methodology. In secondary data analysis, the analysis of data is conducted by those researchers that are most probably uninvolved in the data collection, and probably for such purposes that may not have been foreseen by the actual collectors of data. Secondary data analysis saves cost and time, while providing rich sources of high-quality data (Bryman, 2008, p. 296).

The authors accessed the ‘World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019’ produced by the World Economic Forum and ‘Achieving More Together-Sustainable Growth and Renewal in Finnish Tourism’, Finland’s Tourism Strategy 2019-2028 and Action Plan 2019-2023, published by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland as their secondary research materials. These materials also helped uncover the answers to their research questions that were related to the competitiveness indicators and the strategies of the Finnish government in the nation’s tourism sector. The strategies of government in the Finnish tourism sector have been discussed through both the theory and the thematic analyses of interviews in this study.

## **3.2 Setting**

The site where the researchers conduct their study is understood as setting in the context of research methodology (Given, 2008). The authors agreed upon the interview setting with the experts prior to conducting the interviews. The secondary data were collected online.

## **3.3 Sampling and Participants**

The authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 3 different experts in the field of travel of tourism in Finland. The interviewees were chosen using convenience sampling technique as the researchers interviewed those experts that they had the access to (Bryman, 2008). The first interviewee had 11 years of working experience in the area of tourism, has worked as a Content Expert, Tourist Information Expert and is also cur-

rently serving as a lecturer in tourism in a University of Applied Sciences in Finland. The second interviewee is also a senior lecturer in tourism in one of the Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland. The interviewee also owns a customer service business and has worked as Project Manager and Developer in Tourism. The final interviewee, Mr. Kari Halonen, has 34 years of experience in the tourism sector and is the owner of Toolbox Consulting Ltd, a visiting lecturer in many different universities in Finland, the President of the Skål International Helsinki Club and has other varieties of working experiences in Finnish tourism.

### **3.4 Intervention and materials**

The authors decided to use semi-structured interviews as their intervention to the research. A series of questions were prepared, the answers to which, facilitated the understanding of the indicators of destination competitiveness in Finnish tourism sector. An interview guide including the details of the interview process and interview questions was designed. The semi-structured interview questions were designed in line with the research questions of the study. One interview was conducted face-to-face on the physical settings while other two interviews were conducted on the virtual environment. Mobile phone recorder was used to record the first interview while the other two interviews were conducted and recorded in Skype. The indices consisting of the indicators mentioned in Dwyer and Kim's 'integrated model of destination competitiveness', and the indicators that were selected for the purpose of this study were provided to the interviewees during the interview. Printed copy of the indices was provided on the first interview which was conducted in physical setting. Soft copies of the indices were provided in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> interview as they were conducted online. The recordings were used to generate the transcripts of the interview. The transcripts were then sent to the interviewees.

### **3.5 Measurement instruments**

The series of questions and list of specific areas to be included for the semi-structured interview were incorporated in the interview guide. Even though the interviewees may

not have followed on exactly like the planned outline, all the questions were asked, the protocol devised in the interview guide was followed during the interview, and use of similar wording was considered in each of the interviews to maintain consistency of the interviews (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Bryman, 2008, p. 442). During the interviews, the authors also got opportunities to ask further questions related to their research that were not originally formed while preparing the interview guide.

### **3.6 Procedure**

Designing the interview guide was the first step to research. Collection of rich data were done through semi-structured interviews. Interviews with experts were set-up, recorded and transcribed to generate rich data. Such data were analyzed using thematic analysis that focused on the contents from the experts, i.e., recognized, analyzed, and reported the patterns within data (Bennett, et al., 2018). The interpretation and analysis of obtained results mark the completion of research methodology.

### **3.7 Data analysis**

The authors used thematic analysis for analyzing the collected data. Thematic analysis is the process in which the patterns and themes contained in the qualitative data are identified (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This is a significant method of data analysis that is essential to learn as “.....it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other kinds of analysis” (Braun & Clarke, cited in, Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Using thematic analysis helped the authors to uncover the major indicators of destination competitiveness and also provided valuable inputs on the different elements of tourism and destination competitiveness in Finland.

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

Reliability and validity are commonly used in quantitative research. However, their use in qualitative research is also growing. In a qualitative research, validity is associated with the appropriateness of the tools, processes and data while reliability is linked to consistency (Leung, 2015). The semi-structured interview guide was designed with reference to the ‘Handbook of practical program evaluation’ (Adams, 2015).

There are strategies such as triangulation, prolonged contact, member checks and peer review that help to ensure the validity of the data. The authors applied the strategy of member check to assure that the data is valid (Devault, 2019). Member checking means providing the interviewees the copies of the transcribed interview so that they can review their responses and also verify that the interpretation is accurate (Devault, 2019). This also enhances the reliability of the data. Furthermore, the expert interviewees have a cumulative of 50+ years of experiences in the field of tourism which further enhances the validity and reliability of the collected data.

## **4 FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Thematic Analysis**

The authors decided to use thematic analysis for analyzing the rich data obtained through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, analyzing, and reporting patterns of meaning (themes) in a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This analysis follows the process of identifying commonalities across the data and making sense of them. It is one of the frequently used approach to analysis of qualitative data. However, unlike other analysis approaches, it lacks a distinct collection of techniques (Bryman, 2008, p. 554). In 2003, Ryan and Bernard recommended looking for the following features while conducting thematic analysis:

- Repetitions
- Indigenous typologies or categories
- Metaphors and analogies
- Transitions
- Similarities and differences
- Linguistic connectors
- Missing data
- Theory-related materials

(Bryman, 2008, p. 555)

Similarly, Braun and Clarke have laid out six-step procedure to facilitate the approach of thematic analysis. Those six steps require making oneself familiar with the obtained data, generating codes out of those data, searching for themes from the generated codes, reviewing the themes, naming, and defining the themes and finally producing the report.

Phase	Examples of procedure for each step
1. Familiarising oneself with the data	Transcribing data; reading and re-reading; noting down initial codes
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the data-set; collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for the themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4. Involved reviewing the themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data-set; generate a thematic 'map'
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme; generation of clear names for each theme
6. Producing the report	Final opportunity for analysis selecting appropriate extracts; discussion of the analysis; relate back to research question or literature; produce report

Figure Six-step thematic analysis procedure- Braun and Clarke (Szedlak, et al., 2015)

## 4.2 Themes from the data

Following the six-step thematic analysis procedure recommended by Braun and Clarke, the authors came up with 6 major themes that are depicted in this section.

### 4.2.1 Sustainability

Theme: Sustainability

#### Interviewee 1

*..... sustainability issues have become so important and a lot discussed, the new Finnish tourism strategies focusing a lot on sustainability and that is visible in the way how we market Finland.*

*.... the biggest change is the sustainability part. It has never been in such big focus as it is now. The new Finnish tourism strategies actually came out last year in 2019 and they have*

*a strong focus in sustainability and also in cooperation*

*.... but I am more than happy that we have started to focus on sustainability so much as these (natural resources) tourism resources are vulnerable to use. As long as we can do it....use the resources in a sustainable way....it would bring big opportunities and competitive advantage for us.*

#### **Interviewee 2**

*.... Sustainability of T&T industry development*

*.. sustainability is a good slogan*

*... a very big term*

*... to be able to define ourselves as sustainable, certain types of points if they are fulfilled then we can call our self a sustainable destination*

*requires lot of work in the future*

*.... might take another 20-30 years*

#### **Interviewee 3**

*.... sustainability and digitalization are two key factors they are like in hand in hand. They can see that we have to make this Finnish tourism more sustainable and this has been a new phenomenon.*

Sustainability was one of the main topics that was discussed by all the interviewees. It was discussed in terms of both the tourism strategies and the indicator of destination competitiveness.

### **4.2.2 Digitalization/ICT Readiness**

Theme: Digitalization

#### **Interviewee 1**

*And also, digitalization, obviously we have quite good digital knowledge in Finland compared to many other places....so that's also something Finland wants to take ad-*

*vantage of in developing tourism.*

*..Sustainability and digitalization are the core and they are focusing on them a lot.*

*...I would say that Finland, and specially what Helsinki have been doing in the field of digitalization, when compared to other destinations, is quite far-reaching and doing quite well and the development is quick, going further and improving all the time but then again, in Finland, when we go to places outside of Helsinki, there are still a lot of possibilities for development...many tourism companies there are quite small (like family businesses and so on) and their digital readiness might not be so high..*

*We are living in interesting times and there are a lot of older tourists who are not yet familiar with these things or they won't necessarily ever be, but then again, the transformation is huge, and the new younger generation is so much into technology and digital solutions...so still we have to maintain balance between digitalization and providing old-fashioned services...but I think these are quick changes...*

## **Interviewee 2**

*.... it is very easy to act to different type of e-system like TripAdvisor and booking.com for example. They are the platform open to everyone, so it means that customers review.*

When asked about Finland's strong indicator:

- *Technology know-how*
- *Availability of the latest technology (From Dwyer and Kim's model)*

## **Interviewee 3**

*.....Finnish people are becoming more independent travelers they are not so much leaning on nowadays tour operator or guidelines they are more like independent travelers booking their flights themselves, hotels perhaps may be more complicated packages they then talk to this travel agencies and digitalization is a big part and internet (World Wide web).. all this development has created new environment so during my 30 years, communication has been getting more fast. You have to return to your email request in may be within 2 hours.. normally it took 1 week when we were replying back by sending letters or telex or telegrams so this communication issues has been coming faster and this way may be consumers are Demanding more they have become more ex-*



*perienced travelers in European level and global level people are able to travel more that you can see even statistically.*

*.....this sustainability and digitalization are two key factors they are like in hand in hand. They can see that we have to make this Finnish tourism more sustainable and this has been a new phenomenon. You are absolutely right on this note but also digitalization is another run. (while talking about updated tourism strategies of Finland)*

Digitalization (Dwyer and Kim's model) and ICT readiness (TTCI) were discussed in the same context during the interviews. Digitalization is a key area in Finland's updated tourism strategies (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020) and it also seems to be a vital indicator of competitiveness.

#### **4.2.3 Variety of tourism segments**

Theme: Variety of tourism segments

##### **Interviewee 1**

*...and then Finland is really safe...also in terms of health security and so on. It's a big competitive advantage for us definitely. Also, **nature tourism is a big boom at the moment. Peacefulness and silence tourism and these kinds of trends have become big and Finland has a lot of potential regarding that**, but I am not quite sure if we have yet managed to take all that advantage. That's the field that needs attention...obviously we have beautiful nature, peacefulness, silence and so on but they should be better provided to tourists... better product development regarding that would be important.*

*.. we already discussed the cultural part a little bit but then again it is something that has been developing quite a lot lately...like culture in a way...we have new museums and big festivals and also the science and business aspects like the Slush, startups and our digital competence...and they are all about the culture as well...it is getting big and is developing...*

*.. Yes... I have worked in tourist information for a long time and I definitely know that there are a lot of tourists that prefer to come to Helsinki to see Finnish designs.*

*.. We are also focusing on cities for instance and our culture, art, design, food...*

## **Interviewee 2**

- *Not a mass tourism destination*
- *Educational point of view*
- *Silence*

*... sometimes some of segments in tourism, they are seeking for silence and they love nature. So, one benefit can be we are not a mass tourism destination. That we do not have mass tourism yet. Because not all the tourists are interested in going to mass tourism destination. If they want to see/experience something else for example silence, it's a good benefit for us. It can be seen as benefit also that we have all the possibilities to seek or reach some new tourism segments who are seeking for individual experience and silence. So, we are not a typical destination as Barcelona or New York or that type of destinations..*

*.. the educational point of view that means basically that we are very appreciated in the world because of our school system. So it was going to be a big business you know, educational tourism. We have lot of export in our school also, we have lot of international students. I have 70 percent of my courses in English and they are international students and they have acquired through BBA.*

*... If the situation is as normal so that is the educational tourism, which is a big benefit when marketing Finland. ..*

## **Interviewee 3**

*... we used to have few companies organizing congresses and convention and incentive travel, but now we can see that it has already gone to Baltic states or central and southern European countries...*

*.... international fairs and exhibition- if we can include there international convention and congresses there specially Helsinki would be mentioned but you didn't have that in your list...*

The possibilities of new unexploited tourism segments were found to be discussed in the interviews. The interviewees were of the belief that Finland still has got a lot to offer to its tourists and it could be possible through proper destination management strategies and marketing.

#### **4.2.4 Quality of natural environment**

Theme: Quality of natural environment

##### **Interviewee 1**

*... try to showcase the Finnish culture and tries to embrace all the good things that we have in Finland, like clean and beautiful nature, interesting cultural heritages and so on...*

*... Also, nature tourism is a big boom at the moment. Peacefulness and silence tourism and these kinds of trends have become big and Finland has a lot of potential regarding that...*

*... obviously we have beautiful nature, peacefulness, silence and so on but they should be better provided to tourists..*

*... it can in a way as it is unique and is doing pretty well but what makes us different from many other capital cities in Europe is that around Helsinki, we already have two national parks and it is really really easy to get close to the nature.....and we cannot forget Lapland, the eastern part of Finland, the archipelago and so on...so we have a lot of beautiful nature but we also have them closer to our cities....so I would say that it's actually a big advantage for us for sure...*

*... we need to develop connections to our nature and national parks..*

*... well, like I said that lately we have become better in marketing and using our current culture but in general I would say that the unique nature and unique people (while telling about strengths of Finnish tourism sector)*

##### **Interviewee 2**

*.. Clean air, nature, food and water (while telling about destination competitiveness of Finland)..*

*.. Activities in the nature..*

*... Unique and versatile nature (on major indicators of Finland's destination competitiveness)..*

*... But of course, natural resources and biodiversity that is a big benefit for overall when marketing Finland as a tourist destination that we have the nature here and clean air of course*

*...Natural resources (answer to Finland's biggest strength in tourism)*

### **Interviewee 3**

*.... what you been indicating like the endowed resources I was only highlighting there this quality of the natural environment..*

*.. I can say that this kind of safe environment, Natural resources, the sceneries- the variety of sceneries are the things attracting people and this kind of cultural variety...*

*... Finnair and via Helsinki strategy is giving us an accessibility to Asian market Japan, South Korea, China perhaps also Singapore, Australia and India and there is more frequencies than other Nordic countries so immediately this via Helsinki strategy gives us a possibility to stop this travelers and make it look also to Finland makes so called stopover...*

*.. I was forcing this over 10 years ago, I was saying maybe there will the situation in future people are not able to travel. You are travelling for example I like go to Nepal, I go to Helsinki in one building and I am hiring there a room and I am seeing virtually what I can experience in Nepal.. somebody is providing me Nepalese lunch , there is that smell, feelings, and I can feel okay I like to see mountains, go to hiking and I spend my weekend in that room and that's tourism in the future (virtual tourism)*

All the experts consented that Finland's quality of natural environment gave the nation a competitive edge as a destination. This topic was also discussed in relation to sustainability, virtual tourism and endowed resources (Dwyer and Kim's model).

#### **4.2.5 Transportation infrastructures**

Theme: Transportation infrastructure

## **Interviewee 1**

*... Well, they are all really important... in order to get into any destination, you need transport infrastructure for sure but there's no point having transport infrastructure if customers don't know about the destination...that's why marketing/destination management is important so that people are aware about the destination...but when people are informed about the destination, the transport infrastructure becomes really really important...*

*... like I said before, the access to Finland and especially Helsinki, if you fly, is really easy...we have good connections to Asia and Europe...but then again, when we think about the ongoing climate crisis, compared to many other places in Europe, Finland is like an island because it is so separate from the rest of Europe...like in Central Europe, they have a lot of possibilities in developing train tourism and more climate-friendly ways to travel....but Finland is still more dependent on flights...it is yet to see what happens with the train connection between Finland and Estonia...maybe it can help...it's easy to come to Helsinki but still Finland is a quite demanding country geographically...it is big and the access between long distances, for instance Lapland and Helsinki need to be developed...also, we have a lot of beautiful natural resources and national parks around the country but their access is still not very easy which needs to be developed...we need to develop connections to our nature and national parks...I'd say that it's easy to come to Finland if you fly...accessibility in Helsinki is very good and easy as you have a really good public transportation system...however travelling long distances within the country is not so convenient and it may not be easy for tourists who come for shorter stays..*

*.. Finland has a good internal transportation system but regarding transportation for tourism .... specially the long distances as we discussed ...., there are still rooms for development...the pricing system could also get better as sometimes we can see that it is cheaper to fly to Lapland than to take a train and if you think about the climate, it's not a good way to have it...so in a way, there are possibilities for further development in the railways and roadways....has big possibilities..*

*.. accessibility to Finland, especially from Asia, that is definitely a huge competitive advantage...apart from that), I would say there are possibilities for development... we still have a good public transportation system...it also suggests that we hold very high*

*standards on these infrastructures compared to many other cities/destinations..(while answering if transportation is a huge indicator of Finnish destination competitiveness)*

*... about supporting resources like air transport infrastructure definitely good one, quality of roads – absolutely good one and transportation infrastructure. Like all of the transport infrastructure, we are doing well.*

*.... Well, the education system is extremely important, safety and security- yes, access to drinking water- yes, freedom, public transportation would be the important one*

## **Interviewee 2**

*.... Transportation and infrastructure, I pointed number 6. It could not be well pointed out like in 3rd place or 4th place of course. Infrastructure is very important, and I think we have lack of transportation and connection to other municipalities and areas of Finland. So that is big minus, we have that, but we do not have enough connection that we could use. For example: if i want to travel to east because I live in the west. Even the amount of kilometer is same that I would travel to Helsinki around 450km. so basically, if I travel to Helsinki by train it takes around 3 hrs. but if I want to travel to east and with the same amount of kilometer, if I go there by train it takes 8 hours for me to get there... Since, our railways connections are built in such a way that they don't go east to west they just go only south or to north..*

*... Yes, of course we have airports in this type of municipalities or towns like Kokkola. But you know Finnair has cancelled all the flights at the moment to this type of towns. They don't see connection so important but if you try to develop international tourism for example that's impossible to develop if you don't have any airlines connection which is working. So, there is a big problem in Finnair's policy also regarding the flights to other areas than Helsinki or Lapland. So, they don't see us either as a potential tourism destination....*

*...Supporting resources (from the model)*

- Quality of air transport infrastructure*
- Quality of roads*
- International air transport network*
- Quality of domestic transport network*
- Number of operating airlines*

### **Interviewee 3**

*...supporting resources, I was highlighting only this quality air, transport infrastructure...*

*... maybe for some people of quality of road transport is extremely good if I am comparing like in Russia, definitely we have here in Finland a better road system but it depends where you are coming from...*

*.... we have few harbors that they are having international cruises like Turku, we have this ferry connections from Turku to Stockholm , Turku to Åland Islands and from Helsinki to Tallinn , Helsinki to Riga (capital of Latvia) and then Helsinki to Germany.. but in a way that's a one thing when you are combining these countries together that we have quite frequent organized cruises between these countries and of course Saint Petersburg is the highlight of all this international cruise ships..so when this cruise business is coming back in the gears hopefully, then some of the Finnish cities specially Helsinki are benefiting from this cruise business. Our quality railroad infrastructure, bus infrastructure sometimes they need to be developed specially from consumers point of view..*

*.... nowadays Helsinki and Stockholm ports are the only ports in the Baltic sea areas which are giving free of charge to leave your waste waters so called black and grey waters and its free of charge service..*

Transportation infrastructures of Finland was one of the most discussed topics in all three interviews. The interviewees indicated that Finland has been doing well in terms of transportation and is a significant indicator of competitiveness but were also of the opinion that there are still rooms for development in this sector. It was also discussed as a part of Finland's tourism strategies.

#### **4.2.6 Safety and security**

Theme: Safety and security

### **Interviewee 1**

*...Definitely a big one...global rank 1 (in safety and security) is quite well...that's also*

*something that business tourism is taking advantage of because Finland is considered safe...many political events can take place here safely when compared to many other places but it's also true that usually destinations do not want to market too much....they just want to keep it that way....Saying 'Hey! It's so secure right here' may also be a bad thing to highlight as things may end up differently...*

*.. Well, the education system is extremely important, safety and security- yes, access to drinking water- yes, freedom, public transportation would be the important one. In the demand conditions, we are doing well but there are always possibilities for further development.*

### **Interviewee 2**

*.. • **Overall safety** (while answering on the views on destination competitiveness of Finland)*

*... • **Safety and security** (on the most important situational conditions)*

*.. **Safety & Security** (while answering what the visitors prefer the most about Finland)*

*... overall safety is very big issue*

### **Interviewee 3**

*....I think AA+, quality of health care, GDP per capita, Nature of competitive advantage and access to improve sanitation, Quality of education system and **Safety and security**, access to improve drinking water, state of cluster development and then freedom and last but not least public trust to politician (on the most important situational conditions...*

*.... Finland is considered as infrastructure in a very high level and **safety** and all this stuff*

*... or example this safety and security issue, I sometimes even ask the travel operators that please don't use that we are the safest country in the world or we are the safest destination because one bad apple can destroy that so I let the consumer decide how safe is the destination..*

*... keep promoting what **safety** means to us and how people are reacting when you are coming either from different sexual orientation, religion or from different gender we see both males and females in customer service level. For me, **safety** is the local infrastructure we have we have electricity, we have hotels, we have activities to provide for visi-*



*tors so it's really relaxing you don't have to put so much efforts on that that's a **safety net** and then if you are speaking several languages that's of course is a positive thing, you are positive towards this customers, you are not very hostile, you are approachable those are very positive things. So, **safety and security** is more than this violence or more than terrorist attack. Its better food hygiene and all this factors so even there Finland is doing good performance, but we should improve in many levels all the time and that's part of the sustainability as well.*

The experts highlighted safety and security as the most important indicator under situational conditions (Dwyer and Kim's model). According to TTCI, Finland also ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in safety and security in 2019 (World Economic Forum, 2019). The experts emphasized safety and security as an important indicator of Finland's competitiveness.

## **5 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

The aim of this study is to attain a richer understanding of the indicators, the current scenario, and the ways of improvement of destination competitiveness in Finland's tourism. Thorough semi-structured interviews with three different experts in the field of travel and tourism yielded vast measure of rich data for the authors, the findings of which are indicated in section 4. This section discusses those findings.

### **5.1 Sustainability**

All the experts agreed on sustainability being one of the vital aspects of destination competitiveness. Interviewee 1 and interviewee 3 were very optimistic about the Finnish government's stance on emphasizing sustainability as the way going forward for Finland's tourism industry. Interviewee 2 also indicated 'Sustainability of T&T industry development' from Dwyer and Kim's model as one of the strong indicators of tourism industry. However, interviewee 2 was also of the opinion that Finland may still take 20-30 years to achieve self-sustainability in tourism.

The newly updated tourism strategies of Finland has included supporting sustainable development as its core element as it wants to be the most sustainably growing tourism

destination in the Nordic region (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Interviewee 1's statement "*..... sustainability issues have become so important and a lot discussed, the new Finnish tourism strategies focusing a lot on sustainability and that is visible in the way how we market Finland*" and Interviewee 3's opinion that "*They (government) can see that we have to make this Finnish tourism more sustainable and this has been a new phenomenon*" corroborate that sustainability is an integral strategy of Finnish tourism market. These statements when read with further statements from interviewee 1 such as "*As long as we can do it....use the resources in a sustainable way....it would bring big opportunities and competitive advantage for us*" and interviewee 2's signaling of '*Sustainability of T&T industry development*' as an important indicator of Finland's destination management (public) indicate that sustainability indeed is a vital indicator of Finland's destination competitiveness.

## **5.2 Digitalization**

'Responding to the digital transformation' is one of the key priorities of Finland's updated tourism strategies. The government aims at enhancing the competitive edge of Finland through digital optimization (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Moreover, it also aims to upgrade the technology with respect to market's demand and trends (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020).

On the analyses of the interviews, it was found that the experts held similar opinion on digitalization. They were of the view that digitalization is one of the major elements of competitiveness in Finnish tourism. Some of the statements made by the interviewees are:

Interviewee 1:

*"And also, digitalization, obviously we have quite good digital knowledge in Finland compared to many other places....so that's also something Finland wants to take advantage of in developing tourism."*

*"..Sustainability and digitalization are the core and they are focusing on them a lot."*

Interviewee 3:

*“digitalization is a big part and internet (World Wide web).. all this development has created new environment so during my 30 years, communication has been getting more fast. You have to return to your email request in may be within 2 hours.. normally it took 1 week when we were replying back by sending letters or telex or telegrams”*

*“.....this sustainability and digitalization are two key factors they are like in hand in hand. They can see that we have to make this Finnish tourism more sustainable and this has been a new phenomenon. You are absolutely right on this note but also digitalization is another run”* (while speaking on updated tourism strategies of Finland)

Similarly, when interviewee 2 was asked to choose Finland’s strong indicators of destination competitiveness from Dwyer and Kim’s model, the following were also strongly emphasized:

- *Technology know-how*
- *Availability of the latest technology*

The Finnish government’s updated strategies, discussed on the theory of this study, reveals that digitalization is a major concern in nation’s tourism.

All the interviewees regarded Finland as one of the digitally competent destinations. The statements made by the interviewees suggest that digitalization is one of the strong indicators of Finland’s destination competitiveness. Digitalization is an indicator under the category “situational conditions” in Dwyer and Kim’s model.

### **5.3 Quality of natural environment**

Studies have presented the facts that Finland has the cleanest air in the world, is the water richest country in the world, has the lowest risk to be exposed to natural disasters in the world, has the most forests in Europe and has the third most wetlands in Europe (Statistics Finland, 2019). This signifies that the quality of natural environment is really good in Finland.

The expert interviewees, in their interviews, revealed that the quality of natural environment is one of the vital indicators of destination competitiveness in Finland. Follow-

ing are some extracts of the interview relating to the quality of natural environment of Finland.

Interviewee 1:

*“... what makes us different from many other capital cities in Europe is that around Helsinki, we already have two national parks and it is really really easy to get close to the nature.....and we cannot forget Lapland, the eastern part of Finland, the archipelago and so on...so we have a lot of beautiful nature but we also have them closer to our cities.....so I would say that it’s actually a big advantage for us for sure...”*

Interviewee 2:

*“.. Clean air, nature, food and water”* (while telling about destination competitiveness of Finland)..

*“... Unique and versatile nature”* (on major indicators of Finland’s destination competitiveness)..

*“... But of course, natural resources and biodiversity that is a big benefit for overall when marketing Finland as a tourist destination that we have the nature here and clean air of course”*

*“...Natural resources”* (answer to Finland’s biggest strength in tourism)

Interviewee 3:

*“.... what you been indicating like the endowed resources I was only highlighting there this quality of the natural environment...”*

The interview analyses indicate that quality of natural environment provides Finland with a competitive edge as a destination. This indicator of destination competitiveness falls under the category ‘endowed resources’ as per Dwyer and Kim’s integrated model of destination competitiveness.

## **5.4 Transportation infrastructure**

The tourism strategies of Finland have included ‘improving accessibility, taking into accounts the need of tourism sector’ as a key priority area. The strategy aims at providing accessible transport to the destinations through development of land, port and air transport infrastructures (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020).

According to Dwyer and Kim's model, the transportation infrastructures are the indicators that are incorporated under the categories "Supporting resources". The experts highlighted that Finland has a good quality transportation infrastructure compared to many other places and it is one strong aspect of Finnish tourism. Following are some of the interview extracts on transportation.

Interviewee 1:

*".. accessibility to Finland, especially from Asia, that is definitely a huge competitive advantage..."*

*"... about supporting resources like air transport infrastructure definitely good one, quality of roads – absolutely good one and transportation infrastructure. Like all of the transport infrastructure, we are doing well."*

*".. Finland has a good internal transportation system.."*

Interviewee 2:

*...major supporting resources (from Dwyer and Kim's model)*

- *Quality of air transport infrastructure*
- *Quality of roads*
- *International air transport network*
- *Quality of domestic transport network*
- *Number of operating airlines*

Interviewee 3:

*"...supporting resources, I was highlighting only this quality air, transport infrastructure..."*

The statements made by the experts suggested that Finland indeed has a good quality of transportation infrastructure and its prioritization as a key area in Finland's tourism strategies indicates that it is an important indicator in Finland's destination competitiveness.

## **5.5 Safety and security**

Finland ranks first in safety and security as per the 'World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019' published by World Economic Forum. Interviewee 1 stated that safety and security is definitely a huge competitive advantage for Finland as it facilitates business tourism, events, and conventions. However, she also stressed that marketing

Finland as a safe destination would not be a good idea as it may draw unnecessary attention as well. Interviewee 2, when asked about her views on destination competitiveness of Finland, answered that ‘overall safety and security’ is the most important situational conditions in the context of Finland’s destination competitiveness and it is also what the visitors prefer the most about Finland. Interviewee 3 also listed ‘safety and security’ as one of the important situational conditions in Finnish tourism, but he was also of the opinion that safety should not be used while marketing Finland. In addition, he said that safety and security does not only mean lack of violence or terrorist attack, but it also means that the destination is safe to everyone irrespective of race, religion, gender or any other demographics, has adequate infrastructures for the visitors, has a good customer service level and is a part of overall sustainability.

## **5.6 Variety of tourism segments**

Through the analyses of interviews, it was noticed that Finland has the potential for new tourism segments which are still untapped. The interviewees suggested that Finland, in the past, has often been marketed as the home to Lakelands, Lapland, Santa Claus and archipelagos. They indicated that there are much more possibilities than those attractions and the nation should be able to unlock those potentials.

Interviewee 1:

*‘Also, nature tourism is a big boom at the moment. Peacefulness and silence tourism and these kinds of trends have become big and Finland has a lot of potential regarding that, ...’*

Interviewee 2:

*‘... sometimes some of segments in tourism, they are seeking for silence and they love nature. So, one benefit can be we are not a mass tourism destination ...’*

*‘.. the educational point of view that means basically that we are very appreciated in the world because of our school system. So it was going to be a big business you know, educational tourism..’*

Interviewee 3:

*.... international fairs and exhibition- if we can include there international convention and congresses there specially Helsinki would be mentioned*

All of the interviewees agreed on Finland having the possibilities for new tourism segments. According to them, nature tourism, silence tourism, educational tourism, and international fairs and exhibitions are some of the big possibilities in Finnish tourism industry. Thus, the new tourism segments present themselves as strong indicators of Finnish destination competitiveness at the moment. Those indicators relate to different categories of Dwyer & Kim's integrated model of destination competitiveness such as inherited/endowed resources (nature tourism; silence tourism), situational conditions (educational tourism) and created resources (international fairs and exhibitions).

## **6 RECOMMENDATION**

The rich data obtained from interviewing the experts yielded information on both the stronger and weaker areas of Finnish tourism. The strongly performing indicators of Finnish destination competitiveness have already been discussed in the prior section. After analyzing interviews, the authors have made note of few recommendations that may be helpful in developing the destination competitiveness of Finland.

### **6.1 Land transportation infrastructure**

Even though the experts agreed that Finland has a high-quality transportation infrastructure compared to many other places around the world, they were of the opinion that there are still some shortcomings that need to be addressed. The answers of the experts indicate that Finland can make improvements in the long-haul travels. Interviewee 1 outlined the fact that in many long-haul travels within Finland, there are times when air transportation is cheaper than using bus or train and this is not good from the environment's point of view. Similarly, interviewee 2 pointed out the fact that travelling from east to west or vice versa is often time consuming as there is lack of direct connections. Thus, developing and promoting environment-friendly transportation approach seems to be the way forward. Similarly, more connections need to be built between the east and west of Finland to facilitate travelling for both domestic and foreign tourists.

## **6.2 Cooperation**

The updated tourism strategies of Finland ‘Achieving More Together-Sustainable Growth and Renewal in Finnish Tourism’ describes the Tourism Strategy as a tool to bring together the actors in tourism. The tourism strategy’s focus is on cooperation between all the actors of tourism through common guideline in developing tourism works and generating effective tourism policies (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, 2020). Thus, co-operation is the guiding force for Finland’s tourism strategies.

Visit Finland is the focal authority for tourism-related issues in Finland and it has been working on co-operation through its regional offices around Finland. Despite the efforts made by Visit Finland on cooperation between tourism players of Finland, the experts had reasons to believe that there is still a lot to be done in improving the cooperation. Interviewee 2 stated that Visit Finland often focuses only on Helsinki, Lapland, Lakeland and archipelago regions and many other regions with possibilities in tourism are neglected. Interviewee 3 stated that the co-operation between private organizations is very good, even at the international level. However, he is of the opinion that the national tourism boards, not only in Finland but also in many other countries, are the main competitors for private destination management organizations. He said that Business Finland wants to co-operate with the companies only through its regional offices and it believes that its regional offices are very active and doing a good job, which in his opinion, is not true.

## **6.3 Marketing new tourism segments**

The interview analyses indicated that Finland has mainly promoted Helsinki, Lapland, Lakeland, and Finnish archipelagos for its tourism. The experts believe that there are new tourism segments that Finland can tap into. Interviewee 1 and 2 are of the opinion that Finland can develop itself as a destination that attracts tourists seeking for peace, silence, and individual experiences unlike other typical mass destinations. Moreover, interviewee 2 also added the possibilities of educational tourism. Interviewee 3 sees Finland’s, especially Helsinki’s potential to establish itself as a destination that can hold international fairs, exhibition, conventions, and congresses. The experts (interviewee 1



and 2) suggested that Finland should try to showcase the Finnish culture and its uniqueness to promote cultural tourism as well.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

The goal of this thesis was to examine the major indicators of and current scenarios in Finland's destination competitiveness. The research questions were devised so as to comprehend the tourism strategies adopted by the nation in regard to destination competitiveness, the major indicators of Finland's destination competitiveness, and areas that need attention to advance the competitiveness of Finland as a destination. Section 2 forms the literature part of the thesis that describes the major destinations in Finland, the tourism strategies in Finland, the description of Dwyer and Kim's Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness and the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI). The tourism strategies adopted by Finland were recently updated in 2019 and they have been studied through desktop research. They form a part of literature in section 2 and have been explained in section 2.4 and 2.5. The expert interviews also helped uncover the strategic ideas of Finnish government in tourism.

The research methodology section deals with the research setting, sampling, participants, materials, procedures, data analysis and validity and reliability. The thematic analysis of the expert interviews aided in signaling out the important indicators of Finland's destination competitiveness and also its shortcomings. The thematic analysis has been conducted in section 4 and the vital competitiveness indicators have been explained in section 5. The recommendation for developing competitiveness has been discussed in section 6 while section 7 marks the summary of the study.

The research questions for the study were:

1. What are the tourism strategies adopted by Finland in terms of destination competitiveness?
2. What are the major indicators of destination competitiveness in Finnish tourism sector?
3. What measures can be taken to improve the destination competitiveness of Finland?

The most prominent tourism strategies adopted by the Finnish government are supporting sustainable development, promoting digital transformation, improving accessibility by considering the needs of tourism sector and ensuring an operating environment that supports competitiveness. Sustainability, digitalization, co-operation, quality of natural environment, transportation infrastructure, safety and security, and new tourism segments were found to be some of the major indicators of destination competitiveness of Finland. There are other important aspects as well, but these seemed to be the most talked about by the experts during the interview. The experts believed that Finland still has a lot to do in the tourism sector. The important recommendations that the authors were able to derive from the expert interviews are improving the transportation infrastructure by establishing more connections within the country, promoting co-operation between public and private destination management organizations, and marketing new tourism segments to reach new customer base.

## **8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION AND TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The authors have given their best efforts in ensuring that all the ethical procedures are considered so that it enhances the trustworthiness of the works they have conducted. Full consent of the research participants was obtained, adequate level of confidentiality of the data was ensured and the communication in relation to the research work was done with honesty and transparency.

## **9 FUTURE RESEARCH**

The authors did not find many research works conducted on the destination competitiveness of Finland. Finland has a budding tourism industry and there are possibilities of numerous studies that might be undertaken in the near future. There are a lot of indicators of destination competitiveness and a vast amount of study is necessary to understand each of them and their impacts in the tourism industry. Thus, the authors are hopeful that this study will at least pave a way for potential studies on destination competitiveness of Finland.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. How was tourism industry in Finland when the company was established/when you joined the industry?
2. If you compare the past (the last 10 years) and present of Finnish tourism, what major changes have occurred?
3. What is the strategy of Finnish government in tourism industry? Have there been some significant changes in government's strategies that have heavily influenced the tourism sector?
4. How about the strategies and values of your workplace/organization?

#### COMPETITIVENESS

5. **Destination competitiveness is linked with the ability of the destination to provide better services and facilities and the ability to utilize the resources effectively in a long run than the other destinations, meeting the tourism experience expectation of tourist. For a destination to possess competitive advantage(s) in tourism sector, it must make sure its offerings in terms of total experience and appeal are better than that of alternate destinations for probable tourists.**

What are your views on the destination competitiveness of Finland?

6. In your understanding, what are the major indicators of destination competitiveness in Finnish tourism sector?
7. With reference to the prior studies in destination competitiveness and the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index report published by World Economic Forum, we have picked 10 indicators of destination competitiveness that we would like to discuss with you.
  - Natural resources and biodiversity
  - Cultural and creative resources
  - Visitor satisfaction
  - Safety and security (global rank 1)
  - ICT Readiness (global rank 13)



- Health and Hygiene (global rank 19)
- Business environment (global rank 7)
- Transportation infrastructure
- Price Competitiveness (global rank 122)
- Destination management (marketing framework and strategy)

Questions:

In your experiences, how important are these indicators in determining the competitiveness of a destination?

How is Finland positioned as a destination?

8. There is a list of indicators of destination competitiveness below. With your knowledge and experience, could you point out certain indicators that are strongly connected to the destination competitiveness of Finland? **(It is a long list. You could point out only those indicators that you think are important to the Finnish tourism sector)**

List of indicators based on Dwyer and Kim's integrated model of destination competitiveness:

1. Endowed resources
  - Variety of cuisine
  - Variety of tourist sights
  - Total known species
  - Number of World Heritage natural sites
  - Number of World Heritage cultural sites
  - Protected areas
  - Quality of the natural environment
2. Created resources
  - Entertainment
  - Tourism activities variety
  - Shopping
  - Tourism entertainment variety
  - Variety of shopping
  - Number of international fairs and exhibitions
  - Numbers of room in different accommodation types
  - Number of travel agencies and other reservation facilities
  - Number of food and beverage establishment

3. Supporting resources
  - Quality of air transport infrastructure
  - Quality of roads
  - Quality of port infrastructure
  - International air transport network
  - Quality of railroad infrastructure
  - ATM accepting visa cards
  - CO2 emissions
  - Quality of domestic transport network
  - Number of operating airlines
  - Departure per 000 population
  - Presence of major car rental companies
  - Road density
4. Destination management (private)
  - Extent of staff training
  - Local supplier quality
  - Capacity of innovation
  - Willingness to delegate authority
  - Reliance on professional management
  - Firm level technology absorption
  - Ethical behaviors of the firms
  - Extent of firms' internet use
  - FDI and technology transfer
5. Destination management (public)
  - Government prioritization of TT
  - Effectiveness of marketing and branding to attract tourists
  - Sustainability of T&T industry development
  - Attitude of population toward foreign visitors
  - Extension of business trips recommended
  - Business impacts of rules of FDI
  - T&T government expenditure
6. Situational conditions
  - Internet users
  - Broadband internet subscription
  - Country credit rating
  - Availability of the latest technology
  - Quality of the electricity supply
  - Quality of scientific institutions
  - Quality of health care
  - Purchasing power parity
  - GDP per capita
  - Life expectancy
  - Nature of competitive advantage

- Judicial independence
- Reliability of police
- Access to the improved sanitation
- Quality of educational system
- Safety and security
- Intensity of local competition
- Access to improved drinking water
- State of cluster development
- Physician density
- Venture capital availability
- Freedom
- Public trust to politicians
- Cost of living

7. Demand conditions

- Degree of customer orientation
- Extent of marketing
- Country brand ranking

<b>Pillars</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Northern European Region</b>
Business Environment	5,7	5,2
Safety & Security	6,7	6,1
Health & Hygiene	6,4	6,4
Human Resources & Labor Market	5,5	5,4
ICT Readiness	6,1	6,1
Prioritization of T&T	5,0	5,0
International Openness	4,1	4,1
Price Competitiveness	4,7	4,7
Environ. Sustainability	5,6	5,2
Air transport infrastructure	4,9	4,2
Ground &Port Infrastructure	4,5	4,4
Tourist service infrastructure	4,7	5,0

Natural Resources	2,9	2,9
Cultural resources & Business travel	2,0	1,9

9. In your experience, what do you think the tourists prefer in/like the most about Finland?
10. What are Finland's strengths in tourism and how have they been used for developing tourism industry?
11. How does Finland position itself in global/Nordic tourism market?
12. How do you see Finland's future in destination competitiveness in the next 5 years?
13. Is there anything you would like to add further?

Thank you for the interview.

## Appendix 2: Screenshot of tourism strategies of Finland

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying a document titled "Achieving More Together - Sustainable Growth and Renewal in Finnish Tourism". The document is a PDF file (634.1Kt) available for download. The page content includes the following text:

**Julkaisun muut kieliversiot:**  
 Suomeksi  
 Svenska

Tourism is a service sector with great potential for Finland, and a growing export sector. In 2017, tourism exports accounted for more than 17% of the export income generated by services. The total demand for tourism was approximately EUR 15 billion, and its direct share of GDP was 2.6 %. Tourism employs more than 140,000 people. In addition, tourism has significant regional economic impacts.

"Achieving more together - sustainable growth and renewal in Finnish tourism" is the name of Finland's national tourism strategy for 2019-2028. It envisions Finland as the most sustainably growing tourist destination in the Nordic countries. The key objective is to double tourism exports. The strategy identifies four key priorities that will enable sustainable growth and renewal of the tourism sector: supporting activities that foster sustainable development, responding to digital change, improving accessibility to cater to the tourism sector's needs, and ensuring an operating environment that supports competitiveness. Cooperation plays a major role, as the name of the strategy indicates.

The tourism strategy is based on the roadmap for growth and renewal in Finnish tourism 2015- 2025, which was updated in 2019. The horizontal expert group on tourism played a key role in the update. The Tourism Strategy supports Prime Minister Rinne's Government Programme. The purpose of the strategy is to provide a common guideline for development work in the tourism sector. Measures will be taken in collaboration by a wide range of actors.

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