

T H E S I S

**Impact of Photography on Customer Experience in
Adventure Travel Services**

Elements of Memorable Experiences

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the role that photography plays in enhancing customer experiences in adventure travel services, how memorable experiences are formed and whether photography adds value to tour experiences.

The paper discusses existing theoretical framework, including the formation of memorable experiences (MEs), experience design, connection between photographs and memory and agency in photographic experiences, together with data from commissioner's guests. Data was collected via online questionnaire during winter season 2024-2025. Guests who participated in at least one photography tour with the commissioner were invited to participate in the questionnaire.

The thesis was commissioned by Beyond Arctic, a small-group and photography focused adventure tour operator in Rovaniemi and Levi, Finland. The commissioner's aim was to gain insight into the factors that influence their guests' purchase decisions and whether their photography services add value to their guests' tour experiences.

Results indicate that photography plays a considerable role in enhancing tour experiences by increasing guests' sense of immersion, providing tangible memories that help recall the experiences and providing added value. While typical factors such as reviews and tour content remain important, photographs appeared as a notable factor in choosing the tour and tour operator.

The responses to receiving photographs from tour experiences show how a photography service can enhance immersion in the experience by enhancing engagement with the activity itself. A photography service provides added value to guests and enhances the existing value of the tour, highlighting the importance of the photographs as memories that allow time-travel back to the experience. When embedded into service design, photography can enhance engagement, mindfulness, immersion, memory and satisfaction.

Keywords: adventure services, experience tourism, adventure travel, photography, customer experience, guides (occupations), documentary photography

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1 INTRODUCTION

A picture tells a thousand words. Throughout history, all the way from the 1800s, photos have played an important role in depicting events, discoveries and sharing knowledge. It has given people the ability to be remembered past their lifetimes and the ability to experience events second-hand. A picture offers the ability to freeze a memory in detail that a mind could distort or forget, and sharing an experience with a loved one who wasn't there personally can enhance sense of meaning for a memory.

Photos used to be rare commodities. Taking a single photo required time and equipment that wasn't available for the average person, and therefore many of the earliest photos we have seen much more serious and posed than now. In today's modern digitized world, however, nearly everyone has a mini-sized computer in their pockets with a relatively good camera. With easy access to cameras, taking photos have become a part of everyday life; for experiences to be shared with friends, family and even larger groups of people through messages and social media. As a result, the nature of photographs themselves have evolved into something more documentative. This manifests in everything from using smartphones to capture memorable moments with friends to the rising demand of documentative photographers for important life events such as weddings. Better access to cameras has also enabled the average person to gain physical memorabilia of their travels and experiences.

Advances in camera technology have not only benefited individuals, but also helped reach wider audiences. From service providers to product developers and cultural events, photos have been found to be effective methods of communication and marketing. So much so that in today's world it seems the majority of photos used by businesses and service providers benefit the provider more than the receiver. Photos make for good marketing, but what if they could be used to go back to the individual level and be used to help achieve enhanced travel experiences?

Besides marketing, photography is used widely as a tool in various environments, such as education, communication and self-expression, to provide people with empowering experiences through which they can gain memories, as well as self-confidence.

The commissioner of this thesis is a small-group photography tour operator, Beyond Arctic, in Rovaniemi and Levi, Finland. They offer travelers professional photography services as part of guided winter activities and arctic experiences. In the hectic schedules of the tourism

season, they take time and effort to give their guests experiences where they have an opportunity to focus in the moment, yet still receive the photos many of them wish to have of their travels.

For this thesis, I aspired to explore how these photographs impact Beyond Arctic's guests and if photography helps them have more meaningful travel experiences. In the tourism field, photography is oftentimes used as a means of marketing to reach future customers, instead of a customer-first approach. In the future, I wish to see photography being utilized in more ways than simply marketing. It's a powerful tool that can be used in more ways.

The thesis gives Beyond Arctic an opportunity to explore why travelers choose their service; information that can give insight for assessing the strengths of their business and evaluating the role photography plays in enhancing their guests' experiences and customer-business relationship. Determining whether customers perceive added value from receiving photographs and how it impacts their travel experience can provide insights that could guide future business development and marketing strategies.

Photography has played a significant role in shaping my personal and professional journeys throughout my life. Growing up during the widespread development of smartphones and the rise of social media, from a young age I became aware of the importance of visual memories. The need to document life has been present in various phases of my life and photos have had a lasting impression on me during each one. From seeing photos of me and my teammates competing in scouts competitions, to being shown pictures of myself playing in an orchestra at 15 years old, photos have given me a sense of accomplishment and acknowledgement of things I am capable of. Not to forget they've given me the ability to time-travel back to those moments.

My interest in photography began at the age of fourteen when I received my first camera as a present. Initially, I used it to document everyday moments with friends, creating physical records of my teenage years, which are still some of my most cherished memories. Over time, the hobby evolved into a deeper connection with photography as a tool for personal expression and memory preservation. Later on, my passion for photography expanded that, eventually introducing me to the concept of documentary photography through hiking and outdoor adventures.

In 2021, I realized I wanted to be able to share the joys of documentary photography with others, and started to pursue professional opportunities with photography. Later that year, I began studies at HUMAK University of Applied Sciences where I came to realize photography can be incorporated with outdoor education and adventure travel. This led me to seek job opportunities that combined guiding with photography, and ended up leading me to Beyond Arctic.

During my first year at HUMAK I worked as a photography guide at Beyond Arctic and observed how guests appreciated receiving photos as part of the tour and how those photos influenced their perception of their experiences. These observations became the primary inspiration for the thesis, which explores the role of photography in enhancing individual adventure experiences.

While in tourism photography is primarily used in marketing, it has potential to be used as a tool to enhance personal experiences. Though its attention has increased especially in Northern Lights tours, its use in other guided experiences remains under-explored. To support the commissioner's operations, it was aimed to examine how photography can serve not only as a promotional tool, but also as a means of creating deeper, more meaningful experiences for travelers.

2 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2.1 Commissioner

Beyond Arctic is a small-group and photography focused adventure tour operator in Rovaniemi and Levi, Finland. The company was founded in 2016 by Juho and Annika Uutela, who had years of experience in tourism and a passion for photography they wanted to bring into the tourism sector to provide travelers with once-in-a-lifetime experiences, and eventually became the first photography focused tour operator in the area (Beyond Arctic 2025).

The activities Beyond Arctic provides can be divided roughly into four categories: *northern lights photography tours, winter activities with photography services, nature photography tours and arctic animals photography tours* (Beyond Arctic 2025). Each tour includes a gallery of approximately 10-15 professional photographs taken by photography-wilderness guides during the experience. This allows customers the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the experience without needing to capture photos on their own devices, if they wish, while still receiving tangible memories from the day. In addition to activity tours, Beyond Arctic offers photoshoot services for travellers wishing to commemorate their travels through portraits or family photos.

On northern lights photography tours guides take their guests to locations across Lapland to search for Aurora Borealis sightings and photograph the Auroras. These tours also involve teaching and educating guests with their own or rental cameras on how to photograph the northern lights, as well as providing guests with photos of themselves with the Aurora Borealis. Northern lights photography tours are typically done by car, but have the option to be accompanied by skiing as well.

Winter activities with photography services include ice fishing, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing and day hikes. Each tour includes a gallery of photographs taken by the guide during the activity. If guests don't have their own camera they wish to capture moments with, they can simply enjoy the day and activity while the guide makes sure their experience is captured.

Nature photography tours are for guests looking for winter day hikes and are especially designed with photographers in mind looking for beautiful locations in Finland to capture.

Currently these tours are done in four locations; Riisitunturi National Park, Korouoma Frozen Waterfalls, Oulanka National Park and Explore the Wilderness tour in a nature location close to Rovaniemi. These tours include a day hike with a photography guide in a location suitable for nature photography.

Arctic animals photography tours take place in either a local reindeer farm with a photographer or in Ranua Zoo. On these tours the guide captures photographs of the guests and the animals.

Throughout the years an increasing number of tour operators have recognized providing guests with photos is an effective method of going the extra mile, one that seems to lead to higher customer satisfaction. Especially on Northern Lights hunting tours it has become more popular to provide guests with photos, and you can find several Aurora Hunting tours online from different providers in the area with a photographer or photos promised (Visit Rovaniemi 2025). What makes Beyond Arctic stand out among the many tour operators is their sole focus on photography across all tours. Every guide at Beyond Arctic is also a photographer and all activities with a guide include a photography service, not just aurora hunting.

Beyond Arctic is committed to providing their guests with high-quality personal experiences and professionalism in photography. Their customer demographic is wide and guests come for tours from all over the world. Beyond Arctic keeps group sizes to a maximum of 8 people to be able to keep providing travellers with exclusive and personal experiences and have several private locations around Rovaniemi area for activities.

2.2 Commissioner's need

The commissioner's aim for this thesis is to gain insight into how impactful a photography service is to their guests' experience. As one of the first tour operators in the area to offer professional photography services in adventure tourism, the commissioner aims to gather information of the value of their photography services and to further understand why customers choose them and their photography tours.

The thesis provides the commissioner with insights into guests' perspectives, helping them evaluate, support and develop their business. They gain insight into why customers choose their service and evaluate the role of photography in enhancing guest experiences and customer-business relationship.

Studying the impact of photography on customer experience in adventure tourism is beneficial for several reasons: determining whether customers perceive added value from receiving photographs, how it impacts their travel experience and the appeal of the destination, and it can provide insights that could guide future business development and marketing strategies. The information can also illustrate the professionalism of Beyond Arctic's approach in the field.

In a broader context, I believe there is a need across the fields of adventure travel and adventure tourism to understand how photography can be used as a proactive tool. While research has explored the impact of photography on personal level such as self-image and memory, little research has been done on its effects and use within the adventure travel field specifically. Photography can serve as a powerful tool to provide physical memories, added value, and an additional confidence boost to people, yet, in adventure tourism, it is often used primarily as a marketing tool.

2.3 Purpose and Objectives

By now we've established photographs are powerful marketing tools that support businesses, but how do photographs affect an individual tourist's experience? The thesis aims to find answers to two main questions: "Can photographs positively impact a customer experience in adventure tourism?" and "Can photographs add to the existing value of a travel experience?"

It aims to evaluate the effectiveness of photography as a tool that benefits both customers and businesses, beyond its traditional role in marketing. Understanding what constitutes a successful tour experience from the customer's perspective, and how photography may enhance that experience, can offer insights for developing the quality of services.

The goal is to investigate how impactful photography can be to an individual's adventure experience and provide information that could expand the use of photography in adventurous environments. The thesis aims to find tangible, practical knowledge on how and why photography should be used as a proactive tool in the fields of photography, guiding and adventure tourism and bring awareness to how photography can be used to benefit the customer first.

3 KNOWLEDGE BASE

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how memorable experiences form and how photography plays a role in it, theoretical framework within these topics will be examined. The knowledge base of the thesis consists of three main aspects, each of which were incorporated into questionnaire questions: memorable experiences (MEs), experience design and photography.

3.1 Tourism and Photographs of Northern Finland

Northern Finland, or as it is widely known by its county name “Lapland”, has gained growing worldwide attention during the last decades and people from all over the world choose the destination for once-in-a-lifetime experiences of arctic nature and natural wonders like the Aurora Borealis. Tourism in northern Finland has seen a steady increase of interest in recent years and in December 2024 the amount of nights spent by foreign travelers increased by 9% compared to the previous year (Statistics Finland 2024) and 63% stayed in Lapland region (Visit Finland 2025). Visitors come to Northern Finland to experience activities such as snowshoeing, skiing and winter hiking, sleigh rides with reindeers and huskies and for a possibility to witness the northern lights with their own eyes.

In a study made in 2024 about the image of Lapland, foreign travelers expressing interest in Lapland conveyed high interest rates in nature, people, culture and Santa Claus when asked about what they find to be the best about Lapland. Interest was also shown towards fells, national parks and traditional Finnish food, and respondents found Lapland appealing for its snowy arctic nature, quietness and cleanliness. A quarter of the respondents said they had received information about Lapland through social media platforms (Lapin Liitto 2024). Aurora Borealis sightings are also high on the list on why travelers choose Northern Finland as their destination, and according to a study done in 2020 over 80% of responses showed interest in Northern Finland stated they found Aurora Borealis very or extremely interesting (House of Lapland 2021).

Research suggests that social media platforms play a significant role in today’s travel destination decision-making (Andersson 2024, 19). In an increasingly digitized world, the gap between travel businesses and consumers is narrowing, making destination choices easier and more accessible than ever before (Saari & Tuominen 2009, 41). Travel content on social

media has the potential of reaching wide ranges of audiences all across the world and people sharing reviews of their experiences with tour operators and other travellers are leading to higher interest and higher volumes of travelers to Finland (Hänninen 2021, 12). Photographs play a major role in relaying messages online, and travel photos offer people a chance to see and experience a destination they haven't personally visited. Photos give information words can't convey, considerably impacting destination decision-making. When traveling long distances for once-in-a-lifetime experiences such as seeing the Auroras, it is natural to desire photographs as memorabilia.

3.2 Memorable Experiences (MEs)

Memorable experiences, MEs, are characterized as experiences that raise strong, predominantly positive, emotions in recollection. As all experiences are subjective and personal, MEs too are an individual's personal evaluation of the events during their travels and as such subject to expectations, recollection and reflection (Morgan, Lugosi, Ritchie 2010, 3). Because experiences form between an environment (the experience) and an individual (the experiencer), no two experiences can be the same (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 99). Memorable tourism experiences consist of four key elements prior to, during and after a travel experience: *affect, expectations, consequentiality and recollection* (Tung & Ritchie 2011, 1376).

The first component, *affect*, of MEs means the experience must raise clear, strong emotions in the guest. Although predominantly positive, they have the potential to be negative as well. Memorable doesn't necessarily equal positive, it simply means the emotions drawn from the experience need to be strong enough for later recollection. Even so, it was found that for the majority the emotions in this context are positive, such as happiness.

The second component, *expectations*, means that for an experience to be memorable, its expectations must either be fulfilled or surpassed. Responses to the study by Tung & Ritchie (2011, 1378) showed varying levels of expectations in tourists. Some preferred researching their destination beforehand and inquiring about the experiences from third parties such as agencies, friends and family, and in today's world they would likely do so from social media as well. Others, however, did not emphasize prior destination and experience research, possibly due to wanting to keep their expectations low or open for surprise factors. Despite varying levels of expectation, it was concluded that for the majority of tourists a memorable

experience fulfilled or surpassed their prior expectations of it. Positive surprises, things tourists weren't able to expect, played a significant part in the forming of these memorable experiences.

The third component, *consequentiality*, refers to significant developmental outcomes of the experience on a personal level and can be divided into four subcategories: *social development*, *intellectual development*, *self-discovery* and *overcoming physical challenges*. Morin's paper on "Imagery and self-awareness: A theoretical note" (1998, 4) suggests that imagery can help reach self-awareness by allowing one to see themselves the way others see them, through which it is possible to obtain more information about oneself. Although the paper discusses mental imagery, the same principles can be applied to photography, possibly even strengthening the ability to see oneself or skills in a new light. In addition, photographs are used as mediators in various environments, such as therapy, as methods to self-discovery and self-perception through narratives (Gibson 2018, 15) and Nedelcu even discusses how self-portraits can play a part in accepting realities and help in journeys of self-introspection (Nedelcu E, Nedelcu A. 2012, 4).

The fourth and last component of MEs, *recollection*, is tied to one's ability to time-travel back to the experience later and relive it. Responses to recollections of MEs in Tung & Ritchie's study (2011, 1380) contained numerous mentions to memorabilia, such as photographs, souvenirs and telling stories. Consequently, it can be argued that photographs are a key component in developing memorable experiences for individuals in tourism.

Nevertheless, not every tourism experience is memorable. Satisfaction with an experience is generally an outcome of the wants and needs of an individual and the expectations and reality of the adventure experience. When an individual expresses satisfaction with their tour experience, it is likely due to the end result fulfilling their wishes and expectations of it. Satisfaction is also largely dependent on marketing; for a guest to be satisfied with their experience, the work done to reach said guest in the first place must be presented in such a way that it is possible to deliver that to the guest in real life. If the experience they thought they would have does not match the one they received, it's likely they will not be satisfied (Tung & Ritchie 2011, 1370). Designing memorable experiences has five key principles: *theming the experience*, *harmonizing impressions with positive cues*, *eliminating negative cues*, *providing memorabilia* and *engaging all five senses* (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 102-105).

In recreational outdoor tourism satisfaction with an experience has been found to be linked to both instrumental factors, such as service quality, and expressive factors, such as enjoyment or sense of adventure (Noe & Uysal 2015). The outdoors have also been proven to have noteworthy influence on inner exploration and group processing (Ewert 2000) and help escape demands of everyday life, teach new skills and challenge one's own mental and physical skills, offer closer connection to nature and help with focus and mental recovery (Pohl, Borrie & Patterson 2000, 423). As such, outdoor adventures can help individuals become more immersed in their experiences, possibly increasing satisfaction and the forming of memorable experiences.

3.3 Experience Design

When it comes to the design of a memorable experience, the following need to be considered: is the nature of the experience one where the guest participates in the action passively or actively? Is the guest's connection to the experience one of absorption or of immersion?

Pine & Gilmore's framework "Four Realms of an Experience" (1998, 102) is an example of the different varieties of experiences. Depending on the role of the participant and the nature of the experience, they can be categorized into four types: *entertainment*, *educational*, *esthetic* or *escapist* (Image 1). The framework utilises two axes to categorise experiences into the types. One axis looks at participation: are they an observer or do the guests participate in the forming of the activity? The other is based on physical and mental involvement: is the participant merely witnessing the event or taking an active role within it?

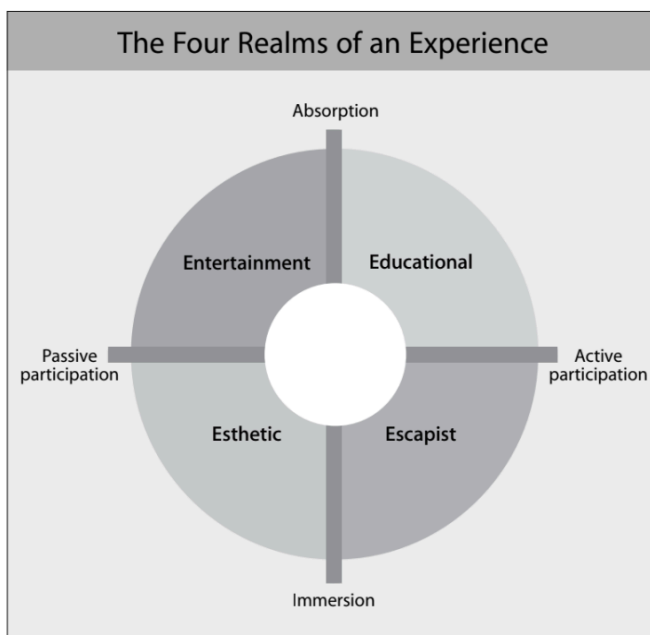


Image 1. The four realms of an experience (Pine & Gilmore 1998)

Entertainment is typically connected to passive participation and absorption, and includes experiences such as watching a movie or going to a concert. *Educational* experiences include more active participation, but still lean towards absorption rather than immersion. An educational experience could be a ski class where the participant is actively involved, but on the absorbing side of the event. *Esthetic* experiences are ones where participants are immersed but have little control over how it progresses, such as going to an art exhibition. *Escapist* experiences have the guest both actively participating and immersed in the event. The richest and most memorable experiences have been found to contain elements from all four categories, creating an optimal spot in the middle of the spectrum (Pine & Gilmore 1998, 102).

In adventure tourism, with high active guest participation and immersion, activities such as skiing or snowshoeing tend to fall towards the escapist experience with elements from all categories, suggesting leaning towards the optimal spot in the spectrum. Outdoor activity tours can teach the guest new skills and knowledge while providing immersive participation.

According to Pine & Gilmore (1998, 98) the service provided is only the stage for an experience. Whenever a service engages guests on a personal, memorable level, it becomes an experience and is not merely a service anymore. Any traveler can use a rental service and pick up a pair of snowshoes, but the service becomes an experience when the guest heads out with a guide who can provide knowledge and information about local culture and nature, provide proper equipment, introduce local foods and produce photos as memorabilia. When the service is personalized, it becomes an experience, and depending on the construction of the experience, it can become a memorable one.

To build a good, memorable experience, one must consider the five key elements of MEs: *theming the experience, harmonizing impressions with positive cues, eliminating negative cues, mixing in memorabilia and engaging all five senses.*

An effective *theme* for an experience is compact but captivating. It encapsulates what the experience is in its core and should be closely tied to the environment in which the guest is immersed in. Nevertheless, a theme isn't simply a marketing claim or a named experience, it needs to show in practice. For instance, Riisitunturi Wilderness Adventure and Photography Tour takes guests to a remote location with landscapes that are hard to find elsewhere. It is

remote enough that it takes two hours to reach the National Park from Rovaniemi and the journey itself gives off a sense of adventure by showing it takes effort to reach places such as these. Guests hike amongst the snow covered trees to reach the top of the fell and the vast landscapes, and enjoy a barbeque at an outdoor fireplace.

A theme forms the foundation for the experience, but it means nothing if it doesn't produce *impressions* from the guests. Impressions are what the guests take away from the experience with them; the actions within the theme that make them coherent with each other. What delivers these positive thematic cues to the guests are guide mannerisms, the way guests are taken in and interacted with, appropriate equipment for the experience, professional photography equipment, guest backpacks with personal gear for guests, outdoor fireplace barbeque and more. These cues are what builds the experience itself in the guest's mind, and in fact, if these cues are missing or lacking in their effectiveness or connectedness to the theme, the guests are more likely to find the experience unsatisfying or inadequate to their expectations.

The third element, *eliminating negative cues*, strengthens the positive cues by doing the opposite. Any cue or aspect of the tour that contradicts or distracts from the theme can turn a positive memorable experience into a negative memorable one.

If an experience was positively memorable, travelers have a tendency to desire practical or tangible items as *memorabilia* of their experiences; postcards from a place they visited, a themed clothing item relevant to the experience or photographs in those locations. Photographs included in the tour experience ensures the guest has a physical memory of their adventure experience. According to Pine & Gilmore (1998, 104), if a service provider does not find desire for memorabilia from their guests, they likely failed to build a memorable and engaging experience in the first place, as memorabilia are primarily bought as physical memory of the experience.

Lastly, a memorable experience must *engage all five senses*. Sensory input and external stimulants reinforce and enhance the theme. They might not make the activity itself any different, but they make the entire experience more engaging and therefore memorable. Think about the cold crisp air of the arctic fells touching the skin, the sound of snow crunching under your boots, tasting the local barbeque and the the scent of the pure, clean arctic air. The senses are what enhances the theme into reality, even if they don't change the activity itself

(Pine & Gilmore 1998, 104). In an outdoor adventure experience, many of the aforementioned key elements are aspects that the environment already offers and are woven into the activity itself.

In addition to the five key elements of MEs, interaction with locals and guides impact how a traveller perceives their experience, and the interaction with these people works as a facilitator of the tourist experience (Coelho & Gosling 2018, 22). Personalization has also been described as key elements of an experience. Personalization, such as photographs, shows the guest just by its presence that such an experience cannot be replicated a second time (Tarssanen 2009, 12).

3.4 Photography and Tourism

When looking at the history of digital photography, it's not possible to point out whether the growing popularity of tourism affected the popularity of travel photography, or vice versa. Not knowing whether there is a positive correlation from one to the other, it can be assumed that they share bidirectional ambiguity, meaning both could have affected the other (Crane & Hannibal 2012, 29). With more everyday people who had access to travel and cameras, others were able to see places they hadn't visited, and could broaden their desires for exploration. Since the first cameras that made photography available for the average traveller, photos have been used to share experiences with friends and family. Visually seeing a place instead of simply hearing about it makes the place seem more real in the eyes of someone who could only imagine it before. In their book "The tourism and leisure experience" Morgan, Brent and Ritchie (2010, 203) discuss the importance of memorabilia, such as photographs, in the tourist experience by stating they help travellers remember the place they visited by freezing the place in their mind.

When you personalize a service that many can experience, such as providing guests with photographs, you can increase the perceived self-worth of the individual as a tourist. Doing so, they are being shown that the provider takes personal interest in them, increasing satisfaction of the experience (Noe & Uysal 2015). Tung and Ritchie (2011, 1381) discuss a missing link in delivering MEs to tourists and believe destination managers cannot directly provide MEs to tourists because of the personal nature of experiences, and because individual differences affect memorable experiences. Due to the personal nature of photographs and the

way they deliver physical memories of the experience to the guest, could a photography service possibly be the missing link?

3.5 Photography, Experience and Memory

Photo taking can reshape or redesign memories and influence how one views an experience at a later point in time, compared to not taking photos at all (Diehl, Zauberman & Barasch 2016, 134). The authenticity and meaning of an experience is also further complicated by the fact that memory is not a completely reliable source. Memory systems actively process input to make sense of the world around us, and due to memory's reconstructive nature (Crane & Hannibal 2012, 73) a guest may experience something during their travels but later forget it happened. Furthermore, from time to time there are photographs or physical reminders of something a person does not remember happening (Hom 2004, 68).

In his work "Photography and Memory", Ali Shobeiri (2023) claims the link between photography and memory is unmistakable. Photographs are taken to preserve memories, and as such, the concept is often taken for granted. Photos are often thought of simply being a physical form of a memory or an experience, however, this way of thinking overlooks the fact that memories themselves are shaped by narrative; the way the experience is told and presented. As such, photographs play a crucial role in this way of thinking where photos form the memories and experiences through a narrative. Shobeiri argues that in today's digital world the meaning of a photograph as a tool to remember the past has evolved into a tool for an ongoing process of remembering the present as we live it. Understanding the interconnected relationship between photographs and memory in today's world is challenging however, because for some photographs are simply a representation of a past experience, but for others those same photographs and their qualities, namely the time and place they were taken in, affect the narrative of the memory itself (Shobeiri 2023, 1-2).

It is argued that the comparison and connection between photography and memory depends on the perspective they are being examined from. If we are looking at photography from the perspective of a memory, the photograph can seem to be cluttered or filled with insignificant details due to the fact that memories are constructed through a personal lens of what an individual values and pays attention to. However, if we're looking at the memory from the perspective of a photograph, the memory can seem fragmented or lacking in detail due to the photographs freezing a moment in time from an objective point of view, without deleting

details that a memory could deem insignificant (Shobeiri 2023, 3). Taking a look at the concept through the lens of documentative adventure travel photography, it can be argued that the objective perspective of the guide taking the photos captures the essence of the experience as it happened in real life, but from the guest's point of view the photographs may lack some details or perspectives the guide has no way of viewing due to differences in what these two people deem significant in the moment.

Shobeiri (2023, 3) argues that despite their contrasting perspectives, photography can still contain and express the fragmented and changing nature of a memory if the person viewing it is actively trying to remember the moments prior to and after the moment through looking the picture. In fact, all a photograph can do for us in the end, is prove that a certain moment existed and happened in the past. Perhaps this is also why photos are found so important by many in relation to memory, when our memories can easily forget or distort those same moments in our minds. Photos have a way of invoking both voluntary and involuntary memories and emotions of the moment it depicts, and the ones prior to and after it (Shobeiri 2023, 4).

Photographs are powerful tools for memory preservation because they contain evidential traces of past experiences and provide a living context where the person in the photo seems to continue existing in the present. The photographs themselves contain two main moments: the moment where the experience happened and the moment it is being witnessed through the photograph's narrative. According to Shobeiri (2023), there are two ways to understand and perceive the connection between photographs and memory: understanding photography through memory, and understanding memory through photography. The first approach sees photography as a way to preserve memories, while the second looks at how memory is described using a visual language (Shobeiri 2023, 7-8).

In experiments conducted by Diehl, Zaubermann and Barasch (2016, 134), it was found that taking photos increases enjoyment of an experience through deeper immersion and mindfulness or the surrounding environment. The act of taking photos brings the person closer to the activity or experience at hand by increasing awareness of details that otherwise could have been overlooked (Diehl, Zaubermann, Barasch 2016, 134 & Diehl, Zaubermann, Barasch 2022, 5). However, in another study by Barasch, Zaubermann and Diehl (2018, 3) it was found that people who take photos with the intention of sharing them with others reported lower levels of enjoyment of the lived experience compared to the intention of taking photos

for oneself as memories. This was found to be the result of the intention behind the action affecting enjoyment and engagement, and to be tied to one's concerns of self-presentation towards others (Barasch, Zaubermann, Diehl 2018, 5).

If the photographs are taken by a third party, such as a guide, it can be argued that such negative effect can be lessened, even if the original desire for a photography service was to receive photos one can share. In the study, it was found that decreases of enjoyment were directly affected by concerns of self-presentation that stemmed from the possibility of being judged by others. This isn't to say such emotions cannot present themselves if the action of taking the photo is moved to a third party, however, as it was found to be tied to personal differences it can be argued that the probability for such emotions can be lower as a result of the experiencer not having the ability to choose which moments of their experience are captured, even if they would know they will share the photos with others afterwards. An outsider taking the photographs allows the recipient to remove themselves of the responsibility of the choice and instead immerse themselves in the experience in real time instead.

The study (Barasch, Zaubermann, Diehl 2018) only takes into consideration the time when taking the photograph happens, not the effects of sharing the photographs post-experience. The intention behind taking or desiring photos can be for both internal and external reasons and it was found that the effects of reduced enjoyment during photo-taking was dependent on *how* present each intention (sharing photos vs. taking for self) was and the individual's level of self-presentational concerns. Individuals with higher levels of self-presentational concern showed higher levels of anxiety in the moment of photo-taking, which lessened their sense of enjoyment.

A guest's perceived value of an experience can either be self-oriented or other-oriented. If a person takes or desires photos of an experience for oneself, they are likely to view memories of the experience from a first-person view. On the other hand, it was found that when photos are taken with the intention of sharing them, they are viewed from a third-person perspective, indicating that the photo is taken with an outsider's judgment in mind (Barasch, Zaubermann, Diehl 2018, 16). The photos chosen into an album were found to contain different types of photographs depending on whether the intention was to share or preserve memories. Individuals with intentions of sharing were more likely to include photos of people posed as opposed to authentic, candid moments, as well as photos that provide more context to each

other, indicating the narrative of the story is meant to be told to someone who did not experience the moment first-hand (Barasch, Zaubermann, Diehl 2018, 18). The intention of sharing photos with people one is close to, such as family or friends, was found to be notably more enjoyable than sharing with people one doesn't know personally, and just as enjoyable as taking photos for oneself as memories. This is because sharing photos with people close to you presents less self-presentational concern.

In a photo-elicitation study done by T.A. Loeffler (2004, 1) on the meanings of outdoor experiences, students who took part in a college outdoors program were asked to bring photographs of their outdoor experience and to reflect on them. The photos were found to serve as a connection to the memories themselves and allowed the participants to focus more on the memory recollection itself and provide more precise descriptions of the experiences. Many of the participants claimed words alone could not accurately describe their memorable outdoor experiences and the photos aided the participants in being able to recall details of the experience better as opposed to not having photos (Loeffler 2004, 551). Many of the participants brought photographs of experiences where they had overcome themselves or achieved a new level of self-discovery. These photos were found to be often used as an anchor in low moments at a later time, to time-travel back the moments of achievement as a reminder of their abilities. The author of the work encourages outdoor educators and those working in outdoor settings to use photos as a tool for self-discovery (Loeffler 2004, 537).

The participants of the study were asked to select the photographs of their experience that posed the most value and the essence of the memorable experience, and the most common groupings were places, friends/groups, oneself, and significant personal moments. Photographing moments of self-discovery, exploration, experimentation and adventure were found to assign more meaning to those experiences. Overall, studies using photo-elicitation methods show that images stimulate stronger and deeper elements of experiences than words.

As discussed earlier, memories are shaped by narratives. They are like stories that connect the experiences and events in a meaningful way, that constructs the whole picture of the experience. In their essence, travel experiences, as they happen, are stories that are then later on shared as memories. Photographs from such experiences are a form of narrative that shapes that memory (Tung & Richie 2011, 1372).

In their work “Exploring the essence of memorable tourism experiences”, Tung and Ritchie (2011, 1374) explore the ideas of mindlessness and mindfulness in a tourism experience. They discuss how the act of being mindful of an environment and surroundings leads to higher levels of learning and satisfaction. It could be argued that the act of the photos on tours being taken by a guide instead of the guests could automatically lead to higher levels of focus and mindfulness, however, in a study done by Alixandra Barasch (2016) it was found that the act of taking photos increases engagement with surroundings through which enjoyment of the activity itself is increased by being more immersed in the experience and paying closer attention the relevant details of the experience (Diehl, Zauberman, Barasch 2016, 134). Hence it can be argued that both options, the guest continuing taking photos and the guide providing photos can increase a guest’s immersion of the experience and lead to higher satisfaction. Both simply offer different perspectives to the experience and demonstrate photography should be used as a tool in these environments. The most important aspect to note here is that both options offer the guest a tool for enhancing autobiographical memory, helping them remember things that happened to them specifically (Tung & Ritchie 2011, 1374).

3.6 Agency in a Photographic Experience

Agency is characterized as one’s ability to exercise control over decisions concerning oneself and their actions. In documentative photography, there is a juxtaposition between agency and the loss of it. The core of documentative photography plays around with the idea that the subject of the photograph is captured from a perspective of non-confrontation, which allows the photographer to capture authentic moments with no intervention. However, in some contexts the loss of agency can prove to be a negative thing. In different contexts of documentary photography the agency of the subject is handled with various degrees; a documentative wedding photographer is hired for the event specifically as an observer but a street photographer might take photos of people who are not aware of being photographed. Agency is an important subject to discuss in the context, because the different levels of agency in a photographic experience can have varying levels of implications on memorable experiences.

Documentary photography allows the participant to detach themselves from the idea that they need to pose for a camera and allows for a more relaxed experience for the one being photographed. A major advantage of a documentative style is it allows an experience such as

an outdoor activity to be captured as it happened in real life. But how does moving the act of photo-taking to a third party, such as a guide, affect the guests on tours? For some individuals, it may lead to feeling a loss of control in choosing which moments are captured of their travels and for others it may prove to be a respite in not having to fret over capturing the memories and instead being able to focus on the moment. Some individuals may have a stronger personal preference in which moments are photographed and how, but others on the other hand may feel relieved to have an outsider take care of it.

Stephanie Hom (2004, 65) argues that when talking about a tourist experience, the agency of a tourist is often misunderstood based on the fact there is a distinctive difference between real time and its representation. Tourist experiences are always shown through a certain narrative in photographs, postcards and other memorabilia such as journal entries, and the agency of a person in real time and in its representation later on can have notably different points of view (Hom 2004, 64). This is an important aspect to note, as the agency of a person may seem higher or stronger in the representation of the experience, compared to what the level of agency was in the moment as it happened. During a backcountry ski tour, the guest does have a certain level of agency when it comes to what places to stop for photographs, what is being photographed, does the guest take photographs on their own device or leave it to the photography-guide, what is the pace and what views they want to stop to see in the area. However, in the end the real decision concerning these aspects, including which moments are being photographed, falls to the guide and is dependent on the dynamic between the guide and the group.

Hom (2004, 64) implies there is a gap between the guest as a tourist and as a narrator, as the agency one sees in recollection may come from the narrative of a story or a photograph, not necessarily from the time of the experience itself. When discussing agency in documentative adventure photography, one has to take into account the difference in point of view of how the narrative of the experience is told at a later point in time, when the photos are taken by the guide and not the guest themselves. On one hand, the photos taken by a guest may at first seem more true to the experience as they are taken from their perspective and the individual has chosen which moments they want to capture. But when the guide photographs the experience from a third-person documentative perspective, is the experience captured more as it truly happened, from an objective point of view? And does the guest see their experience

differently in recollection when the photos are not taken by themselves and therefore not shaped by the narrative *they* want to tell?

The authenticity of an experience comes from the narrative, not from the experience itself. Someone who has never skied before may feel frustrated in the moment of learning it, but views and tells stories about the experience differently when seeing photos of themselves learning the skill and overcoming that feeling of frustration. Documentary photography as a principle plays around with the idea that moments are captured as they truly happened in real life, avoiding misrepresentation through a personal narrative.

In Ali Shobeiri's work "Photographs and Memory" (2023), it is viewed that for some, the camera itself removes a certain level of human agency in the act of memory preservation. When compared to paintings for example, the narrative of the human capturing the moment is removed and so the camera is seen as a true representation of reality. However, there is always an intervention of human narrative in the act, even and especially in documentary photography. The person behind the lens has the ability and agency to choose which moments are captured and how. Hence, I would argue there is no true loss of human agency in photographic memory collection as photographs always reflect the photographer's personal views, experiences and beliefs. The meaning of that photo can of course then be interpreted differently, depending on who took part in the experience and is forming that photograph into a memory through narrative (Loeffler 2004, 540).

3.7 Adventure Education in Photographic Travel Experiences

In adventure travel services, adventure educational methods are often interwoven into the activities themselves. Adventure education uses experiential learning in outdoor settings to encourage and nurture growth on personal level, teamwork skills and one's self-awareness. Although adventure travel more often than not focuses on providing experiences and exploration, it can include aspects of learning and personal development through new physical and mental skills, learning to cope in unfamiliar environments such as the arctic, and encourage reflection of the experiences through tools like photography.

In adventure travel, service providers and guides can incorporate aspects of adventure education in to tour experiences through encouraging guests to try new things and teach travelers skills using activities to make their travel experiences more enriching and

memorable. As discussed in this paper, photographs are often used as a mediator to reach goals such as improved self-awareness or self-discovery, and through providing guests with galleries of photographs from their arctic experiences, Beyond Arctic's guests are given an opportunity to use these photos as they wish, whether that is simply to have a physical memory of their experience, or to look back to the moment and activity to reflect on the sensations, skills and experiences they received.

4 METHODS

Succeeding the various subjects and theories linking photographs and experiences and their importance in this thesis, the purpose of the following chapters is to explore the research process and methods.

4.1 Target group

The thesis used purposive sampling by targeting a specific group of people; Beyond Arctic's guests during the winter season of 2024-2025 who took part in at least one photography tour experience in Rovaniemi or Levi. Due to the participants sharing a set of common traits by having chosen the same tour operator and similar types of activities, opportunity and convenience sampling also played a hand in the selection. Participants were based on who was available to attend at the time and was willing to participate (Crane & Hannibal 2012, 350).

4.2 Questionnaire

Data collection was carried out as an online questionnaire after post-tour photo delivery. Typically customers receive photos within one week of their tour. A more extensive customer feedback questionnaire was built for the season 2024-2025, an online questionnaire by Beyond Arctic, and while originally the thesis questionnaire was planned to be attached to the customer feedback questionnaire, it was decided at the end to separate them on the basis of going over partly the same topics but with different emphasis. Having separate questionnaires ensured both received more accurate data.

Beyond Arctic's customers were given instructions on how to retrieve their tour photos through an online gallery after tours, and further written instructions on how to give feedback on the photos and their experience with Beyond Arctic for the thesis (Appendix 2). The thesis was presented to the guests via a business card sized paper with a QR code to the questionnaire to make it effortless for guests to participate. In addition, a link to the questionnaire was sent to all travellers who took part in Beyond Arctic's tours during the season. To avoid possible bias in the sample from being tours of one guide, all guides at Beyond Arctic were asked to hand out the QR code card to their groups. This ensured the

sample didn't only consist of guests whose guide I was and who I had personally been in contact with.

To ensure respondents give accurate data, the customers were instructed to respond to the questionnaire after receiving tour photos as this plays a significant role in satisfaction and perceived value. Timewise this was the most accurate way to receive data, as photo delivery brings memories of the respondents' experience fresh into the mind and brings up the emotions they felt during the experience.

When building the questionnaire, the advantages and disadvantages of different types of data needed to be assessed to determine the most appropriate data sampling method and data type. Data can be divided into two main types: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative data delivers numerical value, such as numbers or quantities, aiming to produce objective data that can be used to study causal relationships between variables and make generalized results. Quantitative data has the advantage of gathering clear, simple and straightforward information, however, because it doesn't typically take into account outliers such as opinion or reasoning, quantitative data needs to gather a greater amount of data for conclusions when compared to qualitative data (McLeod, 2017).

Qualitative data does the opposite. It gathers data information that cannot be measured numerically, such as experiences, feelings, context or reasoning. Qualitative data comes in various forms, such as interviews, observations, open-ended questions and written accounts such as journals. Its purpose is to study and understand the research topic from the participants' point of view. Qualitative data is of more subjective nature than quantitative, and generates data and insight into meanings and subtleties that quantitative data may rule out (McLeod, 2017). However, qualitative methods don't rule out participant expectations or researcher bias due to the level of interpretation needed to analyze the results (Hannibal 2012, 148). With categorization and coding, qualitative data can be turned quantitative.

The questionnaire's questions were a mixture of qualitative and quantitative to allow for more in depth data, which gave participants flexibility to answer both open-ended questions and multiple-choice, and therefore allowed for more detailed information on certain questions and more straightforward on others.

The goal sample size was 15-30 answers, considering the mix of data types. The questionnaire received 14 answers and was opened 145 times.

Questions

Background information

1. I have read the participant information above and consent to the terms of the study
 - a. Yes
2. I participated on a
 - a. Day Time Photography tour
 - b. Northern Lights Photography tour

Choosing a tour

3. What factors influenced your choice of tour and tour operator when coming to Rovaniemi?
4. What made you pick a tour with a photography service instead of a typical tour?
5. Beyond Arctic was the first tour operator in the area to offer photography services on tours. Did this knowledge factor in on your choice?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Partly

Photos

6. How did the photos you received make you feel?
7. How did you feel on the tour knowing you will receive photos of your experience?
8. Answer on a scale from 1-5 (1=fully agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat disagree, 5=fully disagree)
 - a. I felt present in the moment during my tour
 - b. I felt less inclined to take photos by myself or reach for my own camera/phone, knowing I will receive photos from the tour

Value

9. Answer on a scale from 1-5 (1=fully agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat disagree, 5=fully disagree)

- a. The photos brought extra value to the tour experience
- b. The photos were worth the price of the tour
- c. I would pick a tour with a photography service again in the future

Experience

- 10. Was your photography tour experience successful?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Partly
- 11. What made your experience successful? (for “yes” on above)
- 12. What made your experience unsuccessful? (for “no” on above)
- 13. What made your experience successful or unsuccessful? (for “partly” on above)

4.3 Reliability and Validity

Because the data sample is also based on opportunity sampling, meaning a group of participants who happened to be available and willing to participate, the sample cannot be ruled out of participant variability. Participant variability means the participants have a possibility of sharing a common set of traits that can lead to bias in the results and overlook possible differences in results if the sample would have contained participants with different traits (Hannibal 2011, 148). This essentially means the generalizability of the results needs to be assessed case by case to determine whether they are applicable to different groups of people. The participants of the questionnaire were all international tourists in Finland, who chose the same service, for mostly the same reasons, and possibly had similar goals for their travels based on the type of service they picked. In the context of this thesis, this isn't necessarily a negative quality however, as the thesis aimed to investigate whether photos can positively impact a travel experience and if a photography service can provide added value to Beyond Arctic's guests specifically. Since the choice of sample was deliberate to truthfully study the effects of photographs on individuals in adventure travel, the amount of bias can be argued to be limited in this context.

To make sure participants' privacy was respected and the analysis could avoid bias, all responses were set to be anonymous and no information about age, gender or cultural

background was collected. This assured the results stayed as objective as they could with the subjective qualitative data collection method.

Validity is a term used for determining whether the study does what it claims to do. To ensure the validity and credibility of the thesis, triangulation was used in the theoretical framework and methodology. The questionnaire was used to obtain subjective data from participants and combined with objective data from observations. This grants the thesis a more diverse perspective to the topic. Triangulation refers to the use of different sources, data collection methods and perspectives to support results (Crane & Hannibal 2012, 351).

It is not possible to state that personal reflexivity has not affected the thesis. As a photographer, guide and student of adventure education, I have a predisposition to view the topics discussed in this thesis in a positive light based on personal experience, values and interests. To counteract the effects of possible personal reflexivity, I have aimed to construct the thesis and questionnaire, discuss the topic and knowledge base and cite sources accordingly to provide as diverse of a perspective as I can. Reflexivity in a study of this nature can have both positive and negative outcomes however. Having a predisposition to view the topic in a positive light could help provide perspectives that another could have dismissed, but it could also lead to bias in areas such as the construction of questions in the questionnaire and data analysis.

4.4 Ethics

Following ethical research practices, all participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose and content of the thesis. Guests participating in the questionnaire were explicitly asked for their consent to use the data they provided, were informed about data management and given the possibility to withdraw at any time. Consent was obtained through written agreement within the questionnaire form. When distributing QR codes to the questionnaire, participants were additionally told in person that participation is voluntary.

The questionnaire data was obtained and stored using Webropol's database, utilizing their integrated anonymization feature within the questionnaire. As a result, neither I or a third party, including the commissioner, had access to information through which participants could be identified from or where individual responses originated from. No personal information, such as names, ages or cultural background, was gathered, hence the thesis did not require

formal ethical approval. Ethical considerations have consistently been prioritized throughout the process to ensure respect towards all participants and parties involved.

5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

An inductive content analysis was used as a method to analyze the qualitative data. In this approach the overall picture of the results forms as responses are collected and examined. Inductive analysis enables identifying patterns of meaning through coding and offers flexibility in interpretation of findings. In addition, content analysis allows converting qualitative findings into numerical form based on frequency of mentions.

The responses to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire were analyzed and coded based on explicitly expressed statements and implied meanings within them. A single response can have multiple qualities or reasons mentioned within one sentence, and coding allows taking each of these into consideration. In practise this means the number of mentions of codes can exceed the total number of responses within a question.

Each code was then placed to a broader category, such as recommendations, photographs or tour attributes. This coding and analysis method enables a detailed examination of the meanings behind each response and allows to assign each category a numerical value based on the amount of times the category was mentioned. These values can then be used to calculate percentages for each category in relation to others, providing an overall view of the responses to each question.

5.1 Questionnaire results

The questionnaire received a total of 14 responses. This is on the lower spectrum of responses the thesis aimed for, however, it has enough data to draw some level of conclusions based on the mixture of both quantitative and qualitative data acquired.

Question 1: I participated on a...

Results show that 86% of respondents participated on a daytime tour. In this instance, day time tour refers to every other photography tour besides Northern Lights hunting. Only 14% of respondents participated on a Northern Lights photography tour.

I participated on a

Number of respondents: 14

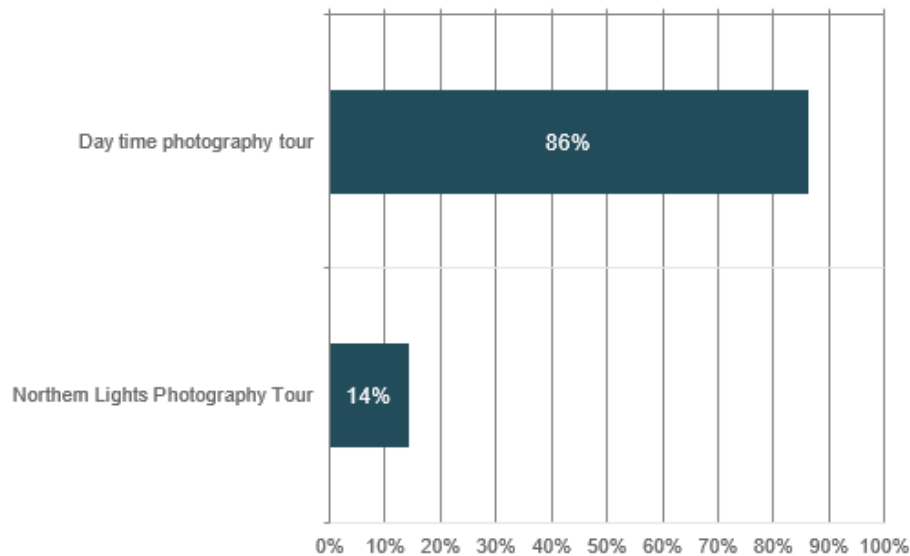


Image 2.

Question 2: What factors influenced your choice of tour and tour operator when coming to Rovaniemi?

The responses regarding factors that influenced guests' choice of tour and tour operator were classified into three main categories: *recommendations*, *photographs* and *tour attributes*.

The majority of guests' decision was influenced by recommendations from others on some level, which appeared 11 times in the responses. These included factors such as wanting to experience popular activities, reviews, probability to see Northern Lights, recommendations, and being booked or suggested by their travel agents.

"Small groups, great reviews, beautiful pictures."

Tour attributes such as group size, price-value ratio, attractiveness of experiences, activity options and nature environment was frequently mentioned.

- *"nos gustó la relación calidad-precio, y el plus de tener fotografías lo hace más atractivo."*

EN: *"- we liked the quality-price ratio, and the bonus of having photographs makes it more attractive."*

In addition, multiple guests directly expressed the photographs or photography service being an appealing factor. One guest expressed the possibility of receiving photos as the primary reason for choosing Beyond Arctic, while two guests attributed their choice to the quality of photos, and another specified receiving photos added value to the tour.

“The opportunity to have photos taken of us during the tour was the main reason we selected the tour.”

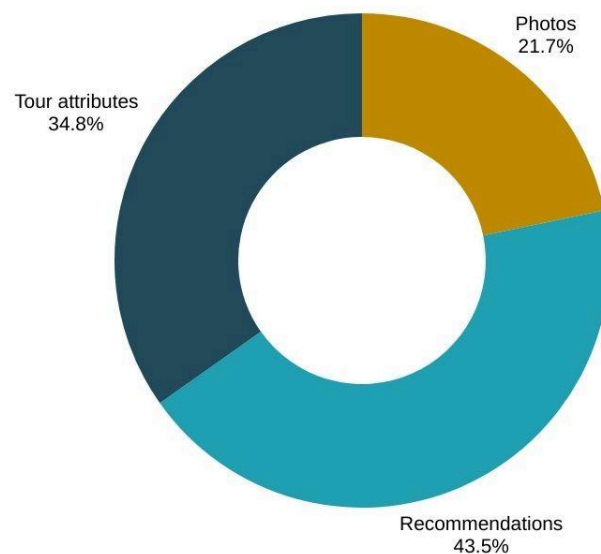


Image 3. Percentages of mentions for each category in relation to each other on why respondents chose Beyond Arctic.

Question 3: What made you pick a tour with a photography service instead of a typical tour?

Responses to the question can be placed into four main categories: *receiving photos*, *having photos as memories*, *offers more than a typical tour* and *immersion in tour experience*. One guest was unaware of the photography service prior to the tour.

The main reason for choosing a tour with photography service was linked to desire of receiving photos and was cited 11 times. Some specifically mentioned the experience of the photographer, skepticism regarding what smartphone cameras could achieve and the potential of receiving high quality photos. Having photographs taken by someone other than the guests themselves being an appealing factor was mentioned eight times.

“It allowed us to focus on enjoying the experience knowing there would be some photos as a reminder of our amazing experience.”

Having the photos as memories was referenced five times, with two mentions emphasizing the role of photographs in helping to recall experiences at a later time and one directly mentioning visual memories.

“To look back at memories, more of a personal touch, I was able to enjoy nature more because I didn't have to focus so much on taking photos”

One respondent wasn't aware photographs were included in the tour package and found it a positive surprise.

Three guests indicated the tour offered them more than a typical tour. One guest reported the photographs provided added value and another felt the photography service gave the tour a more personal touch.

Three guests mentioned being immersed in their tour experience was enhanced by the knowledge that they would receive photos, reducing the need to take photos of their own.

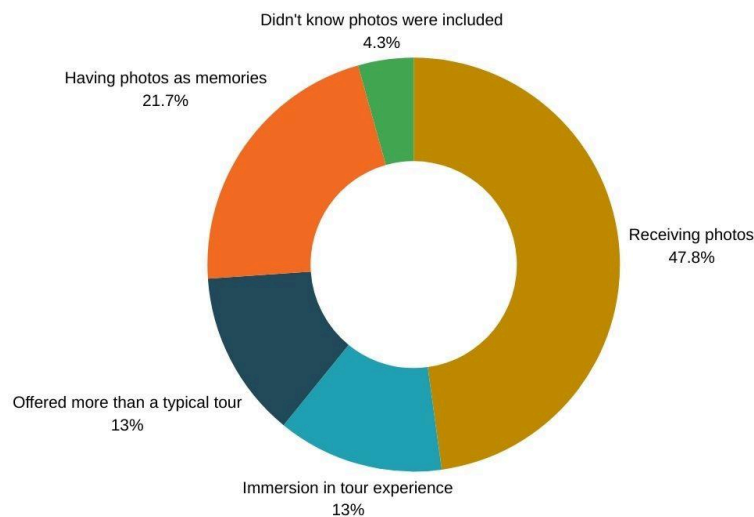


Image 4. Percentages of mentions for each category in relation to each other on why respondents chose a photography tour.

A few guests mentioned they wanted photos, but did not specify *why* they wanted them. This proved difficult in analysis for finding the reasoning behind the answers. Some could be understood through context, however, some were placed in the *receiving photographs*

category on the basis that the context wasn't clear enough and could have led to bias through misinterpretation if placed in another category.

Question 4: Beyond Arctic was the first tour operator in the area to offer photography services on tours. Did this knowledge factor in on your choice?

28% of respondents claimed the knowledge of Beyond Arctic being the first tour operator in the area to offer photography tours influenced their choice of tour operator in Rovaniemi. 72% of guests said it did not affect their decision.

Beyond arctic was the first tour operator in the area to offer photography services on tours. Did this knowledge factor in on your choice?

Number of respondents: 14

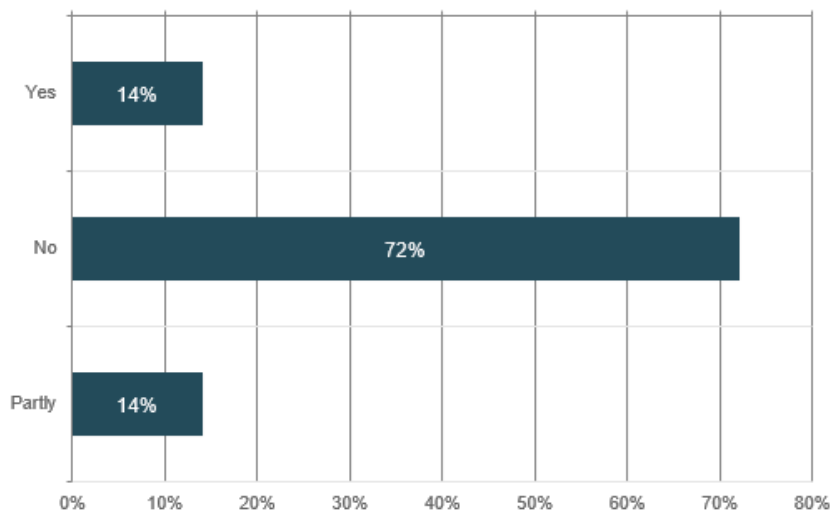


Image 5.

Question 5: How did the photos you received make you feel?

Responses expressed 14 references to positive emotions such as gratefulness, happiness and excitement and feeling good or amazing. One participant specifically expressed happiness at being in the photographs as they are usually behind the camera. Several guests' responses expressed positive feelings about being in photos as well.

Four participants associated the photographs with being lasting memories and three said they appreciated having the photographs to look back on the experience at a later time. Three responses mentioned appreciating the quality of the photographs.

“So pleased to have some photos to help us remember the experience.”

Additionally, three participants completed the survey before receiving their tour photos, but expressed enthusiasm about seeing their photos and trust in the skills of the guide and photographer in successfully capturing their experience.

“I don’t have them yet but I’m sure they will be great, [guide] knows their stuff.”

One guest specifically mentioned the photographs they received made them desire to join more tours like these in the future.

Sharing photos with family and friends, as well as to social media was mentioned two times.

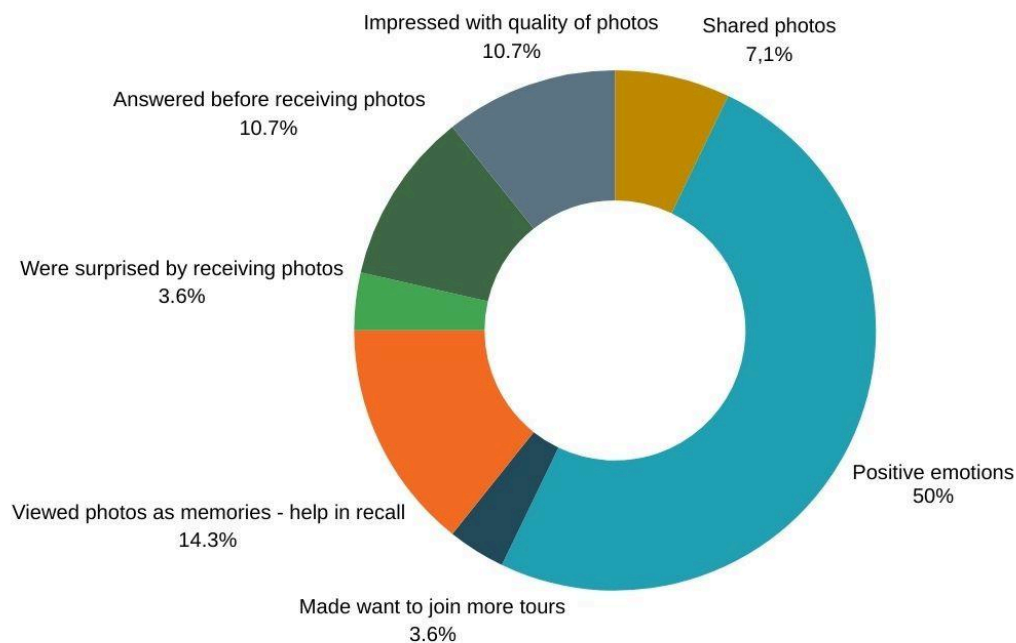


Image 6. Percentages of mentions for each category in relation to each other on how photos made the guests feel.

Question 6: How did you feel on the tour knowing you will receive photos of your experience?

Responses indicated eight references to positive emotions such as feeling good, excited or relaxed. One respondent specifically expressed contentment in receiving photos as keepsakes from the experience, stating that it added a personal touch to the tour.

Five guests mentioned feeling less pressured to take their own photos, and six answers were linked to trusting the guide/photographer to capture their experience.

“I didn't have to worry about taking photos which was fantastic.”

“Didn't worry as much about getting great photos because I knew I'd get good ones from the pro.”

“I feel comfortable receiving good photos instead of solely relying on myself to record the trip.”

“I trusted her fully to capture nice moments-.”

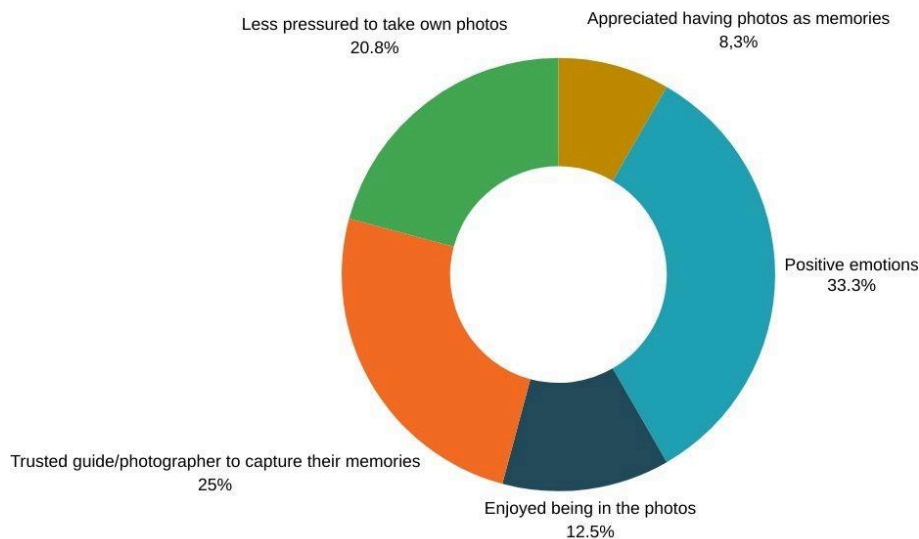


Image 7. Percentages of mentions for each category in relation to each other on how guests felt during the tour, knowing they will receive photos.

Question 7: Answer on a scale from 1-5 (Photos)

93% of respondents felt present in the moment during their tour. 7% of guests felt somewhat present. No participants answered the claim as neutral, somewhat disagree or fully disagree.

When asked whether receiving photographed made the guests less inclined to take photos on their own devices, results showed variety across the scale. 57% of guests felt less inclined to take photos, 14% claimed neutral effect and 29% disagreed with the statement.

Guests who disagreed with the statement could have been attending a northern lights photography tour where the goal is not necessarily to make guests less inclined to take photos but in fact teach them how to photograph Aurora Borealis on their own as well. The statement doesn't necessarily line with content of the Northern Lights tours well and can be the reason for the range of responses.

Answer on a scale from 1-5

Number of respondents: 14

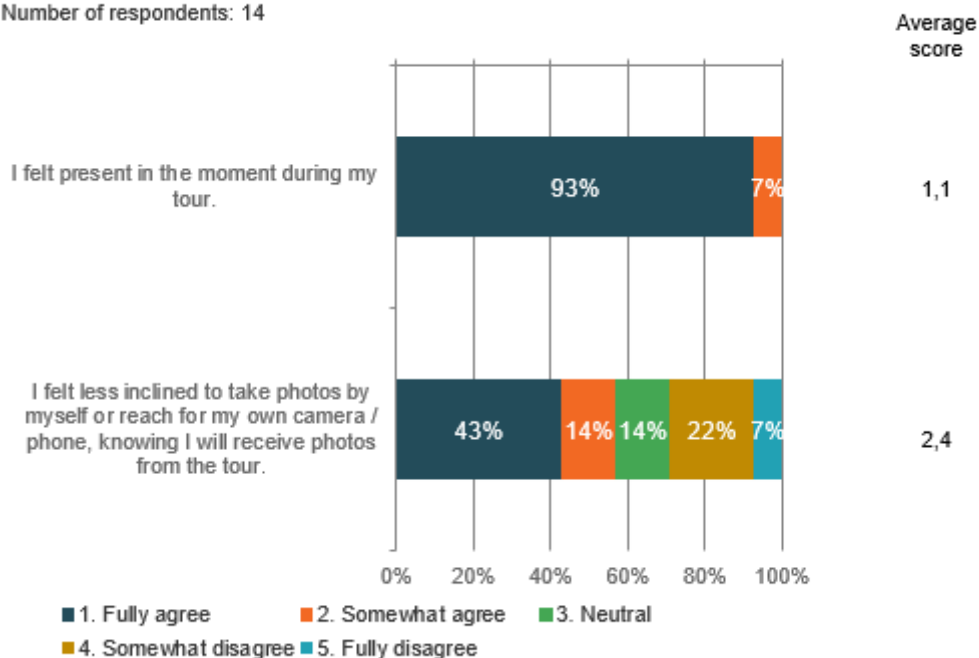


Image 8.

Question 8: Answer on a scale from 1-5 (Value)

All guests claimed the photographs added value to their tour. 79% agreed fully, 21% partially.

86% of guests expressed satisfaction with tour pricing, agreeing with the statement that the photographs were worth the price. 14% of guests expressed neutrality towards the statement. The same responses were found when asked if the guest would join another photography tour in the future.

Answer on a scale from 1-5

Number of respondents: 14

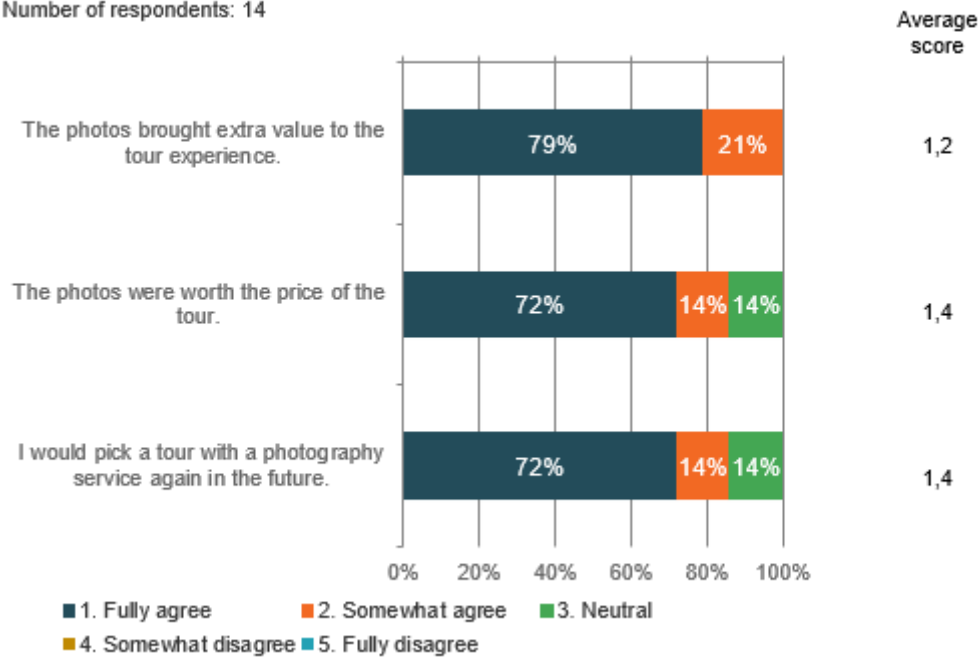


Image 9.

Question 9: Was your photography tour experience successful?

All participants expressed satisfaction with their tour experience.

Question 10: What made your experience successful?

When asked what contributed to the success of their tour experience, receiving photographs was mentioned nine times in various contexts. Two guests said the photos are memories that help them recall their experiences in Northern Finland.

“- the photography gave it even more value!”

Four guests specifically noted they were able to better focus on their tour experience because they didn't have to worry about taking photos, which contributed to their enjoyment.

“We had a lovely time and didn't have to worry about taking our own photos.”

Nature and environment was mentioned five times as being a factor that influenced enjoyment and satisfaction. Qualities of a guide was mentioned six times, highlighting the importance of the human interaction between the tourist and the service provider.

Additionally, qualities or content of the tour itself was reported in three instances, with mentions to group size, food provided and pick-ups and drop-offs.

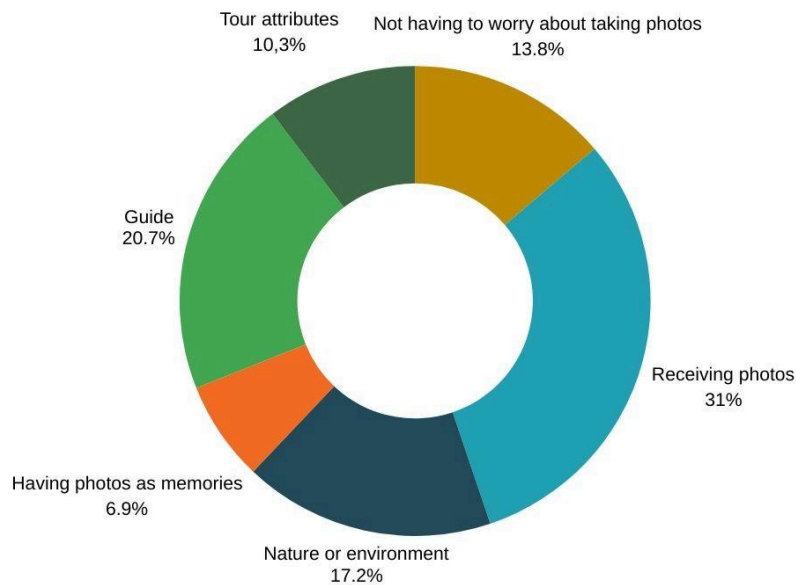


Image 10. Percentages of mentions for each category in relation to each other on what made the guests' experience successful.

5.2 Observations

To provide further context of the use of photographs in adventure travel, observations from my time working as a photography guide for Beyond Arctic are included as triangulation. The observations were collected over two guiding seasons (2021-2022 and 2024-2025) unstructured. The approach allowed me to observe naturally occurring behaviour in the guests within the tour environment, and allowed to gather observations through my own guiding experiences as well as conversation with colleagues, without having a pre-defined structure. Real-world observations such as these improve ecological validity (Crane & Hannibal 2012, 367), although it is important to recognize that they may have bias due being personal experiences.

Throughout both seasons working as a photography guide, guests consistently showed high levels of enthusiasm regarding the tour photographs. They frequently asked about when and how they will receive their photos, occasionally even before the guide had a chance to explain the process back at the office after the tour. Many actively checked the photo galleries and

expressed excitement about viewing their photos through messages and social media channels. This indicates the guests value the visual memories and supports the questionnaire findings and theoretical framework that photographs contribute to the forming of memorable experiences.

During tours, responses to photography and cameras vary based on personality and group dynamics. Some guests actively request posed photos from guides, while others seem content to simply enjoy the surroundings and activity without paying the cameras much mind. The guides additionally initiate moments for taking posed photos in places with beautiful surroundings or background, which seems to be appreciated by most guests. Interactions like these between the guest and guide highlight the importance of connection in not only the experience itself but also the documentation of memories from the tour.

Occasionally, some guests express surprise upon learning that the photography service is included in the tour price. This could be due to changes in their travel itineraries and having booked another tour quickly, the tour being booked by a travel agent, or simply not having noticed the photography service is included. Occasionally these guests stated they assumed the photographs would need to be purchased separately after the experience, and said it was a positive surprise that they are included. As highlighted in the knowledge base, surprises such as these contribute to the formation of memorable experiences, as unexpected positive surprises can heighten emotional effect and satisfaction.

5.3 Limitations of results

When evaluating the thesis as a whole, it is essential to consider its limitations as well. The most notable limitation of this thesis is the small number of guests who completed the questionnaire. With only 14 responses, generalization of the results should be approached with a thorough understanding of the topic at hand.

The timing of the questionnaire proved to be an obstacle in data collection. Being able to answer the questionnaire directly after the tour experience when receiving instructions about the questionnaire would have been optimal for the guests and most likely led to a higher response rate. However, due to the nature of the photographs being an essential component of the experience, participants could not have fully have evaluated the emotional or perceived value of the tour without having first received and viewed their photos. Despite being

instructed to take complete the questionnaire after receiving tour photos, some guests submitted responses without seeing their photos. In addition, due to tight schedules, tourists proved to be difficult to get to answer a questionnaire, even those who initially expressed interest often failed to follow through. This shows in the amount of times the questionnaire was opened and viewed compared to the amount of completed responses and can be the result of various factors, such as tight schedules, instructions lacking enthusiasm, layout of the questionnaire, amount of questions, language or more.

The guests were handed out small business card sized instruction to the thesis with a QR code to the questionnaire at the end of their tour. To find out if more guests would wish to participate, another version of the card was made about halfway through the season with different wording and layout. In the end, it is impossible to know which version worked better, as there's no way of knowing which participants received which card.

Interviews were considered as a possible method of triangulation during the planning phase of the thesis, but the option was eventually excluded due to logistical challenges. Tourists tend to have pre-planned and tight travel schedules, making it difficult to schedule additional interviews after a full day of activities. Furthermore, the demanding nature of seasonal guiding work left little flexibility for conducting interviews from my part.

When it comes to the content of the questionnaire, the open-ended questions also introduced interpretive challenges. In some responses the participants did not directly address the question, suggesting the wording of the question could have been more precise. However, having more defined questions could have further directed participants' responses too closely, potentially influencing the data. Conclusions and codes to such responses could have been derived through context, but having too much room for interpretation within the responses could have introduced bias and reduced reliability. In addition, the theoretical framework for the thesis could have been defined more carefully before building the questionnaire, however, doing so would have shifted the research method from inductive to deductive. Inductive analysis allowed to draw conclusions based on the naturally occurring codes of the results without intervention, in contrast to deductive analysis that predetermines the codes and attempts to find evidence to support them.

A few respondents of the questionnaire stated they wanted photos from their experience, but did not specify *why* they wanted photos. Including a follow-up question for the reasoning on

why travellers desire photos of their experience could have provided additional depth to draw conclusions based on the responses. Additionally, the questionnaire received responses in English, Spanish and French. Responses in Spanish and French were translated into English for analysis, and may have nuances that could have been misinterpreted during translation.

It is also worth noting that guests who had unsuccessful experiences, seemed to not go above and beyond to take part in the thesis study, choosing to leave their reviews on sites like tripadvisor instead. This may explain the absence of negative feedback in the responses, implicating of potential bias in the sample.

It is important to note the sample of this thesis consisted of international travellers and the effect could possibly be different in other customer demographics, such as domestic travellers. Due to the small sample size of the thesis, one needs to be careful to not generalize the findings too far outside the setting of this thesis without considering the impact the setting can have; for example commercial vs personal adventure experiences. In addition, it is possible that the results of this thesis contain some level of bias in the sample due being based in opportunity and convenience sampling.

6 EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

The thesis aimed to find answers to two questions: “*Can photographs positively impact a customer experience in adventure tourism?*” and “*Can photographs add to the existing value of a travel experience?*”. The results indicate that photographs can, in fact, positively impact an experience and add value. Despite the thesis using qualitative research methods for the most part and therefore making it difficult to draw conclusions about causal relationships, results show clear indications of a positive impact nonetheless.

The following chapters will provide an overview of the questionnaire results in combination with the theoretical framework discussed in the knowledge base chapters. In a qualitative study such as this, it’s important to note that percentage values indicating specific items e.g. in choosing a tour, do not exclude other items. In many responses, a single participant's response contained multiple items, and their input is therefore likely represented in more than one category within a single question.

6.1 Summary of research results

Purchase decision

The data gathered from the questionnaire suggests that for nearly half of participants (43,5%) recommendations and reviews influenced the overall choice of tour and tour operator, followed by third (34,8%) of responses that prioritized the tour’s content and attributes such price, activity type or group size. 21,7% of participants expressed receiving photographs influenced their decision, indicating that photographs are valued by travellers to the point of making a difference in purchase-decisions.

Photography tours over typical activity tours

When asked about the factors that influenced the decision to opt for a photography tour over a typical activity tour, the majority (69,5%) of responses said receiving photographs was the deciding factor, out of which 21,7% specifically mentioned the photographs being a tool to help them remember the experience. 13% of responses implied the photography tour offers the guest more than a typical tour can offer and another 13% stated they were more immersed in the tour experience itself as a result. The results show that photographs can have strong effects on guests both during and after the experience.

Emotional impact of the photographs

Results show that the emotional impact of the photographs on guests is significant, with 50% of guests mentioning positive emotions when asked how the photographs made them feel. 14,3% expressed appreciation of the photographs being memories from their time on the tour and one participant stated the photos made them desire to join more tours in the future. One participant wasn't aware the photography service was a part of the tour package and stated it was a positive surprise to receive the photos. Photographs are personal to each tour and group, and can significantly improve a guest's sense of meaning and importance. As demonstrated by theoretical framework on the topic, personalization has been shown to be key elements in the forming of memorable experiences.

Impact of photographs on tour experience

93% of guests stated they felt present during their experience. While the specific question did not further ask the participants whether this was the result of the photography service or another factor, the responses to the following question that asked directly whether the guests felt less inclined to reach for their own cameras to take photos with the knowledge that the guide is photographing them imply photographs played a key role in it, with 57% reporting fully agree or somewhat agree.

When asked indirectly through open-ended questions about how they felt on the tour knowing they will receive photos, 20,8% further explicitly mentioned feeling less pressured to take their own photos. 33,3% reported positive emotions in the same question, such as feeling happy, relaxed or amazing, and 25% mentioned trusting the guide and photographer to capture their experience. Some participants further expressed appreciating having those photographs as memories later on, and 12,5% brought out that they enjoyed being in the photos, with some explaining that they are usually the one behind the camera and missing from photos. These results show that a photography service can improve immersion in the experience.

Value

All participants reported that the photographs brought extra value to their tour experience. 86% stated they felt the photographs were worth the price of the tour, while the rest 14% claimed the effect was neutral. 86% reported they would go on a photography tour again in the future. As suggested by the theoretical framework discussed in the knowledge base

chapters, the photographs that pose the most value and the contain the essence of a memorable experience have been found to be places, friends and groups, oneself and significant personal moments. As typical for a documentative style of photography, these are the types of photographs most often captured for the guests on Beyond Arctic's tours, indicating the content of the photographs play a significant role in added value as well. In addition to photographing moments of self-discovery, exploration, experimentation and adventure that were found to assign more meaning to experiences.

Photographs as memory tools

Supported by the theoretical framework around memory and photography, the results of the questionnaire suggest using photos as memory devices stimulate stronger and deeper emotions of the experience than words alone are capable of. In multiple questions in the questionnaire, guests (unprompted) mentioned they view the photographs as sort of memory devices to time-travel back to their experiences at a later time. These came up in questions about why the guests picked a photography tour (21,7% mentioned having photos as memories), how the photos made them feel (14,3% claimed they help in recall) and further when asked how they felt on the tour knowing they will receive photos (8,3% indicated appreciation of photos being memories).

Additionally, photographs play a major role in shaping the narrative of the experience for guests, constructing an overall picture or story of the adventure experience. Using photography as a tool in adventure travel, customers can reach higher immersion in the activities, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and the formation of memorable experiences for them. Importantly, several guests reported feeling grateful or happy to be in photos themselves, suggesting that the people typically behind cameras in experiences such as these, enjoy taking photos but simultaneously wish they would sometimes be able to be in the photos too. A photography service, such as the one Beyond Arctic provides, can grant photographers these moments.

Factors contributing to tour satisfaction and a successful tour

All participants reported having a successful photography tour experience with Beyond Arctic. Nearly third of responses (31%) cited receiving photographs as being a key factor in making the tour successful. Other important contributors included the guide (20,7%),

environment and nature (17,2%), tour content and attributes (10,3%) and having photographs as memories (6,9%).

6.2 Interpretation of findings

The results indicate that photography plays a significant role in enhancing travel experiences and travel decision-making. While typical factors such as reviews and tour content remain important, photographs appeared as a notable factor in choosing the tour and tour operator. The emotional responses to receiving photographs from tour experiences show how a photography service can enhance immersion in the experience by enhancing engagement with the activity itself. A photography service provides added value to guests and enhances the perceived value of the tour, highlighting the importance of the photographs as memories that allow to time-travel back to the experience and emerged in multiple contexts. This further supports the idea that photography serves as a tool in the forming of memorable experiences. By sharing photos with friends or family the photos act as a tool in building a narrative of the story and memory and the photographs can help individuals help in self-reflection through recall and processing.

A significant amount of responses indicated guests felt less pressured to take photographs on their own devices, knowing they would receive photos of the experience later. This suggests that offering a photography service can allow guests and travelers become more immersed in the activity itself and experience the moment without the distraction or pressure of documenting it themselves. Some participants expressed appreciation and gratitude for the photographs from Beyond Arctic, but stated that they still continued to take their own photos. This can be attributed to several factors, such as enjoying the act of photo-taking, which is likely for travelers who are photographers themselves, or having personal preferences for what is being captured and how.

Despite the significance of photographs in enhancing customer experiences and value of the tour, factors that contributed to the successfulness and satisfaction of a tour besides photographs were the guide, nature and environment and tour's content. These findings further support the notion that memorable experiences are formed through the four key elements prior to, during and after a travel experience (affect, expectations, consequentiality and recollection) as presented by Tung & Ritchie (2011, 1376).

The thesis provides theoretical framework, observations from working life and data from Beyond Arctic's guests that indicates photography serves as a powerful tool that supports to enhance individual adventure experiences, in addition to enhancing customer-business relationship through personalized services. It is important to note that while photography provides several benefits for travel experiences, it shouldn't overshadow the experience and activity itself by the need to capture moments. Immersion and the experience itself should still remain central to the entire tour experience.

When embedded into service design, photography can enhance engagement, mindfulness, immersion, memory and satisfaction.

6.3 Practical Implementations and future use

Taking into consideration the theories and data provided that support the claims that photography can enhance customer experiences in adventure tourism and that photographs add value to an existing experience, making photography an integrated part of service design and not just an afterthought can be potential in other experience types as well. However, generalizing results from a small sample and specific environment such as this thesis, one needs to consider all aspects that can effect the end result in a different context and be well informed about the knowledge base in these topics.

Outdoor experiences such as multi-day treks, expeditions or educational programs could benefit from using photographs as a tool for connection, recall and reflection. Using photographs as tools for reflection is not a new concept, but its benefits individuals not just in commercial settings but also in adventure educational settings is further supported by the theories and studies references in this thesis and the thesis findings themselves. In adventure educational environments, the aim of activities is often to promote deeper engagement and reflection. Enabling participants or guests to set aside personal devices, while capturing photographs of their experiences, can enhance immersion and create space for more focused and mindful participation. The resulting photographs can then be used as tools for debriefs or reflections. As suggested by studies referenced in thesis, photography could also be integrated as a part of the activity where participants take photos themselves, helping them pay closer attention to details.

Potential future studies on the topic could cover the effect in domestic travelers compared to the international travellers of this study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire questions

Background information

14. I have read the participant information above and consent to the terms of the study
 - a. Yes
15. I participated on a
 - a. Day Time Photography tour
 - b. Northern Lights Photography tour

Choosing a tour

16. What factors influenced your choice of tour and tour operator when coming to Rovaniemi?
17. What made you pick a tour with a photography service instead of a typical tour?
18. Beyond Arctic was the first tour operator in the area to offer photography services on tours. Did this knowledge factor in on your choice?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Partly

Photos

19. How did the photos you received make you feel?
20. How did you feel on the tour knowing you will receive photos of your experience?
21. Answer on a scale from 1-5 (1=fully agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat disagree, 5=fully disagree)
 - a. I felt present in the moment during my tour
 - b. I felt less inclined to take photos by myself or reach for my own camera/phone, knowing I will receive photos from the tour

Value

22. Answer on a scale from 1-5 (1=fully agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat disagree, 5=fully disagree)

- a. The photos brought extra value to the tour experience
- b. The photos were worth the price of the tour
- c. I would pick a tour with a photography service again in the future

Experience

23. Was your photography tour experience successful?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Partly
24. What made your experience successful? (for “yes” on above)
25. What made your experience unsuccessful? (for “no” on above)
26. What made your experience successful or unsuccessful? (for “partly” on above)

Appendix 2: QR code to questionnaire given to guests

Version 1

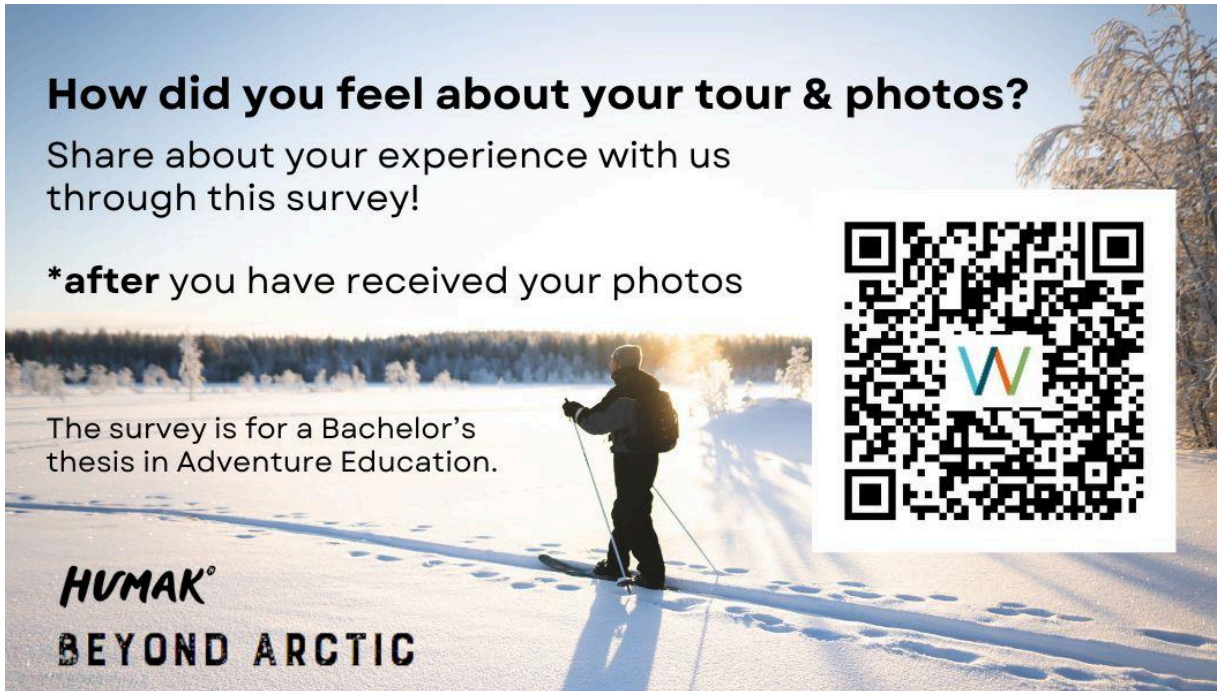


The Impact of Photography on Customer Experience in Adventure Tourism
-Elements of a Successful Customer Experience
Thesis

Please visit the survey after you have received your tour photos!

BEYOND ARCTIC **HUMAK®**

Version 2




How did you feel about your tour & photos?

Share about your experience with us through this survey!

***after** you have received your photos

The survey is for a Bachelor's thesis in Adventure Education.



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