



LAUREA
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Prime Mover

Ecological Promises and Their Execution in Hotel Chains: Case Restel Cumulus and Scandic

Järvenpää, Mona

2012 Kerava

Laurea University of Applied Sciences
Kerava

Ecological Promises and Their Execution in Hotel Chains: Case
Restel Cumulus and Scandic

Mona Järvenpää
Degree Programme in Tourism
Bachelor's Thesis
June, 2012

Mona Järvenpää

**Ecological Promises and Their Execution in Hotel Chains:
Case Restel Cumulus and Scandic**

Year	2012	Pages	42
------	------	-------	----

During the last decade the terms ‘eco’ and ‘green’ have created a trend in the tourism industry. This research focuses on two hotel chains that operate in Finland. One of the target chains is Finnish Restel Cumulus hotels and the other chain is originally Swedish, Scandic. This research studies the basic facts and the eco promises of these two hotel chains and the terms that this topic includes, for example sustainability, eco-label, ecological and eco-tourism. This research aims to find the answer to the main research question. The main research question is ‘What are the ecological promises and how are they executed in the hotel chains?’ The research methods used in this research were interviews with hotel managers and receptionists, systematic observation, documentation by camera and mystery shopping.

Eco labels are the most reliable ways to recognize an ecological hotel. The customers also affect the eco-labels criteria changes, because when the knowledge about eco issues grows, the customers will begin demanding new services from the hotels. Eco-labels or the fame of eco-labels are the creation of the eco-tourism trend. When the knowledge on the environmental problems grew one would have thought that tourism industry would have damaged from it but the opposite happened. Instead of people having stopped traveling they wanted to travel more and with a positive effect on the environment.

What was discovered is that Scandic is clearly a prime mover in the ecological issues. When Restel is just starting their ecological path, Scandic is keeping up with the criteria changes. Both chains have their own target groups and challenges on the ecological matters. Restel Cumulus and Scandic both function in the same country but they have nearly opposite opinions about the affect of ecological deeds. For example one difference was about the opinion about the costs of eco deeds. Scandic claimed that being an eco hotel does not cost much more than functioning normally whereas Restel Cumulus claimed differently. Also the need for ecological acts caused conflicting opinions. In Finland the need is created by the customers’ demands. It is clear after this research that the customers’ needs vary a lot in Finland. Some customers have development demands on ecological matters and some give negative feedback about the eco changes.

Internationality is an advantage in the ecological field. When the hotel chain needs to compete with other international chains for example in the EU area it is easier to make the changes towards an eco label because the consumers expect it. In Finland the changes are made slowly and they are lead by the major Finnish companies. The knowledge of ecological issues is growing but in Finnish hotel chains the acts are in a smaller scale than in the international chains. The acts towards more ecological future begin on the management level. The personnel have the power to influence the acts but not the phase. The education of ecological issues and ecological behavior should be a bigger part of the tourism education because if the people who will have the power to affect on the issues in the future have not have any education on the matter, are suppose to be qualified to make the right moves and changes.

Key words: ecologic, eco-tourism, execution, hotel and sustainability

Mona Järvenpää

**Ekologiset lupaukset ja niiden toteuttaminen hotelliketjuissa:
Case Restel Cumulus ja Scandic**

Vuosi 2012 Sivumäärä 42

Viime vuosikymmenen aikana termit eko ja vihreä ovat luoneet uuden trendin matkailun alalle. Tutkimuksessa keskityttiin kahteen Suomessa toimivaan hotelliketjuun, suomalaiseen Restel Cumulusiin ja alun perin ruotsalaiseen Scandiciin. Käytiin läpi hotelliketjujen perustiedot ja ekologiset lupaukset sekä aiheeseen liittyviä termejä, kuten kehitys, ekomerkki, ekologinen ja ekoturismi. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli tutkia, mitä ekologiset lupaukset ovat ja miten niitä toteutetaan kyseisissä hotelliketjuissa. Tutkimusmenetelminä käytettiin haastattelua, systemaattista havainnointia, dokumentointia kameralla ja testiasiakkuutta.

Eri ekomerkkien kriteerit ja niiden vaihtumistahti vaikeuttavat niiden saamista. Tänä päivänä ekomerkit ovat luotettavimpia tapoja tunnistaa ekohotelli. Asiakkailta on oma vaikutuksensa ekomerkkien kriteereihin. Kun tieto ekologisuus asioista kasvaa, asiakkaat luovat omia kriteerejään palveluille, joita käyttävät matkansa aikana. Toisin sanoen ekomerkit tai ainakin niiden suosio ovat ekoturismitrendin luomuksia. Kun ympäristöongelmat tulivat julkisuuteen, olisi ollut luonnollista, että matkailuala olisi hiljentynyt, mutta reaktio oli päinvastainen. Matkustamisen vähentämisen sijaan ihmiset halusivat matkustaa yhä enemmän ja samalla tehdä ympäristöystävällisiä tekoja.

Tutkimuksessa havaittiin, että Scandic on selkeästi edelläkävijä hotelliketjujen ekologisuusasioissa. Kun Restel vasta aloittaa ekologista polkuaan, yrittää Scandic säilyttää jo ansaitsemiaan ekomerkkejä. Suomessa ekologisuuden tarpeet ovat asiakkaiden vaatimusten luomia. Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että asiakkaiden vaatimukset vaihtelevat jyrkästi. Yrityksen kansainvälisyys on selkeä etu ekologisuuden saavuttamiseksi. Kun yritys toimii monessa eri maassa, ovat niin asiakkaiden vaatimukset kuin kilpailukin kovempia. Suomessa muutokset tapahtuvat hitaasti ja niitä johtavat suomalaiset suuryritykset. Suomalaisissa hotelliketjuissa ekologiset muutokset ovat pieniä, koska suurten muutosten pelätään vieroittavan asiakkaita. Tieto ekologisuudesta kasvaa vuosi vuodelta Suomessakin ja tiedon mukanaan tuomat vaatimukset on täytettävä niin nyt ja kuin tulevaisuudessa. Suuret muutokset matkailuyrityksissä lähtevät johtajatasolta. Suomessa myös työntekijät vaikuttavat työpaikkojensa ekologisuuteen. Muun muassa kierrätys hotellien yleistiloissa ja vastaanotossa on täysin henkilökunnan käsissä. Suuri puute Restel Cumulus-hotelleissa on ekologisuus koulutuksen puute. Kun jokainen työntekijä on itse vastuussa omien tekojensa ekologisuudesta, pitäisi aiheesta järjestää koulutusta. Koulutusta voisi saada jo ennen työelämään astumista. Näin varmistettaisiin, että toimintaan tulevaisuudessakin ekologisesti ympäristön hyväksi. Yrityksen tulisi ottaa vastuu omasta ekologisesta ja kestävästä toiminnastaan, tarjota aiheesta koulutusta ja velvoittaa työntekijät noudattamaan tiettyjä toimintatapoja sen sijaan, että työntekijät kantavat vastuun esimerkiksi yhteistilojen kierrätysmahdollisuuksista.

Asia sanat: ekologinen, eko-turismi, hotelli, kestävä kehitys ja toteutus

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	6
2	Definitions.....	8
2.1	Sustainability and ecological elements.....	8
2.2	Tourism, trends and Eco-tourism.....	9
2.3	Hotel and Eco-hotel	11
3	Eco-labels	12
3.1	Nordic Eco Label	12
3.2	European Eco Label and Energy Star.....	13
4	Hotel chains in the research.....	14
4.1	Restel Cumulus: Ecological and sustainable practices.....	14
4.2	Scandic : Ecological and sustainable practices	15
5	Research plan and ethical issues	16
6	Research methods and analysing the data	18
7	The results: Ecological promises and execution.....	20
7.1	Restel Cumulus: Eco-deeds	20
7.2	Scandic: Eco-deeds	22
7.3	Result summary	26
8	Restel Cumulus and Scandic: Observation and interview results	26
8.1	Eco definitions and membership in eco-hotel chains.....	26
8.2	Recognition of the eco standards.....	27
8.3	Monitoring the eco standards	27
8.4	Customer feedback on eco-hotel	28
8.5	Future eco-projects.....	28
9	Conclusions and development ideas.....	29
10	Self-evaluation	30
	References	32
11	Appendices.....	36
Appendix 1:	Nordic Eco Label Logo.....	36
Appendix 2:	Nordic Eco Labels energy consumption table	36
Appendix 3:	European Eco Label Logo	37
Appendix 4:	Energy Star Logo	38
Appendix 5:	Research plan	38
Appendix 6:	Interview sheet to Restel Cumulus and Scandic receptionists.....	39
Appendix 7:	Interview sheet to Restel Region manager and Scandic Hotel Manager	40
Appendix 8:	Interview result summary	42

1 Introduction

Theme of this thesis is something that has broken through to discussion a few years ago. The words “eco” and “ecological” have become today’s words. When the ideas of global warming and climate change were brought to the public the world priorities changed. Today everyone wants to be ecological and to have a green lifestyle. Even though some feel that the change has become too late, today’s companies and worldwide business chains are competing for the eco-titles.

Global warming is a phenomenon that has brought many different terms into peoples’ vocabularies during the last decade. The first time when this phenomenon was discussed in public was in the 1970. During that year the first Earth Day was arranged and the awareness of global warming was spread. In 1970 US National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration was created and is known today as one of the leading funders of climate research. During this decade the influences of global warming were seen very clearly. For example the drought in India and Africa caused a food crisis that spread the fears about global warming. This decade was the start line also for a phenomenon that is well known today; energy crisis. Oil became a vanishing natural resource and the bargain prices rise rapidly. (New York Times 2012; Global warming 2012; Weart 2008.)

The phenomenon in hand brought many different ways of thinking in many different businesses also in hospitality sector. Unfriendly acts towards the environment are controlled. For example there are fines consider that today all industries have to think about their eco-effect and carbon traces. Airplanes effect on the ozone layer made the air companies think about their possibilities to change the course of global warming. Today airplanes are made more ecological by decreasing the amount of pollution. Cars as well are made to support the environment. Now when oil is seen as “harmful for the environment” people had created alternative fuels which cars can use. Hybrid has brought the industry into a greener level. Eco-travelling is the phenomenon that has created a space for the hotel and tourism industry in the future to compete for a greener future.

This phenomenon has always seemed quite ironic and also at the same time interesting. Because people today use these titles a lot, it is interesting to see who are the ones fooling themselves. During the researchers internship in Holiday Inn Helsinki-Vantaa Airport Hotel she got to see the hotel in action. While she did the internship she tried to snoop around for the eco promises that the hotels chain, Restel, has made and also see was the hotel following the guidelines. After the summer was over the inspiration for thesis had grown. The experience at the hotel helped the researcher to find the right focus points for the research.

The target groups for my thesis are the hotel chains that wish to become more ecological and maybe to achieve an Eco brand like Swan Eco Label for example and a chain that already has eco labelled hotels around Europe and wishes to keep them. It is important to know the terms thoroughly so you can truly understand what they mean and what it takes to call your hotel by that term. My main goal is to help Finnish hotel chains see what it takes to have an ecological hotel. My thesis is important for all who wish to follow the ecological business path. Hopefully my thesis will help also Scandic and Restel to understand their main pros and cons. When my research is done my results can also help the two chains to see if they are missing something or doing something wrong. With my results I could also create some improvement suggestions for the chains. This is not the first case study about ecological projects in hotels but at least I am going to provide a customers' and a students' point of view.

In my thesis I want to discover mainly the fact that is the title ecological used in vain or have the hotels using the description earned it. My main research question is 'What are the ecological promises and how are they executed in the hotel chains?' I also have some smaller issues that I want to explore. For example are the ecological guidelines followed or neglected? Is the personnel trained to know and act ecologically? Do the personnel know what are the chains eco projects and promises? I will also look at the projects in the customers' point of view. Do the customers see the difference between a normal and an ecological hotel? How the customer sees and defines an Eco hotel? I am going to investigate these questions by interviews, systematic observation, mystery shopping and documentation by camera.

Earlier research has been done on this topic and I read a few of those to obtain sufficient background information. This topic is universal so most of the researches have been done abroad. For example, a study about the Eco Labels done for the Regional Central and Eastern European conference on sustainable building on October 2004 in Warszawa, Poland. The study tells that today people are waiting to get more ecological services and especially in the hotel industry. Eco-labels are a huge part of the recognition of eco hotels but still there are no worldwide criteria or Labels. There are over a hundred Eco Labels overall and in Europe over fifty different Eco Labels. (Green Hotels 2012.)

2 Definitions

To understand my topic and all it includes one must know the definitions of the following terms. Sustainability is the big umbrella term that includes all the small details and terms that define the thesis. To completely understand the meaning of sustainability must one know what is ecological or in other words ecologic. Because this thesis is related to tourism industry and my research is based on the basic knowledge and recognition of eco-tourism are those two definitions also initial. As eco-tourism is a growing trend in the tourism industry it is also fatal to understand what the term trend means. During the last decades the customers or travelers or tourists have realized the effects that tourism has on nature and because of this they have become more aware of the choices they make when travelling. Because of the demand brought in by the customers World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and other big organizations have started to act more ecologically. As well as eco hotels are also eco labels created only because of the customers demands.

2.1 Sustainability and ecological elements

According to United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sustainability means the relationship between humans and the nature around them. Sustainable standards are being met when humans live in perfect harmony with nature. When both parts live a way that they do not harm each other complete sustainability can be seen. (EPA 2012.)

Sustainability is a long-term project for the humanity to reach the famous harmony. People also need sustainability to protect the basic natural resources that people need to survive. For example clean water is one of the key elements for survival and humans can secure the production for it by living with sustainable values. (EPA 2012.)

Sustainability is also a big part of eco-tourism. Eco-tourisms sustainable development is integrated elements of economic, ecological and sociocultural sustainability. Sustainability is seen in many different ways. It is considered to be a part of the development of the tourism industry today and also a huge part of community. The ongoing use of natural researches is a big issue today and its conflicts with the environmental standards and sustainability criteria in developed nations. (Zeppel & Heather 2006, 285.)

Ecological is an adjective for the noun ecology. Ecology means the relationship between living organisms and their environment. Living an ecological life means that one takes into consideration all the other aspects in the environment also. The effect that humans have on the environment is one of the main points in ecological living. (EPA 2012.)

For a company to be ecological they need to take into consideration all acts made in and outside the company. This means that the production chain needs to be taken into consideration. Where and how your products grow and come from are important factors. When trying to find the eco way one must not harm any living thing, or if the harm is compulsory it must be in the littlest amount. Ecological lifestyle can also be explained with the term environment friendly, which means exactly the same. (EPA 2012.) For example if a hotel wants to call themselves green they have to take into consideration their whole network. It starts from the suppliers. The suppliers have to also be ecological and they have to grow or produce their products ecologically as well as transport their products in a more ecological way. In the ecological network all the co-operative companies are responsible for their own as well as the networks actions.

2.2 Tourism, trends and Eco-tourism

To really understand my thesis topic one must know what definitions it includes. Tourism is usually a word that people know but they can't explain it. If one understands tourism and its subcategories one can also understand where my topic has started. Inside the tourism industry there are many key figures that define tourism. These key elements help the customers to achieve their expectations and goals. These key figures are accommodation, transportation, attractions and facilities. Attractions are the basic value when measuring the experience of tourism. The attractions are the most important reasons for travelling. "Past tourism research has tended to rely more on the understanding of attractions, and how they affect tourists, than of other components of the industry." (Fennel 1999, 4.)

Tourism has its negative and positive sides. Tourism is in many cases accused of ruining the native cultures of some destinations and that tourism brings nothing good. Although tourism is seen as a bad influence it is rarely spoken that tourism also helps nations to cope with their problems - for example, financial issues. Tourism like many other industries has a lot of subcategories. Mass tourism is the most known and seen one. Today mass tourism is basically based on lying on the beach of some huge international resort. This usually encourages the international companies to expand their business abroad. Mass tourism usually does not support the local economy at all. "Emphasis is often on commercialisation of natural and cultural resources, and the result is a contrived and inauthentic representation of, for example, a cultural theme or event that has been eroded into a distant memory." (Fennel 1999,8.)

In the 1980s competition for the mass tourism effect arrived. Alternative tourism is a form of tourism that advocates an approach to mass conventional tourism. Alternative tourism

emphasizes the demand from the customers for untouched environment and they also demand that the needs of the local people must be taken into consideration. "This 'softer' approach places the natural and cultural resources at the forefront of planning and development, instead of as an afterthought." Alternative tourism also gave the destination countries the option to eliminate the effect on other cultures. Among alternative tourism became a lot of new terms. For example 'appropriate', 'eco-', 'soft', 'responsible', 'people to people', 'controlled', 'small-scale', 'cottage', and 'green' tourism. (Fennell 1999, 9.)

Trend is a coming and going phenomena that always reflects the time it lives in. Trends are categorized into three sections. There are normal trends that affect just few people or some groups. These usually are just passing by and aren't here to stay. Mega trends are major effects and changes in the present that effect on all mankind. Mega trends usually effect on a longer period of time and change the world a lot. A good example of a mega trend is globalization. Eco tourism is a growing trend today and depending on how the future goes eco tourism can grow to a mega trend.

Eco-tourism has been seen as an easy solution to the environmental issues that have been in hand in the last decades. Eco-tourism has opened a whole new perspective to the research about travelling and its disadvantages. It is also claimed to help rural communities and the development of poor countries. Eco-tourism is kind a way to the people to travel as much as they wish without caring about the damage they are doing to the world. This also explains why eco-tourism is seen as an act to save the nature. "Although "green" travel is being aggressively marketed as a win-win solution for the Third World, the environment, the tourist, and the travel industry, close examination shows a much more complex reality." (Honey 2008, 4.)

Eco-tourism can be beneficial for all the aspects that are included in the travel. For example the local people and their economy and for the travelers who get to promote their country and invest their money in the same time they learn important things about the native people. "Consequently, eco-tourists are understood as people with a profound interest in nature-based forms of tourism and ecotourism has been advertized as a sustainable, 'positive' form of tourism." (Gössling & Hultman 2006, 1.)

Eco-tourists are seen as people who are interested in the environmental issues but this is not the case. An eco-tourist can be any one. Today eco travel has been made so easy that anyone can try and choose more ecological choices. Eco-tourism is marketed today as the positive way of travelling. For example the World Tourism Organization claims the growth of sustainable tourism or eco-tourism has helped the protection protected nature areas and all nature sites around the world. "One would thus expect the marketing of ecotourism products to address the 'green' consciousness of tourists. However, an analysis of Swedish eco-

tourism tour operators and their advertisement campaigns reveals that marketing is based on selling unique experiences, rather than on sustainable tourism products fulfilling the criteria of ecotourism.” (Gössling & Hultman 2006, 89.)

It has been argued that if people really buy these experiences because they are ecological or just because of the experience. Do people really care that they are doing an environmental friendly choice or are they just interested in the experience and don't care about the process behind the experience.

“Market estimates are hard to come by, given the lack of consensus over the use of the term(s), but it was suggested in 2004 that eco-/nature tourism was growing three times faster globally than the tourism industry as a whole (WTO 2004, cited in tiEs 2006). Reasons for this growth include demographic changes in source countries (such as older populations and, in turn, the growing number of more experienced travellers), ‘beach boredom’ as a symptom of a maturing market for 3s (sun, sea, sand) holidays and increasing environmental awareness on the part of the general public.” (Hill & Gale 2009, 3.) As the environmental awareness grows, the consumers want more extreme holidays but they want to help the environment at the same time. This awareness creates a demand and because of the demand were the eco hotels, eco labels and eco-tours created.

2.3 Hotel and Eco-hotel

Hotel is an establishment that has lodging, food and other guest services for a short period of time. Technically to be called a hotel the establishment must have at least six different rooms and three of them must have their own bathroom facilities. Hotels are usually rated with stars from 1 poor to 5 excellent. Star ratings are not global and the requirements for them vary in different countries. There are also some countries that don't use the star rating system like Finland for example. Today there are different types of hotels that have been categorized according to their services, for example from conference and business hotels to large spa and wellness resorts. Hotels are categorized today because the customer needs are expanding every year and it would be highly impossible for one hotel to provide all services required (Millar 2008, 2-3).

One of the newest customer needs in hotel business are ecological and sustainable hotels. These eco hotels have been the biggest phenomenon of the last few decades. Basically eco hotels are hotels that have made their business idea to support environment friendly behavior. Because there are so many different ways of approaching the term it is difficult to set certain criteria for it. These hotels are usually controlling their water usage, electricity us-

age and waste control. Their job is to provide a greener environment for their customer to stay in without taking away any luxurious factors that the hotel experience consists of. Eco labels help the consumers to recognize these eco-friendly hotels (Millar 2008, 2-3).

Many sites and studies have appeared about the eco hotels and their growing success. Eco hotel studies usually go hand in hand with Eco-label studies because today a hotel cannot claim that it is an eco-hotel if it doesn't have one of the hundred different eco-labels in the world. Also the terms green and eco are usually mixed but their difference should be noticeable. For a hotel to call itself green it does not have to have an eco-label. Green is used as a marketing word to lure the customers who are eco-friendly but beginners in the field. The consumers should find out the differences between different eco-labels because the criteria do vary a lot. If a hotel has a Nordic Eco Label and another has for example European Eco Label the ecological criteria is totally different. The basic values, water, waste and energy are always the same but the demands vary. Today eco-hotels are a growing trend.

3 Eco-labels

Environmental friendly labels or eco labels are used widely throughout the United States and Europe. These labels usually are used to bring out the ecological efforts of different companies (Nimon & Beghin 1999). In hotel business the hotel can advertise their ecological acts by earning an eco-label.

3.1 Nordic Eco Label

One of the most respected eco labels is the Nordic Eco Label otherwise known as the Swan Eco Label. It is known for the green round logo. (Appendix 1.) The Nordic Eco Label was founded in 1989. The requirements for the label change every few years just to keep them ahead of time. To apply for the label the company needs to have better and weaker examples from the same industry. The companies applying for the label need to fulfil all the categories that are supported in the values. For example water usage must be minimized, waste must be carefully recycled and taken care of and electricity usage must be minimized. The Nordic Eco Label is earned only in the Nordic countries this is why some hotel chains for example Scandic needs to gain also other Eco Labels for their hotels that are not located in the Nordic countries. (Nordic Eco label 2012; Scandic 2012)

According to the Nordic Eco Label (2012) if a hotel or a chain wants to earn the label the following is required:

- “Submission of a general description of the hotel.
- Fulfilment of the limit value for energy consumption.
- Fulfilment of a further 1 out of 3 remaining limit values.
- Fulfilment of all obligatory requirements.
- A score totalling at least 60% of the point score requirements under Operation and Maintenance.
- A score totalling at least 65% of all point score requirements. At least 50% of all point score requirements must be met by Icelandic hotels.
- Nordic Eco labelling has checked that requirements have been met on site.”

The Nordic Eco Label has four limit values. They are energy and water consumption, chemical products and waste management. Energy consumption is the only one where the hotel applying the label has a choice. Energy usage can be measured by electricity and heating consumption per year and square metre or by electricity and heating consumption per year and guest night. “The limit values for water consumption, chemical products and waste management are related to the number of guest-nights per year.” (Nordic Ecolabelling of Hotels and youth Hostels 3.3, 7) The applicers are categorised into three categories according to their different scales. “The limit values vary depending on the type of operations being conducted.” (Nordic Ecolabelling of Hotels and youth Hostels 3.3, 8) The categories go from A to C. (Appendix 2.)

3.2 European Eco Label and Energy Star

There are many other eco-labels that are used in other countries such as The European Eco label. The European Eco label was established in 1992 and its purpose is to encourage businesses to act more ecologically and to product environmental friendly services. This eco-label is known for its flower logo. (Appendix 3.) This eco-label includes for example paper products and cleaning products. The criteria is decided on European level and the products bearing the European Eco labels known flower logo can be marketed any European Union countries as well as in the EEA countries. The criteria are not based on single factors but to an analysis from studies. The European Eco label also brings companies a competitive advantage because this eco-label does not create any barriers in the marketing scale. According to the European Eco label web site “The EU Ecolabel is part of a broader action plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy adopted by the Commission on 16 July 2008.” (European Eco Label 2012.)

European Eco Label has grown fast since the foundation. There has also been bad publicity and discussion about the criteria that European Eco Label has. For example the Belgian Presidency meeting was finding ways how to improve the label. “Investigations by the NGO FERN on a controversial Indonesian paper producer with an EU Ecolabel license, referred to as the *Pindo Deli case*, led to widespread negative publicity against the EU Ecolabel. Some of the problems highlighted in the FERN reports were caused by weak criteria on sustainable forest management but others concerned more general aspects of the EU Ecolabel scheme. The report and its findings triggered a discussion within the NGO and consumer organisation community. We identified some general challenges in the implementation of the EU Eco-label in relation to transparency and its overall credibility.” (Hammer 2010, 2).

The Energy Star is an Eco Label that functions in the USA. (Appendix 4.) This eco label was founded in 1992. It is a government funded program and it is a national sign for energy efficiency. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency creates the strict guidelines that companies have to follow to earn this eco label. This eco label can be earned by companies, as well as private citizens. It is known all around the USA because of its bright blue logo. (Energy Star 2012.)

4 Hotel chains in the research

For my thesis work I choose two known hotel chains in Finland: Scandic and Restel Cumulus. Scandic that also has hotels in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Poland, Estonia, the Netherlands and Belgium. Scandic is a chain that has been ahead of its competition for a long time. When it comes to their eco projects it seems that they really know what they are doing. Or at least in paper it does. To add a little comparison my other choice was a Finnish chain. Restel is a Finnish business chain that includes restaurants, hotels and gas stations. I am focusing on the hotels. One hotel chain in particular had my eye. It was Cumulus because among Restels 47 hotels there are 26 Cumulus hotels. They all are supposed to follow the chains mutual ecological interests and projects. So that the comparison would be financially fair I will focus mostly on Scandic hotels in Finland. (Cumulus 2012; Scandic 2012.)

4.1 Restel Cumulus: Ecological and sustainable practices

Cumulus is a Finnish hotel chain that belongs to a bigger business chain called Restel. There are almost thirty Cumulus hotels in Finland. Cumulus hotels usually have the reputation that they are business hotels but the advantage of having so many hotels in one country is that

the chain can have variety within its services. Cumulus hotels follow Restel chains ecological standards. (Cumulus 2012.)

Restel chain created their ecological standards in 1995 and they include many factors. In Restel chain these standards are included in everyday life. As one of their eco acts Restel has switched to Fortum carbon free electricity and they have participated in EU's energy saving program which goal is to reduce the energy usage in Europe by 9 percent. According to the Restel eco values all the waste is recycled and sorted carefully. They also use some of the water from their water parks to create electricity to their hotels. Restel also uses environment friendly chemicals for cleaning. They also use disposable products as less as possible. Environment is also taken into consideration when new Restel establishments are built. They use materials that have already been used or that can be used again. Restel trains their staff so that they are able to work as ecologically as possible and so that they know the chains standards. To protect the ecological acts Restel has hired a person who takes care that all the values and standards are being followed. (Cumulus 2012.)

4.2 Scandic : Ecological and sustainable practices

The first Scandic opened in 1963 in Sweden but at that time it was called Esso Motor Hotel. In 1984 all the hotels are renamed to Scandic hotels. The chain continued to grow first in to the neighbour countries Norway and Denmark. In 2003 the chain started to work to gain the Swan Eco label and by 2004 all the Scandic hotels in Sweden had it. Today the chain has 160 hotels all over northern Europe and 25 hotels in Finland in which 14 of them are eco labelled and it employs over six thousand people in Europe. Scandic hotels have their own ecological standards that go today hand in hand with Nordic Eco Labels standards. (Scandic 2012.)

Scandic hotels started their eco work in 1993. The way towards a greener future started when Scandic had financial issues and a new direction was needed. Sustainability became the main idea for future campaigns. To the board to understand the true meaning of sustainability the chain joined an organization called Det Naturliga Steget, which is a Swedish ecological organization. When the ecological terms were approved by the board they created an educational program to educate their staff on sustainability and ecological business ways. The main eco points that are taught in the program are that the chemicals used in the hotels are more environmental friendly and the production chain needs to be ecological. This means that the food and wood providers need to act ecologically from the start (planting the seeds) to the transportation to the hotel. It's also important to know which transportation is used and how far the product comes from. (Scandic 2012.)

In 1994 they figured out the washing costs when a customer changes his or her towel every day. Since then all Scandic hotels have had this notice in their hotel rooms' baths about the ecological effect of the towel changing. This way they have increased their customers' knowledge of ecological issues. In 1995 Scandic did some changes in their water usage. All the taps in the hotels are eco taps, which means that they don't let through as much water as the normal taps. With little changes in their everyday life they have decreased their water usage with 14 per cent. During the same year Scandic also released their first eco room. (Scandic 2012)

In 1995 Scandic also created the possibility to recycle in their hotels. Since then Scandic has had a recycling bin in all the hotel rooms, common areas and staff areas. This is a phenomenon that is not seen in many hotels even today. By having the recycling bins Scandic with its customers has decreased the amount of unsorted waste by 67 percents. During this year Scandic also released its first eco room. By 1996 Scandic had decreased its deposable package use by three hundred and seventy million packages. (Scandic 2012.)

In 1999 the first Swan Eco labelled Scandic was released in Norway. The hotel was the first Nordic Eco labelled hotel in Norway. During this year Scandic started to recreate their hotel rooms so that all the material used in the interior are recyclable and natural. For example wood, cotton and wool are used also today in all their rooms. In 2003 Scandic gave a different Christmas present to the world. They invested money to WWF and to Baltic Sea project. Scandic also supports the Stockholm Water Foundation and the researches and development of the world's water assets. In 2003 Scandic started to transform their hotels in Sweden to Swan Eco Labelled hotels. It took them a year to do the transformation. Today all Scandic hotels in Sweden are Swan Eco Labelled hotels. (Scandic 2012.)

In 2004 Scandic changes their hotel rooms so that the room key worked as the main power switch. This quality is quite common today and most of the hotel chains use the idea. In 2006 in all the Scandic hotels in Sweden every cup of coffee or espresso was from fair trade coffee. Today in Finland also Scandic uses fair trade products every day. With this effort Scandic doesn't just act ecologically but they support smaller coffee producers and reduce child labour used in the bigger non- environment friendly coffee farms (Scandic 2012.)

5 Research plan and ethical issues

In my research I'll use five different key words are used. They are ecologic, eco-tourism, execution, hotel and sustainability. My main research question is 'what are the ecological promises and how are they executed in the hotel chains?' I will start my research by doing a background check of my topic. This I will complete by doing the first two assignments "from

theme to thesis” and “research methods”. I will focus on these assignments during weeks from 52 to 7. During these weeks I will do pre-research such as observation, interviews, documentation by camera and mystery shopping in Scandic Simonkenttä. Week 7 is very important because I have my interview with Hotel manager Mrs Asc in Scandic Espoo. Two weeks after that I will meet Helsinki region manager Mr Pusztai and interview him about the ecological issues in Restel chain. This visit will also include observation. During the same week I will visit Cumulus Hakaniemi for observation and documentation by camera. There I will also have two interviews. After these visits I will spend my time analysing the data and results that I have. On week 13 I will have my 75% seminar so on week 12 I will prepare myself for it. After the seminar the result analysing goes on and until week 14 I will have finished my thesis. On week 15 I will do the summaries and then return the ready thesis. I have also a table of my research plan. (Appendix 5)

Qualitative research method is used not only in social sciences but also in market research. Qualitative method is used to gather information about certain human behaviour and the reasons that why people act that way. The questions that qualitative method answers are why and how someone makes a certain decision including the basic what, where and when questions. Qualitative method diverges from quantitative method so that qualitative gives only the answers to the particular case studied contrary to quantitative method that leaves room also for the empirical support. Qualitative research is based on phenomenology. Phenomenology focuses on the specifics about the research target. This study type is always looked through the eyes of the individual that participates to the research. It embraces the importance of the views of the individuals and personal perspectives. “Phenomenological research has overlaps with other essentially qualitative approaches including ethnography, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionism. Pure phenomenological research seeks essentially to describe rather than explain, and to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions (Husserl 1970; Lester 1999.)

Qualitative research process is well planned and clear. The process is based on wide background work and the main idea in it is to find out as many facts and key figures about your own topic as possible. After the researcher has found out all the relevant facts about the topic the research questions are created to support and narrow the topic in hand.

Ethical issues in qualitative research are more complicated than in other research styles because they are mostly evolving from long-term situations and from close personal involvement with people. Interviewing and observation are also included to this phenomenon. The research is based on human interaction and not just statistical figures, which makes it more challenging when it comes to ethical matters. Peoples’ privacy must be protected and their feeling must be taken into consideration. When having personal contact with the source of your research one must be considerate of every move and expression during the for example

interviewing situation. When being as neutral as possible the researcher may avoid all problems.

There are different points of views regarding ethical issues in qualitative research. The absolutist point of view concerns mostly protection, prevention, privacy and informed consent. It stands for the fact that no scientists have rights to invade the privacy of other people. The relativists stand for the right of the investigators to study whatever they wish to. The only 'if' is that they should only study the thing that flows from their own experiences. The agenda for the study must be set by the individual and not by some larger scientific community. In the deception stand the researcher may use new methods she or he sees necessary to get the needed understanding for any situation in hand. This method consists of lies and building a setting for your study. The contextualists are focusing on understanding the processes in their natural contexts. No generalising is made. (Ethics in health research; 2012)

6 Research methods and analysing the data

In qualitative research one may use many different types of collecting data. Different approaches are shadowing, storytelling, narratology and grounded theory practice. The collected data can include group discussions, interviews, field notes and pictures. Most known methods of collecting information are participant observation, field notes, structured interview, semi-structured interview, unstructured interview and analysis of documents and materials.

Interviews are the most common way to gather data for qualitative research. Qualitative interview tries to fill both factual and meaning levels. Interviews are best when used after questionnaires to fill up the story behind the participant. Interviewing also gives the researcher the chance to ask follow up questions and to read the facial expressions that can tell a lot more than just blunt answers on the questionnaire sheet. There are four different interview types; conversational interview that goes with the flow because there are no predetermined questions, general interview guide approach that concentrates on getting certain information from the interviewees, standardized and open-ended interview where all the interviewees are asked the same questions that makes the results easier to analyse and the last is closed and fixed-response interview that allows the researcher to give the interviewee alternatives for answers. "When they do study interviews, these are taken as a topic rather than as a resource, that is, interviews may be studied as objects in themselves, to see how they are produced, but rarely in order to collect information on phenomena 'outside' the interview context. This is one aspect of ethnomethodology's 'situationalism', dis-

cussed previously, and it is compatible with a 'specimen perspective', rather than a 'factist' one." (TenHave 2004, 56.)

Systematic observation is the follow up for basic observation. In systematic observation all the vain information is cut of and the focus in only on the main ideas and main themes. Before the actual observation there is a form made to support the observation itself and to make it easier to do some notes about what you see. The form makes it easier for you to keep your focus on the important things. (Observation 2012; Systematic observation 2012.)

Mystery shopping is a way to discover facts and details by going in to your research place without making a big deal about your self. Mystery shopping creates a possibility to see things in a different way and certainly from a different angle. Mystery shopping can be used together with other methods for example documentation by camera. Mystery shopping is the perfect opportunity to collect photos from your research topic.

Action research is based on the facts that what people do instead of what people say they can do. Action research is a combination of practice and theory and it works through change and reflection in a problematic situation within a mutual framework. "Action research is an iterative process involving researchers and practitioners acting together on a particular cycle of activities, including problem diagnosis, action intervention, and reflective learning." (Avison; Lau; Myers; Nielsen. 1999)

The first thing to do when processing qualitative data is editing. This is done to collect errors and omissions and to correct them if possible. Then the researcher must analyse the data. This way the data is shared into different classes depending on the phenomena in hand. Next is tabulating. Now the researcher summarises the raw data for further analysing. Tabulation is a simple method where the data is in columns and rows. Tabulation is essential for seeing the errors and because it allows the researcher to see the differences or similarities between the results. (Dawson 2002; Kothari 1985; Kumar 2005)

Analysing the data needs four different steps. The first step is to identify the main themes of your research. This way the researcher comes familiar of the meaning of the research and the communication in it. The second step is assigning codes to the main themes. Themes are coded with numbers or key words so that it helps the researcher identify the data. Next is classifying the responses under the main themes. Here the researcher goes through the transcripts of all the interviews that have been done and then the information needs to be classified again under different themes. The last thing is to integrate the results into your text. (Dawson 2002; Kothari 1985; Kumar 2005)

Reporting is the last major task in your research. This is how you can tell the world what you have done and this way you can show the world your findings. Report should always be written in academic format and the language should always be correct and not journalistic. These results and the actual report can be published in newspapers or magazines around the world. (Dawson 2002; Kothari 1985; Kumar 2005)

Analysing is a term that is hard to define. When analysing one must break the subject in pieces and then categorise the pieces. All the information is usable when analysing for example results of some kind. For example when I analyse my research results I must take into consideration all the aspects that I have in my research. When analysing one must also take into consideration also the bad and good qualities. All the qualities also reflect on the analysing results.

7 The results: Ecological promises and execution

In my thesis I conducted a research about the eco standards of two very different hotel chains. These two chains are both Nordic and both function in Finland. One of them is a prime mover on the ecological field and the other one is a beginner. I wanted to see what was going on the paper and actually inside the hotels. My main research question was “What are the ecological promises and how are they executed in the hotel chains?” I did my research using qualitative methods. My main research methods were pre-research, systematic observation, mystery shopping, interviews and documentation by camera. I will analyse the results by comparing the promises to the execution that I discovered during my research.

7.1 Restel Cumulus: Eco-deeds

Restel Cumulus has three daily eco deeds according to their web sites. One is that their waste in every unit carefully and efficiently. “All our units carry out careful waste sorting and efficient recycling.” (Restel 2012). During my research I found out that the hotels I visited had recycling bins in them but recycling wasn’t monitored in any way. The task of every single employee, was to recycle according to their own self esteem. Cumulus hotels are the most advanced hotels in the Restel chain when it comes to recycling because Cumulus hotels have recycling bins in their hotels. (Photo 1).



Photo 1. Recycling at Restel. (Järvenpää 2012)

Another of Restels daily eco deeds is to encourage their customers to be involved in their energy saving system. “We encourage our customers to do their part to save energy.” (Restel 2012) This is done by messages in hotel rooms that tell the customer to turn the lights out when they leave and not to leave their windows open. These messages are shown in the hotel rooms’ television. What I discovered in my research was that there wasn’t that much of encouragements done. The encouragement style has led to the situation where the company doesn’t have the courage to do radical changes towards more ecological future because they are afraid what the customers would have to say about the changes.

“We operate in compliance with environmental legislation, for example, by increasing awareness among our staff members through training and education, and by implementing our own environmental policy programme. In all of our hotels and restaurants, an Environmental Supervisor is appointed to coordinate and monitor the programme implementation.” (Restel 2012). Education about ecological issues is very important and it is easily marketed as an eco-action. Unfortunately my research showed me that the lack of eco education was huge. By educating their staff Restel Cumulus could reach more efficient ways to act ecologically.

“Restel is using Fortum Carbon Free electricity, which is produced in an environmentally friendly manner. Electricity bearing the Fortum Carbon Free eco-label is 100% carbon dioxide free and produced at Nordic nuclear power plants or from renewable energy sources. The objective is to integrate the efficient use of energy as well as to monitor and develop energy efficiency as a part of our daily routines.” (Restel 2012). Restel Cumulus uses the carbon free electricity and there is a certificate that proves their implication to the ecological acts in energy usage savings.

“Restel is involved in the EU Energy Efficiency Agreement project, which in Finland is administered by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy. The project aims at achieving

a 9 per cent reduction in energy consumption among all EU member states by the year 2016. A total of 38 hotels are participating in the Energy Efficiency project. We are committed to pursuing a reduction in energy consumption that will total 10,300 MWh less in 2020 than in 2005 - the reduction is equal to the annual consumption of 500 homes with electrical heating.” (Restel 2012.) Restel Cumulus hotels are involved in this project to reduce energy usage by the year 2016. Also the personnel were aware of this project and they were talking about it proudly.

“The use of disposable or individually wrapped products has been minimized in all our operations. In hotel bathrooms, liquid soap dispensers have replaced individually wrapped soaps. The breakfast at our hotels is planned with the aim of utilizing environmentally friendly packaging and products. Single-use and individually wrapped items are only used when necessary to respond to the expectations of specific customers. Our restaurants favour the use of recyclable or biodegradable materials as preferred product packaging materials.” (Restel 2012.) During my research I found out that the soaps were handled as promised but there was a lot of single packed products on the breakfast table. For example butter, jelly and marmalade where packed in single packages.

7.2 Scandic: Eco-deeds

“Since we started our environmental work, we have given 12,000 team members training on sustainability issues” (Scandic 2012). The personnel in Scandic are being trained and all new employees have to go to an ecological training before coming to work. Service at Scandic is a training course that all the employees take and there one can also get ecology training. “Every hotel has a team member with responsibility for the environment. He or she makes sure that the general environmental plan is followed and that all the team members' initiatives and ideas for a sustainable world are evaluated.” (Scandic 2012.) In Scandic they monitor their waste control for example by doing random samples of garbage bags. Scandic also remembers to remind their staff about the importance and the order of recycling for example. As a part of their training they keep these guidelines seen on photo 2 on their walls.



Photo 2. Recycling guidelines at Scandic. (Järvenpää 2012)

“The Swan is a Nordic ecolabelling system. Outside the Nordic region, we work with the Flower. This is a common ecolabelling system agreed by the EU. The Flower works in the same way as the Swan. To obtain the EU Flower, you need to meet their requirements in terms of the environment, health and function.” (Scandic 2012.) Scandic has the Nordic Eco Label in four out of five of their hotels in the Nordic countries. Because Scandic has hotels also in Europe for example Germany and Belgium they had to get another Eco Label to support them which in this case in the European Eco Label.

“We have measured our water consumption once a month since 1996. Initially, every guest was consuming 240 litres of water per day. Now that figure is down to 209 litres per day, lower than is required for our hotels to carry the Nordic Swan ecolabel.” (Scandic 2012.) Water savings are a big part of the criteria of Nordic Eco Label. All the taps and showers in Scandic hotels are eco models that are seen in photos 3 and 4. These taps do not pass through as much water as the normal taps. Still I was surprised when I saw no automatic taps. They weren’t promised anywhere but I took them for granted.



Photo 3. Eco shower at Scandic. (Järvenpää 2012)



Photo 4. Eco tap at Scandic. (Järvenpää 2012)

“Organic food is one way of contributing to a sustainable future for both animals and humans. We also think it tastes good. We want all our hotels to be able to offer you organic food and food that is produced in a healthy manner. We have come quite a long way in this respect. Today, we serve a total of 1,000 tonnes of organic food every year in the Nordic region. Good food naturally has to be available to everyone. We therefore serve bread that is gluten-free and milk without lactose.” (Scandic2012.) During my research I found out that Scandic serves a lot of organic food and their menus are full of it. Organic foods and wines are much more expensive than normally grown food, beverages and wines. Still Scandic claims that the extra cost is not a big deal. It takes a lot of interest towards the subject to earn the Eco Labels. By serving also environmentally friendly products Scandic doesn’t just support the nature, they support the organic farmers as well. A consumer in Finland can recognise organic food or wines from the photos 5 and 6 below.



Photo 5. The logo of organic food in Europe. (EU 2012)



Photo 6. Fair trade logo. (Fair trade 2012)

“An empty carafe in the hotel rooms is smart green thinking. Despite bottled water being available to buy at Scandic Anglais in Stockholm, guests are encouraged refill their bottles with tap water. It tastes good, costs nothing extra and does not need transporting. A small but important example of how each hotel can help towards a sustainable world and at the same time give you a better experience.” (Scandic 2012.) Scandic has created this carafe from recyclable glass and created a hand mark of a Swedish athlete. In photo 7 there is Ms Acs holding the carafe.

“Our water bottle was designed by a Swede with a feel for water - an Olympic swimmer by the name of Therese Alshammar. Therese worked with designer Jonas Torstensson to come up with the finished product. The bottle is made from hand-blown recycled glass and the cap is also recycled. One krona per bottle sold goes to the Scandic Sustainability Fund, which supports initiatives that contribute to a sustainable society.” (Scandic 2012.)



Photo 7. Ecological water carafe at Scandic. (Järvenpää 2012)

7.3 Result summary

As seen above the text written in the hotel chains web pages doesn't always reflect the execution going on inside the hotels. The differences are not that dramatic with Scandic as they are with Restel. Although this might also reflect on the fact that Restel has many different hotel chains inside their big organization. It is more difficult to fulfil all the standards when one has many different hotel types and also many different types of facilities.

When it comes to Restel, Cumulus hotels have done a much better job with completing their eco standards than with their other hotels. Cumulus hotels are the most advanced hotels in the whole chain and it is no wonder that Restel's future eco deeds are focusing on Cumulus hotels.

8 Restel Cumulus and Scandic: Observation and interview results

Results are based on several interviews, systematic observation and mystery shopping. The results will also be analysed by comparing the interviewing answers to each other. The analysis is the contents analysis and will be done question by question. The interviews were held in Finnish and translated into English later on. The interview sheet and a result summary are also seen in the appendix. (Appendix 6 and 7)

8.1 Eco definitions and membership in eco-hotel chains

Restel Cumulus expects that one needs to take into consideration the big scales if they want to be ecological. According to Mr Putszai eco hotel saves water and electricity and does not forget the customers' needs. "I don't really know how to define an eco hotel but I think that one needs to take into consideration nature friendly construction methods and the life cycle of different products". (Putszai 2012).

According to Mr Putszai Restel Cumulus hotels are not eco hotels yet. "We are clearly behind the development". "It is difficult today to announce yourself to an eco hotel because there are so many people who are ready to prove you wrong. All the Restel hotels facilities are rented and that makes the ecological changes more difficult. We are not the only ones to decide the properties future and if the land lord doesn't have the interests to change

then we can't do anything about it." Today our ecological steps consist of property maintenance and recycling. "Recycling is not that important with customers. The customers do not waste that much while visiting our hotels so the amount of waste is minimal when it comes to them. Recycling can also be difficult for some of our customers if they do not recycle in home." (Putszai 2012.)

Mrs Acs from Scandic stated that "Eco hotel full fills the Swan labels criteria and commits itself to a trusting and sustainable environment friendly work that involves all the employees." According to Mrs Acs the work to become eco hotel needs a wide and trusting network with open communication and honest standards. The ecological work started fifteen years ago in Scandic chain and it has been a long journey. Scandic has fourteen eco labelled hotels in Finland today and it has turned out to be cheaper to act ecologically than they thought in the beginning.

8.2 Recognition of the eco standards

"Our eco standards can be found in the internet but now we have the goal to change and better our eco standards until the year 2016." (Putszai 2012). The whole Restel chain has this project starting in 2012 where the goal is to become more ecological and renew their facilities so that they would fulfil their new standards. They will focus on this via their suppliers. The knowledge of different eco markings and labels is growing inside the chain and Restel has divided different duties and response areas to different people to manage. Scandic has an ecological manager in every country and in Finland the position is held by Raija Acs. Scandics eco standards go hand in hand with the Nordic Eco labels standards. When the criteria changes the chain follows them to a better future.

8.3 Monitoring the eco standards

In Restel Cumulus chain they keep an eye on the big things and most of the responsibility is on the suppliers because if they make a mistake it is in much bigger scale than if the hotel mistakes. Restel Cumulus hotels have recycling bins all around the building but they are empty most of the times because the customers don't use them. Restel Cumulus has done some small changes for example they only change sheets every three days instead of every day. Towels are changed as often as the customer wants. Restel Cumulus hotels demand that their partners have certificates about their business so that they could monitor how ecological their partners are. Each one of Restel Cumulus units does their own ecological plan and they aren't monitored in any way. They try to avoid vain prints and light. Restel

Cumulus hotels have these property checks what gives them an opportunity to discuss the possibilities of control the energy usage with their landlord.

Scandic has a sustainability work group that keeps track on every ones doings. “We have to follow our standards if we want to keep our eco labels. We have a “recycling manager” who takes care that all our waste is properly recycled. This means that he or she does random samples to the cleaning staff and checks that they follow the recycling and other standards. We have these “service at Scandic” sessions where we revise our ecological standards.” (Acs 2012.)

8.4 Customer feedback on eco-hotel

Restel Cumulus has had some bad feedback from their customers about the changes that they have tried to do. For example they tried to change their showers more ecological by reducing the water flow but they got so many negative feedbacks and a huge water accident in their hotel that they changed the system back. The fact that they have not changed many things towards more ecological future has not effected on their customer flow. Some changes have been made because they don't want to loose customers. “Nokia is one of our biggest customers and they demand that all the hotel chains who wish to have them as a customer must measure their carbon footprint. So we did measure ours so that we could keep up with the competition.” (Putszai 2012.)

Scandics customers know that Scandic is an eco hotel so they have not complained. Scandic also has many companies as their customers and they think that the fact that they are more ecological than others may have something to do with their standards business customers. “Our customers have mostly demands and not complaints. They want more organic foods and wines.” (Acs 2012.)

8.5 Future eco-projects

Restel is applying for the Nordic eco label for three of our Cumulus hotels. These three are Cumulus Tampere, Cumulus Postitalo Helsinki and Cumulus Jyväskylä. We have also hired a person to find out what it takes to get the Nordic eco label to these three hotels. The main goal is to have the Nordic eco label for all the Cumulus hotels someday. This year we also have this goal to measure the carbon footprint from all of our forty-nine hotels. Also this year we are going to reduce our electricity usage by five per cents. Scandic has the goal to fill the new regulations for the Nordic eco label in the future also. We are also trying to re-

duce our carbon dioxide emissions so that in the year 2025 there would be none left. Today we purchase ecological electricity, which is produced only with wind and water.

9 Conclusions and development ideas

I started the thesis process without a commissioner and for my professional interest. The aim was to study as much as possible about the ecological standards of the two hotel chains in case. My research could not take stand without the theory backing it up so I had to base my research on my theory. In my thesis I tried to use as many references as possible to get as wide picture of the situation in hand as possible. When thinking of my research questions I think that I found the main facts and definitions to support my research. Because one of these chains already has Nordic Eco Labelled hotels I had to discover the criteria that the hotels needs to fulfil before getting the honour to have the eco label. The purpose of my thesis was to find out the knowledge on environmental issues in Finland and also to help the hotel chains to see that this is a hot topic.

My research had a narrow scope and focused on two very different hotel chains. I wanted to find out if Finland is behind Sweden in the ecological issues. The knowledge on ecological matters is a growing trend in Finland. The ecological changes taking place in Finland are being orchestrated by the major companies. For example Nokia demands that all their co-operative companies measure their carbon footprint. They still don't comment if the figure is satisfactory or not but they still demand to know it.

In the competition of Restel Cumulus and Scandic the Swedish Scandic are ahead of Finnish hotel chains in the sustainability and ecological projects and execution. Scandic clearly is a prime mover in the ecological field in Scandinavia. Although only fourteen of Scandics' twenty-five hotels are eco-labelled in Scandinavia Scandic takes the trophy home with clear victory. Restel is clearly behind the eco growth but they are doing some changes to keep up with the competition. The idea is to change three Cumulus hotels into eco labelled hotels during the next four years.

Today customers are aware of eco hotels and eco labels. Eco hotels are seen as ethical service providers and the eco labels are trusted to tell the truth about the hotel chains actions. With the knowledge come the demands. Customers know what they want and satisfying their needs is a number one goal in hotel business. When customers know about the ecological factors they can demand more from the hotel chains. For example organic food and

wines have appeared on the hotel restaurants menus during the last decade. This way the customers are a part of the hotels network and they reflect on the hotels eco deeds.

For the ecological changes to keep on growing the hotel staff needs to be educated. The education on ecological matters is too little today and it needs to be implemented in the hotels business plan. If the hotels personnel don't know how to act ecologically how are they supposed to make the right choices? In my opinion the eco hotels should have automatic taps all around the hotels. The taps could help the hotels to reduce their water usage even more than ecological taps. Also recycling should be a part of everyday life in all hotels. For example Restel claims that they recycle all their waste but they don't have recycling bins in all their hotel rooms or in the reception. For example I went to Holiday Inn Messukeskus to interview Mr Putszai and the hotel had recycling bins in the rooms and also in the general facilities but not in the reception.

10 Self-evaluation

On the positive aspect I am proud that I was able to focus only to the main definitions and research points. After including the definitions that one needs to know to focus and understand my research the rest of the theory part was quite short. Because I wanted to stay focused on my topic I didn't add anything that would not be valid for the research. In the end I think that my thesis should have been in a bigger scale but I am still happy about my results.

As a researcher and an interviewer I did also some mistakes. An interviewer should always be as objective and neutral as possible. Unfortunately I wasn't. I started my research with prejudices towards Restel chain. In my mind I knew that Restel was an underdog compared to Scandic. My prejudices started in the summer of 2011 when I did my internship in a Restel hotel where the ecological issues were not taken into consideration almost at all. This is where I got the idea to my thesis and I often thought that there would be no positive results from Restel but I found some positive surprises.

If I had the chance I would change Restel chain to Sokos Hotels chain. This is just because Sokos Hotels is the biggest competition in ecological deeds to Scandic in the Scandinavian area. This comparison would have been more interesting and the differences would have been less dramatic. Knowing now the facts about the Nordic Eco Label and the demands they have for the label it would have been interesting to know which of those two hotels have fulfilled their standards.

This topic for my thesis gave me a wider picture about the situation that Finland is when it comes to the eco matters. I have always wanted to work in a Nordic Eco Labelled hotel and now when I start my career in one I have the knowledge about the hotels functions and basic values. Through my thesis I learned a lot about academic writing and doing research. The process was not a simple as I hoped but I had fun doing my thesis. My thesis also got me thinking the network of hotels and all the factors that need to be taken into consideration when applying for an eco label. Although my thesis was only about the tourism industry and about hotel chains the topic is much wider. The basics of my theses topic could be used in any type of education. Overall my thesis gave me more trust on myself because I have always been a bit afraid of it. Knowing now that I was able to graduate and to finish my thesis I know that I have the knowledge and professionalism that I need in the work life. My thesis as well as the three years in Laurea UAS has given me the time to grow as a person and as a professional tourism student.

References

Literature and articles

Avison, D., Lau, F., Myers, M. & Nielsen P. A. January 1999. Communications of the amc. Vol. 42, No. 1

Dawson, C. 2002. Practical Research Methods. New Delhi. UBS. Publishers' Distributors.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. 2005. The SAGE Handbook for Qualitative Research

Fennell, David A.. Ecotourism : An Introduction. London, GBR: Routledge, 1999. P. 4-9.

Gössling, Stefan; Hultman, Johan. 2006. Ecotourism in Scandinavia : Lessons in Theory and Practice. Wallingford, Oxfordshire, GBR: CABI Publishing. P. 1, 89.

Hammer L. 2010. Improving the EU Eco Label- Discussion paper for the Belgian presidency meeting. 2010. Director General of DG Environment, in a letter to FERN on 21 May 2010.

Hill, Jennifer (Editor); Gale, Tim (Editor). 2009. Ecotourism and Environmental Sustainability. Abingdon, Oxon, GBR: Ashgate Publishing Group. P. 3.

Honey, Martha. 2008. Ecotourism and Sustainable Development : Who Owns Paradise? (2nd Edition). Covelo, CA, USA: Island Press. P. 4.

Husserl, E. 1970. Trans D Carr Logical investigations New York, Humanities Press

Ten Have, Paul. 2004. Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology. London, GBR: SAGE Publications Inc. (US). P. 56.

Zeppel, Heather. 2006. Indigenous Ecotourism : Sustainable Development and Management. Wallingford, Oxfordshire, GBR: CABI Publishing. P. 285.

Electronic sources

Cumulus 2012. Homepage. Accessed 22.12.2011 - 20.04.2012.

www.cumulus.fi

Dawson, C. 2002; Kothari, C.R 1985; & Kumar, R. 2005. Accessed 13.2.2012.

http://ihmctan.edu/PDF/notes/Research_Methodology.pdf

Energy Star 2012. Homepage. Accessed 22.01.2012.

www.energystar.gov

EPA United States Environment Protection Agency 2012. Homepage. Accessed

22.01.2012. www.epa.gov

Ethics in health research. Accessed 20.2.2012.

<http://www.sahealthinfo.org/ethics/ethicsqualitative.htm>

European Eco label 2012. Homepage. Accessed 22.01.2012.

www.ecolabel.eu

Global Warming 2012. Sustainable Earth - Sustainable Future. Accessed

22.01.2012.

<http://globalwarming.com>

Green Hotels 2012. Accessed 1.4.2012.

<http://www.greenthehotels.com/eng/BohdanowiczSimanicMartinacEcolabelsSB04.pdf>

Lester S. 1999. An introduction to phenomenological research. Accessed 20.2.2012.

<http://www.sld.demon.co.uk/resmethy.pdf>

Millar, M. 2008. Hotel Guests' Preferences for Green Hotel Attributes. University of San Francisco, January, 2-3. Accessed 22.01.2012.

<http://repository.usfca.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=hosp&sei-re-dir=1&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fscholar.google.fi%2Fscholar%3Fstart%3D20%26q%3>

Ddefini-

[tion%2Bhotel%26hl%3Dfi%26as_sdt%3D0#search=%22definition%20hotel%22](#)

New York Times 2011. Global Warming & Climate Change. December. Accessed 22.01.2012.

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/science/topics/globalwarming/index.html#>

Nimon, W. & Beghin, J. 1999. Are Eco-labels valuable? Evidence from the apparel industry. American journal of agricultural economics, 801 - 811. Accessed 15.01.2012.

<http://www.jstor.org/pss/1244325>

Nordic Ecolabel 2012. Accessed 28.12.2011.

www.nordic-ecolabel.org

Observation: Systematic observation. Accessed 20.2.2012.

<http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/sommerb/sommerdemo/observation/systematic.htm>

Research Methodology. Accessed 2.2.2012.

http://www.ihmctan.edu/PDF/notes/Research_Methodology.pdf

Research plan, Academy Of Finland. Accessed 20.2.2012.

<http://www.aka.fi/en-GB/A/For-researchers/How-to-apply/Appendices/Research-plan/>

Restel 2012. Accessed 04.01. - 20.04.2012.

www.restel.fi

Scandic 2012. Accessed 22.12.2011 - 20.04.2012.

www.scandichotels.fi

Spencer R. Weart 31.10.2008. The Discovery of Global Warming. Harvard University Press.

http://www.google.fi/books?hl=fi&lr=&id=qX8yCpETS-IC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Spencer+R.+Weart++The+Discovery+of+Global+Warming&ots=B6VJwSG-xQ&sig=XFhS5Kt5Wc3DCzQ-yG5Jep-vYlc&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Spencer%20R.%20Weart%20%20The%20Discovery%20of%20Global%20Warming&f=false

Wikipedia 2012. Accessed 6.2.2012.

http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualitative_research

Unpublished resources

Interview Restel Cumulus Helsinki Region Manager

Interview Scandic Espoo Hotel Manager

Interview Restel Cumulus Hakaniemi Receptionists

Interview Scandic Simonkenttä Receptionists

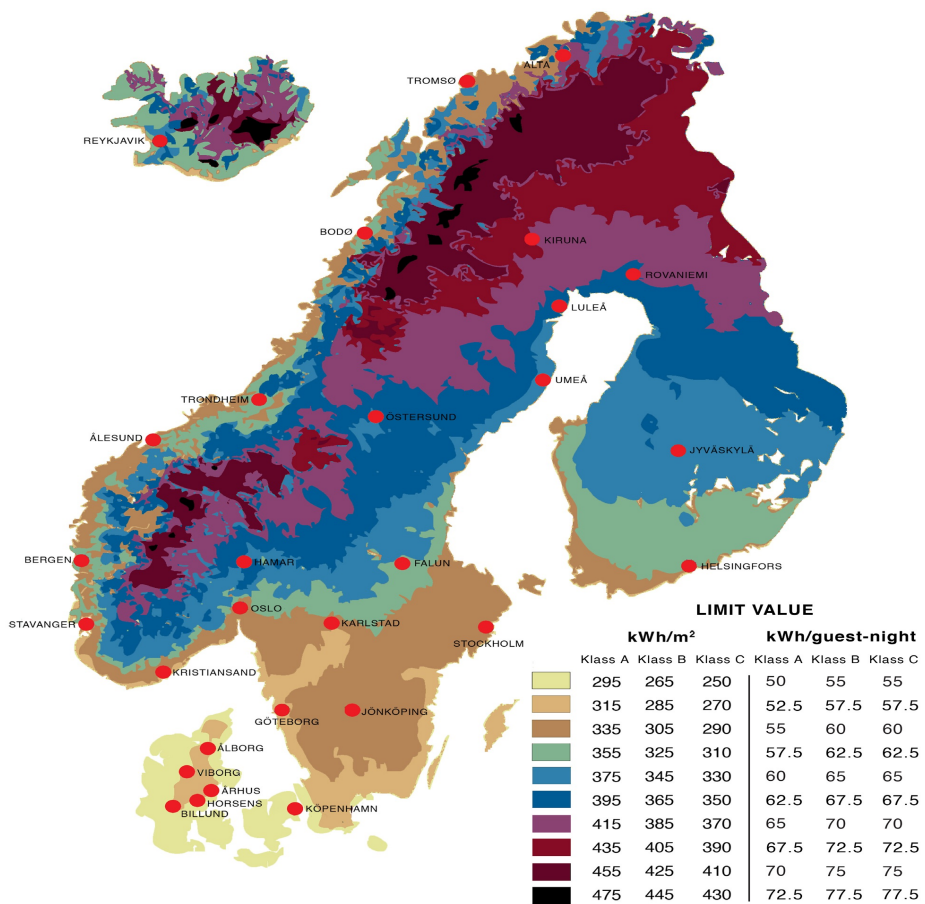
11 Appendices

Appendix 1: Nordic Eco Label Logo



Appendix 2: Nordic Eco Labels energy consumption table

Source: NORDKLIM 2001, Nordic climate maps, DNMI report 06/01



Appendix 3: European Eco Label Logo



Appendix 4: Energy Star Logo



Appendix 5: Research plan

Week / year	Work
52/11	Doing the first part of the thesis (from theme to thesis)
1/12	Doing the first part of the thesis (from theme to thesis)

2/12	Doing the first part of the thesis (from theme to thesis)
3/12	Doing the first part of the thesis (from theme to thesis) Visiting travel fair and seeking for materials and interviews from professionals
4/12	Starting the second part of thesis (research methods)
5/12	Research methods, Quantitative research method
6/12	Research methods, Qualitative research method Mystery shopping in Scandic Simonkenttä Interviews at Scandic Simonkenttä Observation Photography
7/12	Research methods, Research plan Interview at Scandic Espoo with Raija Asc (Hotel manager)
8/12	Visit to Cumulus Airport Interviews Observation
9/12	Meeting with Gabor Pusztai in Cumulus Interviewing Observation
10/12	Analysing results
11/12	Analysing results
12/12	Preparing for the 75 % seminar
13/12	75 % seminar
14/12	Finalising the results and the thesis Summaries
15/12	Returning of thesis

Appendix 6: Interview sheet to Restel Cumulus and Scandic receptionists

1. Is your hotel an eco hotel?

2. Are you aware of different eco labels, where do you get your eco information?

3. Are there many customers who have questions about the Nordic Eco label?
4. Does your company provide education about ecological issues?
5. Do the staffs opinions count when the chain is considering new eco projects?

Appendix 7: Interview sheet to Restel Region manager and Scandic Hotel Manager

1. Define an eco hotel
2. Are your hotels eco hotels in your opinion?

3. Does your chain have any Nordic Eco labeled hotels?
4. In your own words tell about the eco standards.
5. Do you think that your chain follows their eco standards?
6. Does any one monitor that the standards are met?
7. Have you gotten any feedback from the customers?
8. Do you have any future projects regarding ecological matters?

Appendix 8: Interview result summary

	Cumulus	Scandic
Recycling part of everyday actions	+ / -	+
Suppliers are carefully chosen (eco standards)	+	+
Cleaning is done with environment friendly chemicals	+ / -	+
Sheets are not changed every day	+	+
Towels are not changed every day	customers demands	customers demands
Single-packed products are no longer used in breakfast	-	+
Organic foods and wines are found in the menu	-	+
Usage of Fair Trade products	-	+
Ecological changes and development is seen every work day	+ / -	+
Employees have effect on the future ecological projects	+ / -	+
New employees are trained to act ecologically	-	+