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Jan Velvin • Anne Köchling (Eds.)

Tourism in a Changing World

Insights from the International Competence Network of Tourism Research and Education (ICNT)

ESV ERICH SCHMIDT VERLAG

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Insights from the International Competence Network of Tourism Research and Education (ICNT)

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We dedicate this book to
John S. Hull

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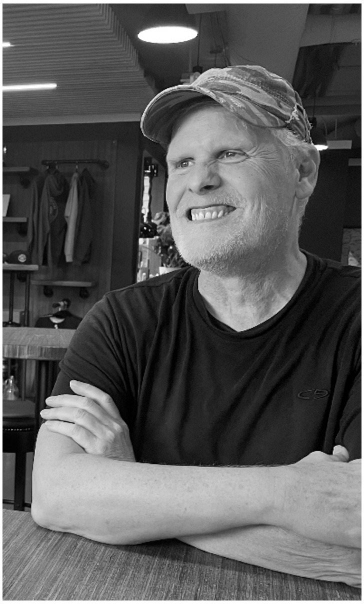
In Memoriam



John S. Hull

21 June 1963 – 31 August 2024

After completing his PhD at McGill University in Canada, John ran his own consultancy, focusing on cultural heritage and natural resource management. He worked closely with the Quebec-Labrador Foundation and remained, throughout his career, deeply engaged in issues concerning Indigenous communities and their cultural landscapes.

His first academic position was in New Zealand, where he spent three years in the School of Hospitality & Tourism at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), focusing on sustainable tourism planning and development. At the same time, he also served as an associate director for the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI), which was also based at AUT.

In 2011, John arrived at what he himself described as a return "home to nature" when he took up the position of Associate Professor in Tourism at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) in British Columbia, Canada. It was the following year that we in the ICNT network had the privilege of getting to know him as a connection that would grow into a lasting and meaningful collaboration. Over the years, John served as a visiting professor in Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, and at numerous other institutions across the globe.

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What many of us did not initially realise was that John had a background in landscape planning, an "unspoken" side of his professional identity that, in hindsight, made perfect sense. His deep appreciation for aesthetics, cultural heritage, and the protection of Indigenous lands was evident in everything he did.

John was passionately committed to environmental responsibility and sustainable tourism, and these values were woven into his research and teaching. In later years, his academic focus expanded to include reflections on the good life and what nourishes both body and soul. One of his most cherished projects, developed in partnership with Judith Chomitz at TRU, involved taking students to Italy to explore the interconnections between culture, food, and cross-cultural understanding. A highlight for many was the opportunity to engage hands-on with Italian culinary traditions.

John's research interests were wide-ranging, from sustainable tourism planning and governance to adventure tourism and festivals, from wine and local food to wellness tourism. He continued to publish scholarly work both independently and in collaboration with colleagues, including several of us in the ICNT network. His final article was published as recently as January 2024. He was particularly passionate about sustainable tourism in British Columbia, a commitment that led to his involvement with the B.C. Minister of Tourism Engagement Council.

Beyond his academic achievements, John was a person who truly lived what he taught. He found joy in hiking, skiing and cycling, as well as in quieter pursuits such as gardening, reading with his book club in Kamloops, and exploring local food and art. His fascination with Vikings and the Viking Age was immense, and he pursued research projects and gave speeches in several countries such as Norway, Iceland, and Canada to share his passion. He also found it amusing when someone remarked that he looked like a Viking. Many of us were fortunate to celebrate both his 50th birthday in Bruges and his 60th in Norway, surrounded by friends and colleagues who held him dear.

John was, above all, a relational person. He met both people and landscapes with gentleness and warmth whether in remote mountain valleys filled with birdsong or in bustling cultural centers. Those who knew him speak of his kindness, humility, loyalty, and inclusiveness. Curious, thoughtful, with a great sense of humor, and full of life, John embraced the world with open arms. His memory remains with us in the ICNT network, his colleagues at TRU, and the many collaborators and friends he gathered across the world.

Jan Velvin, Marit Gundersen Engeset, Michael Lück & Anne Köchling
on behalf of all ICNT members

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Editorial

The world in which tourism research and education operate today is anything but predictable. Climate change continues to reshape destinations ecologically as well as socially in ways we only partially understand. Political instability can lead to economic crises and the closure of borders, with some regions having to deal with war and famine. These conditions undermine long-established assumptions about the increasing global mobility of people in the tourism sector. Digitalisation and AI are unfolding at a pace that leaves even the technologically adept feeling overwhelmed at times. Among the younger generations growing up today, some are idealistic, others uneasy, and many are acutely aware of the planet's limits.

The contributions in this book reflect both the turbulence and transformations of our time, while also highlighting the determination of researchers within the International Competence Network for Tourism Research and Education (ICNT) to engage with complexity rather than retreat into theoretical abstraction. The authors build bridges between theory and practice and demonstrate meaningful engagement with industry actors and local communities. The ICNT is an association of international universities in the field of tourism and hospitality whose members from all over the world are committed to an ongoing exchange about research and teaching.

A recurring thread throughout the book is the growing recognition that tourism cannot rely on incremental improvements alone. Several contributions respond, in different ways, to the need for regenerative approaches, i.e., approaches that not only reduce harm but actively restore ecosystems and strengthen social structures. It may sound ambitious, perhaps even slightly utopian, but the authors make a persuasive case that traditional sustainability frameworks are no longer sufficient.

The authors make use of diverse research approaches. Scenario planning, Delphi studies, mixed-methods field research, and case-based pedagogical inquiry are just some of the methods represented. Together they show that future-oriented knowledge development cannot be captured by a single epistemology. Scenario planning, for example, enables DMOs to explore not only what is likely but also what is possible, including uncomfortable developmental pathways where climate stress or digital fragmentation challenge existing governance models.

Tourism education both as it currently exists and as it might evolve is another recurring theme in the ICNT network and in this book. Some chapters examine inquiry-based learning, coaching, or adventure- and skill-based training, while others explore how pedagogical "experiments" generate new insights into student inquiry learning processes. Such research raises several compelling questions: are our teaching practices evolving as quickly as the world our students

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are preparing to enter? Many of the findings point to experiential and reflective learning environments no longer being "nice additions", but essential conditions for developing the capabilities that future generations will need, such as resilience, collaborative capacity, critical thinking, and the ability to act under uncertainty.

Across all contributions, a shared message emerges: the future of tourism will depend on our collective willingness, as tourism educators and researchers, to engage early, openly, and constructively in shaping tourism's future. To achieve this, the applied research showcased here, stands out as an essential tool for informing practice-oriented decisions capable of shaping both tourism and tourism education in the years ahead.

We hope that this book will offer a set of tools and grounded insights that help readers navigate uncertainty and engage critically with the future of tourism. If this collection succeeds in sparking new conversations between scholars and practitioners, or in inspiring students to ask new questions about today's and tomorrow's tourism, then it has fulfilled its purpose. We therefore invite you to read this book as an ongoing dialogue between colleagues situated in different contexts across the world. The collection reflects the diversity of the ICNT network and the shared belief that tourism research and education can and should contribute to more sustainable and equitable tourism.

Jan Velvin and Anne Köchling

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Part 1: Exploring sustainable tourism futures: Contributions to bridge the theory-practice gap

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Anne Köchling, Jan Velvin

Introductory chapter

Exploring sustainable tourism futures: Contributions to bridge the theory-practice gap

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Abstract: *This first introductory chapter sets the stage for a collection of works addressing the critical need for sustainable and regenerative tourism in the context of pressing global challenges such as climate change, overtourism, and socio-political instability. It outlines the dual role of tourism as both a contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and a sector profoundly affected by environmental degradation. The authors underscore the importance of applied research in bridging the gap between tourism theory and practice, advocating for stakeholder engagement and actionable recommendations. By presenting diverse methodological approaches, including scenario planning and the Delphi-method, this chapter introduces methods to explore the future that will be applied in sub-sequent chapters. Ultimately, it argues for a paradigm shift in tourism, moving from a growth-oriented focus to one that prioritises ecological restoration and social equity, thereby fostering a more resilient and responsible tourism future.*

Keywords: *applied tourism research, sustainable tourism, regenerative tourism*

1 Introduction

Tourism has become one of the defining socio-economic phenomena of the 21st century. With 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals recorded globally in 2024, international tourism had fully recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic only four years after its outbreak. Its rapid growth is expected to continue, reflecting structural trends associated with rising middle classes in Asia and Africa, technological innovation, and global mobility (World Tourism Organization, 2025). Yet, this growth unfolds within a global context increasingly characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity features commonly described under the "VUCA" framework (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). This framework underlines that the external pressures shaping tourism's future are multidimensional.

The effects of climate change are already reshaping destinations from coral reef degradation and altered snowfall patterns to increased frequency of extreme weather events (Scott et al., 2019). While the destinations themselves suffer the consequences, the industry simultaneously is a key driver of climate change accounting for at least 8.8 % of all global greenhouse gas emissions (Sun et al., 2024). This stresses the urgent need to encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly sustainable travel behaviours. Additionally, overtourism challenges the social and ecological carrying capacity of destinations worldwide,

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raising questions about justice, distribution, and governance (Milano et al., 2019; Back et al., 2025). The aforementioned developments have given rise to discourse surrounding the imperative of degrowth of tourism (Murray et al., 2025). Besides, political instability and conflict further expose the fragility of international mobility, as evidenced by sudden shifts in travel flows due to global crises (Bhaskar & Karthikeyan, 2025; Köchling et al., 2025).

These challenges underscore that tourism cannot be viewed as a self-contained system. Rather, it constitutes a node within a complex global network of environmental, economic, and socio-political interactions. The ability of tourism research to address these interdependencies, and contribute meaningfully to global adaptation and transformation agendas, depends firstly on whether the results deliver directly applicable recommendations for action to the tourism industry, and secondly on whether these recommendations are heeded by practitioners and policymakers alike. However, scholars increasingly highlight a persistent gap between tourism academia and industry, noting that knowledge transfer is often weak. Applied research can be a key mechanism to close this gap by engaging stakeholders, co-producing knowledge, and explicitly articulating managerial and policy implications in research outputs (Jones & Walmsley, 2022). As such, applied research is crucial in tourism because it directly connects theoretical knowledge with practical decision-making in destinations, businesses, and policy, thereby improving competitiveness, sustainability, and resilience of the tourism system. It generates context-specific evidence that managers, communities, and governments can immediately use to design products, manage impacts, and respond to crises such as pandemics or climate-related shocks (Menon et al., 2022).

2 Contributions in this collection

The six chapters presented in this first part of the collection are examples of such an application-oriented approach and aim at bridging the theory-practice gap. While the overarching theme of all chapters is a sustainable (or even regenerative) future for tourism, some of the aforementioned global trends and phenomena are addressed. Tourism actors and stakeholders are involved in the research process and concrete recommendations for practical action, and the future of tourism are formulated. The authors from Germany, the Netherlands and Finland apply a wide variety of methods for this purpose, ranging from the Delphi method and scenario planning to traditional surveys and interviews.

In light of the discussion about overtourism and the question of how to mitigate social imbalances and improve tourism acceptance in affected destinations, Seeler, Eisenstein, Krause, and Kunz use a mixed-methods approach to examine which measures German Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) have used to date. The authors identify promising measures to foster a socially sustainable destination development. However, they also discuss the barriers to success that have been identified, such as resource restrictions and the current

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roles and responsibilities of DMOs. These can help to inform policy requirements.

Postma, Wielenga, Middelhoek, and van de Waadescribe describe a project in which they support the Dutch DMO 'Waterland van Friesland' in strategic planning by developing alternative future scenarios. The authors use scenario planning and work with the DMO to determine how they can prepare for the various future scenarios. Scenario planning offers a structured means of exploring multiple, plausible futures under uncertainty (Postma, 2015) and is particularly suited to tourism contexts characterised by dynamic external forces and long-term structural shifts. By constructing narratives of alternative futures for instance, sustainable, adaptive, or disruptive tourism regime scenarios stimulate critical dialogue among scholars, policymakers, and industry stakeholders.

In the next chapter, Ritalahti employs the e-Delphi method to elicit the perspectives of travel intermediation experts in Finland on the future of this sector. The Delphi method introduced by Linstone and Turoff (1975) belongs to the most influential techniques to explore future-oriented questions by systematically aggregating expert judgements to generate consensus-based predictions. The method has been widely adopted in tourism futures research, for example, in studies identifying long-term trends in sustainable tourism, destination development, and technological disruption (Lin & Song, 2015). The author undertakes the future exploration in the context of two major global trends: the increasing digitalisation of travel planning and booking, and the ongoing effects of climate change.

In the studies presented in the following two chapters, the tourism industry is not directly involved. Yet, the authors draw on trends and social developments relevant to practice and society. Toivonen and Iloranta broaden the readers' understanding of luxury in the context of the emerging field of space tourism experiences. They provide reflections on future perspectives of space tourism in light of the need of sustainability and end up with recommendations for the industry.

The chapter by Weis, Topp, Aidley, and Eisenstein addresses tourist mobility, or more precisely, the attitudes towards mobility and travel in Germany across different age groups. In view of climate change and the fact that mobility exerts the greatest influence on CO_2 emissions mitigation (Sun et al., 2024), the authors analyse whether spatial mobility, which has previously been viewed positively, is increasingly viewed more critically, particularly among younger age groups. They conclude with recommendations derived from their research, which are intended to support pro-environmental travel behaviour in all age groups.

In the last chapter of this part of the book, Holmberg and Konttinen even go beyond the concept of sustainability by addressing a regenerative tourism approach. Whereas sustainability has long guided policy and scholarship (Bramwell & Lane, 2011), there is growing recognition that "sustaining" current systems may be insufficient in the face of accelerating environmental degradation

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and social inequality. The emerging paradigm of regenerative tourism advocates for practices that restore, renew, and enhance ecological and social systems (Bellato & Pollock, 2025). Within this framework, tourism is not merely to reduce harm but actively contribute to planetary health and community well-being. The authors employ an explanatory case study to gain an understanding of how the regenerative tourism model could be implemented in the Finish context. They conclude that in Finland, regenerative tourism is seen as taking sustainability to the next level.

3 Conclusion

Overall, this book brings together an international group of scholars applying diverse methodological lenses to study tourism's uncertain futures. The chapters in this first part of the book collectively pursue the objective to situate tourism within global transformation discourses, emphasising sustainability, resilience, and regeneration and putting the practical contributions of research into the centre. Understanding the future of tourism is not solely an exercise in prediction, but a process of collective learning and value negotiation. Methodological diversity, interdisciplinarity, and reflexivity are necessary conditions for addressing the grand challenges of our time. The evolving tourism research, therefore, mirrors the transformation of tourism itself — from growth-oriented industry to an arena of global responsibility and renewal.

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Measures to support tourism acceptance and the future of DMOs: Empirical insights from German DMOs

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Abstract: *Tourists' insatiable demand for leisure experiences underpins the economic prosperity of tourism and the resilience of the industry. However, some destinations have become victims of their own success, leading to growing imbalances between residents and visitors and declining tourism acceptance. In order to mitigate such imbalances and ensure benefits for all stakeholders, measures have been implemented to mitigate negative impacts of tourism while enhancing tourism acceptance. The aim of this study was to analyse the status quo of the implementation of such measures among German DMOs. Using a mixed-methods approach including desktop research, qualitative focus groups and an online survey, a total of 35 promising measures were identified. The results also show that the current roles and responsibilities of DMOs, as well as funding sources and human resources, limit the successful and sustainable implementation of such measures. A shift in DMO structures towards integrative destination management is needed to ensure social sustainability and resident satisfaction.*

Keywords*: Social impact, Overtourism, Resident perceptions, Tourism acceptance*

1 Introduction

Profit-oriented and neoliberal tourism strategies and tourists' insatiable demand for leisure experiences have contributed to a sustained increase in international tourist arrivals pre-COVID-19 (World Tourism Organization [UN Tourism], 2020). Recent numbers demonstrate the resilience of the tourism industry as recovery of international tourism is at 99 % of pre-pandemic levels and several destinations even reported above pre-pandemic arrival numbers (UN Tourism, 2025). Not only did tourism arrivals grow but also visitor spending – in some destinations spending grew even faster than arrivals (UN Tourism, 2025). Strong pent-up demand is witnessed as the desire to travel for leisure purposes is greater than ever – leisure travel is a clear consumption priority for Germans (Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen e. V. [FUR], 2025) who would rather save on everyday consumption (e.g., cloths, groceries) to afford travelling. Leisure travelling is an important part of a fulfilling life for many Germans that love to travel in their own country. This is also mirrored in the 2024 statistics on tourist arrivals and overnight stays in Germany with a total of 496.1 million overnight stays by Germans, a new record was reached (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2025).

On a state level, media headlines in 2024 were full of record numbers to celebrate the economic success of the industry – in the northernmost state Schles-

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wig-Holstein, for instance, an all-time record was reached with a total of 9.4 million guests and 38 million overnights stays (Schlichting, 2025). The vast majority of overnight stays were recorded at the Baltic Sea and the North Sea where tourism is not only the main economic driver but has also caused dissatisfaction among residents in the past. Similar results have also been recorded in all other federal states across Germany that have experienced another increase compared to 2023 and have (almost all) reached pre-pandemic levels (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2025).

However, the realisation of economic benefits and overaccomplishment of development aims have been accompanied by evolving challenges in some destinations (Seeler & Eisenstein, 2024). Especially well-visited destinations with tourism as the main economic factor have become victims of their own success (Milano et al., 2022). This does not only apply to city destinations such as Venice, Amsterdam or Barcelona, but also islands, beach resorts and nature destinations (e.g., Hughes, 2018; Rejón-Guardia et al., 2020). Due to increasing imbalances between local communities and visitors, social sustainability got threatened and anti-tourism attitudes have evolved in some destinations (Milano et al., 2019, 2024; Hughes, 2018; Papathanassis, 2017). Calls for alternative indicators that have non-monetary value and go beyond economic figures to measure tourism success became louder (Cave & Dredge, 2020). The pandemic and particularly the lockdown periods have silenced the discussions around overtourism tendencies for a while, yet the recent developments show that past issues have not been resolved. Instead, business as usual is pursued and as seen in previous crises, economic, reductionist mindsets remain dominant (Cave & Dredge, 2020; Høegh-Guldberg et al., 2021). Furthermore, it seems that ambitions to endorse a positive transformation towards more sustainable tourism futures and the admission that tourism success needs to be understood beyond growth and profit sink into oblivion (Bellato & Pollock, 2023). Although interest in residents' perceptions has grown among Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) and political decision-makers (Eisenstein & Schmücker 2021; Seeler & Eisenstein, 2023, 2024), this interest of sustaining and enhancing residents' well-being and ensuring tourism acceptance is often mostly driven by pragmatic reasons and reactions to evolving dissatisfaction and unrest instead of profound and inner conviction to actively drive the change (Bellato & Pollock, 2023).

At the same time, changes in a DMO's responsibilities towards more holistic management and stewardship organisations (Høegh-Guldberg et al., 2021; World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021) and a paradigm shift towards regenerative tourism models is witnessed (Cave & Dredge, 2020). This demonstrates the transformational will among actors, the acknowledgment of resident perspectives in tourism (Šegota et al., 2024) and the evolving openness towards system-thinking and realisation that destination development needs to be understood through a complex adaptive systems' perspective (Hartman, 2023). However, Bellato and Pollock (2023) critically remark that "(v)ery few communities, associations or companies have invested the time and money needed to understand

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its systems-changing implications or catalyse its true potential" (p. 6). Thus, a stronger commitment among all stakeholders towards the much-needed transformation is required. This entails not only the development and implementation of alternative key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor and evaluate tourism destination development but also redefine success and explore practical solutions to mitigate negative impacts on the resident population and living environments. Although some interventions and measures (e.g., code of conducts, awareness campaigns, visitor guidance) have been implemented and tested to minimise negative impacts and improve resident satisfaction with tourism development, there is little knowledge about their promise of success and practical relevance and feasibility.

The aim of this study was to better understand the roles and responsibilities of German DMOs and to identify promising measures to mitigate negative impacts and strengthen tourism acceptance among residents. Building on a mixed-method approach, a total of twenty promising measures to minimise negative impacts and fifteen promising measures to support tourism acceptance among residents were identified. The central findings of the study will be outlined, and practical examples provided in this chapter.

2 Alternative tourism indicators: The tourism acceptance score

Interest in understanding residents' perceptions on tourism development in their own place of living has grown in the recent past and calls for alternative KPIs that prioritise community well-being over pure economic factors emerged (Bellato & Pollock, 2023; Cave & Dredge, 2020). However, empirical insights into resident perspectives remain scarce and there has been limited research on comparative instruments that allow to monitor tourism acceptance over time. In 2019, the tourism acceptance score was introduced measuring the tourism acceptance among Germans for the first time (Eisenstein & Schmücker, 2021). Since then, the representative study has been repeated on a yearly basis and the tourism acceptance has been examined in more than 100 destinations on different destination levels across Germany. The standardised five-point scale from 1 (mostly negative) to 5 (mostly positive) to measure tourism acceptance among destination residents enables comparability between destinations and years. A distinction is made between the tourism acceptance score (TAS) for the place of residence (TAS-R) and the personal tourism acceptance score (TAS-P). The TAS was developed following the well-known Net Promoter Score (Reichheld, 2003). This means that the score is computed based on a simple deduction in which the detractors comprising the negative scores (score 1 and 2) are subtracted from the promoters which are the sum of the positive scores (score 4 and 5) (Seeler & Eisenstein, 2024).

While the results show that Germans are generally positive about tourism in their place of residence and that there are no nationwide problems with tourism acceptance, time comparisons show a steady decline in tourism acceptance

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among Germans since 2019 (DI Tourismusforschung, 2023). A slight increase in tourism acceptance was found in 2024, yet the 2019 level has not been reached and further monitoring is required to understand long-term changes (DI Tourismusforschung, 2024). Furthermore, tourism is mostly understood as an economic driver and is accepted for its contribution to job creation, tax revenue and investment. However, the personal benefits that residents can derive from tourism in their place of residence (e.g., leisure and cultural offerings, restaurants and cafés, local supply) are often only marginally known (Seeler & Eisenstein, 2024) and tourism is not understood as a booster for their own quality of life (Seeler & Eisenstein, 2023). Residents increasingly demand measures and actions to mitigate tourism-induced negative impacts – whether they are mostly only perceived or real impacts. At the same time, DMOs understand the need for measures that support and strengthen tourism acceptance among Germans. Given that the core function of a DMO has long been to promote a destination to attract visitors (Høegh-Guldberg et al., 2021), and that roles and responsibilities have only recently begun to change, there is insufficient experience among DMOs in addressing the destination's community, and only little practical value associated with such promising measures. Although DMOs have begun to implement campaigns targeting the local community, there is a lack of empirical evidence to investigate the potential of such interventions and measures. In general, the perspective of tourism providers, and DMOs in particular, has been largely neglected in the predominantly guest-centered tourism research.

3 Research aims and method

The overall aim of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the current roles and responsibilities of German DMOs in relation to sustainable destination development, particularly with regard to social sustainability. The study also aimed to identify promising measures for combating overtourism tendencies, mitigating negative impacts, and strengthening local acceptance of tourism. This study followed a practical approach and aimed to develop a comprehensive overview of measures to support DMOs in coping with the increasing challenges associated with tourism acceptance. German DMO representatives, who have been largely neglected in tourism research, were given a voice. The project was guided by the following four research questions:

1. What factors determine tourism acceptance among Germans?
2. Which concrete measures are considered promising to mitigate negative impacts and strengthen tourism acceptance?
3. What experiences have been made with the implementation of measures?
4. What situational influences determine the success of the measures?

A comprehensive mixed-methods approach was introduced to address existing research gaps. A sequential and developmental approach was applied comprising a comprehensive desktop research, qualitative focus groups interviews and an online survey. As a first step, comprehensive desktop research was con-

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ducted to identify measures already implemented by German DMOs at different destination levels and beyond to mitigate negative impacts on destination residents and to enhance tourism acceptance. Through a deductive online desktop research, more than 180 measures from about 90 destinations were identified. In a second step, a qualitative focus group interview was conducted digitally using the Zoom platform. A purposive sampling strategy was applied and a total of 16 industry experts were selected who are members of a Germany-wide working group that concentrates on tourism future developments (DTV AG Zukunftsentwicklung). The focus group interview took place on 14 December 2021 and lasted three hours. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the following three topic areas: (1) overtourism & tourism acceptance in general, (2) promising measures to improve tourism acceptance, and (3) promising measures to combat overtourism and mitigate negative impacts. They were asked to discuss their respective topic in detail for 45 minutes each. After three rounds of discussion, a short summary of each topic was provided by the interviewer and participants were asked to add additional information if desired. On completion of the interviews, all audio files were transcribed, the information coded and analysed using MAXQDA.

A survey was designed and programmed based on the key findings of the desktop research and the qualitative focus group interviews with tourism experts. The aim of the online survey was to gain a holistic understanding of industry experts' perspectives on tourism acceptance, as well as promising measures to mitigate negative impacts and strengthen residents' support for tourism. A snowball sampling strategy was used, and the survey was disseminated through newsletters and LinkedIn. Data collection took place between 22 December 2021 and 12 January 2022 with a total of 877 valid responses, of which 615 represented a German DMO. The remaining 262 respondents worked for other tourism related businesses (e.g., hotels, transport, experience providers). As the aim was not to obtain a DMO-specific perspective, but rather the general sentiment of DMO representatives, it was possible for several people from the same organisation to participate in the survey. The high number of participants demonstrates the topic salience. Once the data collection was completed and the dataset cleaned, descriptive statistics were applied using SPSS25.

In a last step, two additional focus group interviews with experts from two German regions that faced overtourism tendencies and experienced dissatisfaction among residents in the past (Tölzer Land in Bavaria, Island of Usedom in Mecklenburg-Western-Pomerania) were conducted. Both focus group interviews were conducted digitally on 12 January 2022 with five participants each and lasted 1.5 hours. Due to space limitations, this chapter concentrates primarily on the core results of the quantitative online survey and the results of the qualitative interviews are presented in a condensed form. The study was fully funded by the *LIFT Wissen* funding programme of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection and was conducted by the German Tourism Association (Deutscher Tourismusverband, DTV) under the scientific

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leadership of the German Institute for Tourism Research (DI Tourismusforschung, FH Westküste).

4 Central findings from the qualitative focus group interviews

In the pre-survey and post-survey focus group interviews industry experts concluded that Germany as a whole does not have a year-round overtourism problem. However, there was a consensus that there have been temporary and localised issues of crowding in the past and that some destinations, particularly on the coasts, have experienced longer-term, seasonal problems of crowding that have led to dissatisfaction among local residents. Here, industry experts critiqued the dominance of quantitative measures to define destination success and allocate funding – as long as destination success is measured by the number of guests and overnight stays in a destination, there is little remedy for the likelihood of overcrowding. It was further noted that the aims of reaching more guests are often not orchestrated with infrastructure developments as the existing infrastructure often fails to endure the growing number of guests. Increased congestion and load pressure can therefore also be seen as a symptom of inadequate infrastructure development.

In this vein industry experts also discussed the occasional lack of critical reflection among locals, the application of double standards and the constant search for a scapegoat: while locals enjoy leisure activities in their own place of residence and want to experience their favourite places exclusively, they blame tourism activities for issues such as crowding and traffic congestion, even though locals are often part of the crowd and the congestion. Industry experts assumed that there is no evidence-based overtourism issue in Germany – as also seen in survey results from recent tourism acceptance studies – but rather a perception problem that is deeply rooted in the minds of residents and has become emotionally charged. The general redistribution of the population and rural exodus together with the COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated these concerns and shifted the problem from cities to the countryside. Overall, it was concluded that a lack of knowledge and critical reflection of one's own behaviour largely influences perceived overtourism tendencies and tourism acceptance. Industry experts further noted that the complex tourism system is often undervalued and misconceived due to a lack of visibility and lack of understanding. Furthermore, there has been limited support from local and national politics which has contributed to negative perceptions and missing appreciation. One expert summarised this as follows: "if at some point, we have managed to make people as proud of tourism as they are of the automotive industry in Germany, then we will have achieved something" (translated from German). To achieve this, there is a need for stronger lobby and funding for community initiatives to help raise awareness for the complex system. This would also mean broadening the roles and responsibilities of a DMO towards more inclusive and all-encompassing destination management that aims for an increase in guest

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satisfaction while safeguarding and boosting a high quality of life for residents. A total of 35 measures were identified by industry experts as promising to mitigate negative impacts and promote tourism acceptance and then tested in the subsequent online survey among tourism stakeholders.

5 Core results from the online survey

Around 60 % of respondents represented a local tourism organisation, 32 % a regional tourism organisation and the remaining 8 % cross-regional or federal state organisations. While the majority of respondents agreed that ensuring the satisfaction of guests and locals is equally relevant to their work, the overall organisational understanding is mostly through a guest perspective (Figure 1).

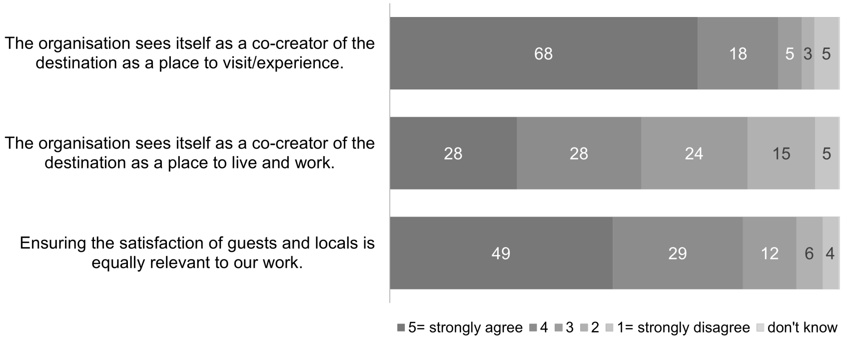

Figure 1: DMOs self-perception

Source: author's work

While tourism acceptance has declined from 2019 to 2024 (DI Tourismusforschung, 2023, 2024), with more than a third of respondents admitting that this decrease is notable, given the increasing occurrence of negative attitudes and overcrowding in popular areas, less than a third of DMO representatives believe that the issue's relevance has been recognised too late to determine destination success. Seven out of ten respondents (strongly) agreed that tourism acceptance is of key importance and high relevance for their strategic direction and almost 60 % (strongly) agreed that the issue is increasingly being considered in their internal marketing (Figure 2).

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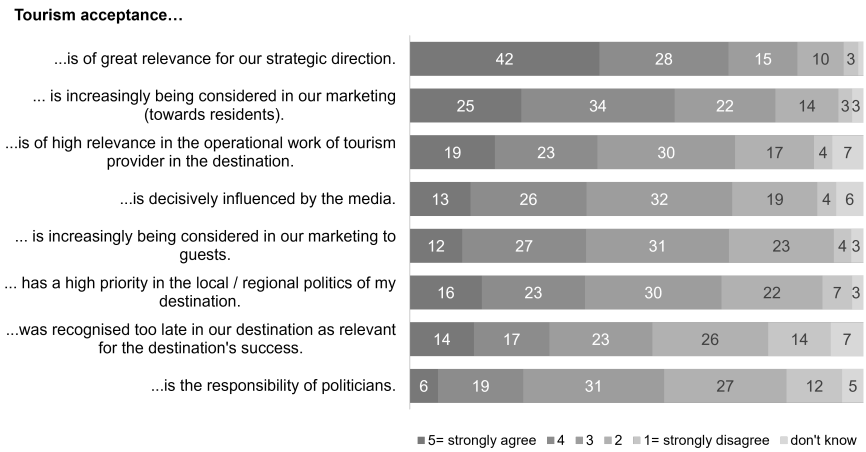

Figure 2: Tourism acceptance in destination work

Source: author's work

Although more than a third of respondents see the media as a key influencer in the debate on overtourism, only 18 % of DMOs agreed that their destination had been linked to the issue by the media. Industry experts in the qualitative interviews noted a lack of infrastructure to cope with the increasing visitor pressure during the high season yet also noted that these infrastructure shortages are no year-round problem. This is also mirrored in the survey results as 24 % of survey respondents agreed that the infrastructure in their destination was inadequate for the increasing number of guests – at least temporarily during the high season and in some highly visited hot spots. Overall, the results show a growing awareness of the issue, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the urgent need to implement measures to mitigate negative impacts and strengthen tourism support.

5.1 Measures to mitigate negative impacts through tourism

The 35 previously identified potential measures (see Table 1) were analysed with respect to their promise of success on a five-point scale (extremely promising to not promising at all), their probability of use within the next five years and use in the past five years. A distinction has been made between measures that are mainly aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of tourism and measures that are aimed at supporting the acceptance of tourism among residents.

Travel congestion and parking issues are major challenges and impact guests and locals alike. Thus, it is not surprising that on a five-point scale from 1= not promising at all to 5= extremely promising, 90 % of respondents consider solutions for traffic congestion as promising or extremely promising (top-2 value). While 11 % of respondents stated that their DMO had worked on this issue in the past five years and 35 % said that they had considered finding solutions for

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traffic congestion in the past and will continue doing so in the next five years, 42 % of respondents said that they would start their initiatives in the coming five years. The high level of commitment and the increase in the number of DMOs looking for solutions to address the issue demonstrate their relevance and timeliness. Despite the high involvement in the past and endeavours to find solutions, it remains a central issue which demonstrates not only the complexity in finding solutions but also the multi-stakeholder approach that is needed here. Overall, the results demonstrate that rather softer, educational measures to manage visitor flows and behaviour, such as awareness-raising campaigns or behavioural tips and recommendations, are seen as promising tools in German destinations, while harder and more restrictive measures, such as capacity limits or bans on new development projects in highly frequented areas, are seen as less promising and necessary at this stage. Some of the more restrictive measures, such as behavioural rules, were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, but focused mainly on reducing the spread of the virus. The results also show an increased willingness and likelihood to use digital, innovative solutions to guide visitors (47 % over the next 5 years), solutions to traffic congestion (42 % over the next 5 years), awareness campaigns (36 % over the next 5 years), defining and implementing new KPIs to measure destination success (31 % over the next 5 years) and promoting dialogue between locals and visitors (29 % over the next 5 years) (Table 1).

Table 1: Measures to mitigate negative impacts through tourism (in %)

Measure to mitigate negative impacts through tourism	Top-2 promise of use	Applied last 5 years	Planned next 5 years	Applied last 5 years & planned next 5 years
Solutions for traffic congestion	90	11	42	35
Creation of off-season offerings	71	18	17	49
Preservation of original townscape/cityscape	68	--	--	--
Digital, innovative solutions for visitor guidance	66	7	47	16
Awareness-raising campaign	66	9	36	27
Target group-orientated marketing	66	18	14	55
Promoting dialogue between locals and guests	63	8	29	27
Option for citizen participation	60	22	16	38
Improving the information base of the PR press	59	11	24	29
New attractions in less visited areas/places	57	11	26	22
New KPIs to measure destination success	54	5	31	15

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Measure to mitigate negative impacts through tourism	Top-2 promise of use	Applied last 5 years	Planned next 5 years	Applied last 5 years & planned next 5 years
Behavioural tips & recommendations for tourists	50	24	11	33
Improved spatial (re-)distribution	47	11	13	23
Ban on undesirable tourist offers	36	7	6	8
Limitation of visitor numbers/introduction of capacity limits	33	12	8	10
Behavioural rules/regulations for guests	31	18	5	25
Introduction of a tourism tax	25	12	9	23
Price increase for tourism products	22	16	12	20
Selective ban on new infrastructure projects (hotels, souvenir shops etc.)	22	6	7	9
Omission of marketing activities (demarketing)	8	16	3	7

Note: Scale from "1= not promising at all" to "5= extremely promising".
Source: authors' work

A detailed analysis reveals differences between destination levels. The implementation of digital, innovative solutions to regulate and control visitor flows (e.g., real-time measurement, recommendations based on artificial intelligence) is more likely to be seen as promising by DMO representatives from interregional organisations or DMOs at state level. Particularly DMOs from the North Sea and Baltic Sea coasts operating in destinations with a high tourism intensity and insufficient infrastructure to cope with the high amount of visitor flows consider digital guidance as promising to mitigate the negative impacts on the destination. A correlation analysis further shows that there are relatively strong correlations with measures such as setting capacity limits, spatial (re-)distribution, awareness-raising campaigns as well as the establishment of new KPIs to measure destination success. The omission of marketing campaigns is generally considered less promising; however, a differentiated analysis shows that particularly DMOs on local and regional levels see potential in this measure. They represent destinations that have a long tourism history, have been associated with overtourism in the news due to localised and temporal overcrowding and deal with increasingly dissatisfied residents. As seen in other European destinations with high visitor pressure (e.g., Amsterdam, Venice, Barcelona, Mallorca), the omission of marketing activities often comes along with additional more restrictive visitor management, such as price increases, behavioural guidelines or capacity limits.

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5.2 Measures to strengthen tourism acceptance

Three-quarters of respondents agreed that measures are needed to increase the acceptance of tourism among the local population. The need to implement measures is particularly strong in destinations with high visitor numbers and at federal state level. Compared to measures aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of tourism activities on destinations, the results show an increased relevance of tourism acceptance measures and a stronger commitment to implement measures in the following years (Table 2).

Table 2: Measures to strengthen tourism acceptance (in %)

Measure to strengthen tourism acceptance	Top-2 promise of use	Applied last 5 years	Planned next 5 years	Applied last 5 years & planned next 5 years
Cross-industry development of tourism potential	78	10	21	31
Tourism awareness campaign	71	10	24	12
Information material on tourist offers for new residents	71	21	12	40
Discounts for locals to use the tourist infrastructure	69	15	18	21
Active promotion of dialogue to raise awareness in the press	65	15	18	26
Visibility campaign	64	5	18	4
Marketing campaigns for the appreciation of locals	59	9	20	10
Opportunities for co-creation and active involvement in tourism plans	57	24	16	29
Ambassador campaign for locals	56	10	21	31
Active promotion of the dialogue between tourism professionals and pupils/schools	53	8	17	10
Information provided on local tourism for pupils/schools	50	6	14	7
Active promotion of the dialogue between locals and guests	48	9	16	9
Newsletter for residents	58	8	14	16
Information event/roadshow for locals	48	17	18	14
Interactive platforms for the permanent exchange of information	43	5	14	8

Note: Scale from “1= not promising at all” to “5= extremely promising”.

Source: authors’ work

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Although the likelihood of success of measures such as a visibility campaign to inform and raise awareness of the complex tourism system is regarded as relatively high (64 %), few DMOs have implemented such measures in the past or plan to do so in the near future. Communicating with schools through a variety of measures is also seen as promising not only to increase acceptance of tourism, but also to promote tourism as an attractive industry to work in. However, this has only been implemented to a limited extent in the past and is planned for the future. This limited involvement can be explained by the current roles and responsibilities of DMOs, as well as the frequent lack of funding for internal marketing activities and projects for the local population. An increasing number of campaigns that combine awareness-raising, appreciation of locals, cross-sectional development and media sensitization are being implemented: 24 % of respondents stated that they had planned such a campaign for the next five years. Awareness-raising campaigns are particularly important where tourism is wrongly blamed for a wide range of problems, has a negative image and its economic contribution to local welfare is underestimated. There is also growing resentment and ignorance among local people, who show little pride in their place of residence. If residents are aware of the economic importance of tourism and have a strong sense of place but are increasingly dissatisfied due to high visitor numbers and the perception that infrastructure development is driven by tourism, then other measures are needed. Exclusive offers and discounts for residents to use tourism infrastructure are seen as promising. Such initiatives are often implemented in the off-season and ultimately help to extend the season. Such offers for locals also open doors for an active dialogue between tourism providers and local residents and can be linked to participatory approaches to tourism development. Such initiatives also contribute indirectly to the active promotion of a dialogue to raise awareness in the press. Thus, measures often fulfil more than just one sub-aim in managing issues around decreasing tourism acceptance and increasingly perceived negative impacts through tourism.

6 Conclusion

In light of the realisation that the local population is vital for the competitiveness of destinations, and that their attitudes are crucial for the sustainable development of destinations, there is a growing interest in residents' perceptions of tourism in their place of residence (Eisenstein & Schmücker, 2021). A positive and healthy development can only be achieved if there is harmony between all stakeholders involved (Bellato & Pollock, 2023; Cave & Dredge, 2020). This requires a common understanding and agreement, or at least a compromise agreement, on what tourism, its impacts and success mean to their place of residence and to themselves. Tourism destination success has mainly been defined by economic measures and quantifiable indicators, such as the number of overnight stays or expenditures (Cave & Dredge, 2020). With tourist arrivals continuing to rise and the appetite for leisure travel seemingly insatia-

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ble (FUR, 2025; UN Tourism, 2025), the success story of the tourism industry as a whole, and individual destinations in particular, seemed unstoppable. Although the global pandemic brought the tourism industry to a standstill for a while, the industry once again proved its resilience as arrivals are almost back to pre-pandemic levels (UN Tourism, 2025). However, all success comes at a price, as residents of destinations feel the (temporary) pressure of visitors and the negative impact on their places of residence. Anti-tourism attitudes and tourismphobia have emerged and the tourism acceptance among residents is continuously shrinking (Hughes, 2018; Milano et al., 2022, 2024; Seeler & Eisenstein, 2024). Measures to mitigate negative impacts and strengthen tourism acceptance are needed and several initiatives have already been implemented. However, a comprehensive overview of promising measures and guidance for the deployment of measures was missing. This theoretical and practical gap was addressed in this study and a deeper understanding of the new roles and responsibilities of DMOs was gained.

Based on a mixed-methods approach and by giving a voice to the often-neglected DMO representatives, a set of 35 promising measures was identified. Twenty measures are considered promising in terms of mitigating negative impacts on the destination, while fifteen measures can help increase the acceptance of tourism among local residents. Correlation analysis reveals that different measures can be combined, and in-depth analysis shows that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, situational and destination-specific solutions are needed, as well as continuous monitoring to evaluate changes and progress. Overall, the results show that the focus of interventions is mainly on reaching out to locals who have expressed displeasure and dissatisfaction with current developments, while little attention is given to locals who are supportive and positive towards tourism. However, it is vitally important that residents with a positive attitude towards tourism in their place of residence remain enthusiastic. Thus, supportive measures that show appreciation for them and participatory formats and co-creation processes are suitable.

Results of the comprehensive research also show that the DMOs' current roles and responsibilities as well as funding sources and human resource deployment often limit the successful and sustainable implementation of such measures. Thus, ensuring the sustainable development of tourism destinations by ensuring social sustainability and residents' quality of life requires a more radical shift in DMO structures, roles and responsibilities towards destination stewardship and regenerative tourism (Bellato & Pollock, 2023). As with any research, this study comes with limitations. Given the relatively short amount of time permitted in the funding scheme, it was not feasible to conduct more qualitative interviews that could have delivered different viewpoints and perspectives from other tourism stakeholders as well. While the study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of existing measures and interventions, it had no claims for completeness. Furthermore, while the perception of the promise of success was examined, the study does not provide insights about real impacts. Although

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several of the measures and actions that are presented in this study have been implemented in the past and are planned to be continued in the future, a performance review is still pending and will be needed in the future to monitor and evaluate whether interventions have been able to accelerate change and eventually support the much-needed transformation towards more sustainable tourism futures.

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DMO Waterland of Friesland in a changing world

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Abstract: *The European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI) specialises in scenario studies and foresight for the leisure and tourism industry. This chapter presents a recent study conducted for the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) "Waterland van Friesland", which is responsible for marketing the lake district in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands. The aim of the study was to assist the DMO in updating their strategic document. By first developing a better understanding of the forces driving change in the tourism market, two key uncertainties within this forcefield were identified and used to develop four plausible future scenarios, each depicting an alternative future. To prepare for the future landscape outlined by these scenarios, the current strategic document was subjected to wind-tunnel testing, and recommendations were made to adjust it, ensuring the DMO is more future-proof until 2035.*

Keywords: *Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO), scenario study, drivers of change, climate change, digitalisation.*

1 Introduction

During times of accelerating change, foresight provides an approach for organisations and businesses to learn to understand its position in the global (tourism) system and the dynamics of this complex forcefield. A better understanding helps them to search for indicators of change that illuminate plausible future developments, anticipate changes and take action to become more resistant or even steer future developments into a more desirable direction. Scenarios serve as a key tool within foresight (Postma et al., 2024).

The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) of *Waterland van Friesland* [Waterland of Friesland] is an organisation that called the European Tourism Futures Institute (ETFI) at NHL Stenden University for assistance in making its strategic policy more future proof. Waterland of Friesland is the destination in the southwest of Friesland that represents the province's lake district. Administratively, the lake district is located within two bordering municipalities: *Súdwest-Fryslân* [Southwest Friesland] and *De Fryske Marren* [The Frisian Lakes]. Touristically the lake district is managed by the Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) *Waterland van Friesland*. The DMO is an association and with a membership of almost 1,000 tourism and hospitality businesses in the region (VVV Waterland van Friesland, n.d.).

Because the lake district Waterland van Friesland is located within two municipalities, it is currently subject to two governmental area visions: an area vision by the municipality of De Fryske Marren („Working towards the most beautiful

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water recreation destination in the world") and by the municipality of Súdwest-Fryslân („Flourishing hospitality economy 2035"). The DMO itself has a prevailing policy document called *Koersdocument richting 2025* [Course document towards 2025] whose implementation is already well advanced (VVV Waterland van Friesland, 2020). Now that the policy period of this document is ending, the DMO wanted it to be updated. By means of a scenario study by the ETFI, the DMO wanted to generate inspiration for its future development and to be better suited to answer questions such as: what kind of organization do we want to be? and how do we foresee the future of our current core tasks (i.e. connecting, marketing, information provision and hospitality)? The DMO preferred to look ten years ahead (until 2035) and to involve both board and members in the study.

2 Working with scenarios

Scenarios are used to explore the future, not to predict it. Starting from important uncertainties, several (usually four) representations are made of a future that could happen if those uncertainties were to develop in a certain direction, mostly in words and images. So, scenarios depict (four) possible futures in which various developments in society are plausibly integrated. There is little chance that an individual scenario will manifest itself. However, it is likely that what is actually going to happen will be framed by the four scenarios together and contains elements of all four. Or to put it another way: the scenarios could be regarded as the corners of a billiard table that together delimit the future playing field that the DMO will have to deal with. In this way, scenarios provide guidance to take measures that can prepare the DMO for what is to come, to steer developments in a desirable direction, and so to become more future-proof. This is also referred to as *strategic foresight*, i.e., strategically foreseeing what may happen (Postma et al., 2024). The European Foresight Platform defines foresight as an open participatory and action-oriented process that is focused on thinking the future, debating the future and eventually shaping the future (European Foresight Platform, n.d.).

In most cases, scenarios focus on developments in the macro environment and meso environment. In the macro-environment, regional, national and international developments take place in the demographic, economic, social/cultural, technological, ecological and (geo)political domain, usually with a life span of 10–15 years or more. The DMO does not have the power to influence these developments but simply has to face them and deal with them. Meso-developments take place in the domain of tourism, such as in the market of supply and demand (figure 1). The DMO can exert (some) influence on these developments, especially with regard to the destination (Postma and Papp, 2021). Scenarios that are based on these macro and meso developments are called environmental scenarios or system scenarios (Postma et al., 2024).

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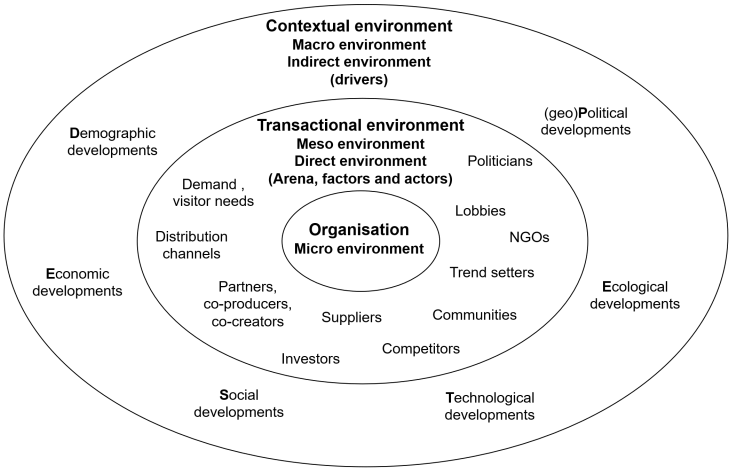

Figure 1: The meso and macro environment of an organisation

Source: Postma et al., 2024, p.135

3 Research design

Typically, a scenario study conducted by the ETFI encompasses the following steps (Postma et al., 2024):

Horizon scanning. During this first phase a longlist is composed of all kinds of developments in the macro and meso environment that are perceived to have an impact on the future developments during the time period defined at the start of the project. Ideally, such developments are monitored and interpreted by the organization on a structural basis. Yet, in practice it is mostly done as a stand-alone exercise at the start of a project.

1. Environmental analysis. During this second phase all the 'data' provided during horizon scanning are interpreted and analysed qualitatively. This means that the organization and ideally its stakeholders collaboratively explore the cause and effect relations between the individual observations and collaboratively try to create a number of cause-and-effect clusters – not into thematic clusters. In fact, each cluster represents a process affecting future developments as perceived by the group of participants. Next, each cluster is given a label that represents the force that fuels the process within that cluster. Such a force is referred to as a driving force of change. The environmental analysis ends with rating the perceived level of impact and the perceived level of unpredictability//uncertainty of all driving forces during the period to come. The two drivers that pair the highest level of uncertainty with the highest level of impact are the so-called key-uncertainties on which the scenarios will be built. The impactful drivers of which the future development is rather predictable (key certainties or sometimes called 'givens') are

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integrated within each of the scenario themselves, because it is likely that they will occur anyhow, whatever future may evolve.

2. Scenario matrix. The bandwidth of within which the key uncertainties, as identified in the previous step, may develop is bordered by finding two plausible extremes to which the driving force could have developed by the end of the period under investigation. If the two key uncertainties with their plausible extremes are combined orthogonally, it results in a matrix that shows a scenario in each of the quadrants that is framed by a combination of two extremes.
3. Scenario development. With the help of imagination, outside-the-box-thinking, thinking the impossible and the unlikely, each of these scenarios is elaborated into a narrative that is positioned within the future, i.e., the year in which the period under investigation end. Each scenario is extreme, yet plausible. The narrative may be supported with images to trigger the imagination of the user. Nowadays, Generative AI could be used to create narratives and pictures.
4. Using the scenarios. Scenarios can be used in several ways. The most straightforward is to test how robust prevailing policy is in each of the depicted futures. A second option is to use the scenarios to explore the strategic potential of the future by investigating important positive and negative implications of each scenario, so as to create an overview of opportunities and threats that the future holds. This overview can be used for strategy development. A third possibility is to use ingredients of the scenarios to draft a future vision or paint a picture of the preferred future. With the second and third option, the scenarios are used to steer the future in a preferred direction. In this project, the first method was used.

4 Driving forces of change

In most scenario studies conducted by the ETFI horizon scanning is used to create a longlist with all kinds of indicators of change within the contextual and transactional environment during a workshop with the client and its stakeholders. These findings are qualitatively analysed during the same workshop to identify driving forces of change (section 3, step 1 and 2). During this project, however, it was decided to review the driving forces of change in previous scenario studies conducted by the ETFI resulting from workshops with stakeholders and experts, the area visions by the two municipalities, and the DMO's course document to create such a list. This resulted in the following overview.

The following drivers of change were identified:

- Climate change
- Growing interest in nature
- Evolution of holiday preferences and holiday behaviour
- Developments in mobility
- Tourism community relations

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- Climate adaptation and climate mitigation
- Frisian identity and Frisian consciousness
- Digitalization and mobile society
- Demographic developments and work
- Government regulation
- Demographic developments and lifestyle
- Globalization

In the project each of the drivers was accompanied by a paragraph of text in which the process driven by the force and its foreseen development was explained.

5 Key uncertainties

Not all driving forces are expected to have an equal influence on the future of the DMO, and the development of some is less predictable than others. The driving forces that, according to the stakeholders, combine a strong impact with a high level of unpredictability or uncertainty are called key uncertainties. The scenarios will be framed by two key uncertainties. Driving forces that combine a high level of impact with a high level of predictability have most likely already been included in policy. Whatever future may unfold, these drivers will play a role anyhow. Or, in other words, they are apparent in each of the scenarios.

In order to determine which driving forces can be regarded as core uncertainty, the board of the DMO and a sample of members have been asked to rank them. A total of 19 people received a survey in which the list of driving forces, each with an explanation of their development, was presented. The participants were asked to select the three drivers of change they thought would have the biggest impact until 2035 and the three that were most unpredictable or uncertain. The survey was distributed by the DMO and the responses were analysed by the ETFI. An importance * uncertainty matrix was composed that revealed that climate change and digitalization & mobile society stood out as key uncertainties on which the scenario framework would be built (figure 2).

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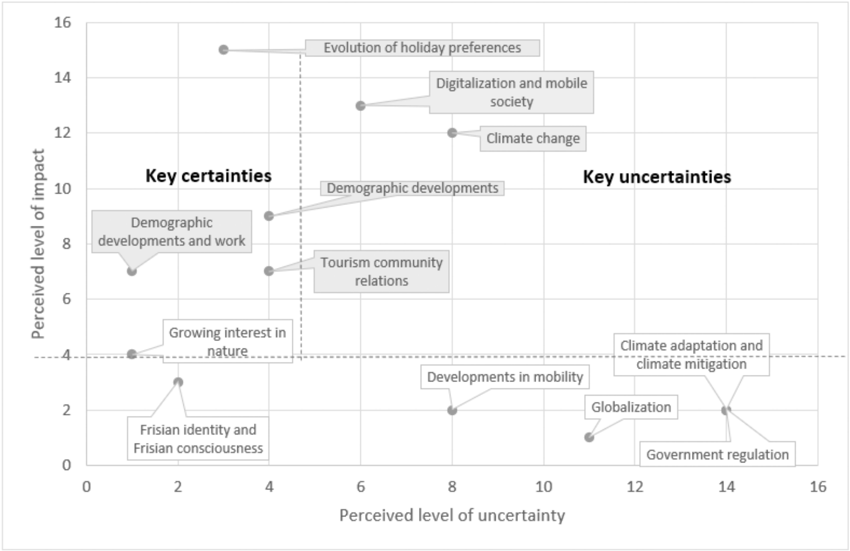

Figure 2: Importance * uncertainty matrix

Source: author's work

Note: dotted lines are drawn at the median of the X and Y axis

In the survey the current and anticipated developments of the two identified key uncertainties were described as follows.

5.1 Foresight of climate change

Summers are getting hotter, winters are getting wetter, and weather extremes are getting bigger, resulting in periodic desiccation and wetting, and changes in nature. The landscape may become rugged, and biodiversity may decrease, and species of birds, plants, insects and algae that previously had their habitat in more southern countries may settle in the area. Sea and river dikes may be modified and summer polders may come back – this time to retain water. The scarcity of resources may be increasing, including a water shortage during the summer.

Climate change shows that temperatures in, for example, Mediterranean and North African countries are rising, which, on the one hand, leads to different holiday patterns becoming visible: countries around the Mediterranean Sea are becoming too hot for holidays, causing people to move to cooler places in Central and Northern Europe. The first signs of this are already visible: the number of holidaymakers whose destination is Southern Europe has decreased by 10 % in 2023, according to the European Travel Commission (European Travel Commission, 2024). The European Union predicts that the decline will fall by a further 10 % over the next 20 years, while tourism to mainly Central and Northern Europe will grow (European Commission, 2023). On the other

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hand, climate change may also lead to a shift in seasons. A 5 % increase in tourism to Northern European coastal regions is expected in summer and early autumn (European Commission, 2023).

5.2 Foresight of digitalisation & mobile society

People, especially the youth, are getting more and more caught up in social media and ongoing communication. They are constantly exposed to influencers and advertising. Marketing organizations increasingly make use of platforms such as TikTok, trying to capture the attention of the audience and to retain it. These influencing techniques have a profound impact on people's notion of what is valuable and how they spend their time. At the same time, gamification is gaining ground, where tasks and activities are put into game-like environments to increase engagement. Ultra-realistic *Virtual Reality* (VR), *Augmented reality* (AR), and *Mixed Reality* (MR) add a new dimension to entertainment, allowing users to fully immerse themselves in digital worlds. These techniques offer opportunities for the tourism industry to increase the experiential value of travel and sightseeing, and to provide visitors with an immersive experience that exceeds their expectations.

In our contemporary world, where time is precious, people increasingly strive for efficiency in all the activities they do. That leads to a growing demand for curated products that seamlessly fit individual needs and preferences, facilitated by today's mobile technology. Tourists increasingly require a *one-stop experience*, also referred to as *seamless customer journey*, where they can find everything they need in one online location.

In line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2026,2017), *interconnected networking* and *assistant technology* are undergoing a strong development. Examples are robotisation, the development of *the Internet* of Things and *Smart Living* (applications of smart technology in and around the home, controllable with *smart smartphone* or *tablet*, such as lighting, heating, sound, security, doorbell, refrigerator, etc.), and the development of *Generative Artificial Intelligence* (AI, such as *ChatGPT*). Business processes are foreseen to be increasingly optimized through digitalization, robotization, and artificial intelligence, improving efficiency and reducing environmental impact.

So, digitalisation is affecting both demand and supply. It is anticipated that robots will increasingly be able to take over routine activities. AI will play an increasingly important role in the design of holidays – also by the traveller itself. ChatGPT, for example, is already capable of working out an entire vacation to your liking. In the near future, it is likely that AI will be used more often for planning activities, and facilitators will use it to inform and guide visitors.

6 Scenario matrix

The scenario team at the ETFI dived into the foresighted developments of the two key uncertainties of digitalisation and mobile society and climate change.

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By using their imagination for both key uncertainties, they identified a pair of extremes that would be plausible by 2035.

Climate change could lead to a situation in which the lake district Waterland of Friesland would offer the opportunity for people living in the Mediterranean area to escape to a cooler destination. Both the climate and the water in this part of Friesland offers the alternative people in the south of Europe may be looking for. This could lead to massification of tourism in the Waterland. This extreme was labelled 'destination follows demand'.

Alternatively, it is also plausible that climate change would have an entirely different outcome. A large part of the Netherlands, and also of the province of Friesland, is below sea level. The Dutch have always been successful in water management by designing a genius system of canals, mills and milling stations to keep the water out in times of high precipitation and threat of flooding. The alternation between periods of great drought and heavy precipitation, and the fact that the rivers coming from the Alps and other mountainous regions in Europe bring an increasing amount of water to the Dutch river Delta, poses the provincial administration with the challenge to intensify its water management activities. During wet times the water has to be stored in designated low areas to prevent other areas from being flooded. In dry times this water storing has to ensure that the population will have enough drinking water. This may mean that (some) lakes will get (partly or for certain periods of the year) a different function. In that case water management and protection of nature and landscape will be leading and tourism will have to adapt to this. That would only allow for small scale tourism, slow tourism and regenerative tourism. This extreme is labelled 'destination rules demand'.

The digitalisation and developments towards an even more mobile society could result in decentralised or centralised technology by 2035. Decentralised technology is the extreme in which technology is developed and used decentrally by individual businesses and users. In this situation the technology provision is rather fragmented. The other extreme envisages a situation where technology is in the hands of and dominated by only a few remaining organisations or businesses, such as Meta.

When the two key uncertainties and their plausible extremes for 2035 are combined, this results in the scenario matrix as shown in figure 3.

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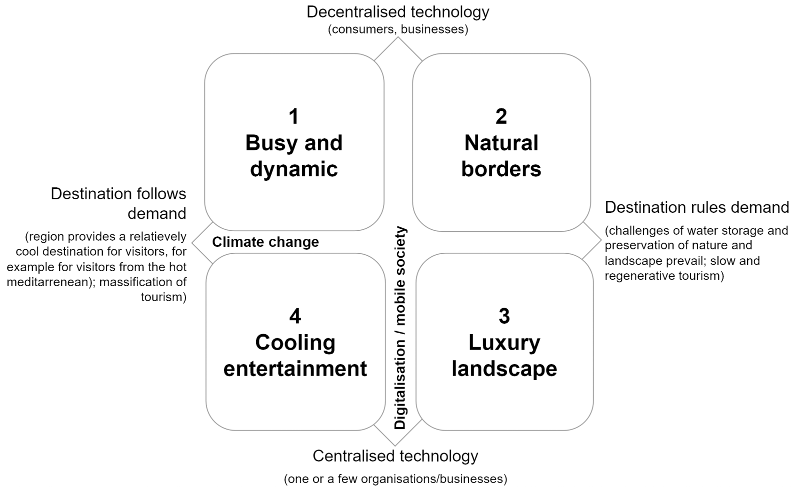

Figure 3: Scenario matrix

Source: author's work

7 Scenario development

Whereas the previous steps, up to the creation of the scenario framework, are rather straightforward, the development of the scenarios themselves is an intense task. It requires holistic thinking, thinking of the unlikely, and so challenging your own beliefs and convictions, by using imagination, outside-the-box thinking, association, and exchanging ideas with experts. Gradually story lines were crafted for each scenario, build around a dedicated set of themes to make them more easily comparable. Each scenario paints an entirely different picture of the future of tourism to the Waterland of Friesland. Overlap needs to be prevented. The team used generative AI to create a representative image for each of the scenarios.

7.1 Scenario 1 – Busy and dynamic

In 2035, Waterland of Friesland has evolved into a popular tourist destination, primarily due to the shift in tourism from Southern to Northern Europe caused by the heat in Southern Europe. This region now attracts a large number of international visitors, leading to mass tourism. Technological innovation in the region is driven by small, local enterprises, resulting in slower and less standardised development. The use of data has increased, but policies are mainly based on data collected by the public sector, while business data often remains internal.

Most visitors come from the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany, but tourists from Asia and the Middle East are also increasingly finding their way to Waterland of Friesland. The region offers a diverse range of activities, including beach tourism, adventure and sports tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, nature

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tourism, and gastronomic tourism. Young people prefer active water sports. International visitors, especially from Asia, are attracted by cultural highlights and commercial landmarks, often presented with staged authenticity. This has led to new attractions and thematic shops, but also to pressure on the authentic Frisian identity and language.

Nature in the region is freely accessible, and some farmers have adapted their operations for tourism. However, the balance between tourism and liveability, nature development, and nature conservation has been disrupted. Both visitors and residents find the beaches and water too crowded. Accommodations do not necessarily emphasise sustainability and are often privately owned, putting pressure on the balance between holiday and permanent homes. For tourists, there is a diverse range of affordable housing, but for residents, these have become unaffordable. The boating season has been extended due to the increase in individual tourists with their own boats, who are becoming more aware of the navigation regulations.

Local businesses use their own apps for tourist information and bookings, and search engines operate based on AI. The lack of a coordinating role makes the tourist offerings fragmented and sometimes confusing, especially for the Asian market, which is accustomed to package deals. Popular highlights such as the Elfstedentocht are experienced authentically by European visitors, while Eastern tourists visit these in groups. The travel movements are not collectively organised, which burdens the (water) road network. The increasing crowds make it harder to find peace. Technological developments in tourism are limited by the decentralised business landscape, and innovations are more often aimed at improving the customer experience than at destination management and area protection.

7.2 Scenario 2 – Natural borders

In 2035, Waterland of Friesland has developed into a sustainable destination where nature conservation and protection are central. Due to the heat in Southern Europe, there has been a shift towards exclusive tourism in Western Europe, attracting ecologically conscious visitors to Waterland of Friesland. These visitors opt for slow and regenerative tourism, with activities and visitor numbers strictly regulated to protect the landscape.

Technological development is driven by small, local enterprises, resulting in diverse technological solutions without standardisation. The use of data has increased, but policies are mainly based on data collected by the public sector, while business data often remains internal. Technological innovations are focused on regulation and minimal ecological impact.

Waterland of Friesland attracts visitors from higher socio-economic classes, both from Europe and exclusive groups from the Middle East and Asia. These visitors are interested in authentic and physical experiences such as cultural and heritage tourism, nature and ecotourism, gastronomic tourism, educational trips, digital detox, mindful travel, and religious tourism. There is a strong

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emphasis on making Frisian culture accessible to raise awareness and support for landscape preservation.

The offerings include nature walks, long-distance walks such as the Elfstedentocht route, retreats, bird watching, and guided tours by residents exploring nature and Frisian culture and history. Museums and churches are open year-round without staff, and the infrastructure for walking, cycling, and canoeing routes has been expanded. Due to tropical summers and warmer winters, Waterland of Friesland remains attractive even in the winter months, and the boating season has been extended.

Accommodations are innovative and sustainable, with strict sustainability standards and cultural-historical requirements. Large-scale hotel developments are banned, and new wetlands have made floating/boating accommodations possible. There is a healthy balance between holiday and permanent homes, and nature campsites and mini-campsites cater to the demand for immersive overnight stays. The retail offering focuses on authentic and local products, and the hospitality industry focuses on local cuisine and a sustainable menu.

Many providers have their own search engines and booking platforms, and a coordinating role is lacking. This poses no problems for most tourists, as they are purposefully searching. Natural and cultural heritage is safeguarded by regulations and Frisian pride. Farmers are encouraged to adopt organic and/or authentic farming practices and to allocate parts of their land for nature and tourism.

The government controls visitor flows and sets thresholds for water consumption by tourist attractions. Frisian entrepreneurs commit to regulations to preserve culture and landscape. Unique nature areas have become a new USP of the region. Boat owners maintain their boats themselves and are bound by strict regulations to minimise environmental impact. Rental boats are exclusively electric, and specific areas are closed to tourism during vulnerable periods. Dynamic zoning is applied to minimise ecological disruption.

7.3 Scenario 3 – Luxury landscape

In 2035, Waterland of Friesland has developed into a luxury tourist destination where exclusivity and nature conservation are central. Large, centralised organisations such as luxury hotel chains and tech giants offer streamlined and seamless customer experiences focused on comfort and status. Technological innovations are quickly and consistently implemented by these well-funded companies, leading to standardised technologies and services. Data exchange between large companies and the public sector optimises visitor management and landscape protection.

Visitors are interested in designed authenticity and comfortable nature experiences enhanced by AI and AR. The offerings focus on cultural and heritage tourism, nature and ecotourism, gastronomic tourism, and wellness and health tourism. Tours and activities are personalised based on preferences and emo-

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tions, and AI/AR-enhanced experiences provide educational and customised interactions with nature and culture.

New wetlands have been transformed into exclusive recreational areas with strictly regulated water activities. Accommodations range from luxury ecological hotels to self-navigating holiday homes, and the hospitality industry offers interactive culinary experiences enriched with technology and stories about origin and cultural significance. The boating season has been extended due to global warming, with strictly regulated sailing routes and a centralised rental fleet.

The tourist offerings are easily accessible via centralised platforms, and large companies ensure a consistent and high-quality offering. The government uses data for policy-making and encourages farmers to adopt authentic farming practices. Strict regulations focus on emission reduction and nature conservation, and large enterprises recognise the importance of balancing economic interests with nature conservation.

Although the balance between tourism, liveability, and the environment has been strengthened, the growth of technological implementation raises concerns among residents about the job market. There is a tension between the interests of the government and those of large companies.

7.4 Scenario 4 – Cooling entertainment

In 2035, Waterland of Friesland has become an extremely popular destination, focused on international visitors. Due to the heat in Southern Europe, a new form of mass tourism has emerged in this region. Technological innovation and facilitation are driven by a small number of large companies and organisations with sufficient capital, leading to rapid and consistent innovations and standardised technologies and services. This results in a cohesive and effective tourist experience.

Large, centralised organisations such as luxury hotel chains and tech giants offer tourist services with an emphasis on relaxation and entertainment. The data landscape has grown significantly, and data exchange between large companies and the public sector optimises the visitor experience.

The region attracts many different nationalities, with large groups of tourists, families, and groups of friends from all over Europe. Waterland of Friesland is already being called the new costa full of 'Benidorm Bastards'. Activities are tailored to the needs of different generations and nationalities, with a focus on entertainment. AI and VR are used for urban escape rooms and AR games, and active water sports such as sailing, kiting, and foiling mainly attract young people.

The tourist offerings are aimed at the masses, with affordable and easily accessible options, but limited diversity and niches. The boating season has been extended due to climate change, and the waterways are busier than ever with electric and partially automated rental boats. Large-scale (virtual) competitions,

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river cruises, and party cruises are popular, although most water sports enthusiasts focus on their own entertainment. Due to decreased knowledge of regulations and increasing selfishness, rudeness on the water has increased, leading to strict regulation with the help of AI and AR.

Accommodations are mainly in the hands of large players and range from luxury but affordable hotels to glamorous glampings and all-in youth accommodations. Contactless services and VR/AR tours are standard, and AI-driven travel planners help tourists explore the region. Mass tourism has led to new career opportunities, but also to a decrease in tranquility and pressure on the Frisian identity and language. The landscape has become a platform for entertainment, leading to a greater emphasis on strengthening Frisian nature and culture.

The increase in tourists has exacerbated food and water shortages, and local infrastructure and services have been adapted to address these challenges. Despite technological advancements and centrally organised offerings, there are still plenty of opportunities in the job market.

8 Using the scenarios: wind-tunnel testing and future proofing actions

In this final phase of the project, it was examined to what extent the policy in the existing DMO course document holds up in the four 'extreme' paintings of the future and what adjustments or additions might be necessary to update the policy and make it more future-proof. This is referred to as wind-tunnel testing (Postma et al., 2024).

Key points from the current policy that went into the wind tunnel were: information provision, hospitality, establishing connections, marketing, and development. Two wind tunnel workshops were facilitated, the first workshop for the board of the DMO, and the second workshop for a few members of the DMO.

During the workshops the participants were asked to indicate on a 5-points scale to what extent each of the five key tasks would withstand or match with the situation as described in each scenario. This refers to a robustness score. In case of a low robustness score, they were asked to generate ideas for actions that the DMO could take to be better prepared for the scenario, and they were required to express how suitable, acceptable, feasible and scalable that action would be. An action is suitable if it addresses the key issues related to the strategic position of the DMO; acceptable if it aligns with the aim of the DMO and with the expectations of the stakeholders; feasible if it could be put into practice in terms of resources, aptitude and abilities of the DMO; and scalable if it is rather easy to upscale or downscale the activity quickly if changing market circumstances require so. During the workshops ideas for actions could be taken from a survey that was conducted among all 950 members. This survey contained a long list of ambitions that was deduced from the prevailing course document and other policy ideas that were brought up by the DMO. The aim of the survey was to

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identify the ambitions for the next ten years most preferred from the perspective of the members. The top 15 was shared during the workshops.

Both workshops were organized according to the world café method. This means that the participants were subdivided into four groups, one group for each scenario. Each group had a dedicated time slot to work on the scenario. Upon a sign from the ETFI facilitator the groups broke up and the participants redistributed themselves across the four scenarios. Ideally, after four rounds everyone would have discussed each scenario and everyone would have been at the table with everyone else. However, we only conducted three rounds during each workshop.

Based on the outcomes of the workshop the five core tasks of the DMO were given a robustness score from 1 to 5, indicting the extent to which each of these tasks was future-ready, or would need to be adjusted to prepare it for the future.

A further analysis of the results of the workshops led to a list with suggestions and ideas. The common thread throughout the core tasks is:

1. Acting as a driving force, giving direction and establishing connections between stakeholders. This is about, for example, initiating and coordinating collaboration across fragmented (physical and digital) information channels. It involves fostering harmonious cooperation among guests, members, entrepreneurs, industry, agriculture, and government – and to build a shared vision. And also enhancing social cohesion among entrepreneurs, promoting collective marketing strategies, maintaining relationships with travel organizations like TUI, managing tourist flows throughout the season, and guiding the distribution and development of offerings.
2. Acting as a facilitator. This involves, for example, providing support to entrepreneurs and local guides to enhance professionalism and hospitality towards visitors. This can be achieved through appropriate training, education, and coaching focused on hospitality, as well as by ensuring access to quality information, such as digital brochures.
3. Establishing a target group specific approach (target groups are tourists, residents, and businesses). As the (online) visibility of offerings becomes increasingly important, it is essential to distinguish between three target groups: residents (hospitality), tourists (product development, encouraging desired behavior, managing crowd dispersion), and entrepreneurs (centralized B2B information, application of AI and AR, and recognition for early innovators).
4. Digitalisation. To ensure future-proofing, it is important to digitize information channels for the three target groups—for example, through a digital platform, website, and/or app that evolves with technological advancements (such as AI) or includes a virtual assistant.

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9 Conclusion

In this chapter a scenario study was presented as conducted by the European Tourism Futures Institute, for the DMO of the Waterland van Friesland, the lake district in the southwest of the province of Friesland, in the Netherlands. Foresight by means of scenarios can be used to prepare for uncertain developments in a vast changing world.

In the study the ETFI slightly deviated from the typical approach. Firstly, by including desk research to deduce driving forces of change from previous scenario studies instead of conducting a horizon scanning exercise with a larger team of involved stakeholders. Secondly, because a wind tunnel test to evaluate existing policy is not common in the practice of the ETFI, as most clients want to develop a new vision or strategy. Thirdly, because a survey was included among a large group of people to get a better understanding of the viewpoint of a large stakeholder group: the members of the DMO. Last but not least, the study was characterized by quite a short lead time, high involvement of the DMO, almost on a day-to-day basis, and great commitment of the ETFI team. The project resulted in a report in which actions are listed to update the DMO's course document in order to better prepare the DMO Waterland van Friesland for an uncertain future.

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Jarmo Ritalahti

Towards a more sustainable future? Experts' view on the Finnish travel intermediation business

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Abstract: *The internet, online marketplaces, and artificial intelligence have revolutionised the travel services industry, making it challenging for traditional travel intermediaries to justify their existence in a world where vast amounts of information are easily accessible and transactions can occur directly between buyers and sellers online. This study seeks to gather insights from travel intermediation experts in Finland regarding the industry's future. The e-Delphi panels aimed to achieve a consensus on the themes that will impact the industry by 2030. Data was collected using the e-Delphi method over three rounds involving 12–14 participants. The first round identified the megatrends in the business: sustainable development and digitalisation. The second round delved deeper into the initial findings, highlighting that climate change and biodiversity loss pose significant threats to the tourism industry. The third round concluded the study by emphasising that tourists should travel more by rail and take responsibility in combating biodiversity loss. Additionally, travel intermediaries will play a crucial role in addressing climate change.*

Keywords: *Futures' data, Delphi method, sustainability, travel intermediation*

1 Introduction

The tourism industry is currently facing significant challenges due to various global economic, environmental, political, and social changes. Digitalisation and sustainability are key issues in the tourism sector (Ritalahti, 2018; Ritalahti & Ali, 2023). However, significant shifts in the worldwide climate, political instability, particularly in Europe, and evolving attitudes in both tourism-generating and destination countries are influencing the direction of these megatrends, either strengthening or weakening them (e.g., PWC, 2024).

This study primarily focuses on experts' insights into the future of the industry within the context of sustainability and responsibility. The experts involved were Finnish travel intermediaries who were part of the Association of Finnish Travel Industry's (SMAL) work group on responsible tourism during 2022–2023. The study utilised the e-Delphi method to gather future data for 2030, conducted over three rounds.

This research is the fourth part of a larger study, and its findings will be used for further analysis, including PESTEL analysis and the development of future scenarios. The broader research questions include: What are the futures of Finnish leisure travel intermediation? How will the travel behaviour of Finns change? How will these changes impact the travel behaviour of Finns? The comprehensive research aims to help SMAL develop its activities to anticipate a sustainable

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future for the industry in Finland and to provide vision options for smaller travel intermediaries in Finland to define their sustainable business strategies.

A travel intermediary is defined as any dealer who acts as a link in the distribution chain between the company and its customers. Travel agents and tour operators are considered intermediaries or distributors in the tourism industry. Although the distinction between a travel agency and a tour operator is minimal today, a travel agency can be seen as a retailer. In contrast, a tour operator is viewed as a wholesaler (e.g., Lubbe, 2000).

According to Lominé and Edmunds (2007), a tour operator pre-arranges and sells holidays to the public. Originally, holidays were sold as packages, but they can now be customised to suit individual needs. A travel agent offers products and services created by tour operators, cruise lines, airlines, trains, ferry operators, and other tourism service providers for sale. The primary task of travel intermediaries is to connect buyers and sellers, thereby reducing transaction and supply/ownership costs between them.

The travel distribution structure has undergone significant changes over the past few decades. With the advent of the Internet, consumers began using electronic channels for travel bookings (Cetin et al., 2016). The growing use of Internet applications means that more consumers are likely to make bookings online. Additionally, the services offered by travel intermediaries are also available online. As a result, travel intermediaries have incorporated Internet technologies into their daily operations and strategies (Law et al., 2015).

Trezner (2012) states that travel intermediaries function as an interface, and nowadays, perhaps more as a platform between various actors in the tourism supply chain. This role allows travel intermediaries, including online travel agencies (OTAs), to influence demand. Travel intermediaries are more commonly used when purchasing complex packages and when planning to travel to distant destinations.

Contemporary travel intermediation involves various forms of cooperation, including relationships, supply chains, or networks. Stakeholders in these cooperative activities include handling agents, ground operators, consolidators, wholesalers, inbound tour operators, and destination management companies. In tourism, travel intermediaries also collaborate with actors in tourism-generating areas, including travel management companies, consolidators, wholesalers, outbound tour operators, travel agents, retail chains, online travel agents, and home-based travel agents (Trezner, 2012). According to Rossini (2015), technology companies like Google and TripAdvisor were emerging players in online travel intermediation ten years ago. Furthermore, Ku and Chen (2024) state that tourism businesses satisfy customers through artificial intelligence innovation services. Mobile applications also influence tourists' decision-making and behaviour at every stage of tourism use (Rashid et al., 2020).

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2 Futures studies

The future cannot be directly observed or recalled from memory, but it is somewhat real, and most of us are aware of it. This awareness has evolved over hundreds of thousands of years and is unique to humans (Malaska, 2017).

Futures studies is a growing academic field that examines future projections by analysing breaks in past trends and current long-term perspectives. It considers probable, possible, and preferred futures. The field's societal goal is to help private and public decision-makers by presenting alternative strategies for navigating a changing environment. As a research area, it explores how individuals and organisations manage uncertainties about the future. Typical research topics include the philosophy of future knowledge, the development of methodologies for future analysis, and the exploration of alternative futures for specific issues or broader themes. Being interdisciplinary, Futures studies integrates insights and methods from traditional disciplines to address broad and complex questions (Turku School of Economics, 2019).

Malaska (2017) categorises futures studies into three areas: topic-specific studies, methodological studies, and pragmatic future studies. His research covered a wide range of topics, with a focus on sustainability and holistic thinking. Malaska developed and used various methods to explore and predict future trends and scenarios in his methodological studies. In his pragmatic futures research, he emphasised practical applications and real-world impact. Although futures studies are closely related to academia, people engage in them in their daily lives: we forecast when planning our lives and making decisions, such as changing jobs, buying a new house, or retiring. These decisions are based on our expectations of the past, present, and future information (Tetlock & Gardner, 2015). According to Gonzalez-Rivera (2013), people discuss future events, make predictions, or have an idea that something is forthcoming. The future is important not only in our personal lives but also in the organisations we work with, the municipalities we live in, and the governments we interact with (Van der Duin, 2016). The continuous change in our national and international operational environment requires organisations to react quickly to ongoing development work and to anticipate and apply it to succeed (Hamarus, 2017). People tend to think about the future mainly during times of uncertainty, such as during a recession, job loss, or a decline in consumption. Under optimal circumstances, individuals experience a sense of assurance regarding the future, thereby diminishing the need for exhaustive knowledge in this regard (Wilenius, 2015).

The ability to critically observe future images is an important skill. One of the primary tasks of a future researcher is to envision various scenarios and images of the future. When creating scenarios and future images, researchers should remember that we already live among several future images that can be used as reference points when creating scenarios. Thus, it is essential to analyse them critically. The future is present in our predictions, aims, hopes, and fears (Dufva

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& Minkkinen, 2018). Future literacy is a skill that can be developed. It emphasises individuals' ability to use future knowledge in the present (Miller, 2018). There is a need to establish future literacy in a world that is more complex than ever (Pouru & Wilenius, 2018).

Futures studies invent, evaluate, and suggest possible and plausible futures. They help people explore diverse options to decide what kind of future they want. This way, it is possible to make effective plans to facilitate the most probable future to come true. Future researchers use research outcomes and findings from other disciplines to conclude or summarise different possible, plausible, and preferred futures that we face (Rubin, 2019). Futures studies can begin by understanding that we cannot predict the future; however, we can construct visions and ideas of what will happen ahead of us. Thus, we must consider several alternative futures. Futures are not predetermined, as we can only estimate the probabilities of events and issues when assessing their possibilities. We can shape our futures through our actions and choices. Therefore, it is essential to understand what is possible, probable, and preferable. The importance of values cannot be avoided, especially when discussing alternative futures. It is impossible to directly research the future, as it does not exist in the same way as the present and past. One can say that it exists today in the form of intentions that we can study. It is also possible to research facts and phenomena that will impact the future. Additionally, alternative development paths can be explored, but it is essential to consider that various outcomes have different likelihoods. It is possible to influence the future with our choices, and it is vital to define the choices that lead to the best and most acceptable future states (Rubin, 2019).

Approaches to the future are predictive, explorative, and normative. The predictive approach bases its future projections on historical data and established patterns. The explorative approach sees that the future is not a continuation of the past. Instead, it looks at what could happen in the future. The normative approach aims to change the current state when one is unsatisfied with it (Van der Duin, 2016). The more distant the future being studied is, the more reasonable the use of the explorative approach is (Van der Duin, 2016).

The list of foresight methods is long. Van der Duin (2013) emphasises seven of them in his book: scenarios, the Delphi method, trend analysis, technology forecasting, quantitative trend extrapolation, technology assessment, backcasting, and road mapping. Some methods are linked to the explorative, some to the normative, and some to the predictive approach (Figure 1).

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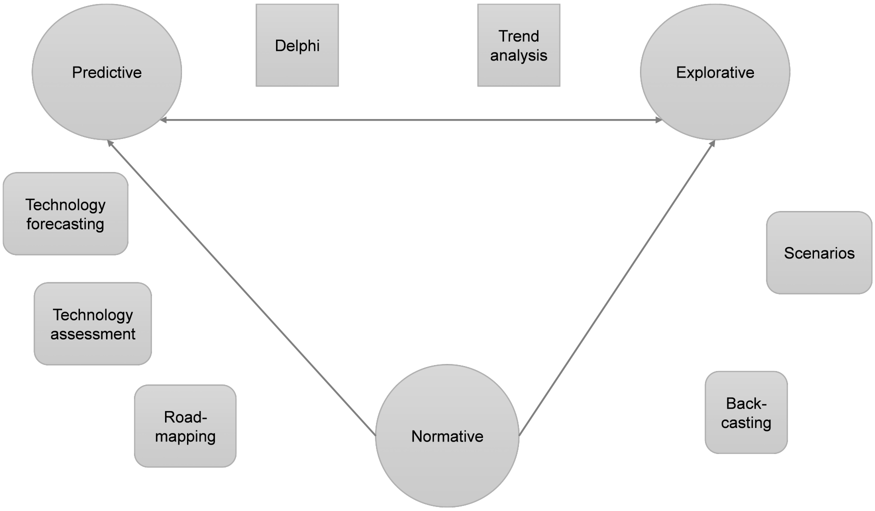

Figure 1: Foresight methods
Source: van der Duin, 2013

3 Method

This study aims to help travel intermediaries develop effective strategies, create informed policies, and facilitate planning and understanding of the future. The issues addressed in this study include fast-changing travel intermediation, sustainable development, and corporate responsibility.

Although this study is explorative, it employs the e-Delphi method, which is typically associated with predictive approaches. The background data was gathered through trend analysis, weak signals, and wild cards. The results of this study will be utilised for SMAL scenarios.

The e-Delphi method used in this study was conducted in three rounds during the 2022–23 period. It served as a flexible tool to gather expert insights from busy industry professionals. Traditionally, the Delphi method relies on surveys and leverages information from panel participants who are experts in the study's field (e.g., Investopedia, 2024). The first-round survey is based on previously collected relevant data and other future study methods. The second and third-round surveys are developed after thoroughly analysing the results of the previous rounds. The aim is often to reach a consensus among the experts, although this is not always necessary. Additionally, the results of the various rounds enable experts to communicate anonymously with one another (Cuhls, 1998). Häder and Häder (1995) agree that the Delphi method enables experts to assess uncertainty and ensure that knowledge and data are collected promptly.

Wechsler (1978) describes the Delphi method as a survey conducted by a monitoring group involving multiple rounds with a panel of experts who remain anonymous to one another. The goal is to reach a consensus on their subjective

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and intuitive forecasts. After each round, participants receive standardised feedback, including the statistical group judgment derived from the median and quartiles of individual predictions. Arguments and counterarguments from extreme responses are also shared as part of the feedback whenever possible.

Häder and Häder (1995) characterise the Delphi method to understand topics or themes presented as statements of uncertain and incomplete knowledge. It is important to note that panellists can only provide estimates or guesses based on their understanding and knowledge of the theme/topic. The selection of panel experts must be based on their knowledge and experience of the study's topic/theme. Panellists must be competent to assess the statements of the various rounds, but they can also learn as they receive additional information about the topic/theme during the several rounds (Figure 2). It is also important to understand that, although future information is collected through surveys, it is not always based solely on mathematical and statistical models.

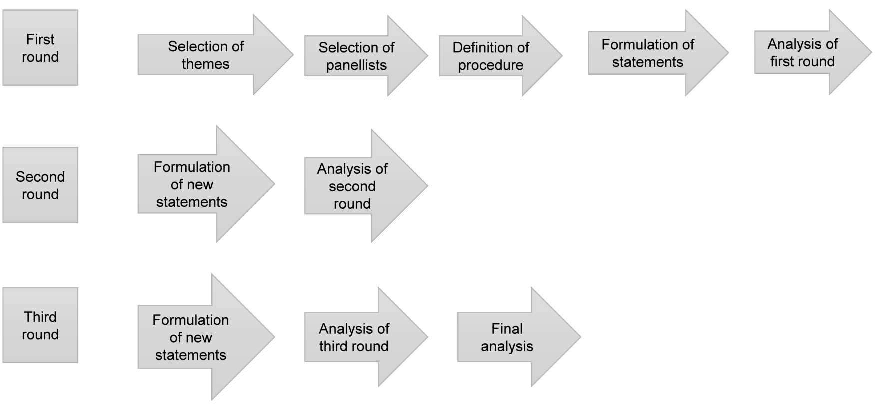

Figure 2: Delphi process

Source: Häder & Häder 1995; Foresight-platform, 2024

This study's themes focused on sustainability as a significant trend in travel intermediation, based on desk research by Ritalahti (2018). Sustainable tourism refers to a destination's capability to maintain a balanced and resilient tourism sector, avoiding reliance on mass tourism and achieving a harmonious balance between residents and visitors (The Data Appeal Company, 2022).

Ritalahti (2018) highlighted sustainability and digitalisation as the two most crucial trends in the industry. The study also included trend analysis, but Ritalahti (2021) emphasised that sustainability is a more critical trend, as digitalisation and digital tools were not a concern for Finnish travel intermediaries' customers. Ritalahti and Ali (2023) added responsibility as another major trend affecting Finnish travel intermediation.

According to the UNWTO (2021), the tourism industry faces several sustainability challenges, including increased energy and water consumption, rising CO2

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emissions, resource scarcity, declining biodiversity, climate change, and extreme weather conditions. PWC (2016) highlights that sustainability, as a megatrend, encompasses responsibility, which is a significant force shaping the world. The recognition of climate change as a human-induced issue presents a challenge for the tourism industry, including travel intermediation. Consumers have acknowledged this reality (ETC, 2016).

Other methods used to gather future data for this study included observing weak signals, black swans, and grey rhinos. A weak signal is an early indicator of change or the emergence of a new phenomenon that could become significant in the future (Dufva, 2019). A black swan refers to an unpredictable event with substantial impacts that is often rationalised only after it occurs. This term originated from Dutch mariners' surprising discovery of black swans in Australia in 1697, as such birds were previously thought not to exist (Taleb, 2007). In modern terms, it represents an unexpected and unforeseeable event. A grey rhino refers to events, phenomena, or risks that are highly likely to occur and have a significant impact. Despite recognising them in advance, we often ignore them and only respond after they materialise. This delayed reaction happens because addressing them is often challenging, and it feels easier to avoid dealing with such complex issues (BCTraining, 2023). More detailed data on previous studies are available in Figure 3.

Trend analysis – pre-pandemic, but updated post-pandemic (e.g., Ritalahti, 2018)	Weak signals, black swans and grey rhinos – pre- and post-pandemic (e.g., Ritalahti, 2021)	Customer surveys – pre-pandemic and at the end of the pandemic (Ritalahti & Ali, 2023)
Low-carbon and energy efficiency	Black swans/wild cards: - COVID-19 pandemic - Russia's attack on Ukraine	Sustainability: - Travel services - Domestic travelling - Travelling to neighbour countries
Shift to more environmentally friendly technology and policies	Weak signals (trend): - Travel by train	Responsibility: - Well-being of travel experts in the intermediaries - Appreciation of local cultures in destinations - Human rights - Recycling, waste management
Mass and over-tourism	Grey rhinos: Rising temperatures' impacts on destination temperatures and lack of snow (more extreme weather conditions)	

Figure 3: Summary of the background studies for the e-Delphi study

Source: author's work

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The initial statements for the first Delphi round were derived from the topics listed in Table 1. The next step in the Delphi study, as shown in Figure 2, was to select the panellists. The Association of Finnish Travel Industry (SMAL) has several working groups, and after discussions with the association, it was decided to invite members of the responsible tourism working group. The experts who joined the panels were responsible for sustainability and responsibility within their organisations. Given the study's primary focus on sustainability, the number of participants in the Delphi process ranged between 12 and 14. At the start of the Delphi process, group members were asked if they would like to join the panel. They were introduced to the panel's objectives and informed that they would be invited to participate in three rounds.

The third step of the Delphi study involved defining the procedure or process. This was first agreed upon with the association and then with the panellists. The process was to last about a year and align with the working group's annual meeting calendar. Links to the online surveys were sent to the panellists via email, using the Webropol survey platform. In 2022–2023, the group met four times. During the first meeting, the Delphi process, including its principles and timeline, was explained. The first survey was sent out in the summer of 2022, with results published in the autumn of 2022. The second survey was sent out at the end of 2022, and the results were published in early spring 2023. The final survey was sent out in late spring 2023, with results published in the summer of 2023. The third round's results summarised the entire Delphi process.

The sample sizes for the three rounds ranged from 5 to 9 participants. One challenge with busy experts is getting them to respond, as they have many other tasks in their work lives. However, the panel does not always need to be large (Foresight-platform, 2024).

The outcomes or synthesis of the three rounds are described in the next section.

4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Findings

Although the study did not aim for complete consensus, the experts likely agreed on several topics. The lack of total consensus can be attributed to the diverse industry backgrounds of the panellists, who worked in both large and small organisations and held positions ranging from expert to managerial.

The target year for this study is 2030. The first round's results indicate that the megatrends in travel intermediation will be sustainable development and digitalisation. However, the primary focus of this study is on sustainability and its various aspects. The main challenges or themes in sustainable development are climate change and the tourism industry's responsibility. According to the experts, by 2030, Finns will spend their holidays similarly to today, travelling abroad to sunny destinations in the Mediterranean and neighbouring countries. They will also enjoy activity holidays and stay in their second homes. The most popular holiday destinations for Finns in 2030 are expected to be Finland,

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Estonia, Sweden, Norway, Spain, and Greece. The criteria for Finns when choosing holiday destinations are clear: price is the top criterion, followed by ease of travel, short flights, activity options, and a fair price-to-quality ratio.

In the second round, climate change was identified as the most significant threat to the tourism industry by 2030. The industry should also address the decline of biodiversity. However, tourism will not be environmentally friendly in 2030, and tourists will not compensate for their carbon footprint. Some tourism stakeholders will not engage in sustainable and responsible business practices by 2030. Over-tourism will remain a challenge that will not be resolved by 2030. Flying will continue to be a significant mode of travel for Finns, particularly for international trips. Domestic travel will not be prioritised more than it is now, and travelling will be slightly more expensive in 2030.

The third round identified more concrete solutions to the issues of sustainable and responsible tourism. Tourists should travel more by rail instead of flying. Travel intermediaries will have greater responsibility in combating climate change and informing their customers about it. Tourists should also take more responsibility for addressing the decline of biodiversity. Additionally, the ethicality of tourism will be questioned.

4.2 Discussion

According to Investopedia (2024) and Foresight-platform (2024), the Delphi method can be beneficial for collecting future data, primarily when conducted online. This approach allows for reaching busy panellists without the need for physical meetings, allowing them to focus on the statements at their convenience. However, gathering responses from busy individuals can be challenging. In this study, the panellists were familiar with each other, as they were part of the same working group; however, they were unaware of each other's responses. One of the weaknesses of the Delphi method is the varying levels of expertise among the panellists. Additionally, the results depend on how the researcher or manager interprets the data from each round. It is crucial to formulate statements clearly and understandably. Sometimes, it can be difficult to discern the actual contribution of the panels.

Finnish tourists are aware of the importance of sustainability and responsibility in the tourism industry. However, their awareness of climate change and biodiversity decline is relatively low. Representatives of travel intermediaries have started to pay more attention to these issues. If travel intermediaries do not take more responsibility in communicating the industry's challenges, tourism behaviour will not change significantly by 2030. Popular destinations will remain the same, including neighbouring countries and some popular Mediterranean countries.

When comparing previous studies by Ritalahti (2021) and Ritalahti and Ali (2023), it is notable that Finnish customers' future insights are more positive and optimistic than those of travel intermediary experts. This discrepancy may be due to respondents' tendency to provide socially accepted answers to please

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researchers, or it may be because Finnish customers genuinely intend to behave sustainably and responsibly. On the other hand, industry representatives, who have a deeper understanding of their industry and customers, tend to draw fewer positive conclusions.

5 Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the tourism industry is currently grappling with significant challenges due to various global economic, environmental, political, and social changes. However, digitalisation and sustainability are key issues in the sector. This study examines experts' perspectives on the future of the industry within the context of sustainability and corporate responsibility. This study, part of a larger research project, contributes to the understanding of two main themes relevant to the industry from the perspective of the travel intermediation sector. Finns will continue to spend their holidays abroad, including in neighbouring countries and some Mediterranean destinations, as well as on activity holidays and in their second homes. When choosing holiday destinations, their criteria will include price, ease of travel, short flights, availability of activities, and a good price-quality ratio. However, sustainability and responsibility will not be significant factors in their decision-making process. Nevertheless, both tourists and tourism service providers, including travel intermediation organisations, recognise the importance of sustainability and responsibility. There is a discrepancy regarding who should take more responsibility to enhance sustainable development and responsible business practices.

The data collection for this study took place during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which influenced the data, particularly in terms of people's travel behaviour. The war in Ukraine also impacted the data collected in the e-Delphi rounds, prolonging the data collection process. However, the megatrends have remained consistent.

The next step in the broader research in 2024 was to create scenarios for the industry. The scenarios were based on four previous studies, including this one, as well as a PESTEL analysis of the industry's operational environment (Appinio Research, 2024). This PESTEL analysis helped create scenarios that outlined different possible development paths for a given issue, aiding in the examination of potential outcomes and planning for various contingencies (Garvey, 2022).

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Examining the concept of luxury in the context of New Space Tourism

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Abstract: *The concept of luxury is constantly evolving and affected by the changes in society, consumer culture, and the experience economy. New forms of luxury have been acknowledged parallel to the traditional understanding, making the contemporary perspectives of luxury broader and multidimensional. The base of the luxury industry is heavily grounded in experiential luxury, such as tourism and hospitality services. However, the image of experiential luxury in the academic discussion is a traditional perspective of luxury, highlighting brand-managerial and product-focused perspectives, where experiential luxury services are seen as Western-branded five-star hotels and Michelin-starred or full-service restaurants. Consequently, this gives a very one-sided image of luxury tourism experiences. Therefore, the current discussion lacks an understanding of other forms of experiential luxury services, and, at the same time, new forms of luxury concepts where, for example, sustainability or bodily sensing act as the key element of the luxury experience. The recently emerged "New Space" industry tourism fits within other current societal trends enhanced by rapidly advancing technological developments. Even though commercial space tourism can be initially viewed as an exclusive experience only to the wealthy, there are several space touristic experiences already available, which can be experienced either from Earth – or space-bound. This chapter broadens the understanding of luxury in the context of space tourism and provides new avenues for the discussion of luxury and space tourism in a changing world.*

Keywords: *Space tourism, Luxury tourism, Luxury, Experiential luxury*

1 Introduction

People have found the subject of space travel fascinating since the beginning of the space exploration era, as demonstrated by the popularity of space-themed Hollywood productions, which have produced science fiction-based stories about space travel for many different generations (Toivonen, 2020). The first space tourism products are thus based on such science fiction-related image curiosity factors (Damjanov & Crouch, 2019). The desire of affluent tourists to undertake more unique and challenging experiences has been one of the driving forces behind the demand for public space travel, enabling them to experience a new, untouched area that is difficult for the masses to copy (Wittig et al., 2017).

Space tourism has been referred to as a joyride for the ultra-wealthy, emphasising especially the concept of luxury (Billings, 2006); as such, it has had many of the traditional elements attached to luxury products (see, e.g., Kapferer & Bas-

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tien, 2012). Space tourism can be seen as a high-priced product that exceeds its functional value. This unique tourism product, which also comes with an element of rarity, could, in the future, even offer personalised and tailored companying services. Furthermore, this kind of hedonistic experience might also represent a status or social marker for the consumer, making the owner or beneficiary feel special and having a sense of privilege (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). So far, terrestrial space tourism has been the only option for the "common man" to experience space-related activity; however, future space tourism activities are likely to include packages for a range of lifestyles whilst the industries developments reach the consolidation stage in regards to the tourism life cycle. This chapter explores the concept of luxury in the context of space tourism. In addition, it examines the meaning of luxury fitting into the context of New Space tourism through definitions of academic literature by looking into the luxury concept both from the perspectives of traditional luxury as well as new forms of luxury.

2 The Concepts of Space Tourism and the Luxury

2.1 New Space Industry Tourism

The beginning of commercially operated space tourism was already forecasted in some academic journals in the 1950s, with the general assumption that ordinary people could afford space travel once it reached the same level of maturity as the airline industry (Toivonen, 2022). The term "New Space" first emerged during the 1980s to refer to commercial space markets, with the intention of differentiating the developing businesses in the space industry from the traditional business structures and norms established during the first space race between the USA and the Soviet Union (Hay et al., 2009). New Space industry companies have technology development activities and other attributes associated with their business models, such as flexible organisations, a willingness to take risks, and a focus on new technology solutions. New Space thus provides alternatives to, for example, the publicly funded NASA programme, allowing it to benefit from new innovative products, space services, and processes that create added value for traditional space operations (Toivonen, 2022).

Especially during the 2010s, there was a global transition with regard to the space environment, as the New Space industry, involving private spaceflight companies, emerged as an active player alongside previous governmental actors in space activities (Toivonen, 2020). A new private company-led space race emerged between private companies, Virgin Galactic, Blue Origin, and SpaceX. Those were all owned by globally influential billionaires to gain the status of being the world's first fully operating space tourism company. Currently, *Virgin Galactic's* main aim is to provide suborbital commercial spaceflights for space tourists, suborbital launches for space science missions, and also to transform the current cost, safety, and environmental impact of space launches and pioneer the next generation of reusable space vehicles (Virgin Galactic, 2023). *SpaceX's* ultimate aim is to colonise Mars and enable people to live on other

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planets as well as to revolutionise space technology and reduce space transportation costs (SpaceX, 2023). In 2019, SpaceX also started to operate under a partnership with NASA, transporting cargo and astronauts to the International Space Station. Alongside the sub-orbital space touristic flights, *Blue Origin* has been developing technologies to enable private human access to space with the goal of lowering costs and increasing reliability (Blue Origin, 2024).

Duval and Hall (2015, p. 450) classify the concept of space tourism as "the temporary movement of people for non-military reasons beyond the Earth's atmosphere". The boundary between Earth's atmosphere and outer space is defined as the Karman line, which the Federation Aeronautique Internationale specifies as an altitude of 100 kilometres, while NASA defines it as 80 kilometres (FAI, 2018). According to Reddy, Nica and Wilkes (2012) new adventures and unique experiences, such as the sense of weightlessness and the earth watching from space, drive the demand for space travel. Hossein et al. (2020, p. 541) classify similarly that "adventure, gratification, social motivation, experience of new service, and acquisition of information about space and space travel motivate travellers to undertake a space trip".

Harrington (2017, p. 118) defines a space tourist as "someone who tours or travels into, to, or through space or a classified body for a pleasure and/or recreation". Crouch, Devinney, Louviere, and Islam (2009, p. 451) claim that there is a significant portion of the public, in general, and of high-income or high-net-worth individuals in particular, who are favourably disposed towards engaging in some form of commercial space tourism flight activity. Reddy et al. (2012, p. 1101) clarify that "two aspects in particular have to be taken into consideration when explaining space tourism motivation. First, there is the pioneering aspect, which motivated the first private space explorers to push the barrier and experience something that only astronauts have done before, and secondly, it is the space flight experience which attracts many people with all the excitement and uniqueness".

To date still only a handful of people have visited space as paying tourists in orbital spaceflight so far, compared to over 500 professionals, mostly US astronauts (NASA, 2023). Dennis Tito became the first paying space tourist in 2001, travelling on a Russian Soyuz rocket to the International Space Station. Tito has preferred, however, to be classified as an 'independent researcher' rather than a 'space tourist', as his weeklong $20 million stay had involved six months of authentic astronaut training (Toivonen, 2020).

There are several different alternative forms of space tourism experiences possible, and within each, there is likely to be a growing number of competing space tourism ventures to emerge over time. Currently, the context of commercial space tourism includes terrestrial space tourism, such as Earth-based activities and cyberspace tourism; atmospheric and low Earth orbit tourism; astrotourism, referring to experiences beyond Earth's orbit and Mars experiences (Carter et al., 2015; Cater, 2019). Terrestrial space tourism includes Earth-based simulations and entertainment experiences such as visits to space observato-

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ries, museums, and exhibitions, star gazing with a telescope, and watching the Northern Lights. Cyberspace tourism, another form of terrestrial space tourism, includes experiences such as virtual gaming environments and virtual reality space travel (Toivonen, 2022).

A zero-gravity flight is an atmospheric space tourism experience at a higher altitude, in which the passenger does not leave Earth but has the opportunity to experience true weightlessness. Also, there is an ongoing development process to create commercial high-altitude space ballooning to offer views of the Earth from very high up in a more traditional touristic environment; the viewing capsule also includes a lounge area with a bar (Space Perspective, 2024). Suborbital tourism flight experiences, which started to operate in July 2021 by Virgin Galactic and Blue Origin, focus on attaining the altitude required to qualify as reaching space and combine the excitement of a rocket-assisted jet flight to orbit with an extended period of weightlessness and a view of Earth.

Hence, suborbital space tourism can be viewed as the first stage of so-called common man space tourism, as it does not require passengers to undergo professional astronaut training beforehand (Toivonen, 2022). So far, the International Space Station (ISS) in low Earth orbit has been the ultimate space destination in the orbital space environment for some space tourists (in co-operation with NASA), with several experimental areas and observation ports for views of Earth and outer space (Toivonen, 2020).

2.2 Luxury as a Concept

There is no generally accepted definition of the luxury concept (Ko et al., 2019). Rather, it has been agreed that the concept is ambiguous, illusive, and hard to define as it is attached to fragmented meanings (Cristini et al., 2017) and complexities (Gurzki & Woisetschläger, 2016). In addition, it has been criticised that many definitions of luxury concentrate on luxury as a form of product with certain objectified dimensions, such as high quality, price, and exclusivity (Wirtz et al., 2020), rather than seeing luxury as a concept also attached to services, experiences, and moments. The debate around the concept has been argued to be caused by competing definitions (Ko et al., 2019), intertemporal changes (Cristini et al., 2017), and the differences in definitions between experts and academics (Brun & Castelli, 2013).

The differences in understanding and roots causing the debate are not only between experts and academics. Kapferer (2014) highlight that the manner in which scholars debate about the luxury phenomenon shows the differences between the concept and conception, which are not recognised. Kauppinen-Räisänen et al. (2019) add that the difficulty of defining luxury in academic research demonstrates that the concept and understanding of it are in a continuous transition stage. Furthermore, luxury understanding differs inside the scientific community depending on varying research objectives within different disciplines (Heine, 2012).

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The contemporary understanding of luxury within academic discussion refers to traditional, new, and unconventional luxury (see Table 1). However, the border between understandings is not clear-cut. Instead, it demonstrates that luxury is continuously in flux (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2019). In the traditional approach to luxury, it is perceived through objectification as highly valuable, high priced, high quality, and exceptional. The base assumption with traditional luxury is that luxury companies develop luxury brands to be appealing to consumers so that they reflect these attributes of objectification, and based on the objectification, it is defined as luxury (Bauer et al., 2011). According to Thomsen et al. (2020), in this conceptualisation, luxury is defined as being ontologically scarce, expensive, and exclusively available to a limited number of people. The democratisation of luxury has sparked a debate on the concept of new luxury, which has been explored through many definitions (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003; Truong et al., 2008). When describing new luxury, the concept has been approached from the perspective of "self-referring luxury," which is used to express the notion of it in hedonistic terms. It encompasses wishes, dreams, and emotions and is characterised by pleasure, emotion, and feelings (Godey et al., 2013). While the concept of new luxury first denoted consumers' desire for a high-quality lifestyle, researchers have attached other interpretations, such as premium (Turunen, 2018) and masstige (Kumar et al., 2020; Truong et al., 2009) as it has been noted that, consumers' consumption objectives differ between luxury and masstige brands (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009b; Miller & Mills, 2012b). According to Kumar et al. (2020), masstige is the term used to describe prestige and mass marketing that arises when a luxury brand lowers its price to make it affordable for the general public without significantly sacrificing the quality of the product. Determining what constitutes a luxury has grown more difficult with the rise of masstige. Additionally, it weakens the sense of luxury since luxury and non-luxury are viewed as two extremes on a continuum, and the distinction between ordinary and luxury is subjective (Tynan et al, 2010).

Therefore, new luxury has received criticism for being marketed to the masses and not being associated with objectification through traditional luxury (Hennigs et al., 2013). While it has been emphasised that the concept of new luxury is driven by people's longing for exclusive, emotional, uncommon, and unforgettable experiences (Kapferer, 2015), research on new luxury in an academic context has primarily focused on the aspects of affordability and accessibility.

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Table 1: Differences in luxury

	Traditional luxury	New luxury, Unconventional luxury
Luxury as a/an	branded product	experience
Determined by	attributes (objectification of luxury)	subjective perception
Consumption is	conspicuous	hedonic or inconspicuous
Defined through	marketers/industry	consumer
Value comes through	status	individual meaning-making

Source: authors' work

With the widespread availability and affordability of masstige luxury, the definition of luxury has become disputed and transformed (von Wallpach et al., 2020). Besides the traditional and new luxury, the contemporary understanding of the luxury concept can be seen as an unconventional form of luxury, which "focuses more on luxury in terms of being epistemologically scarce, experiential and agentic" (Thomsen et al., 2020, p. 442). One of the main contrasts from the traditional viewpoint is that the concept is detached from social class and conspicuousness since it is not defined as being something for the masses or upper class or representing a means of displaying affluence and status (Thomsen et al., 2020). Instead, it has been recognised that unconventional luxury can encompass more than just a pleasurable experience, as it surpasses the transformational qualities of experiences (von Wallpach et al, 2020). Unconventional luxury pertains to the subjective meaning-making of luxury, namely the personal significance attributed to the luxury encounter, which may manifest as a fleeting moment (Thomsen et al., 2020). From this perspective, luxury can be seen as a distinctive experience that is subjectively defined and has a private connection supporting the inner self of the consumer (Bauer et al., 2011). In the study conducted by Kauppinen-Räisänen et al. (2019), luxury was seen as a subjective perception of something that holds great importance for the consumer rather than only based on the inherent features of the product or service. Luxury is perceived as relative, subjective, contextual, and deeply ingrained in the consumer's lifestyle, extending beyond mere purchase (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2019). Consumers possess their own individual comprehension of the luxury concept (Roper et al., 2013). From the viewpoint of consumers, luxury is not defined by specific characteristics but rather by its temporary, fleeting, intangible, and adaptable nature, which becomes apparent in moments (Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Potavanich, 2015).

Over the last two decades, the consumer market has transformed from focusing on products and services to being centred around experiences. This shift means that instead of simply purchasing goods or services, consumers are now seeking out experiences that satisfy their needs and desires (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The luxury market is also seeing a notable shift from product to experiential luxury consumption (Cristini et al., 2017). The increasing accessibility of luxury items has diminished the perceived worth of luxury goods (Turunen, 2018) and has

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redirected the pursuit of exceptional and exclusive experiences in the realm of luxury. Thus, researchers have contended that luxury has evolved into a quest for significance for consumers by transitioning from material possessions to personal, meaningful experiences (Cristini et al., 2017). As luxury has been associated for decades with products and luxury brands are known for selling these products, luxury is often defined based on the characteristics of the products, which helps us understand the similarities, differences, and classifications of luxury and non-luxury items (Heine, 2012). Scholars (see e.g., Heine, 2012; Turunen, 2018; Wirtz et al., 2020) have criticized the practice of objectifying luxury based on specific features. According to Heine (2012), qualities are inadequately elucidated and often remain at a conceptual level, such as mentioning the product's superior quality or beauty. The challenge posed by the abstract nature of qualities lies in their potential to be seen as subjective. Furthermore, these traits are influenced not only by the individual but also by the social context, circumstance, and the item in question (Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2012). Turunen (2018) emphasises the difficulty in defining luxury solely based on product attributes, such as price, quality, and aesthetics. These characteristics can be found in any product, regardless of whether it is considered luxury or not. The presence of certain features alone does not constitute luxury. Unless these characteristics hold significance for consumers, they will not contribute to the sense of luxury (Berthon et al., 2009; Okonkwo, 2007). The qualities acquire significance and symbolic importance when they are perceived and displayed in specific settings (Turunen, 2018). Therefore, especially in the context of luxury services, which offer extraordinary experiences, both the viewpoints that emphasize the specific qualities and features of luxury objects, as well as the understanding of luxury from an individual's standpoint, should be combined in understanding luxury services as this integration will provide a comprehensive understanding of how consumers experience them (Wirtz et al., 2020).

If luxury is viewed from the perspective of experiences, it offers temporal escapism from the consumer's life (von Wallpach et al., 2020, Holmqvist et al., 2020). Escapism enhances the significance and distinctiveness of situations while also providing a means for rejuvenating individuals (Bauer et al., 2011). Furthermore, despite consumers associating luxury with materialistic items like holiday destinations, the experience of luxury arises during instances "when they feel free, alive, and reconnected with nature and humankind" (von Wallpach et al., 2020 p. 499). They are distinguished from pleasurable moments by their common experiential attributes, associated with notions of liberation, happiness, flawlessness, rarity, compassion, and exhilaration. Consequently, they are perceived as luxurious as they become significant and precious (von Wallpach et al., 2020). Luxury moments share similarities with both meaningful and extraordinary experiences (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2019) and peak experiences (Maslow, 1971), happiness, and well-being (Bauer et al., 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). These moments can vary from experiences walking in a forest with a family to an exceptional vacation location, a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, or a great achievement (von Wallpach et al.,

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2020). In addition, luxury experiences support individuals in constructing their personal self-narratives (Bauer et al., 2011), as luxury elicits a sense of uniqueness in individuals (Hennigs et al., 2012). Hennigs et al. (2012) assert that the luxury experience encompasses a range of emotional requirements, and customers' emotional demands are fundamental to the perception and interpretation of luxury.

As consumers interpret luxury, they highlight the viewpoint of the "symbolic to self" aspect of luxury. Luxuriousness refers to how consumers perceive luxury in their daily lives and surroundings, and it is not necessarily determined by comparing oneself to others, brands, or products (Turunen, 2018). The luxury extends beyond the physical objects and encompasses the behaviours of consumers, who interpret and engage with these objects according to their situational conditions and requirements (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2019). Thus, in today's consumer culture, luxury may not be solely determined by the brand or product itself, but rather by the intangible desires and meaningful experiences associated with it. These factors play a crucial role in enhancing consumers' well-being (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2019). Moreover, the concept of luxury is not solely tied to the products and experiences the luxury industry provides. Its significance is derived from the viewpoint of consumers, who use luxury to create meaning. Luxury is associated with the specific role it plays for consumers rather than the inherent qualities of the offering itself, which may bring benefits to the consumer (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2019).

In the context of tourism, the concept of luxury is challenging, as any travel to a destination, even those affected by over-tourism, can be seen as a luxurious vacation due to the strong association between luxury and tourism experiences (Correia & Kozak, 2012). However, the notion that modern customers seek meaning and happiness in luxury consumption by doing and experiencing makes opportunities, particularly for luxury tourism and services.

Experiencing luxury entails a strong and deep engagement with the situation and a heightened intensity (Hemetsberger et al., 2012). Furthermore, the luxury experience can lead to losing time and location awareness (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2019). According to Hemetsberger et al. (2012), consumers' luxury is centred around intricate experiences involving their materialistic self, and doing that is freeing, oscillating, integrating, and relating self, being (harmony of selves), and becoming (achievement-oriented and self-transformational) self. Experiencing luxury allows individuals to embody various identities through symbolic consumption, indulging in special moments and activities, experiencing harmony, self-improvement, and surpassing oneself (Hemetsberger et al., 2012).

2.3 Luxury Elements in New Space Tourism

Due to its rarity, space tourism may be considered the ultimate luxury tourism experience, but at the same time, the concept of luxury has moved from the physical to having a more emotive appeal, and space tourism is also a metaphor

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for understanding that change (Yeoman, 2008). Space tourism offers a consumer a once-in-a-lifetime experience, which can be luxurious from the perspective of the objectification of luxury and subjective meaning-making of luxury (See Table 2). It may offer a prerequisite for losing a sense of time and place, uniqueness, privacy, and escapism, which are central elements in luxury experiences (see previous section). Furthermore, luxury tourism experiences that require a more active role for the consumer may respond to more private and intrinsic values, which aim to add also experiential value with playfulness, enriching the escapism in the experience that creates different value dimensions than traditional luxury tourism experiences enjoyed in traditional contexts (Iloranta & Komppula, 2022). In addition, individuals develop their perception of their existence in society through consumption, which involves controlling their sense of belonging, social status, and personal identity (Belk, 1988). This process occurs as individuals identify themselves based on the places they visit and the manner in which they travel (Sirgy & Su, 2000). Space tourism may offer consumers many possibilities to experience both hedonistic and eudaimonic experiences, where the fulfilment of people's potential comes central.

In 2021, Blue Origin tested the pricing matrix for commercial space tourism for the first time by receiving one seat of its pioneering sub-orbital space flight for a tourist who pays the highest price in an online auction. At first, the commercial space tourism industry appears to offer the physical space environment experience only to affluent travellers, as the current estimated ticket cost is $450,000 per "space jump" (Virgin Galactic, 2023). Hence, the division between different social groups will be extreme in the pioneering stage of space tourism unless someone is sponsored otherwise. Indeed, such "lottery ticket" options for future space tourism flights would mean that space flights also become accessible to tourists who are not part of the wealthy elite, and this could thus speed up space tourism development towards mass tourism. From the luxury perspective, the challenge is that if space tourism moves toward the masses, the luxury element attached to the experience may lose its meaning. However, some of the existing terrestrial space tourism experiences, such as star gazing and watching the Northern Light, for example, in the Finnish Lapland with a naked eye, are already reachable pricewise to many ordinary tourists. Hence, the element of luxury could be tailored into such terrestrial space touristic experiences via supporting tourism services, including accommodation, transportation, and gastronomy experiences.

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Table 2: Luxury elements in space tourism

	Space tourism from the perspective of traditional luxury	Space tourism from the perspective of new luxury or Unconventional luxury
Luxury as	a once-in-a-lifetime experience, where luxury is mainly experienced in enclaved luxurious spaces and contexts, where luxury is luxurious across situations	a once-in-a-lifetime experience, where luxury is experienced in moments that may offer escapism or intrinsic value. The luxuriousness of experience is formed jointly by the objectification of luxury and subjective perception.
Determined by	attributes (objectification of luxury), such as price and uniqueness. Customer roles are more passive and reactive, and they are being pampered.	subjective perception, where the customer may also be active and playful, if they wish.
Consumption is	Conspicuous, the experience is expensive.	Hedonic or inconspicuous. The experience may be expensive; however, that is not the reason for consumption.
Defined through	Reflection on the luxury industry, society, other people and sense of belonging	Reflection on the consumer's own hedonic or eudaimonic perception, where the fulfilment of people's potential comes central.
Value comes through	Status Status has a significant public component since it is a value associated with extravagant consumption. The other characteristics of luxury value come after the status value.	Individual meaning-making Various value forms depend on the consumer's perception. Consequently, a deep personal bond where luxury strengthens the customers' inner selves. Value is actively co-created by the customer.

Source: authors' work

2.4 Future aspects

The concept of luxury has a long historical evolution, encompassing both positive and negative connotations (Brun & Castelli, 2013). The modern luxury industry caters to a wider range of customer categories, and in postmodern society, consumers long for luxury products and services for conspicuous and inconspicuous reasons (Atwal & Williams, 2009; Eckhardt et al., 2015). In order to maintain its exceptional status, luxury must constantly adapt and evolve as societies progress and economic situations shift (Gurzki & Woisetschläger, 2016). Boswijk et al. (2013) argue that Western societies are undergoing societal and economic change, where the societies are moving from an experience economy to a transformation economy, that is, into an economy of meaning. The same phenomenon is visible in luxury consumption. From this perspective, the fulfillment of people's potential is striving towards meaningful values, which also emphasizes the importance of harmony and a balanced lifestyle for the consumer (Brand & Rocchi, 2011). Traditional associations between conspicuous consumption and concepts like prestige and extravagance may carry negative connotations for consumers (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Goor et al., 2020).

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Consequently, the widening wealth gap in societies could lead to the adoption of inconspicuous consumption practices (Belk, 2020). The origins of luxury consumption have traditionally been associated with reasons that are focused on external motivations. However, as luxury consumption has evolved in society, it has shifted towards more internally driven motivations (Iloranta, 2022). As luxury is closely associated with cultural and societal values (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012) and consumer culture changes, the future of luxury must evolve taking into account the younger generations and their values. This drives luxury consumption towards experiences as well as authenticity and meaningfulness. The studies conducted in unconventional luxury contexts (e.g., Iloranta, 2022), that is, studies where the environment does not necessarily relate to the traditional material elements of luxury, have noted, to provide more meaningfulness to the experience, for example, through sustainability and consumers' active participation. This kind of experience with space tourism could provide a fruitful base for luxury tourism experiences.

Also, according to Eskola (2024, p. 184), "interpreting luxury within socio-material practices has opened novel pathways for understanding the less rational nature of knowing luxury through the human body". Such embodied luxury (Eskola, 2024) engages touristic bodies in diverse sensory states that affect the knowing of luxury. Hence, there are different sensory states engaged in the experience, and touristic ongoing and future practices may be affected by memories carried within the body Eskola, 2024; Valtonen et al., 2017).

As commercial tourism in the New Space industry has only recently emerged, it is yet challenging to forecast the upcoming popularity of this new sector of tourism taking place bodily in an authentic space environment, which does not have gravity. In general, however, in order to anticipate future trends in tourism industry developments, weak signals from society can be looked at as a process of acquiring information (Hiltunen, 2013). Weak signals are the early signals of emerging trends, a collection" of weak signals can be used to recognise the pattern of an emerging trend (Choo, 2007). Megatrends can then be harnessed in shaping a new business era and become part of the formative process.

Recent global megatrends have included elements related to climate change, emphasising that ecological actions are a matter of urgency (Dufva 2020). There has also been a rise in ethical behaviour toward different types of travel experiences (Toivonen, 2020). As a result, some formerly renowned luxury tourism experiences, such as animal trophy hunting and their participators, have started to face public shaming on a global scale. Therefore, the adaptation to both the changes in consumer behaviours as well as the global climate change-related challenges that are to impact all future actions of the global tourism industry will be important business attributes for the tourism operators in the New Space industry as well. Hence, to conclude and as illustrated (in Figure 1), the future aspects of luxury elements present in touristic experiences in the New Space industry, are likely to include elements present in unconventional luxury as well as hedonistic, embodied sensing, sustainable as well as value-based ones.

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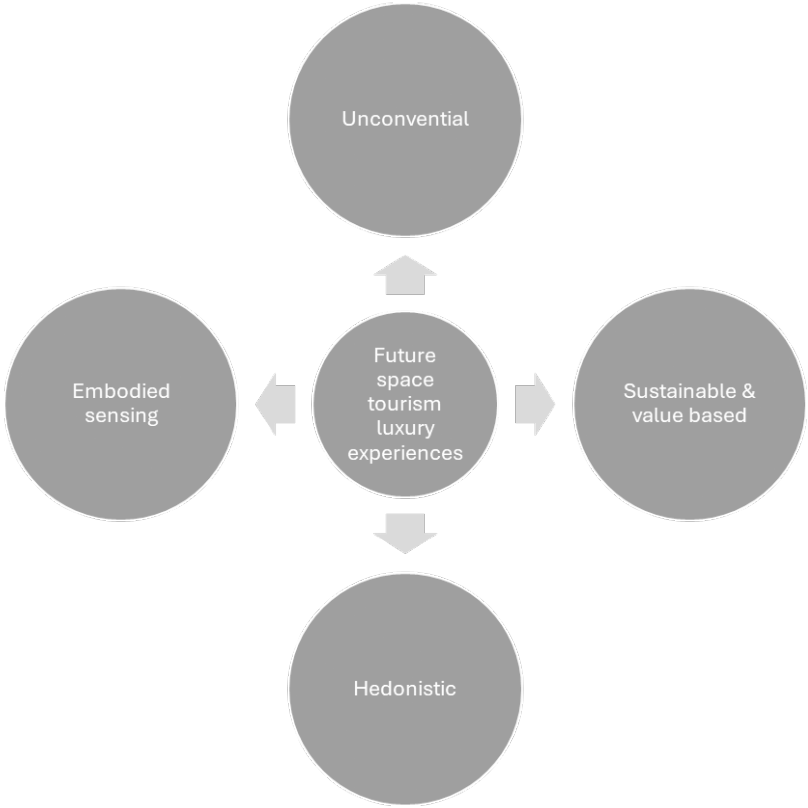

Figure 1: Future space tourism luxury experiences
Source: authors' work

3 Conclusion

Some new avenues of approach for the discussion of luxury and space tourism have lately emerged in our constantly evolving world. This chapter examined the meaning of the concept of luxury through academic definitions and concluded that the concept of luxury can be delved into the context of space tourism both from the perspectives of traditional luxury as well as new forms of luxury. At the moment, the sub-orbital tourism sector emerging in the New Space industry has its luxury elements as a product especially through its exceptionality as it offers the affluent traveller a once-in-a-lifetime unique experience in an authentic space environment. The space touristic experience may also be interpreted as luxurious from the perspective of the objectification of luxury and subjective meaning-making of luxury. Indeed, the current space touristic experience palette represents unique products with an element of rarity, which can represent a status for the consumer, making the traveller gain

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a sense of privilege. However, future space tourism activities and experiences will likely include various packages for various lifestyles and budgets.

From the future perspective, to maintain its luxury status, the space tourism industry has to consider the sustainability perspective more profoundly, as sustainability is giving meaningfulness to contemporary luxury experiences. In addition, it has to balance with the idea of a rarity as a luxury experience that is not available to the masses. However, suppose space tourism is viewed from the unconventional luxury perspective as a moment where the consumer defines what luxury is. In that case, luxury stays in the eye of the beholder, and the mass perspective on the consumption of luxury decreases. At that point, even if it were available to the masses, the unique experience may give the consumer the feeling of a hedonistic experience or even an eudaimonic experience that can be attached to luxurious meanings. Also, in the future, practising luxury in space tourism may highlight the importance of the human bodily senses and the bodily impacts experienced in an authentic space environment. Such embodied luxury experiences could affect future life choices and practises made by space tourists, for example, by enhancing the individual´s future environmental protectiveness toward planet Earth.

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Young and green? Age-dependent attitudes towards mobility and travel

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Abstract: *Previous research found that spatial mobility was predominantly positively connoted and valued. However, in connection with the discussion of the climate crisis, critical voices are increasingly being raised, leading to terms such as "flight shame" appearing more frequently in public debate. Movements like Fridays for Future and Last Generation suggest that a comprehensive shift in values towards greater environmental awareness may be taking place, especially among younger people. In this context, a corresponding difference in the attitudes of different age groups towards travelling and mobility would be plausible. Whether such a difference in attitude can actually be established in the German population and especially in the younger age group was investigated as part of a survey on mobility prestige in 2022. This chapter focuses on selected statements on attitudes towards mobility and travel. An analysis of the data by age group shows clear differences in the attitudes of older and younger age groups.*

Keywords: *Mobility, frequent travel, air travel, age, attitudes*

1 Introduction

It is becoming ever more urgent to identify the motivations and attitudes driving individual behaviour with negative environmental impact (Passafaro, 2020) as global temperatures are rising (Nasa Earth Observatory, 2023). The summer of 2023 turned out to be the hottest since records began (Copernicus Climate Change Service, 2023). In this context, mobility and travelling are important aspects since they cause a substantial part of CO_2 emissions (Umweltbundesamt, 2020). Many modes of travelling are still based on the use of fossil fuels, such as most planes and cars (Altenburg et al., 2023). Others have fewer negative consequences for the environment, e.g., e-mobility (Scuttari & Isetti, 2019) and some others (cycling, walking, etc.) combine low (or no) emissions with providing positive benefits to individual health and wellbeing (Oja et al., 2011; Roe & Aspinall, 2011). Understanding and influencing mobility is thus a key component of addressing the climate crisis.

30 years ago, Armbruster (1996) asked how much mobility is good for us, focusing on land consumption, negative effects of flying on air quality, noise and exposure to radiation. Later, Girod et al. (2013) stated that travel behaviour has a significant impact on global CO_2 emissions and that changing travel behaviour can in turn have a substantial impact on reducing CO_2 emissions. Koçak et al. (2020) argue that tourism development in particular contributes to CO_2 emissions. Lenzen et al. (2018) estimate tourism to contribute about 8 % to

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global CO_2 emissions. Peeters and Papp (2023) calculated that decarbonised tourism is only possible by shortening travel distances and shifting air travel to rail, and thus to a large extent depends on changing travel behaviours.

Knowing how often, how much and by which means people travel is therefore a necessary first step to describe actual travel behaviour, for work and for leisure. Yet, being able to describe behaviour is not enough. Given that it is important to change mobility and travelling behaviour, a necessary precursor is understanding which factors influence travellers' decision-making behaviour, e.g., their attitudes and opinions. Lastly, a clearer understanding of potential differences between age groups would enable stakeholders and policy makers to design more nuanced communication and more targeted interventions.

While economic, technological and political changes since the middle of the last century have enabled growing access to private travel for increasingly large sections of the population, social changes and a shift in values have led to a growing appreciation of leisure, experiences and self-realisation through travel. This is reflected in almost continuously rising demand figures both nationally and internationally (Eisenstein, 2021) – the major exception to this has been the COVID-19 pandemic (World Tourism Organization, 2024). The same changes have also led to a significant increase in occupational mobility, resulting in a normalisation of mobility in the professional environment (Kesselring & Vogl, 2010; Schneider et al., 2016; Schneider & Ruppenthal, 2014). The term mobility covers all forms of circular or residential, work-related or private movement, i.e., relocations, seasonal work, weekend commuting, holiday trips, day trips or shopping for daily needs (Eisenstein et al., 2019), while touristic travel excludes movement within the familiar environment and permanent mobility such as relocations for longer than one year (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNSD] & United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2010). Spatial mobility generally has a positive connotation and is honoured with social appreciation, particularly in westernised societies (Eisenstein et al., 2019; Roller, 2018; Schneider et al., 2016). Both holiday trips and business trips are suitable as instruments and symbols of social distinction due to their various design options, with business trips in particular creating a privileged status for individuals as these trips are not necessary or possible for every employee (Eisenstein et al., 2019). In connection with social processes, Cohen and Gössling (2015) identified a glamorisation of spatial mobility, as an idealisation and positive staging take place, in which the negative consequences of mobility are mostly disregarded. Status symbols such as frequent flyer programmes and (personally allocated) company cars are described by Eisenstein et al. (2019) as a means of communication especially for business travellers wanting to demonstrate their social distinction, lifestyle and performance. However, Eisenstein et al. (2019) also noticed a decline in the general social importance of cars as a status symbol and, as a result, a possible change in their function as a status symbol for business travel.

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Although increasing mobility and excessive use of natural resources for tourism were already criticised by Krippendorf (1975) more than 50 years ago, it is only since the late 2010s that a noticeable and media-effective change in attitudes seems to have taken place – driven by young people. Monaco (2022) states that the rapid and irreversible impacts of climate change are undoubtedly a source of stress for young people. It can be assumed that not least this stress factor led to the formation of a global movement named "Fridays for Future". The movement represents the growing awareness of the climate crisis, triggered by pupils and students and originating from Greta Thunberg's school strikes (Moor et al., 2020; Sommer et al., 2019; Wahlström et al., 2019).

The aim of this chapter is to analyse attitudes towards frequent (air) travel and general mobility and to examine whether there are significant differences between different age groups. First, the term "attitude" is defined and environmental attitudes regarding travel behaviour are reviewed. Subsequently, connections between age and attitudes are investigated followed by a presentation of the methodology and the results of a survey representative of the German population conducted in 2022 examining attitudes towards mobility and travelling. Results of this survey are compared with the literature review in the discussion. The chapter closes with a conclusion and implications for tourism companies.

2 Literature review

2.1 Environmental attitudes and travel behaviour

An attitude can be described as "[…] an evaluation of an object of thought." (Bohner & Dickel, 2011, p. 392) and is one of the determinants of behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). While this definition is mostly agreed upon, more elaborate definitions of attitudes vary in their definition of how permanent attitudes are. Theories range from long-term, stable constructs to temporary, context-dependent responses, with both views having their strengths and weaknesses (Bohner & Dickel, 2011). Attitudes can be classified based on their degree of abstraction and generalisation (vertical-hierarchical distinction) and based on their topics (horizontal distinction), and therefore ranging from broad systems of values and worldviews to attitudes towards specific behaviours while including a huge variety of topics (Passafaro, 2020). For example, environmental attitudes centre on concerns for the environment or caring for the environment (Gifford & Sussman, 2012).

As attitudes do not directly predict behaviour, Passafaro (2020) recommends identifying moderators and mediators of attitudes specific to given settings and behaviours. For example, easily performed behaviour (picking the recycled variant of office paper) is more likely to be predicted by (environmental) attitudes than difficult behaviour (consistently using public transport instead of the car), as is publicly observable behaviour in comparison to private behaviour (Gifford & Sussman, 2012). As well, Gifford (2011) lists seven categories of

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psychological barriers to climate change mitigation (e.g., limited cognition about the problem or perceived risks of change) with 29 specific manifestations (e.g., ignorance, uncertainty, or financial, social or psychological risks), calling them 'dragons of inaction' to demonstrate their power to stop people reaching their goals. Moreover, research has found pro-environmental attitudes to be dependent on current events (e.g., political movements, protests, etc.) and to show variations according to age, gender, nationality, urban-rural residence, socioeconomic status, religion, (environmental) education, experience, values, personality and politics (Gifford & Sussman, 2012).

The start of a youth-led and -organised global climate strike movement, most commonly known as "Fridays for Future" protests, is an event that may have influenced many people's attitudes towards climate change and environmental protection due to its widespread media coverage. While 15-year-old Greta Thunberg began her school strike in August 2018, Sommer et al. (2019) put 18th January 2019 as the start of the Fridays for Future movement in Germany, with 25,000 people protesting in 50 German cities. Due to the subsequent absence of substantial achievements and declining protest participation, a partial radicalisation of the climate movement ensued. A result of this was, for example, the Last Generation movement, which started with a hunger strike by seven activists in August 2021 and has since sought to increase the pressure on political decision-makers through rule-breaking actions (Rucht, 2023).

Based on Greta Thunberg's appeals for a low-carbon lifestyle, a debate about flight shame began in 2018 in Sweden (Gössling, 2019), with "flight shame" either referring to the traveller's feelings of guilt for using a mode of transport with a substantial CO_2 footprint or the act of other people accusing or "shaming" a person for their behaviour (Gössling et al., 2020; Mkono, 2020). By 2019, the concept was discussed globally, either by expressing concern about the climate and emissions, supporting the concept or suggesting options for addressing emissions, but also by issuing critique on the concept, rejecting it or promoting flying (Becken et al., 2021). Gössling et al. (2020) found flight shame to be correlated with an alteration of air travel practices among peers, or the participation of children in climate-related school strikes. According to annual representative surveys, the percentage of German airline passengers who feel guilty about the climate impact of their air travel has risen from 41 % in 2019 to 50 % in 2023 (Lohmann, 2024). However, this is not yet expected to result in a trend towards less air travel, but rather a greater willingness to make compensation payments (Lohmann, 2024). While the number of passengers has not yet recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels, a substantial and sustained upward trend from 2019 to 2024 is visible (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2025).

Before the phenomenon had received the name 'flight shame', frequent flying while knowing about its environmental impact had been a hot topic already 15 years earlier, eliciting feelings ranging from defiance over guilty pleasure and apologies to surprise that the formerly culturally desirable activity of flying should now be frowned upon (Randles & Mander, 2009). The way in which

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especially frequent flyer programmes cater to this desirability by regulating and awarding prestige and social capital to preferred customers was analysed by Thurlow and Jaworski (2006). Gössling (2019), for example, highlighted the role of celebrities in displaying moral and social norms with regard to air travel by analysing the greenhouse gas emissions of ten selected persons based on their social media posts of their travels.

Earlier research from the UK suggested a relationship between individual's pro-environmental attitudes and pro-environmental household behaviour, but not to individual's inclination to go on leisure flights or distances flown (Alcock et al., 2017), which was later supported for young adults by Oswald and Ernst (2021). Strategies employed by environmentally conscious travellers to reconcile the cognitive dissonance arising from the incongruity between their attitudes and flying behaviour encompass refraining from altering their travel patterns (while providing rationalisations grounded in aspects of the travel product, travel context, or personal identity); curbing or limiting flights; adopting alternative behaviours to offset the impact of air travel; and completely ceasing to fly (McDonald et al., 2015). Similarly, Árnadóttir et al. (2021) explored the justifications of young Icelandic adults to continue air travel, as none were willing to quit flying despite their awareness of climate change.

As increasing air fares might be a means of reducing demand for air travel and subsequently, emissions, Gössling et al. (2020) investigated various policy measures which would increase air fares either directly by imposing different taxes or indirectly by removing current subsidies. Acceptance rates for these measures ranged from 40 % to 63 % and differed significantly between people feeling flight shame, flying less or having stopped flying completely. Correspondingly, Davison et al. (2014) found different levels of agreement for an increase in flight prices in the four market segments identified in their research.

In conclusion, it can be noted that air travel in particular was a status symbol whose position is increasingly being discredited due to heightened public discussion of its ecological consequences. Comprehensive behavioural changes are not yet visible, but instead different strategies are adopted by travellers, ranging from no behavioural change to completely abstaining from air travel, accompanied by more or less strong feelings of shame. The study therefore aims to answer the following question:

Q1: What are attitudes of the German population towards frequent (air) travel and mobility?

2.2 Age and attitude differences

Age was identified as a possible source of differences in environmental attitudes, with one explanation for this effect being the change in people's attitudes over time, i.e., that as people age, their environmental concern diminishes (Gifford & Sussman, 2012). However, research found mixed results concerning who shows more pro-environmental attitudes. Early research distinguished younger age groups as more concerned about environmental problems (Buttel, 1979; Hon-

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nold, 1984; McMillan et al., 1997), while later research showed a decline of environmental concern of adolescents since the 1970s (Wray-Lake et al., 2010). Further research found that environmental awareness increases with age and peaks in middle age before declining again (Morrison & Beer, 2017), while Gray et al. (2019) could not provide evidence of increased environmental concern amongst younger people.

Another line of argument focuses on generational effects which propose that differences between age groups are caused by events that influenced one generation and not the following (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014). Consequently, the general liberal-mindedness of earlier eras might have contributed to a reduction in the environmental concern of older people (Gifford & Sussman, 2012). However, Honnold (1984) found the decline in environmental concern in higher age groups to be a result of cohort effects as well as true aging effects. For Switzerland, Lorenzini et al. (2021) reported higher pro-environmental attitudes of the younger generation while at the same time, pro-environmental concern has risen over all generations as well.

Generational effects with regard to travel decision making, including attitudes, were found by Gardiner et al. (2014; 2013), while differences in travel behaviour of different generations were investigated by research as well (Huang & Lu, 2017; Li et al., 2013). Moreover, tourism research lately intensified its focus on specific generations' travel behaviours, be it Generation Y (Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2010) or Generation Z (Pinho & Gomes, 2023; Prayag et al., 2022; Ribeiro et al., 2023).

With regard to air travel, Berneiser et al. (2022) examined various potential influencing factors on the intention to decrease air travel and found younger people to be less likely to reduce air travel. However, the correlation between age and intention to decrease air travel was weak. Stronger positive correlations were found for perceived behavioural control over sustainable travel modes; believing that avoiding flights was an effective way to mitigate climate change; a less favourable attitude towards travel in general; and concerns regarding intergenerational justice (Berneiser et al., 2022). Based on attitudinal statements that air travel behaviour affects climate change on the one side and agreement that flying alternatives are easy to find on the other side, Davison et al. (2014) developed a model of four segments of respondents who differed significantly with regard to age and actual flying behaviour – here, people who disagreed with both statements and flew most frequently were significantly older than those who supported one or both statements. Contrarily, Gunziger et al. (2022) found four cluster segments based on general environmental attitudes and willingness to replace flying by train use, but no relationship to age or number of flights taken in the last 12 months. Furthermore, there was no association between flight shame and age (Gössling et al., 2020; Lohmann, 2024).

In summary, differences in pro-environmental attitudes between people of different ages have been found in various manifestations. With regard to travel behaviour and especially air travel, age and generational differences were re-

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searched as well with mixed results. Because of the conflicting findings so far, the study therefore addresses the following question:

Q2: To what extent do attitudes towards mobility and (air) travel differ between different age groups of the German population?

3 Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, the results from an empirical survey conducted in December 2022 are used. The survey was carried out using the i:omnibus panel from Ipsos. The sample comprises 1094 persons.

The selection of respondents is representative for the German-speaking population in private households in Germany between the ages of 16 and 75 according to the quota characteristics gender, age and place of residence.

As part of a larger study on mobility and travel, respondents were asked to submit their assessment of a total of 14 general statements on mobility and travel on a rating scale from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree. As this study's research questions focus on attitudes, only the statements relying on attitudes were included in Table 1.

Table 1: Statements on mobility and travel

No.	Statement	Category
1	It is important to be mobile.	Attitude
2	It is desirable to travel a lot.	Attitude
3	I don't let discussions about environmental protection take away my desire to travel.	Attitude
4	When I fly, I have a guilty conscience these days.	Attitude
5	Achieving frequent flyer status is a positive status symbol.	Attitude
6	I am in favour of increasing flight prices.	Attitude
7	Frequent travel is irresponsible these days.	Attitude

Source: authors' work

The data obtained from the empirical survey was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 29. The results in response to the research questions defined above are presented in the next chapter.

4 Results

4.1 Results of all respondents

The mean values of agreement scores for the seven selected statements on mobility and travel are presented below (figure 1).

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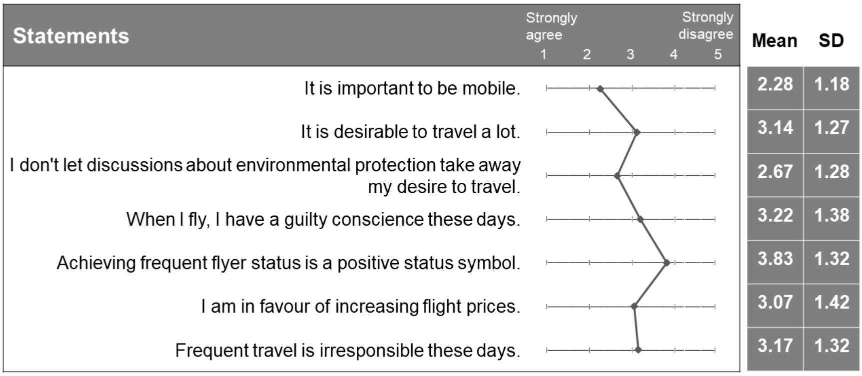

Figure 1: Mean values of agreement with attitude statements

Source: authors' work

Mean values as depicted in figure 1 provide an initial overview of agreement with the various statements. The lowest mean value (2.28) and thus the highest approval is recorded for statement 1 "*It is important to be mobile*". The highest mean value (3.83) and consequently the lowest approval is obtained by statement 5 "*Achieving frequent flyer status is a positive status symbol*". The remaining mean values fall between 2.67 (statement 3) and 3.22 (statement 4) and thus within a range of only 0.55 points. Overall, mean values predominantly lie in the centre of the scale.

Results in table 2 show percentages for individual values on the rating scale from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree and top-two-boxes (TTB; sum of values 1 and 2) as well as bottom-two-boxes (BTB; sum of values 4 and 5).

Table 2: Agreement with attitude statements on mobility and travel (in %; rating scale from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree)

No.	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	TTB	BTB
1	It is important to be mobile.	31.8	29.5	23.8	8.5	6.3	61.3	14.9
2	It is desirable to travel a lot	12.6	17.7	32.0	18.9	18.9	30.2	37.8
3	I don't let discussions about environmental protection take away my desire to travel.	23.9	21.5	29.5	13.9	11.2	45.4	25.1
4	When I fly, I have a guilty conscience these days.	14.3	17.3	26.3	16.1	25.9	31.6	42.1
5	Achieving frequent flyer status is a positive status symbol.	5.6	8.7	24.5	19.7	41.5	14.3	61.1
6	I am in favour of increasing flight prices.	19.3	16.3	26.0	15.5	23.0	35.5	38.5
7	Frequent travel is irresponsible these days.	13.9	16.2	30.0	18.4	21.5	30.1	39.9

Source: authors' work

The analysis of TTB and BTB values shows more clearly the level of agreement with the statements than the mean values. The highest approval with highest

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TTB value is given to statement 1 "*It is important to be mobile*" with 61.3 %, while the BTB value for this statement is only 14.9 %. Mobility is therefore fundamentally important for the majority of respondents. The results for statement 2 "*It is desirable to travel a lot*" indicate that mobility cannot be considered synonymous to travelling: less than one third of respondents (TTB 30.2 %) agree with this statement, while slightly more than one third (BTB 37.8 %) tend to disagree.

Statement 3 "*I don't let discussions about environmental protection take away my desire to travel*" receives the second highest level of approval with a TTB of 45.4 %, while a quarter of respondents tend to reject the statement (BTB 25.1 %). For the majority of respondents, the desire to travel is therefore not restricted by environmental discussions. However, nearly one third of respondents tended to feel bad about flying (statement 4 "*When I fly, I have a guilty conscience these days*"; TTB 31.6 %), while the majority of respondents (42.1 %, BTB) stated that they did not have a guilty conscience when flying.

Statement 5 "*Achieving frequent flyer status is a positive status symbol*" shows a marked deviation with a TTB value of 14.3 % and a BTB value of 61.1 %. Statement 5 thus displays exactly the reverse distribution to statement 1 and emphasises that frequent flyer status represents a positive status symbol only for a relatively small group.

Statement 6 "*I am in favour of increasing flight prices*", with a BTB value of 38.5 %, receives a slightly higher rejection than approval (TTB 35.5 %). It is nevertheless remarkable that more than one third of respondents are in favour of an increase in air fares.

The results for statement 7 "*Frequent travel is irresponsible these days*" are somewhat unexpected, as the previous results indicated the opposite distribution for this statement. A larger proportion of respondents (39.3 % BTB) reject statement 7, while 30.1 % (TTB) agree. Particularly the results for statement 2 are contradictory to these results, as statement 2 found a greater rejection of more frequent travelling, while in the case of statement 7, a larger proportion does not consider more frequent travelling to be irresponsible.

The following section explores how the results differ for various age groups, as significant differences between age groups are expected.

4.2 Mean values by age groups

In order to compare mean values by age group, a Kruskal-Wallis test with pairwise comparisons and subsequent Bonferroni correction was carried out. The results are presented in graphical form in figure 2, using hexagons featuring all pairwise comparisons of mean values of different age groups for each statement surveyed and analysed in this chapter.

Each age group covers a span of ten years, with the exception of the youngest and oldest age groups. The youngest age group covers nine years (16–24 years), while the oldest age group covers eleven years (65-75 years). Altogether, six age groups were formed.

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For the first statement "*It is important to be mobile*", there are statistically significant differences between age group 1 and age groups 4, 5 and 6 and thus between the youngest age group and the ages 45 and older. The youngest age group shows a higher mean value, which means a lower level of agreement with the statement, than age groups 4, 5 and 6. The lowest mean value and thus the highest level of agreement is found for age group 6. Being mobile is therefore less important for people aged 16–24 than for people aged 45 and over.

Statistically significant differences were observed for statement 2 "*It is desirable to travel a lot*" only between the youngest age group 1 and the oldest age group 6, with the younger age group reporting the lowest mean value and thus the highest level of agreement with the statement, while the oldest age group displayed a higher mean value and thus a lower level of agreement with the statement. Hence, a reverse direction to the results for statement 1 can be observed.

Regarding statement 5 "*Achieving frequent flyer status is a positive status symbol*", there are numerous statistically significant differences between the various age groups (see Figure 2). With comparatively high mean values, the older age groups 4, 5 and 6 clearly reject statement 5. By contrast, the younger age groups 1 and 2 have significantly lower mean values and therefore a much higher level of agreement with the statement. The mean value of age group 3 is in an intermediate position, but also slightly lower than the average mean value and therefore expresses greater agreement with the statement than the overall average.

For statement 6 "*I am in favour of increasing flight prices*", there are again statistically significant differences between age group 1 and age groups 3, 5 and 6. Age group 1 achieves the comparatively highest mean value and thus the lowest level of agreement, while age group 6 displays the lowest mean value and thus the highest level of agreement.

For statements 3, 4 and 7, there are no significant differences between age groups.

To summarise, the greatest differences can be found between the youngest and oldest age groups whenever statistically significant differences exist. With regard to the statements, the younger age group assesses the importance of being mobile as lower, but considers frequent travelling to be more desirable. They tend to assess frequent flyer status more positively as a status symbol and are more likely to reject higher air fares than the older age group. The older age group has the opposite assessment of each statement.

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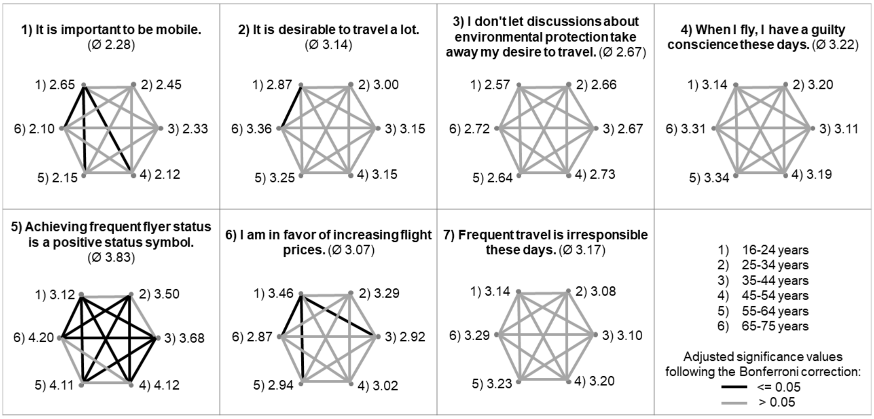

Figure 2: Agreement with attitude statements by age groups (mean values on a rating scale from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree)

Source: author's work

5 Discussion

Q1: What are attitudes of the German population towards frequent (air) travel and mobility?

Statement 1 "*It is important to be mobile*" reached the highest level of approval of all statements described in this chapter, with 61.3 % of respondents supporting the statement. This result is in line with the positive connotation of spatial mobility described by Roller (2018) and Schneider et al. (2016). However, this statement alone is not sufficient to support the glamorisation of spatial mobility as described by Cohen and Gössling (2015) and the results of the following statements point to a more nuanced view on the desirability of (frequent) travel by the German population. Just under half of the respondents (45.4 %) are in favour of statement 3 "*I don't let discussions about environmental protection take away my desire to travel*", showing that the general desire to travel remains despite environmental discussions – which is confirmed by official statistics on arrivals and overnight stays as well as annual surveys (Eisenstein, 2021; Lohmann, 2024). At the same time, however, a quarter of respondents tend to reject statement 3, indicating that environmental concerns already have some influence on people.

The desirability of frequent travel (compared to travel in general) is contemplated in statement 2 "*It is desirable to travel a lot*". A higher proportion of respondents (37.8 %) tend to reject statement 2, while nearly one third of respondents (30.2 %) agree with this statement. Accordingly, frequent travel in particular is not seen as desirable by a considerable proportion of Germans. Statement 7 "*Frequent travel is irresponsible these days*" also focuses on frequent travel, but from a negative point of view. As respondents rather disagree with this statement than agree, in combination with results from statement 2 it can

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be deduced that frequent travel is therefore not necessarily desirable, but is not utterly discredited either.

The different results for the statements on mobility and (frequent) travel indicate that mobility and travel are perceived as different concepts by respondents. Mobility and travel both refer to work-related and leisure-related movements (Eisenstein et al., 2019), while touristic travel only refers to non-everyday mobility (UNSD & UNWTO, 2010). The agreement values indicate that (everyday) mobility is more important to respondents than the non-everyday mobility of touristic travelling. Arguably, for many people, mobility or the ability to be mobile may have become a necessity, while (frequent) travelling may be desirable but not essential. This is supported, for example, by the results of several studies especially on the normalisation of occupational mobility (Kesselring & Vogl, 2010; Schneider et al., 2016; Schneider & Ruppenthal, 2014). The results of this study indicate a decreasing appreciation of mobility over (frequent) travel.

Three statements focused on different aspects of air travel: flight shame, frequent flyer programmes as positive status symbols and increased flight prices. Flight shame (statement 4) has been experienced by nearly one third of respondents, which is a lower proportion than measured by Lohmann (2024) for the year 2023. However, the values measured by Lohmann (2024) only refer to air travellers and are therefore not directly comparable with the population-representative results of this study; neither can comparability be established through further evaluations as part of this study. Nevertheless, it can be asserted that a significant proportion of the German population already has a guilty conscience when flying – regardless of whether they have recently flown or not.

Frequent flyer programmes as positive status symbols (statement 5) are rejected by the majority of respondents and received the lowest agreement score of all seven items. Consequently, it appears that frequent flyer programmes are no longer a means of communication of social distinction, lifestyle and performance as described by Eisenstein et al. (2019). It is also possible that the objective of frequent flyer programmes – to heighten its desirability by awarding prestige and social capital (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2006) – no longer applies in light of ongoing public debates, for example on their environmental impact. However, as the respondents were not asked about general pro-environmental behaviour or their positions in the environmental debate, this question cannot be answered conclusively. It remains to state that frequent flyer programmes represent a positive status symbol only for a small proportion of respondents.

An increase in air fares (statement 6) is viewed controversially – the proportions of supporters and opponents are almost equal, with a slight majority of opponents. The proportion of those in favour is lower than measured by Gössling et al. (2020), who referred to specific measures or values while the statement here only mentions a general increase. A correlation analysis with flight shame (as carried out by Gössling et al., 2020) was not conducted, but this would be a promising approach for the future.

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Q2: To what extent do attitudes towards mobility and (air) travel differ between different age groups of the German population?

The analysis revealed significant differences between age groups for only four of the seven statements. The results of this study thus are in line with previous studies, where age was sometimes, but not always, identified as a differentiating factor. In each case, the largest differences emerged between the youngest and oldest age groups, even though the differences between these groups were still relatively small. As the direction of these differences varies, it is necessary to take a closer look at the individual statements.

The importance of mobility (statement 1) is significantly higher for those aged 45 and over than for those aged 16–24. To date, no age differences regarding the importance of mobility are known from other studies, so no comparison is possible. A plausible hypothesis would be that mobility is a greater necessity for the older population groups due to a greater number of daily obligations (work, shopping, driving (children) to leisure activities) than for the younger age group. In particular, it can be assumed that the normalisation of work-related mobility (Kesselring & Vogl, 2010; Schneider et al., 2016; Schneider & Ruppenthal, 2014) is not yet relevant for those aged 16–24, as many in this age group are still at school or in further or higher education. The lower importance of mobility for the youngest age group thus supports the assumption that the respondents associate mobility primarily with routine movements rather than touristic journeys.

By contrast, frequent travel is assessed as more desirable by the youngest age group (16–24 years) than by the oldest age group (65-75 years) (statement 2). In combination with the greater agreement of the youngest age group that frequent flyer programmes are positive status symbols (statement 5), this suggests a glamorisation of travel by the youngest age group as described by Cohen and Gössling (2015). Possibly, this age group is also more susceptible to the promises of prestige and social distinction offered by frequent flyer programmes (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2006) or the positive depiction of frequent trips by celebrities in social media, which result in high greenhouse gas emissions (Gössling, 2019). It is also consistent with age group 16–24 being least in favour of higher air fares (statement 6). Overall, the results outlined here support findings of other research, indicating that younger age groups show little interest in reducing or stopping air travel (Árnadóttir et al., 2021; Berneiser et al., 2022). Whether those aged 16–24 generally support pro-environmental attitudes and may experience cognitive dissonance cannot be determined from the results available. However, flight shame (statement 4) is not experienced significantly more by members of this age group than by all other age groups. This reflects previous results (Gössling et al., 2020; Lohmann, 2024).

On the other hand, especially those aged between 65 and 75 rated frequent travel as less desirable, were least likely to consider frequent flyer programmes as a positive status symbol and were most likely to be in favour of rising air fares. However, it is not possible to tell from these results if these are effects of

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general pro-environmental attitudes or rather a result of health issues due to age. The general desire to travel despite environmental discussions (statement 3) exists equally for all age groups and the assessment of frequent travelling as irresponsible (statement 7) also shows no statistically significant differences between age groups. A different – and somewhat more optimistic – interpretation of this could be that campaigns of groups such as Fridays for Future (Sommer et al., 2019) or Last Generation (Rucht, 2023) have had an effect in influencing the older generations. If that is the case the small difference in attitudes would indicate not less environmental concern of the younger generation, but growing environmental concern in older ones. This highlights the need for further research to identify the background to the seemingly eco-friendlier attitudes towards frequent travelling and air travel of the oldest age group in particular.

6 Conclusion and implications for tourism companies

To address climate change, a change in travel behaviour is needed; primarily towards travel behaviour with a much-reduced CO_2 footprint (Girod et al., 2013; Peeters & Papp, 2023). To understand and influence travel behaviour, in turn an understanding of attitudes is needed. Overall, the current study suggests that mobility is mostly regarded favourably, and (frequent) travel is viewed positively by a considerable proportion of Germans. Environmental concerns are visible among a proportion of respondents in several statements and it can be assumed that these result from general pro-environmental attitudes. However, one limitation of the study is the absence of questions on general pro-environmental attitudes. As a result, only hypotheses can be made, and no corresponding conclusions can be drawn. Furthermore, the present evaluation is limited in that it considers only attitudes and not actual or intended behaviour. Research has shown that attitudes do not reliably predict actual behaviour (Gifford & Sussman, 2012; Passafaro, 2020). Another limitation is the timing of the study, which took place in 2022 when travel was possible again almost as it was before the pandemic. This may also have influenced attitudes towards travel and mobility.

Further studies should contribute to a more differentiated view of Germans' attitudes towards frequent travel and mobility. This can be achieved by correlating attitude statements with actual or intended behaviour, as well as with general pro-environmental attitudes. Further research should also examine the perception of everyday mobility in comparison to tourist mobility, as well as any differences in attitudes towards private and business travel.

The current research revealed that respondents' attitudes differed for several statements and similarly high proportions agreed or disagreed with the statements. The analysis by age groups revealed significant differences in four of the seven statements, but these were relatively small. Also, no particular change towards a more pro-environmental stance in the younger generations could be established. Thus, age cannot be identified as the sole decisive factor for the

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overall divergent assessments of respondents. Further investigations are therefore necessary in order to better understand and categorise the different assessments of the statements on mobility and (frequent) travel – not least to be able to draw conclusions for tourism companies.

Based on the results obtained from the study so far, tourism companies can draw the positive conclusion that the desire to travel is still strong for the majority of respondents despite environmental discussions and mobility is generally highly valued. It is therefore unlikely that the demand for travel will decline significantly in the near future. However, as frequent travel is not (or no longer) considered desirable by a significant proportion of respondents, it is possible that people will travel less frequently in future, which could have an impact on overall demand. In particular, demand for air travel may change to a greater extent if flight shame and rising prices come together. Tourism companies should therefore prepare for increased competition for potential customers.

At present, the easiest way to reduce CO_2 emissions would be to reduce the demand for air travel, which would benefit environmental and climate protection. Overall, however, it cannot be concluded from the results that a reduction in CO_2 emissions is likely due to significantly lower demand for travel, and the current figures on air travel (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2025) also contradict this hope. In order to reduce CO_2 emissions caused by travel, a change in travel behaviour is therefore imperative. On the one hand, this requires potential travellers to make use of eco-friendly offers wherever possible, but on the other hand it also requires tourism companies to develop more eco-friendly offers and governments to create the appropriate regulatory conditions. As there are divergent results for several statements, it is reasonable to conclude that not all potential customers currently attach the same importance to eco-friendly travel behaviour. Marketing activities should consider this and accordingly highlight pro-environmental elements of travel packages more for older customers or place more emphasis on prestige while addressing younger travellers, for example.

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Regenerative tourism in Finland – a buzzword or a panacea?

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Abstract: *The pandemic gave the world of tourism a chance for a rethink, and models focusing on a resilient and sustainable future for tourism were developed. One such model gaining global popularity is regenerative tourism, where tourism acts as a healing force and a change agent, revitalising both human and natural ecosystems. Regenerative tourism aims not just to do less damage, but to restore the harm already done. Regenerative tourism means more than just sustainability as it emphasises nurturing, thriving and revitalising living systems as well as giving back instead of just doing less harm. As regenerative tourism is a relatively new concept with a limited number of studies and examples available, this explanatory case study aims at gaining an understanding of the potential of regenerative tourism for tourism development in Finland. The results show that in Finland, regenerative tourism is seen as taking sustainability to the next level.*

Keywords: *Regeneration, Regenerative Tourism, Transformation, System change, Finland*

1 Introduction

Before the pandemic, discussions about the tourism industry were dominated by mass tourism, overtourism and growth expectations (e.g., Dodds & Butler, 2019; Hussain, 2021; Saarinen, 2020). Although the pursuit of a more sustainable tourism has been ongoing for a long time, the demand for it became even more pronounced during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Ataljevic, 2020; Cave & Dredge, 2020). New tourism development models based on a resilient and sustainable approach supporting local communities, ecosystems, and heritage have been created. One such model gaining worldwide popularity for post-pandemic rethink, recovery, and resilience in tourism is the concept of regenerative tourism. Regenerative tourism has even been branded as the saviour of global tourism in the post-pandemic world (Zaman et al., 2023).

New Zealand has been one of the pioneers of regenerative tourism and they had a programme called “Back to Life – Towards a Regenerative Recovery” (Back to Life, 2021) to embrace regenerative tourism in the pandemic era (Haugen, 2021). In New Zealand, the question was whether the tourism industry would go back into its old habits or embrace a regenerative approach that focuses on place and people rather than extractive profit. Indeed, this is an important question for the global tourism industry and destinations worldwide, also Finland. The dominating forms of tourism often lead to exceeded carrying capacities and degradation of resources and biodiversity, overconsumption of energy and

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water as well as generation of waste along with diverse negative social and economic impacts to the local community. Regenerative tourism is seen as offering a new pathway for a more sustainable tourism. So far, there is a limited understanding of the definitions and potential of regenerative tourism and its practical applications (e.g., Bellato et al., 2022; Bellato & Pollock, 2023). The aim of this paper is to explore the concept and application of regenerative tourism in the Finnish context.

The question is whether regenerative tourism is a real game-changer and panacea for the tourism industry, or just a buzzword for a novel form of alternative tourism with the possibility to cater for a niche market only. Goodwin & Santilli (2009) stated already a long time ago that alternative forms of tourism are often seen as benign and superior to mass tourism, and thus they are rarely subjected to a critical review. As regenerative tourism has received a lot of interest in recent years, there is a need to have a closer look at the phenomenon and its potential implications for the future of tourism.

This explanatory case study relies on interviews and existing documents such as blogs, articles, and websites. The data was collected throughout 2023 in a time when tourism was coming back to normal after the many travel restrictions and lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2 Regenerative tourism

2.1 Background

Climate change and loss of biodiversity have been singled out as the biggest risks to the planet in the long-term (de Boer & Aiking, 2021). According to the latest IPCC (2021) 6th Assessment Report, climate change is posing a severe threat to human wellbeing and the health of the planet. Our liveable future on the planet is now under threat. Dasgupta (2021) highlighted that the loss of biodiversity is affecting our economies as well as the planet and the people. At the same time, the global community is entering a very unstable geopolitical climate with the Russian invasion of Ukraine and ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Supply chains are disrupted, and costs of living are rising all around the world. Thus, it has been argued that we are living in an unpredictable VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world (Major & Clarke, 2021). As globalisation is considered one of the main factors of environmental degradation (Borowiez & Papiez, 2024), a new way of organising economic processes is needed.

Both people and their livelihoods need a system change. Circular Economy (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015) has been offered as one of the solutions to change from a linear economic system to a circular one where there is no waste, but all resources are kept in the loop for as long as possible. Circular Economy concentrates on the environmental aspect of the economy, and it is closely related to Regenerative Economy and, thus, to its application to the tourism

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industry, an approach for development called regenerative tourism (see, e.g., Bellato & Cheer, 2021; Cave & Dregde, 2020).

It needs to be emphasised that regenerative tourism is not an approach to reach sustainability, rather it strives for more by highlighting the need to give back to communities, cultures and places engaged in tourism activities. The aim is not just to minimise the negative impacts of tourism, but to find a path that leads to positive outcomes, allowing the destination's ecosystem to recover, heal and thrive (Sharma & Tham, 2023). Thus, regenerative thinking emphasises an alternative economic model to capitalism that goes beyond mere growth. The regenerative tourism model focuses on holistic development, enhancing the wellbeing of the entire community (Duxbury et al., 2021; Haugen, 2021; Zaaman et al., 2022).

Regenerative tourism advocates giving up the capitalist agenda dominating tourism development so far. In the regenerative tourism model, the focus would be on measuring other impacts and tourism success indicators than monetary and growth ones (Cave & Dregde, 2020). The dominating discussions in a regenerative tourism context are related to degrowth rather than growth (see, e.g., Saarinen, 2021). Moreover, in the regenerative and restorative system (Circulab, 2022), all capital generated is used for the wellbeing of nature and people. The purpose of a regenerative economic system, be it circular economy or regenerative tourism, is to have a positive impact, e.g., to restore an ecosystem and regenerate a community.

There are many advocates for the regenerative economy. Well known scholars embracing the regenerative model are, e.g., the Oxford University scholar Kate Raworth (2022) with her Doughnut Economics theory that balances planetary boundaries and human needs and Cambridge University academic and author Wayne Visser (2022) with his book "Thriving". Anne Pollock, a change-agent for tourism, is perhaps the world's foremost expert on regenerative tourism. She has profiled herself as one of the first and most vocal voices in regenerative tourism worldwide along with the speaker and author Michelle Holliday and Diane Dredge, the founder of Tourism CoLab. They are all very active in social media, leading the discussions on regenerative tourism also online.

Regeneration is grounded in living systems theory (Tomej & Bilynets, 2024). There is an emerging language, new vocabulary, associated with regeneration. The verbs associated with the current form of tourism and economic activity in general are "grow" and "extract", whereas those associated with regeneration are "thrive", "flourish" and "nourish". Actors in regeneration see themselves more like gardeners, servants and stewards, nourishing and taking care of living systems, helping life thrive and evolve (Ateljevic, 2020; Nylund, 2021; Pollock, 2019).

2.2 Defining regenerative tourism

Regeneration is an ancient concept that became mainstream in agriculture in the early 1980s (Hussain & Haley, 2022). The main aim is to enhance human

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connection to a place and thereby making people eager to protect and nurture that place for future generations. Regeneration understands that people are interconnected with each other and the living ecosystems, it is not enough just to sustain and survive, but we need to thrive and flourish (Bellato et al., 2022; Major & Clarke, 2021). As Major and Clarke (2021, p. 196) put it, "Regeneration asks us to rediscover what it means for people, organisations, communities and our places to thrive."

As a relatively new concept, regenerative tourism has been defined in different ways and there is not a universally accepted definition yet. Dredge (2022, p. 270) argues that "regenerative tourism seeks to ensure that travel and tourism deliver a net positive benefit to people, places and nature, and that it supports the long-term renewal and flourishing of our social and ecological systems". Another definition is provided by Bellato et al. (2023, p. 9) stating that regenerative tourism is "a transformational approach that aims to fulfil the potential of tourism places to flourish and create net positive effects through increasing the regenerative capacity of human societies and ecosystems". Further, Sharma and Tham (2023) see regenerative tourism as a philosophy and way of life that can be developed across small and larger development projects.

Regenerative tourism should be seen as a healing force and as a possible change agent to revitalise human and natural ecosystems (Bellato et al., 2023; Haley, 2022; Hussain & Pollock, 2019; McEnhill, 2020). A core idea is for visitors to leave the place behind better than it was before their visit (Zaman et al., 2022; Sharma & Tham, 2023). Regeneration in a tourism context is also about inclusivity, nurturing, flourishing, thriving and revitalising ecosystems, societies and economies, as well as giving back instead of just doing less harm (Bellato & Cheer, 2021; Duxbury et al., 2021; Pollock, 2019; Visser, 2022).

Implementation of regenerative tourism requires a paradigm shift. It is an emerging model as experts in the tourism field have become dissatisfied with the way sustainable tourism is developing (Hussain & Hailey, 2022; Major & Clarke, 2021). Saarinen (2021, p. 2) states that the conceptualising of sustainable tourism has had an emphasis on meeting the needs of the industry rather than on being based on the principles of sustainable development.

The dissatisfaction with the concept of sustainable tourism has resulted in an increasing interest in the potential of regenerative tourism (Pung et al., 2024). By becoming more regenerative, destinations and companies can provide new products to repackage "sustainable" offerings to have a real positive impact on the planet and people (Haugen, 2021). Current models of tourism focus on growth, economic value and transactional relationships between visitors and hosts. Regenerative tourism challenges those ideas. In regenerative tourism, community wellbeing, fostering connections and nurturing love of place are in focus (e.g., Duxbury et al., 2021). Regenerative tourism puts purpose and passion back to the core of action (Major & Clarke, 2021) and thereby creates conditions for revitalised tourism systems, economic stability and minimum impact on the environment (Hussain & Hailey, 2022).

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Regenerative tourism is based on an inclusive approach to tourism development (Pung et al., 2024). The starting point is that all stakeholders, i.e., companies, public sector, NGOs and local community, are involved to identify and implement new innovative service offerings based on a regenerative economic model (Duxbury et al., 2021; Sharma & Tham, 2023). The key stakeholders in regenerative tourism are involved in the following activities (Bellato et al., 2022):

- Stewarding (businesses, residents, public bodies and NGOs protecting, restoring and regenerating the place)
- Hosting (tourism service-providers such as hotels and restaurants offering the services to guests)
- Guesting (guesting stakeholders visit communities to develop deeper connection with themselves, communities and places, includes bringing and taking perspectives to other places to restore wellbeing)
- Communing (involves resourcing guests developing the unique culture of places, the role is to be a change-agent for the regenerative development model)
- Placing (provides the conditions for tourism to occur and for life to thrive)

In regenerative tourism, the wellbeing of the local community is fundamental, requiring destinations to become more creative and resilient. As Hussain (2023, p. 6) claims: "A nice place to live is a nice place to visit". Further, regenerative tourism can enhance transformational changes in the host communities by restoring the relationship between people and nature (Bellato & Pollock, 2023). Thus, community empowerment and ownership are crucial for a successful shift towards tourism, that is regenerative rather than capitalising on the existing resources (Duxbury et al., 2021; Qu & Zollet, 2024).

It is not only the destination that will be impacted by regenerative tourism. Also, the visitors will be influenced as the tourism experience will be a catalyst for a meaningful change to their lives. Visitors may "see themselves as a part of a living system and recognise their interconnectedness with people and places they visit and return home to" (Major & Clarke, 2021, p. 198). When visitors engage in activities such as tree planting, they are proactively contributing to the wellbeing of the community visited (Sharma & Tham, 2023). Major & Clarke (2021, p. 198) further state: "Rather than creating experiences for visitors, placing the communities' needs first will allow our visitors to experience our interconnected thriving communities and just maybe they will want to create the same in their own communities when they return home."

2.3 Regenerative tourism compared to other forms of alternative tourism

Many forms of tourism emphasize similar issues to regenerative tourism, such as community development (community-based tourism), doing good (volunteer tourism), ecosystems (ecotourism), and transformational tourism (see, e.g.,

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Saarinen, 2021). These are often small-scale and referred to as alternative tourism (Triarchi & Karamanis, 2017; Wearing, 2001).

According to Wearing (2001, p. 31), alternative tourism models share the following characteristics: they aim to preserve, protect, and enhance the quality of the resource base, fostering the development of infrastructure and economic growth in accordance with the carrying capacity of the environment and society, minimising the negative impacts of tourism, benefitting the local residents, emphasising both ecological and cultural sustainability. Alternative tourism models are thus regarded responsible and sustainable (Saarinen, 2021). Wearing (2001, p. 32) states that "alternative tourism can be broadly defined as forms of tourism that set out to be consistent with natural, social and community values and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences."

At first glance, it might seem that alternative tourism models such as community-based tourism, ecotourism, voluntourism and regenerative tourism have a lot in common, i.e., being small-scale and tourists aiming at doing good during the visit. However, when these alternative models are studied in more detail, there are some differences, which are summarised by the authors in Table 1.

Of all the forms of alternative tourism, *voluntourism* has perhaps received the most criticism (Budd, 2018; Freidus, 2017). Volunteer tourism is often presented in a context where Western tourists travel to the Global South and aim to "do good" but in fact voluntourism also often has negative impacts on the local community (Guttentag, 2012). As with all forms of sustainable tourism, there is a wish that voluntourism could also be transformational (Budd, 2018; Rosenberg, 2018), with visitors rewarded with a better understanding of the lives of the locals and locals receiving benefits from it as well. It may help, says Freidus (2017), if volunteers see their contribution as a cultural exchange rather than as humanitarian relief. Overall, when studying voluntourism cases, it often seems that voluntourism is developed to meet the desires of Western tourists to offer help (see, e.g., Guttentag, 2012) help rather than starting from the real needs of the local people, which is the emphasis of regenerative tourism.

Ecotourism, in turn, has been developed as a model enhancing sustainable tourism and preserving natural habitats. Places with high biodiversity, often protected areas, have become popular ecotourism destinations. An increasing number of visitors to protected areas contributes to negative impacts on flora and fauna and the concept of ecotourism is thus complex (Abuhay et al., 2023). Ecotourism is described as a model prioritising environmental conservation, providing financial benefits for local individuals and businesses as well as delivering positive, memorable and educational experiences for visitors travelling to places of natural beauty. At the same time, ecotourism aims to encourage partnerships with indigenous people and local communities (Barten, 2024). Compared to regenerative tourism, which can be developed in any rural area, ecotourism is usually developed in less accessible nature destinations with fragile environments.

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Table 1: Alternative tourism models

	Regenerative tourism	Volunteer tourism (voluntourism)	Community-based tourism (CBT)	Ecotourism
Definition	"…a transformational approach that aims to fulfil the potential of places to flourish and create net positive effects through increasing the regenerative capacity of human societies and ecosystems." (Bellato et al., 2023, p. 9)	"tourism where volunteers engage in voluntary work in search for unique experiences that contributes to manpower and intellectual support to a community and altruism projects" (Chua et al., 2021, p. 193)	"… tourism owned and/or managed by communities and intended to deliver wider community benefit." (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009, p.12)	"… a resource-based tourism that focuses on experiencing and learning about nature, and which is ethically managed and locally oriented. It typically occurs in natural areas, and contribute to the conservation or of such areas" (Fennell, 1999, p. 43)
Focus	Regeneration and thriving instead of growth. Everyone seen as a caretaker or steward of the destination environment and community.	Charity projects; combining travel and volunteering.	A community offers insights about culture, traditions and daily lives, giving tourists a possibility for an authentic experience.	Niche segment of tourism in natural areas, experiencing and learning about nature, low-impact, local tourism experiences.
The service offering is developed and controlled by …	All stakeholders in collaboration, focusing on hosts	Outsiders: Charity organisations, nonprofits	Local community, government, nonprofits and companies	Companies, communities (outside and local)
Typical destinations	Rural areas in the industrialised world, e.g., New Zealand, Australia.	Rural areas in Asia, Africa and Latin America	Rural (but also other disadvantaged or less-developed) areas in Asia and Africa	Mainly beautiful and isolated spots (often national parks) in Latin America, Africa and Asia
Typical tourist activities	"Doing good", e.g., learning traditional local skills or taking part in alien species elimination	Taking care of children and animals such as elephants. Construction projects.	Living with the local community and following their daily life.	Wildlife watching, e.g., whale watching

Source: author's work

Third, *community-based tourism (CBT)* focuses on the local communities while making sure that their social, environmental, and economic needs are taken care of with tourism products (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). CBT is defined as tourism development managed and owned by communities themselves, de-

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livering benefits directly to them. Very often, CBT companies are family-owned homestays and lodges. CBT initiatives generally take place in rural areas, but there are examples of CBT in Phuket Old Town (Holmberg et al., 2019). While CBT aims to cater for the needs of the local community and conservation of it, it does not attempt to make the community flourish and revitalise it like regenerative tourism does.

In table 2 the benefits and challenges of regenerative tourism and other forms of alternative tourism are summarised. They all have potential benefits, but especially with voluntourism the challenges may outweigh the benefits.

Table 2: Benefits and challenges of alternative tourism models

	Regenerative tourism	Volunteer tourism (voluntourism)	Community-based tourism (CBT)	Ecotourism
Benefits	Potentially a sound way to recognise the interdependence of people and nature, leading to a healthy and mutually beneficial co-existence.	May improve the situation of less advantageous groups in the community/areas in need of protection; doing and feeling good	Improved livelihoods, local economic development, social capital and empowerment. Growing interest in protecting the local culture and environment, increased pride of local community, collaboration in the community, learning from experts	Can potentially benefit the local people and economy, increase the interest in conservation and awareness of important issues.
Challenges	May be too idealistic, not a realistic approach to develop tourism in a major way. Niche market potential and fitting the rural setting only.	Dependent on outside expertise, led and financed by outsiders; instead of paying for labour, projects raise money by hiring volunteers who may not have the necessary skills and they end up doing more harm than good; children portrayed as orphans even though they are not	The benefits may be unequally distributed among the community, some benefit from it and others don't.	Often occurs in fragile areas and may not be managed properly so carrying capacities may be exceeded.

Source: author's work

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Table 3 summarises the general values and tourist motives of regenerative tourism and other forms of alternative tourism. From the tourist point of view, voluntourism and regenerative tourism may have similar motives as the motives for travel are altruistic (Bellato et al., 2023; Seeler et al., 2022). The tourists undertaking CBT want to live like a local and learn about local ways and traditions (Liang, 2022), while the ecotourists aim at conserving the natural environment and educating themselves. On the background, though, there may be motivations that relate to a bucket list mentality, a desire to escape the daily life to visit fragile and biodiverse destinations (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022).

Table 3: Values and tourist motives associated with alternative tourism models

	Regenerative tourism	Volunteer tourism (voluntourism)	Community-based tourism (CBT)	Ecotourism
Environmental/ socio-cultural/ economic values	Ecological and living systems worldview, aims at thriving ecosystems, indigenous wisdom	Socio-cultural and environmental focus	Environmental, socio-cultural and economic needs of the community	Environmental conservation priority
Tourist motives	Desire to do good, a remedy for climate anxiety, planetary thinking	Desire to help and do good, personal development, altruistic motives	Living like a local, learning about the local community and its traditions	Anything from education and nature conservation to bucket list mentality

Source: author's work

All four forms of alternative tourism share an interest in environmental values. For regenerative tourism, it is a more holistic worldview, including all living things, also people, in the ecosystem. Voluntourism and CBT have both socio-cultural and environmental values, while CBT also focuses on economic ones. Ecotourism is mostly just about environmental values.

3 Methods

Case study can be described as a method that examines chosen cases such as organisations, individuals, and events. A case should have clear boundaries, and it usually relies on multiple data sources. Case studies can be explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive (Yin, 2014). An explanatory case study focuses on understanding the "how and why" of the phenomenon studied. Exploratory case studies explore situations in which the case being evaluated has no clear or single set of outcomes, but some patterns can be recognised. A descriptive case describes the phenomenon within the context it occurred. (Bartlett & Varvus, 2017) This study represents an explanatory case study, as the aim of the study was to gain an understanding of how the regenerative tourism model could be implemented in the Finnish context.

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All the data was collected and analysed between April 2023 and February 2024. As typical in case study research, a variety of data was collected. The data collected comprises three interviews with regenerative tourism experts as well as documents such as articles, blog posts and websites. As the regenerative tourism concept is still rather new, it was especially difficult to find experts with a deep understanding of how regenerative tourism could be implemented. The snowball technique was used to identify the best experts and industry cases from the tourism industry in Finland. It soon became evident that rather few companies in Finland are following the core ideas of regenerative tourism. For this study, four forerunners of regenerative tourism, located in different parts of Finland, were studied. The companies were the regeneration pioneer Hawkhill Resort in Nuuksio National Park in the Helsinki Metropolitan area, DMC Adventure Apes with locations in Tampere in Southern Finland and Kuusamo in the northeast, nature tour operator Äksyt Ämmät in Eastern Finland and Lapin Paimenlomat – Lapland Shepherd Holidays operating in the Northern part of Finland.

4 Regenerative tourism in the Finnish context

4.1 Background – Finland as a tourism destination

Over the past decade, the tourism industry in Finland has experienced growth similar to global trends, despite a significant drop in international tourist arrivals due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Prior to the pandemic, in 2019, the revenue generated by tourism in Finland was over EUR 16 billion and it has been estimated to reach EUR 20 billion by 2028. In 2023, the number of accommodation nights was almost back to 2019 levels, mostly due to domestic demand (Statistics Finland, 2024). Finland has been the slowest Nordic country to recover after the pandemic, also due to the closure of Russian airspace to most airlines and the decreased numbers of flights to and from Asia (Visit Finland, 2 February 2025, p. 20).

The main destinations in Finland are Lapland and the capital area around Helsinki. However, there are many efforts related to developing tourism also in Eastern Finland and in the more remote archipelago areas. The Russian war in Ukraine has created challenges, especially for tourism in the capital area of Helsinki and close to the Russian border in Eastern Finland. For instance, before the pandemic outbreak in 2020, Russian tourists made up 80 percent of the total number of tourists visiting Eastern Finland (TEM, 2023). Despite the challenges related to the international demand, Finland is committed to becoming a leader in sustainable tourism, which means that sustainability is at the core of all activities (Visit Finland, n.d.). Finland is a forerunner in the world with the SDGs (Sustainable Development Report, 2025) and Helsinki was the first European city to report its progress with the goals. The city is ranked number one in the 2024 international Global Destination Sustainability (GDS 2024) index measuring the sustainability of travel and event destinations.

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4.2. Regenerative tourism in practice

Tourism development in Finland is based on the Tourism Strategy for years 2022–2028. The aim is to make Finland the most sustainably growing tourist destination in the Nordic countries. According to the strategy (TEM 2020), sustainability and growth can be reached by offering ecologically and socially sustainable services with a high profitability. The strategy states the following: "Sustainable tourism, and potentially also regenerative tourism, is the focus in new service concept development" (TEM 2020, p. 37).

The tourism strategy (TEM, 2020) does not clearly specify what regenerative tourism could be in a Finnish context and it does not discuss how regenerative tourism is different from sustainable tourism. The destination marketing organisation of Finland, Visit Finland, goes deeper into sustainable tourism development in their report "State of Sustainable Tourism 2022" (Visit Finland, 2023) emphasising that Finland and Visit Finland as an organisation are committed to promoting sustainable tourism. Finland should be the first choice for a conscientious traveller. The focus of tourism impacts should be on the "handprint" of tourism rather than the footprint (Visit Finland, 2023). Tourism should make positive impacts as the organisation states: "Simply minimizing the impact of tourism is no longer enough. 'Handprint' refers to the positive impact an organization makes through its services and products. Customers and society as a whole will benefit from the handprint." (Visit Finland, 2023, p. 19).

According to Visit Finland (2023), regenerative tourism is a potential development approach linked to the handprint of tourism. Visit Finland defines regenerative tourism in the following way: "Regenerative tourism means revitalizing or updating local conditions. Regenerative tourism makes tourism much more attractive to locals, as it improves the socioeconomic, cultural and ecological conditions of the destination, rather than undermining them." (Visit Finland, 2023, p.19). Already in the following report, Visit Finland (2024) promotes the shift from sustainable tourism towards regenerative tourism. Visit Finland shares the view that "in regenerative tourism the drivers of change are usually the hosts and local communities, in sustainable tourism the private sector and governments" (Visit Finland, 2024, p. 21).

Besides tourism authorities, there are also people advocating regenerative tourism. According to the best-known tourism expert in regenerative tourism in Finland, Anu Nylund, regenerative tourism requires a new and holistic way of thinking (Nylund, 2023). Nylund (2021) states that regenerative tourism is about cooperation and about finding new solutions for tourism. Nylund believes strongly in Pollock's key focus areas for regenerative tourism such as "instead of doing less harm do more good" and "living in harmony with nature". In a Finnish context, Nylund defines regenerative tourism as

At the heart of regenerative tourism is the idea that the communities themselves define the form and content they want to develop their own place and seek solutions on how to produce well-being and how to help nature to regenerate.

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Community residents must find answers to questions about what they love about the place, what they are proud of, and what matters most to them. Services are not developed for the sake of production, but to promote the common good and holistic well-being. Instead of destinations, we speak of communities. (Nylund, 2024)

According to the main organisations working with tourism development in Finland, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in Finland (TEM) and Visit Finland (2024), regenerative tourism could have some potential in the process of new service concept development and development of destinations.

4.3. Regenerative tourism from a destination perspective

According to expert interviewee 1, there are some general principles for development of regenerative tourism. It differs from sustainable tourism perhaps because the idea is to "do good". The interviewee also mentioned that regenerative tourism is just a new word for something that has been around for a long time, a "new source of inspiration". An important thing is to include all the stakeholders, different interest groups, in the process. It is vital that everyone is equally included in the planning and decision-making processes and that the process is continuous.

Interviewee 1 sees regenerative tourism as a bottom-up development approach and as an enabler, bringing the entire community together. Interviewee 1 is aware of its idealistic roots, and fears that it will only be an addition to sustainability efforts in Finland. Many domestic tourists expect Finnish tourism products to be more affordable than those that require travelling abroad. It requires a change in attitudes. This is what interviewee 1 said:

We have a long tradition of working together and organising workshops in Finland. We are peacemakers and can work together. The problem is how to make people take part. Much is done through projects, but what happens when they are over, how is the work organised afterwards? But this is very much like discussing climate change, which is not just an ecological catastrophe. It needs the attention of us all.

Tourism companies developing regenerative tourism usually have a strong passion for it, as interviewee 1 stated: "Regenerative tourism is like a religion."

Even if the regenerative tourism model has its roots in a post-capitalist economic alternative (see, e.g., Cave & Dredge, 2020), it seems that Finnish actors are rather pragmatic, relying on some of the principles of regeneration without acknowledging the strict ideology of the model. For instance, the City of Helsinki (2023) plans to go on the regeneration path with its tourism development. It plans to involve its marketing agency (Helsinki Partners) in taking regenerative tourism approaches in marketing communications and organise events, where regenerative tourism training can be provided to local companies. Helsinki intends also to start measuring regenerative tourism progress with metrics like number of regenerative tourism concepts in use, number of vegetarian restau-

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rants and location of accommodation service providers in proximity to nature conservation areas.

Helsinki stresses the wellbeing of its citizens in its regenerative tourism vision, but also highlights the benefits to the visitors:

The well-being of Helsinki residents must be the starting point for all development. The aim of regenerative tourism in Helsinki is to provide tourists with an experience of a sustainable and innovative way of life, which they can also take with them and make part of their own daily life. The implementation of services and the operations of companies are managed so that they do not cause harm to people or nature near or far; instead, they improve the quality of life and conditions for everyone. (City of Helsinki, 2023, p. 9).

In practice, regenerative tourism could be commercialised in products such as canoe tours to clean up the Baltic Sea or shepherd holidays. Visit Finland describes a typical regenerative holiday in the following way:

Popular shepherd holidays are a good example of regenerative tourism. During Shepherd's Weeks, visitors can enjoy nature and relaxation, and take care of sheep, cows or horses. At the same time, they participate in valuable nature conservation work and receive well-being from nature. 35 Shepherd holidays are organized by private operators and Metsähallitus, among others. (Visit Finland, 2023, p.19).

However, regenerative tourism is rarely mentioned in tourism strategies and development plans at the destination level. In Finland, destination management organisations primarily focus on marketing, aiming to increase visitor numbers and extend the relatively short tourism season in most Finnish destinations.

4.4 A company perspective on regenerative tourism

While regenerative tourism requires a systemic change and cannot be achieved by a single company alone, individual companies can still adopt regenerative tourism practices. There are already a few companies in Finland that have started applying regenerative practices in their business.

The owners of the two companies that were interviewed said that they were sustainability-minded already from the beginning. They felt a deep connection to the place and wanted to use the buildings already there. One of the companies built their log cabins to last for 100 years and already had the fourth generation working on the premises.

However, the company representatives said that being sustainable is no longer enough. It is, of course, the prerequisite, but being a responsible company is so much more these days. Interviewee 2 said this:

Regeneration is needed. We cannot use the resources indefinitely. We also need to give something back to the destination, its nature and people, the community. Tourists are still not aware of regenerative tourism, what it is all about. It is no rocket science, but something that can be brought into business, to everyday

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life. At least our guests are interested in the approach, even if they do not fully understand it. Our activities and the things we do with our guests result in lifelong friendships. We know that there is no future for tourism, if we do not make sustainable choices, in everyday life as well. Can you imagine: Our Chinese customers pick up the trash that Finns have thrown on hiking routes!

Applying regenerative tourism in practice always means that companies need to educate guests about the need to care for the environment, for instance interviewee 3 said this: "We teach our guests about the local environment and show them how to build bug hotels, for example. When they go home, they know a new skill." Interviewee 2 mentioned that they reward guests who act in a responsible manner, for example: "We may reward our guests with chocolate bars if they turn off the lights from rooms when they are not there."

The companies involve their clients in regeneration work, fighting biodiversity loss and rewilding nature. This is what interviewee 3 said:

> *We do our best to get rid of alien species in our premises, either by having staff and guests remove them with spades or asking the sheep of our neighbours to eat them. We also let a diverse range of flowers take over.*

What was also common to them was that they had some principles regarding activities: they should not interfere with the enjoyment of the peace of nature, as put by interviewee 2:

We do not use any motor vehicles in our activities, we move with our own muscles in nature. Our trips are accessible and inclusive for all. We believe in making travel accessible for everyone. We want to make connections between locals and clients. They can meet at village events and through nature activities. Grannies can be guides when we go to the forest to pick berries. It also makes the locals happy as they feel that they are needed and able to share their knowledge. We have also managed to make connections between locals and guests in towns.

When a company decides to apply a regenerative tourism philosophy there are a few issues to consider. Regardless of the ideology behind regeneration, regenerative tourism must be profitable for the companies embarking on the regenerative path. For instance, interviewee 3 stated: "You really need to consider how to make the business profitable as regenerative tourism models often are implemented at a small scale!"

The well-being of the local community is important for companies following the principles of regenerative tourism. The companies employ locals, e.g., local artisans, cooks, cleaners, and builders. Moreover, local activity providers can get gigs to take the guests canoeing or horseback riding. A local school kitchen is used for catering activities. All kitchen utensils (glassware, plates etc.) are Finnish design and made in Finland, which is important to highlight to guests. Having domestic and local produce is a part of being responsible, too.

Host companies have paid special attention to making local traditions and artisans meet with guests, for example, by offering activities like baking work-

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shops with Karelian pastry experts, teaching about the traditions to the guests, and making locals feel pride in their culture. They also hire local guides and contribute to the overall sustainable development of the local community, as put by Äksyt Ämmät (2019): "Äksyt Ämmät works together with many local societies and companies and makes voluntarily work for example in the local unemployment association."

The tourism companies being forerunners in regenerative tourism so far in Finland emphasised that the principles of circular economy should be followed. One of the companies (interviewee 3) pointed out concrete practices, i.e., the reuse of old building material, for instance old doors being reused as tables: "Our tables and TV stands have already their fourth lives …they were previously trees, then doors or barn walls …now furniture!"

The companies also advise their guests about food waste and weigh it. The guests become aware of the issue, understand that they do not always need a full plate, and return home with new knowledge and spread it to their families and friends. The staff inform the guests of the local nature, herbs, and teach recycling.

Of course, many responsible tourism companies already may act in regenerative ways, but they may not be aware of it or document it on their websites and in other channels. One of the interviewed companies, interviewee 2, said that

It is not enough that paperwork and money gets you certificates and labels on the wall. You also need to act that way. A typical problem in Finland is that how to make sustainability deeds visible. Communication is always a challenge. Many do the right stuff, but do not know how to communicate. There are many companies that do not have the certificates and labels, but are in fact really responsible ones. For the international guests it is really important to show the labels, though. Compensating flights and planting trees with money is not the solution to make tourism sustainable.

Based on the interviews most tourism companies still mainly strive to become more sustainable rather than applying a regenerative tourism model. When the authors asked tourism scholars and academics as well as tourism industry representatives about examples of regeneration, they often were able to name just one company as a representative of regenerative tourism, i.e., Hawkhill Resort in Nuuksio National Park, a very active player in the Nuuksio Lakeland Association (2025) with its 28 member companies. The network members collaborate actively and organise regenerative tourism related events like Lupin-Battle.

5 Discussion

Already before the COVID-19 outbreak it became evident that new tourism development models were needed. Especially big cities, but also many beautiful "instagrammable" remote hotspots suffered from what in the literature has been referred to as overtourism. As Hussain and Hailey (2022, p. 6) stated, "tourism

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could be seen at times and in some places as parasitic, where it would extract value from the host community without giving much back in return". Thus, it is evident that new alternative tourism development models such as regenerative tourism is needed.

In Finland, interest in regenerative tourism is on the rise, spearheaded by Visit Finland and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. However, as Jaakkola (2022) notes in her article, it has yet to become mainstream. Indeed, regenerative tourism still seems to be a niche tourism option. It may be of interest to find out if regenerative tourism can be applied to an urban setting as well. At least the city of Helsinki has started mentioning it in its tourism development plans and, according to its Tourism Director Nina Vesterinen, aims to invest in regenerative tourism in the future (City of Helsinki, 7 May 2025).

In the Finnish context, regenerative tourism very much follows the definition suggested by Ateljevic & Sheldon (2022) stating that "tourism should be mobilized to positively contribute to the destination communities". Rather than merely meeting the requirements of sustainable tourism, the few companies embracing the regenerative tourism model are, for example, adhering to circular economy principles, actively analysing their carbon footprints, and striving to enhance the wellbeing of the local community. The findings of this paper indicate that in Finland, regenerative tourism is seen as taking the principles of sustainable tourism to the next level. The Finnish regenerative tourism model is about educating the visitors about the negative impacts of tourism and encouraging them to do good during their visit. Furthermore, the model focuses on restoring landscapes and choosing environmentally friendly modes of transport.

Regenerative tourism must offer something more than just the idea of "leaving a place better than it was before" (see, e.g., Bellato & Pollock, 2023). In Finland, the holistic view of tourism as a living system, underlying regenerative tourism, seems not to be completely understood yet. As Dredge (2022) argues, regeneration offers a more holistic and deeper level of knowing, sensing and understanding. Relying solely on scientific methods and prioritising conceptual and cognitive intelligence is no longer a workable solution. More integrated knowledge, where head, heart and gut are all involved, is what is needed in tourism development. According to Pollock (2019), tourism can be something that delivers positive change – more net benefit – to all participants. In fact, it could even have the potential to "become an agent of positive transformation that can contribute to a better quality of life for all". Thus, regenerative tourism has its potential in a Finnish context as well. That view is also shared by Visit Finland (2024, p. 5), stating that regenerative tourism may offer inspiration and completely new kinds of indicators for tourism success. Especially in rural areas, regenerative tourism could be used as a development model for involving everyone in the community to become hosts for the guests. This could decrease the "we-them" (locals vs tourists) rhetoric existing, especially in smaller munici-

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palities and cities. Locals often perceive tourists as intruders, invaders taking over their personal space.

Pollock (2019) emphasises that regenerative tourism is not anti-growth, but the indicators for success are different than in more traditional forms of tourism development. In regeneration, all growth must benefit the entire system. In regenerative tourism, growth is defined differently, or not even seen as the ultimate goal. Success is more net benefit, more creativity, resilience and collaboration for both guests and hosts. Growth never happens at the expense of others. In practice, it means collaboration instead of competition. Implementing regenerative tourism is a maturation process that will ultimately deliver more net benefit, greater wellbeing, to more people. According to Pollock (2019), in the end, places will “flourish” and “thrive”. In Finland, regenerative tourism principles have, so far, been implemented on a company level rather than in a whole community or village. It would be interesting to see what the regenerative model could give the entire community, as the companies following the model have been rather successful and received attention by travel media and Visit Finland, e.g., the first Sustainability Ambassador of Visit Finland was the CEO of Hawkhill, Annu Huotari.

Bellato and Pollock (2023) state that “regeneration has proved to be a difficult concept to embrace” (p. 5). The data collected for this study suggests that while regenerative tourism is well recognised by tourism researchers and developers, the industry itself has yet to appreciate the value of shifting from sustainable to regenerative business practices. For a start, discussing regenerative tourism calls for a new vocabulary.

In table 4, there are examples of words that are different in the regenerative tourism vs sustainable tourism models. When compared to a traditional sustainable tourism model, regenerative tourism highlights the collaborative aspects, as tourism is a part of the whole community. People visiting the community are seen as guests rather than tourists, and the locals are hosts providing the guests with a transformational tourist experience.

Table 4: Vocabulary examples for sustainable tourism and regenerative tourism

	Sustainable Tourism	**Regenerative Tourism**
Visitors to a destination	Tourists	Guests
People living at the destination	Locals	Hosts
The place visited	Destination	Community
Goals for tourism development	Economic, environmental and social sustainability Survival and conservation	Revitalisation and rewilding, flourishing and thriving Collective healing and wellbeing

Source: author’s work

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6 Conclusion

Regenerative tourism has become almost like a buzzword in the media. The New York Times (Glusac, 27. 8. 2020) came up with an article titled "Move Over, Sustainable Travel. Regenerative Travel Has Arrived". According to the definition in that article, regenerative travel/tourism is about "leaving a place better than you found it." However, is that even possible? With the tourist numbers of today? Also, according to the most powerful voice for regenerative tourism, Anna Pollock, travellers leaving the place better than they found it is an oversimplification of the term and putting too much responsibility on the tourists themselves. Regenerative tourism calls for a system change, where the whole system needs an overhaul. People – hosts, guests, entrepreneurs – need to see themselves as a part of the ecosystem, not view nature as a separate entity, but to see the interdependence with all life forms.

In the current form of tourism, the focus is often on the visitors and their experiences: What can the tourists gain from visiting a destination? In regenerative tourism, the questions are the other way around, e.g.: What does our community need and how can tourism help to serve? It is no longer enough to cause as little negative impact as possible, as in sustainable and responsible tourism, but the impact needs to be positive. The destination must improve and be in a better state after the visit than before it. It can be restoring the damage that has previously been done to the natural or cultural heritage of a destination or giving visitors an opportunity to do good to the natural environment by planting trees, restoring bogs or eliminating invasive alien species, for example.

For this study, like for so many before about the topic, it was a challenge to find cases of regenerative tourism outside of the rural setting. Urban examples of regeneration are few, in Finland and abroad. Aspirations for it are growing, though. For example, the city of Helsinki has expressed interest in regenerative tourism and is working on indicators for regenerative tourism. There is perhaps a lack of understanding of the concept as the number of vegetarian restaurants in the city is given as an example of indicator of regeneration. Just like circular economy, also regenerative tourism needs the involvement of the whole community, not just individual companies. Such an ecosystem is still lacking in Finland. The Nuuksio Lakeland community in the proximity to Helsinki is perhaps the closest thing to that kind of ecosystem in the country, and also it is just in the development phase.

While regenerative tourism may be seen an alternative approach to cure the illnesses of tourism, it still seems to be for the niches, not for the masses. At least in Finland, it is mainly nature-based and rural tourism companies that have embarked upon the regenerative path. Of course, any revitalising approaches to tourism development should be applauded and embraced. However, a significant impact has yet to be observed. Currently, regeneration may offer a competitive edge to companies that emphasise it and successfully appeal to the sustainability-minded segment of the tourism market.

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Part 2: Pedagogical transformation to new teaching methods: Navigating the tension between ideals and practice

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Jan Velvin, Anne Köchling

Introductory chapter

Pedagogical transformation to new teaching methods: Navigating the tension between ideals and practice

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Abstract: *This second part examines emerging pedagogical strategies in tourism education, with particular attention to the interplay between innovative teaching methods, sustainability imperatives, and student agency. The contributions reflect a growing departure from lecture-centric models toward approaches that foreground inquiry, coaching, and reflexive learning. These shifts are not merely methodological, they signal a redefinition of the educator's role and a recalibration of institutional priorities. While the promise of AI, adventure-based learning, and sustainability integrated curricula is evident, the chapters also underscore persistent tensions: between ideals and implementation, between curricular ambition and structural inertia. Taken together, they offer a critical lens on how tourism education might evolve to meet the demands of a volatile and ethically complex future.*

Keywords: *Flexible and reflexive learning, sustainability, new teaching methods*

1 Introduction

The field of tourism education is currently characterised by a state of dynamic tension. This is due to the fact that the tourism industry is undergoing a period of rapid transformation. Technological advancements and the imperative to align education with sustainability principles as incorporated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023) are two key examples of developments illustrating the urgent need for up-to-date training. Simultaneously, uncertainty is growing – ranging from future pandemics (Mallapaty, 2024) to the escalating climate crisis (IPCC, 2023). Moreover, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is poised to fundamentally reshape the educational landscape altering not only how students learn, but also what they learn and who participates in learning (Al-Zahrani & Alasmari, 2024). AI is likely to become a key learning assistant for students, enabling personalised learning pathways aligned with curriculum objectives. In the context of tourism education, AI opens possibilities, among others, for simulation-based learning (Zhu & Yu, 2025), individualised instruction and flexible learning (Altun et al., 2024), as well as data-driven insights into student progress (Sajja et al., 2025). Overall, tourism educators need to cultivate competencies that are both future-oriented and deeply rooted in practice.

However, despite the increasing adoption of digital and hybrid formats, traditional lectures remain dominant in higher education (Crawford & Parsell, 2025), although meta-analyses consistently show that student-centred teaching meth-

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ods yield better learning outcomes across natural sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), humanities, and social sciences (Kozanitis & Nenciovici, 2023). Tourism studies, straddling theory and practice, demand more than content knowledge; students must learn how to learn and how to act in complex, unpredictable, and often interdisciplinary contexts.

AI-based tools, for instance, can simulate scenarios such as crisis management in destinations, sustainability assessments of tourism projects, or customer journeys in the luxury segment (Knani et al., 2022). These simulations offer students the opportunity to engage with real-world challenges in safe, digital environments. However, the integration of AI raises pedagogical and ethical concerns. Tailoring algorithms to individual learning styles may inadvertently reinforce knowledge gaps or limit exposure to diverse perspectives. In sustainable tourism where complexity, value conflicts, and ethical reflection are central this poses significant risks (Batista et al., 2024). There is also concern that AI might be used to streamline teaching at the expense of relational learning, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary dialogue qualities essential for educating responsible tourism professionals especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (Apata et al., 2025).

Moreover, AI itself is implicated in sustainability debates. Large language models and data-driven systems carry substantial environmental footprints, and it remains unclear how educational institutions should reconcile the benefits of AI with principles of green digitalisation (AlSagri & Sohail, 2024). This underscores the need for tourism education not only to use AI as a tool but also to critically examine its societal implications, including ethical dilemmas, power dynamics in model development, and energy consumption associated with generating text and images.

2 Contributions in this book

This collection of chapters explores diverse approaches to renewing tourism education, moving beyond traditional lectures toward pedagogical strategies that challenge and expand the understanding of learning in the context of future tourism. These include both didactic and practice-oriented methods. For example, Van der Merwe, Gohori, and Vosloo's research highlights the value of adventure-based programs such as the Beyond Adventure Gap Year Programme in developing practical skills like navigation, first aid, and survival. These competencies are vital for operating safely and effectively in nature-based tourism and provide students with experiential learning that enhances confidence and situational awareness, skills relevant for roles such as safari guides or lodge managers.

Another pedagogical shift is inquiry-based learning, which breaks radically with lecture-driven models. As Holmberg and Ritalahti show in their chapter, in this approach students' own questions, projects, and collaborations with industry form the foundation of learning. This model demands much from both students

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and educators but appears to foster key competencies for the future workforce, including critical thinking, project management, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Sustainability integration is also essential for a future-oriented education. Iloranta and Harkison argue that luxury tourism, traditionally associated with exclusivity and high consumption, is now facing market expectations for responsibility and sustainability. Their analysis of master's programs in luxury tourism reveals limited curricular integration of sustainability, despite the sector's potential and stated commitment to the SDGs. This points to a need for educational institutions to revise curricula to reflect the evolving sustainability focus in luxury travel, ensuring graduates adopt a holistic perspective.

Coaching, long used in professional contexts (Laur et al., 2025), is increasingly applied to support students' entrepreneurial development. Unlike mentoring, which often involves experience transfer, coaching emphasises reflection, accountability, and personal growth (Irby, 2021). Anckar, Holmberg, and Konttinen discuss how coaching and mentoring serve as strategies for continuous improvement in teaching and learning, distinguishing coaching as task-oriented and mentoring as relationship-oriented.

Fan and Lück show that while zoos and aquaria have strong potential as platforms for conservation education given their broad public reach and visitors' general interest in animals, the effectiveness of their educational efforts depends heavily on how interpretation is designed and what content is prioritised. The authors argue that more scientifically grounded, goal-oriented interpretation paired with opportunities for visitors to act and reinforced through post-visit engagement may strengthen the ability of zoos and aquaria to foster meaningful conservation learning and behavioral change.

The chapters in this collection collectively examine how new pedagogical approaches can foster future-oriented competencies in tourism education and beyond. What happens when learning becomes a shared endeavour among students, educators, and industry? How might a stronger emphasis on practical skills, coaching, inquiry learning, and the intersection of sustainability and luxury tourism enhance students' capacity to act in a rapidly changing world? And what pedagogical and institutional challenges must be addressed to realise the potential of these approaches?

All the models presented are grounded in research aimed at identifying what is needed to develop competencies for future students or how tourism attractions could implement educational designs for the future. Whether focusing on entrepreneurial or practical skills, these approaches implicitly target capabilities essential for diverse roles in the tourism sector. They also support broader skill development, self-leadership, sustainability literacy, decision-making, and meta-learning all of which are increasingly recognised as vital in the contemporary workforce.

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A common thread across several chapters is the redefinition of the professor's role from knowledge transmitter to student-centred facilitator. This shift entails a new professional identity and institutional support, and it requires students to assume greater responsibility for their own learning transition that is not without challenges. As Holmberg and Ritalahti note, students may find open, project-based learning environments disorienting and frustrating. Yet, research and practice suggest that it is precisely through such challenges that deep learning and genuine competence development occur (Kozanitis & Nenciovici, 2023). When students engage with real-world problems, collaborate with external stakeholders, and receive support from faculty willing to embrace the facilitator role, they do not merely learn about tourism, they learn to inhabit the tourism profession.

Despite sustainability's prominence in policy and academic discourse, its implementation in higher education, particularly in tourism, remains fragmented and inconsistent. Many programs reference sustainability in strategic goals, but few translate these into concrete learning outcomes, assessment methods, or practice-based activities (Sipos et al., 2008). This disconnect can undermine students' preparedness to meet industry demands for responsible and integrated practice aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Another persistent challenge is the gap between theory and practice. Sustainability is often taught as an abstract concept, detached from real-world issues such as overtourism, social inequality, or carbon-intensive business models. This is compounded by a pedagogical tradition dominated by lectures and monodisciplinary structures, despite sustainability's demand for interdisciplinary and systemic thinking (Findler et al., 2019). Many educators lack training in sustainability pedagogy and student-centred learning, making it difficult to achieve transformative education goals (Thomas, 2009).

Furthermore, opportunities for student agency and entrepreneurial exploration remain limited. Coaching-based approaches, as described by Anckar, Holmberg, and Konttinen, demonstrate how students can develop action competence and ownership of their learning, but such practices are still marginal. The same applies to programs emphasising practical skills and personal development, such as the adventure-based gap year initiatives documented by van der Merwe, Gohori, and Vosloo. These programs equip students with essential competencies such as safety, navigation, and environmental awareness that are often absent in academic curricula but critical in nature-based tourism contexts.

The need for a more holistic and practice-oriented education model is evident. Technological advances like AI will shape how students acquire knowledge. As the following chapters suggest, future tourism education will likely embrace new pedagogical methods, including a shift toward student-centred facilitation and a curriculum where sustainability is not merely aspirational but a pervasive and actionable dimension throughout the learning journey.

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Peet van der Merwe, Owen Gohori, Philip Vosloo

The importance of adventure gap year programmes in hard skill development

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Abstract: *This study evaluates the Beyond Adventure Structured Adventure Gap Year Programme's (BASAGYP) potential to enhance the participants' hard skills. The study argues that hard skills are divided into technical, safety and environmental categories. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data pre- and post-programme. Technical skills were tested in four key areas: navigational, survival, food collection and first aid skills. Likewise, environmental skills were assessed under eight sub-categories: trip planning and preparation, travelling and camping on durable surfaces, disposing of waste, collecting souvenirs from nature, starting a safe campfire, encountering wild animals outdoors, considering other visitors in the same outdoor area and minimal impact skills. Safety skills were also divided into two sub-categories: dealing with environmental damage and dealing with client dangers. The main contribution of this research lies in the theoretical contribution to the studies on hard skills, which have been discussed extensively in the literature and results sections.*

Keywords: *adventure tourism; BASAGYP; environmental skills; hard skills; safety skills; technical skills*

1 Introduction

The various types of gap year programmes fall under two main groupings: structured and unstructured. Unstructured gap year programmes have no preset activities planned by an organisation; instead, the individual plans and participates in their gap year programme (Jones, 2004). On the other hand, structured gap year programmes are presented so that all the activities offered form part of a structured programme established by the gap year organisation with specific outcomes (Jones, 2004; Beyond Adventure, 2017). Cremin (2007, p. 526) states, "Gap years are associated with periods or breaks, usually in an unfamiliar location, between secondary and tertiary education or one job and another". King (2011, p. 341) views "a gap year, or a year out, as a break in an educational career that is usually taken between leaving school and starting studies at university". Furthermore, Griffin (2013, p. 85) states that the gap year "is associated with secondary and tertiary school leavers". In the past, researchers have not necessarily focused on an all-encompassing overview of 'the gap year', as this term can refer to several activities that young adults may undertake.

One such gap year programme in South Africa is the Beyond Adventure Structured Adventure Gap Year Programme. The Beyond Adventure Structured Ad-

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venture Gap Year Programme (hereafter referred to as BASAGYP) is presented near Grahamstown, South Africa.

Participants can enrol in a six-month (January to June) programme or an eleven-month (January to November) programme, in which they will receive adventure-based leadership training in preparation for the business arena and adventure industry. The training mentioned above introduces participants to adventure-related activities and qualifies them through the completion of business certificate courses through EDUSTUDY (further education and training course)and adventure activities completed at Level 2 of the Adventure Recreation Association (ARA). The ARA Level 2 certifies the candidate as an assistant facilitator in particular adventure activities. The training focuses on developing specific hard skills (technical skills) and soft skills (interpersonal skills), preparing participants to be practical outdoor leaders/guides (Beyond Adventure, 2017, p. 1). The study focus falls on the hard skills obtained during the adventure training programme.

Priest and Gass (2005: xii) and Doyle (2017, p. 1) define hard skills (technical skills) as solid, tangible, and measurable skills that are easy to quantify, for example, how to tie a knot or how to make a fire. Priest and Gass (2005:xiii) compiled a list of three hard skills that contribute to being an effective outdoor leader, namely, environmental skills, safety skills, and technical skills (Priest & Gass, 2017, p. 5). Therefore, the present study aims to evaluate the BASAGYP to determine whether the training provided by them has enhanced the participants' hard skills. This was done by conducting a pre- and post-test of hard skills developed during the gap year programme. This will assist the management of the programme in identifying possible shortcomings.

2 Literature review

2.1 Setting the background

The literature study consists of the following sections, (i) setting the background, (ii) adventure programming, and (iii) a discussion of the adventure training hard skills content.

Dowling and Fenell (2003) explain that tourism can be viewed as a global activity that provides a service sector of employment, revenue, and widespread economic impacts. On a larger scale, this is referred to as mass tourism. However, various types of tourism have arisen as an alternative to mass tourism; these are collectively referred to as alternative tourism.

Alternative tourism is described by Fennell (1999) as a generic term that encompasses a whole range of tourism strategies (e.g., 'appropriate', 'eco-', 'soft', 'responsible', 'people to people', 'controlled', 'small scale', 'cottage', and 'green' tourism), all of which attempt to offer a more benign alternative to conventional mass tourism at specific types of destinations. Various alternative tourism types include ecotourism, cultural tourism, educational tourism, scientific tourism, volunteer tourism, agritourism, and severe leisure and adventure tourism

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(Wearing, 1998; Cloke & Perkins, 1998). Newsome et al. (2013) describe natural area tourism as consisting of four characteristics: wildlife tourism, adventure tourism, geotourism, and ecotourism. From this, one can conclude that adventure tourism falls under alternative tourism and, more specifically, forms part of natural area tourism.

Adventure tourism refers to an outdoor travel activity and can be categorised as a leisure travel activity in which physical risk and danger are compulsory; it is also seen as a thrill-based activity where an adventurist is ready to face specific challenges (Dar, 2014). According to Priest and Gass (2005), four elements must be present for an activity to be classified as an adventure activity, namely:

- the activity must be a novelty;
- the activity must be entered into voluntarily;
- it is a state of mind; and
- the outcome must be uncertain.

Adventure tourism can further be classified into three segments, namely hard, soft and nature-based adventure, with the distinction in the level of physical activity, skills required, and risks involved (Buckley, 2006). Hard adventure typically involves a significant amount of risk and physical activity, attracting "adrenaline junkies," and is distinguished by intense physical effort. Hard adventure activities are more extreme and difficult compared to soft adventure activities. Bungee jumping, rock climbing, river rafting, sandboarding, and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) riding are examples of hard adventure activities, categorized as such, due to the risk of severe injury or even death (Buckley, 2006). Nature-based adventure refers to activities that involve physical contact with animals and are considered dangerous because any contact with animals can become dangerous in seconds (Buckley, 2012). Soft adventure refers to types of adventure activities that include activities that are less dangerous and physically demanding when compared to hard adventure activities (Buckley, 2006). Soft adventure activities, such as game drives, photographic safaris, hiking, and 4x4 trails, have elements of adventure that appeal to "non-adrenaline junkies" and are typically marked by high levels of safety and fun (Hudson, 2003, p. 8).

Martin et al. (2017) explain that adventure tourism has become a programme where clients can participate in a thrilling experience where danger is imminent, and the outcome is uncertain. These adventure programmes or experiences embrace imminent physical dangers and emotional risk-taking as educational tools because of their potential as a catalyst in facilitating transformation in the lives of programme participants (Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005). Therefore, training adventure guides forms a critical part of adventure tourism.

2.2 Adventure programming

Priest and Gass (2005) posit that it is called adventure programming when adventure is used to achieve a training purpose or outcome. According to Priest and Gass (2005), four adventure programming applications are identified. The

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first is recreational adventure programming, which is used to teach new activities, have fun, or be re-energised by adventure. Second, educational adventure programming aims to understand new concepts, add to the knowledge of old ideas, or re-ignite awareness of previously known needs. The third is developmental adventure programming, which seeks to improve dysfunctional behaviour. Fourth is therapeutic adventure programming, where mental health professionals collaborate with the adventure industry to engage clients on cognitive and behavioural levels. These concepts/applications are used in adventure training programmes to reach specific outcomes for participants. For example, paddling might teach participants the necessary hard skills to row and guide the kayak on a river or set up an abseiling activity (Priest & Gass, 2005).

Authors (Ashbaugh, 2003; Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007; Ramsoonair, 2004) also refer to hard skills as the technical skills required to perform a specific task or set of tasks. Costin (2002) suggests that hard skills use equipment, and that the implementation of a task involves physically delivering a product. Ashbaugh (2003) and Mullen (1997) agree that hard skills or technical skills usually have objective assessment strategies, and many professions rate hard skills and proficiency over soft skills (Shooter, Sibthorp, Paisley, 2009 Bancino & Zevalkink, 2007; Caudron, 1999; Mullen, 1997). As indicated above, hard skills are divided into three categories: technical, safety, and environmental. These skills will be discussed next.

2.2.1 Technical skills

Technical hard skills form the cornerstones of outdoor leadership training. These skills incorporate the competencies needed to teach a group the appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes related to a specific activity, the environment and safety (Martin et al., 2006, p. 160; Priest, 1987, p. 5; Swiderski, 1981, p. 108). Technical skills serve as a foundation for conducting any adventure experience.

In a study done by Buell (1981, p.163) on the identification of outdoor adventure leadership competencies for entry-level and experience-level personnel, participants recommended the following nineteen technical skills required for outdoor leadership. These nineteen skills were prioritised by the candidates from most to least important (see Table 1). Technical skills serve as a foundation for conducting any adventure experience.

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Table 1: Technical skills required for outdoor leadership

– First-aid and safety, – Physical fitness, – Personal and group equipment, – Water safety procedures, – Hiking and trail techniques, – Camp craft, – Expedition behaviour, – Food selection and preparation, – Navigation and route planning, – On-the-trail activities, – Search and rescue, – Environmental awareness, – Survival, rope craft, weather, automobile and van use, – Physiology and nutrition, – a Special Mode of travel and tool craft.

Source: Buell (1981, p. 163)

For the purpose of this research, the researchers evaluated the BASAGYP technical skills focus, and the following four skills could be considered as hard skills: navigation, survival, food selection (identification) and first aid. Navigation refers to the ability of an outdoor leader to navigate in the worst possible outdoor terrain. This means an outdoor leader must be able to read maps, calculate distance using bar scales on the maps, cite grid references, and convert from map north to magnetic north and true north (Twehous et al., 1991, p. 115). Lifesaving and first-aid – here outdoor leaders should be able to swim and provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first-aid to participants if needed (Priest & Gass, 2005, p. 110). Priest and Gass (2005, p. 110) expect outdoor leaders to be able to survive under the worst possible conditions if lost, injured, or caught out in a storm during an adventure activity. Food collection – gathering edible food and water in various settings are also crucial survival skills outdoor leaders should have. These leaders should know the food rule: if unsure, don't consume (Priest & Gass, 2005, p. 110).

2.2.2 Safety skills

Martin et al. (2006, p. 108) and Thomas (2010, p. 239) explain that one of the primary goals for outdoor leaders is to take participants into nature on an adventure and bring them back safely. Jillings et al. (1995, p. 5), who conducted a safety study on project adventures spanning 20 years, found that an accident rate of 4.33 accidents occurred per million hours of adventure activities. They further stated that even with these available statistics, it is proven to be challenging to convince the public to participate in activities that deliberately place participants at risk. As mentioned by Williamson and Meyer as in Priest and Gass (2005, p. 94), there are three components that can increase the chance of an accident. Priest and Gass (2005, p. 94) list these three components as: errors made by outdoor leaders, unsafe environmental conditions, and unsafe activities performed by participating clients (See Table 2).

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Table 2: Leadership, environmental and client risks

Leadership risks (errors by adventure leaders):	
– making assumptions without supporting evidence – erratic behaviour under stress – improper attitudes toward risk – carelessness – distraction – fatigue – inflexibility or resistance to change	– pre-set goals or preconceptions – ineffective supervision – denial, complacency – poor health – lack of experience, knowledge, or skill, – failure to respect hazardous situations (Schimelpfenig, 1996)
Environmental risks:	
– altitude – wildlife – animal traps – avalanches – cold water – currents – tides – surf – deadfall – deep snowpack – deep water – falling trees – flash floods	– illness – insects – lightning – loose rocks and boulders – moving water – rockfalls – stoves and fires – river strainers – uneven terrain – vehicles – poor visibility – bad weather, and wet or slippery surfaces (Schimelpfenig, 1996).
Client risks:	
– exceeding their abilities – failure to follow instructions – poor hygiene – poor positioning – overconfidence – poor technique or moving at an unsafe speed (Schimelpfenig, 1996).	

Source: Priest and Gass (2005, p. 94)

For this research, the BASAGYP safety skills training was evaluated, and two areas were identified as particularly challenging: (i) managing client risks and (ii) addressing environmental risks.

2.2.3 Environmental skills

Martin et al. (2006, p. 221) and Kellert and Derr (1998, p. 8) explain that one of the most powerful tools for an outdoor leader is striving to protect the natural environment. They state that this is done by environmental interpretation and education. Leaders need to instil a sense of connectedness to the environment in their clients by helping them interpret the environment and educate them on what the environmental issues are in that area, what impact we as people have on the environment, and how to live with minimum environmental impact. Buell (1981) was the first to introduce environmental awareness as a critical skill for outdoor leaders. Cafaro (2012, p. 89) further adds that the outdoor recreation field also grew in the number of activities in a location. For example,

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mountain biking, horse riding and hiking can most probably all be practised on the same trail. This, however, creates challenges of its own as the different activities often negatively affect one another. For example, horses on trails often result in muddy terrain for hikers during the wet season, while hikers tend to scare and startle the horses on the same trail. Cafaro (2012, p. 89) states that all forms of recreationists have the right to practice their activities considering other forms of outdoor recreation. These are some concerns that outdoor leaders must consider in order to be sensitive to other recreationists in the same area and not damage the environment.

Leave no trace (environmental skill) was established as a joint venture between the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) and the United States Forrest Service (Martin et al., 2006, p. 220; Marion & Reid, 2001). This venture highlights the following skills:

- plan ahead and prepare for the trip;
- try to camp and travel on durable surfaces;
- dispose of human and other waste properly;
- leave what you find; do not take anything;
- minimise the impact of campfires;
- respect all wildlife and be considerate to other participants in your area.

For the purpose of this research, the researchers evaluated the BASAGYP safety environmental skills training programme, and all participants were present and tested.

As can be seen from the above discussion, hard skills (technical skills) encompass a variety of skills that need to be transferred to the adventure leader in adventure training programmes, such as the BASAGYP. As stated in the method below, this research used pre- and post-testing to determine the skills developed in the BASAGYP. This was evaluated to assist the BASAGYP managers in identifying possible shortcomings within the programme.

3 Methods

A qualitative research approach, namely phenomenological research, was followed. Phenomenological researchers record and analyse the perceptions of the audience studied (GAP year students) in relation to the aspect being studied (Hard skills transfers) and are especially useful for topics in which the researcher digs into the audience's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. More specifically, this research followed the existential phenomenology approach, which focuses on understanding the audience's (GAP year students) experiences through their perspective. Phenomenology can also be applied when interviewing participants before, during, and after the experience. A non-probability sampling method was applied, of which purposive sampling was utilised with semi-structured interviews to capture the qualitative data from the BASAGYP participants.

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The semi-structured interview guide was based on the work of Greffrath and Roux (2012) (the only study conducted in South Africa on gap year programmes) on the ATKV' (Afrikaanse Taal en Kultuurvereniging translate to English meaning Afrikaanse Language and Culture Organisation) (the effect of a gap year with selected adventure-related activities on specific personal competence-related factors on school 'graduates') and work carried out by Priest and Gass (2017) (leadership wall).

Although the interview guide determined both the hard and soft skills incorporated into the programme aspects of BASAGYP, this study only attends to the skills gained regarding hard skills. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of five sections: Section A covered demographic information adapted from Greffrath and Roux (2012), for example, 'male or female' and 'home language'. Section B was adapted from Greffrath and Roux (2012) with questions relating to the ''participants' secondary school education or most recent form of education', such as 'the number of learners who attended the same school'. Section C focused on the 'participants' expectation of and motivation for participating in the gap year'. Section D consisted of questions on hard and soft skills and was adapted from the Priest and Gass' (2017) leadership wall, where the participants explained how proficient they considered themselves to be in each of the skill areas and measured skills gained at the end of the year. Section E focused on the most and least impactful exercises that contributed to the hard and soft-skill development at Beyond Adventure SAGYP. Sections A and D were used for this research.

The population for this study comprised all the participants in the BASAGYP for 2018 enrolled in the 11-month-long programme. These participants participated in pre-and post-testing (at the beginning of January and the end of the programme in December 2018). The researchers allocated the participants number codes to maintain confidentiality. In the end, 15 participants were interviewed, of which 4 were male students and 11 female students.

A digital recording device was used to record the interviews, which were carefully transcribed. The data transcription was performed by studying and comparing the participants' responses at the start and end of the GAP year to establish hard skills gained or not gained during the course of the programme. This was also the main aim of this research.

Following the Priest and Gass (2017) categorisation of hard skills, the interview guide divided the hard skills into three groups: technical, environmental, and safety skills (as discussed in the literature background). The questions asked under these groups were based on categories identified by Priest and Gass's (2017) leadership wall. The answers obtained under the different groups/sections were then analysed to obtain different themes using the six steps of Creswell and Creswell (2018).

The ethical process followed: the project proposal was first submitted to the scientific community of the applicable school, and after approval, it was submit-

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ted to the ethics community of the faculty. Ethics clearance was given for the study with the following number: 00657-20-A4. The results of the study are discussed next.

4 Findings and Discussion

This section presents the results of the interviews that were conducted pre- and post-BASAGYP. As discussed in the literature section, hard skills are divided into three categories: (i) technical skills, (ii) environmental skills, and (iii) safety skills (Priest & Gass, 2017). Therefore, the findings of this research will be discussed under these three categories by examining the pre-test and the post-test interviews with the respondents.

4.1 Technical skills

In technical skills development, four key areas identified in the literature were tested: navigation, survival, food collection, and first aid.

4.1.1 Pre-test: Navigational skills

During the pre-test interviews, two themes were identified. The first theme is 'little to no navigation skills'. Most participants, such as interviewees 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14 and 16, highlighted that they did not know how to navigate the wilderness as they had never been in the wilderness. Some of the interviewees had the following to say during the pre-test interviews:

"I have never been in a wilderness area. I have only seen this on TV. No experience or training and never talked about it (Interviewee 4)."

"I am a city boy and all we know is GPS (Interviewee 7)."

"I do not navigate in the wilderness as I grew up in the city and don't have the skills to survive in the wilderness" (Interviewee 13).

The second theme that was identified during the pre-test interviews is that some interviewees 'had navigational skills'. Interviewees 5 and 10 stated that they got their navigational skills from the Voortrekkers, a youth organisation, which they were part of. Respondent 8 mentioned that his navigation skills were taught to him by his father, he stated:

"My father taught me about stars and how to find my way around. Also, about a lot of other stuff and we have been camping a lot".

4.1.2 Post-test: Navigational skills

One theme was identified during the post-test interviews as participants of the BASAGYP indicated that they had 'improved their navigational skills'. Interviewees 2, 4, 9, 10 and 11 pointed out that after the BASAGYP they were able to use the stars and the sun to find their way. Besides being able to use the sun and stars to navigate, the interviewees concurred that the BASAGYP had also taught them a lot in terms of navigating in the wilderness as well as making use of a compass, as participant 9 explained:

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"We did a survival course where we were trained in wilderness navigation using a compass. Without a compass, I can make one out of a stick and some sand. We experienced various hikes in the wilderness and with a survival course we did, l feel very comfortable with the navigational skills."

This resonates with Lekies, Yost and Rode's (2015) research on urban youth's experience of nature with implications for outdoor adventure recreation, which found that the participants' navigation skills improved after participating in an outdoor programme. Nevertheless, interviewee 12 stipulated that the BASAGYP had not done much as he had acquired the skills from his father since he was raised on a farm:

"I was raised on a farm and my father taught me most of the things I know, and he is quite reliable."

Similarly, interviewees 5, 8 and 11 stated that they had received some training from their parents or previous programmes in wilderness trekking. As interviewee 11 stated:

"During the hike, beach survival, and Amatola that occurred during this year I had the opportunity to study maps and read roads and footprints. Especially during the hunting, it taught me various skills on navigating with a compass and all other sorts of things".

However, interviewees 5, 8 and 11 still felt and appreciated that the BASAGYP had taught them more and alluded that they felt more comfortable with navigation following the training. From this, one can conclude that most participants acquired a new skill, and therefore, the gap year programme contributed to their skill set.

4.1.3 Pre-test: Survival skills

The pre-test interviews revealed that the participants of the BASAGYP had little survival skills from camping or no survival skills at all. Those who acquired some survival skills from either camping with their family or Voortrekker groups were interviewees 5, 7, 8, 11, 12 and 14. Although interviewees 4, 9, 13, 15 and 16 expressed that they did not have a chance to learn survival skills through family camping, they claimed to have a high level of survival instinct. They believe that this would enable them to survive for a few days in the wilderness but would struggle to survive for longer than a week. Interviewee 9 commented:

"I do know how to survive for a few days in the wilderness but would not be able to go further than a week."

4.1.4 Post-test: Survival skills

The post-test interviewees indicated that the survival skills of participants of the BASAGYP improved after attending the programme. Most of the participants (interviewees 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15) stated that their survival skills had greatly improved due to the BASAGYP programme as they learnt a lot about

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surviving in the wilderness. Interviewee 15 who had indicated that she had no prior exposure to survival skills stated:

“After this programme, l will be able to survive well in the wilderness as l am now able to build a shelter, get some food, start a fire”.

Kellert and Derr (1998) also found that the survival skills of participants of the National Outdoor Leadership School programme improved significantly after attending the programme. Participants who acknowledged improvement in their survival skills also mentioned that such skills had helped them to develop relationships with the natural world around them, and this according to Ball (2001), allows the participants to view the world in a way they had not been accustomed to in their daily lives.

Interviewees 8 and 12, who indicated during the pre-test interviews that they had some knowledge of survival skills, asserted that the BASAGYP programme had not done much to improve their survival skills as they already knew what was taught because of their previous experience with either family camping or Voortrekker groups.

4.1.5 Pre-test: Edible food collection

During the pre-test interviews, the researchers identified two themes: (i) ‘little knowledge of gathering food’; and (ii) ‘no knowledge of gathering food’. Interviewees 8, 9, 11, 13, 14 and 16 mentioned that they had little knowledge of finding edible foods in the wilderness. Respondent 9 stated:

“I grew up in the city and l don’t know how to gather food in the wilderness. In fact, l do not know plants very well. l have no knowledge of which mushrooms are edible.”

Interviewees 2, 6, 7, 10, 12 and 15 indicated that they did not have any knowledge of gathering food in the wilderness:

“I have never had to find anything that is edible in the bush and never learnt anything about it” (Interviewee 2).

4.1.6 Post-test: Edible food collection

All the participants of the BASAGYP programme indicated that they had learnt a lot about gathering edible food in the wilderness during the year. Interviewee 5 stated:

“We have been taught a lot about surviving in the bush and what type of foods to look for, how to get to those types as well as on beach-type environments. We have been taught about the different kinds of seafood that can be consumed, where the food is found and how to prepare/cook it.”

Interviewee 8 explained that the programme had allowed them to gain a greater understanding of finding different foods in different environments:

“We have been taught that every environment is different and has different plant species that are edible or are hazardous to your health if consumed. With

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this knowledge, we can now gather different edible foods in different environments."

The above statements show that the respondents learnt how to correctly identify edible food sources in the bush and beach surroundings. This resonates with research by Kellert and Derr (1998), who found that food-gathering skills in the wilderness increased for participants who attended outdoor training programmes similar to the gap year programme.

4.1.7 Pre-test: First-aid skills

Some of the interviewees indicated that they had little first-aid skills while others stipulated that they did have first-aid skills during the pre-test interviews. Those who had first-aid skills were interviewees 3, 7, 10, 13 and 15, while the rest of the interviewees specified that they had helped before in a first-aid situation or had no prior first-aid experience.

4.1.8 Post-test: First-aid skills

The post-test interviews revealed that all the participants of the BASAGYP programme gained first-aid skills. All the participants who completed the programme mentioned that they were quite confident in performing first-aid following the training:

"After this training, if there is a first-aid kit on hand during a situation, l will be able to do first aid perfectly" (Interviewee 6).

4.2 Environmental skills

Environmental skills were assessed under eight sub-categories as stipulated by Marion and Reid (2001). These include (i) trip planning and preparation skills; (ii) travelling and camping on durable surfaces; (iii) disposing of waste; (iv) collecting souvenirs from nature; (v) starting a safe campfire; (vi) encountering wild animals in the outdoors; (vii) consideration of other visitors in the same outdoor area; and (viii) minimal impact skills. The results show the following:

4.2.1 Pre-test: Trip planning and preparation skills

Most of the interviewees mentioned during the pre-test interviews that they had previously been on camping trips (at least one camping trip). Interviewees 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 15 even went further to state that they were confident in preparing for outdoor trips. Interviewee 8 stated:

"I have planned trips with my friends which turned out to be a success. Therefore, l am confident when preparing for outdoor trips".

4.2.2 Post-test: Trip planning and preparation skills

During the post-test interviews, the researchers established that although most of the participants had indicated that they had previously been on camping trips, the BASAGYP programme taught the participants a lot in terms of trip planning and preparation skills, as they alluded that their trip planning and

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preparation skills improved after attending the BASAGYP programme. Interviewee 7 explained:

“We have gone on multiple camping trips as well as outdoor adventures in the past year, so I feel highly confident with setup, planning, knowing exactly what to take and how to be prepared for most of the things that are to come your way when doing outdoor camping.”

4.2.3 Pre-test: Travelling and camping on durable surfaces

Before the BASAGYP training, two themes were identified: (i) some participants had experience, while (ii) others had no experience. Interviewees 9, 12, 13, 14 and 15 indicated that they had been visiting camping areas to go camping with their families. Interviewee 9 explained:

“In the past, I travelled with family on camping and fishing trips and had to camp on durable surfaces. I am used to it.”

However, Interviewees 3, 10, 11 and 16 were the ones who highlighted that they did not have any experience of travelling and camping.

4.2.4 Post-test: Travelling and camping on durable surfaces

After the BASAGYP training, one theme emerged where the participants indicated that they were now ‘a lot more comfortable with camping’. Despite having prior camping experience, interviewee 8 pointed out that the BASAGYP made him more comfortable with camping:

“Based on experience, we go camping often as a family, but at Beyond it has taken me a step further as usually we would have been camping with a caravan and here you have your own one-man tent. You must make sure it does not break.”

This concurs with Kellert and Derr (1998), who stated that attendees of a three-week BASAGYP programme mentioned that they regarded camping skills as a lot more important after their training as compared to before the training.

4.2.5 Pre-test: Disposing of waste

During the pre-test interviews, one theme was identified with participants indicating that they ‘had little experience in disposing of waste’. Respondents 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 mentioned that they were aware of waste disposing methods such as burning, picking up, or digging holes but had not much experience doing that. Interview 4 explained:

“I just know that the best option is to dig a hole and dump the waste there, but I have no idea how”.

4.2.6 Post-test: Disposing of waste

During the post-test interviews, a theme emerged which indicated that participants

‘learnt how to dispose of waste’

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"They taught us what to use, and to put all the items back into our bags. When you dig a hole for use, we were told that it should be filled afterwards, and when making a fire to cover it completely. We were taught to try as much as possible to leave the area much the same way as when we got there (Interviewee 2)."

Interviewee 13 added:

"We have been shown on various occasions the various ways of disposing of human and other waste. We were taught this during the first hike and navigation activity as well as recently during the beach survival activity."

Similarly, Kellert and Derr (1998) found that participants of a BASAGYP programme are more aware of the environment and have a greater sense of how to take care of it. They even argued that most participants created less waste after the programme.

4.2.7 Pre-test: Collecting souvenirs from nature

When the pre-test interviews were conducted the main theme that was identified was that the participants 'preferred to collect souvenirs'. Interviewees 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14 and 16 expressed that they picked up souvenirs to have memories of their adventures and where they had been. Interviewee 4 stated:

"I like to keep a remembrance of the time I had outdoor and want to bring something back like a memorial to show that I was there, and I enjoyed the time out there".

4.2.8 Post-test: Collecting souvenirs from nature

After the programme, the researchers identified three themes: (i) participants were 'less likely to collect souvenirs', (ii) some 'refrained from picking up souvenirs', and (iii) some would still 'pick up souvenirs'. The responses from the interviews showed that only two (6 and 8) interviewees would no longer pick up anything from nature, as interviewee 6 mentioned:

"I no longer believe in taking souvenirs from nature anymore, but I would rather take something like a T-shirt."

Four interviewees (1, 11, 14 and 15) seemed to have not changed their behaviour regarding collecting souvenirs after the programme. Seven respondents (2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12 and 13) indicated they were likelier to pick up souvenirs after the programme. Interviewee 2 explained:

"I have collected a few souvenirs during the hikes that we have done as well as during the couple of adventures we have gone on like at the campsites. l always found one thing that caught my eye. I then thought, yes that is what I want."

Interviewee 10 indicated that she would only pick up souvenirs if she felt that her actions would not be detrimental to the environment. She stated:

"I would not like to take something that would damage the environment, or where animals would live. I would take in the paths where we walked".

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Daniels and Marion (2005) also found that participants who completed an adventure gap year training course did not show slight improvement regarding not taking souvenirs from nature. This aligns with the results of this study.

4.2.9 Pre-test: Starting a safe campfire

The researchers managed to identify only one theme during the pre-test interviews: 'knowing how to start a safe fire'. Interviewees 2, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 16 stated that they knew how to start safe campfires, and they gathered experience from camping with family and friends and from activities organised by the Voortrekkers.

Interviewee 12 stated:

"I was born and raised on a farm and my dad taught me since I was little – different techniques and in different situations".

4.2.10 Post-test: Starting a safe campfire

During the post-test interviews, the theme emerged that participants 'learnt a lot about starting a safe campfire'. Interviewees 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 all concurred that the BASAGYP taught them a lot about starting a safe campfire that they can control and will not damage the environment. Interviewee 2 explained:

"They taught us to protect the environment around us. If it is windy to dig a hole, use rocks around the fire to keep it closed and controlled."

Even Interviewees 9, 11, 12 and 14, who stated during the pre-test interviews that they had been trained before on making campfires, said that the BASAGYP had taught them more about starting safe campfires. Interviewee 11 stated:

"Before the BASAGYP I had learned how to make a fire. However, at Beyond l have been taught safety precautions to take, such as to dig a hole and put bricks around it and having sand close by."

Kellert and Derr (1998:52) found that participants who went on a three-week or more adventure excursion deemed fire-making a critical skill that improved in the post-test after their programme.

4.2.11 Pre-test: Encountering wild animals in the outdoors

From the pre-test interviews, the researchers identified the following theme: 'limited experience with wild animals'. Interviewees 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 mentioned that they had limited or no experience with animals in the wild. Respondents 3 and 5 revealed that they had some hunting experience, while interviewees 8, 9, and 10 stated that they loved animals and knew a bit about them:

"I work a lot with animals. My knowledge of animals is quite good, I love them and study them. If a predator is dangerous, I might know how to handle the situation. I know the animal is normally more afraid of me than I am afraid of it (Interviewee 8)."

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Nevertheless, Daniels and Marion (2005) found that gap year programme trainees indicated during pre-test interviews that they knew what to do when encountering dangerous animals such as bears but struggled to know what to do with less dangerous animals.

4.2.12 Post-test: Encountering wild animals in the outdoors

Two themes were identified during the post-test interviews: (i) 'gained theoretical knowledge but not practical experience' and (ii) 'had the practical experience but lacked theoretical training'.

Interviewees 2, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 13 agreed that BASAGYP had taught them a lot. Interviewee 10 stated:

"We haven't dealt with a lot of wild animals, but we have been taught what procedures to take during hikes and navigation. How to recognise the animals and how to avoid them and what to do in a situation where you encounter them."

Likewise, interviewees 2, 4, 5 and 15 felt that they did not experience any encounters with wild animals during the BASAGYP training. However, respondent 7 explained:

"I have encountered a wild animal and I did not handle it very well; I decided to run. Now they taught us not to run, to stand still and let it pass, you are in its territory, you just be calm."

4.2.13 Pre-test: consideration of other visitors in the same outdoor area

During the pre-test interviews, two themes were identified: (i) 'considering other campers' and (ii) 'might consider campers under certain conditions'. Interviewees 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13 and 14 concurred that they took others camping with them into consideration, while respondents 4, 11, 15 and 16 stated that they did not go out of their way for others. Interviewee 16 explained:

"If they disrupt my experience negatively then I might not be as considerate. They should not play music too loud and not be inconsiderate, as I might not be very welcoming."

4.2.14 Post-test: Consideration of other visitors in the same area

The 'very considerate towards other campers' theme emerged during the post-test interviews. Most interviewees highlighted that they had improved in being considerate towards others in the same area as them after the BASAGYP programme. Respondents 7, 9 and 15, however, indicated that they remained unchanged. Interviewee 7 mentioned:

"I treat the guests the way I like to be treated. If I need some peace, I know they would also like some peace. We follow the rules like we have our lights out at 10. We keep the noise level down and we keep the area clean for them. We display what we want also for them."

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This resonates with Daniels and Marion's (2005) study which found that attendees of the trainer course of a gap year programme also improved vastly in being mindful of other visitors in the same area.

4.2.15 Pre-test: Minimal impact skills

'Taking care of nature' was identified as the theme during pre-test interviews. Interviewees 2, 11 and 15 explained that their parents taught them to take care of nature, while interviewees 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 further elaborated that they wanted to take care of nature and not trample on vegetation or litter the environment. Interviewee 14 stated:

"I always look after the plants and look where to step so that l do not trample on anything that would be beneficial to the environment."

4.2.16 Post-test: Minimal impact skills

During the post-test interviews, two themes were identified, namely, (i) 'received sufficient training' and (ii) 'have not received training'. Interviewees 2, 5, 7, 10, 11 and 13 alluded that the BASAGYP taught them a lot regarding how to travel with minimum impact, as interviewee 10 explained:

"They taught us not to go off the trails and pick up items where the animals live and to not damage the environment. Not everyone would do that, but they trained us well."

These results concur to some extent with Kellert and Derr (1998), who found that participants rated camping and travelling with minimum impact as essential skills and that they improved after completing an outdoor programme of three weeks or longer. Nonetheless, interviewee 6 felt that the BASAGYP did not focus on minimising their impact on the environment, as he argued: "I don't believe they focused on that this year or taught us anything about that."

4.3 Safety Skills

Safety skills were divided into two sub-categories, namely (i) dealing with environmental dangers (risks), and (ii) dealing with client dangers (risks). Both were assessed during pre- and post-test interviews.

4.3.1 Pre-test: Assessing and dealing with environmental dangers

Under the category of dealing with environmental dangers, the researchers identified two themes: (i) 'no experience or knowledge' and (ii) 'having enough instincts'. During the pre-test interviews, respondents 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15 and 16 expressed that they had little or no experience handling such situations. Interview 16 stated:

"I have never been placed in such a situation and would not know how to handle it."

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Other interviewees (4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 15) indicated that they thought they had good instincts and could use their common sense to deal with environmental danger. Interviewee 11 explained:

"I am relatively good at problem-solving. I would probably know what to do."

Interviewee 13 revealed that he had some prior knowledge of crisis management. He stated:

"I have done crisis management courses before. This prior knowledge would help me assess the situation and how to tackle the different situations when in crises."

4.3.2 Post-test: Assessing and dealing with environmental dangers

Two themes were once again identified by the researchers during the post-test interviews: (i) received theoretical training' and (ii) 'did not receive theoretical training'. Interviewees 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 13 concurred that BASAGYP taught them how to assess and handle dangerous situations. Interviewee 7 had the following to say about the experience:

"For the river crossing during our week of survival. We just had to look at which way the current was going, and we went parallel with it. The thunderstorm we experienced on our 100 km race forced us to call it a day as the thunder and the lightning was very heavy and the chance of being struck was quite high."

Kellert and Derr's (1998) also found that the participants of an adventure programme had renewed respect for the environment. Nonetheless, interviewees 6 and 15 explained that they did not feel they received specific training for such situations at BASAGYP. They did, however, feel that they were a lot calmer and more open-minded in general. Interviewee 6 stated:

"They taught us how to handle a dangerous situation with a cool head. They have not given us specific training on these two dangerous situations, but I am calmer in stress situations now, and I will be able to assess a dangerous situation."

4.3.3 Pre-test: Assessing and dealing with client dangers

The researchers identified two themes from the pre-test interviews: (i) 'no knowledge regarding client challenges' and (ii) 'ability to assess situations'. Interviewees 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 stated that they had no knowledge or experience assessing dangerous situations arising from a client's actions. Interviewee 3 stated:

"I don't have a lot of knowledge and experience about that."

Interviewees 5, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 stated they would know what to do in the situation. Interviewee 15 explained:

"I am conscious of what happens around me, I believe I would be able to assess things quite well. Crises management when the situation occurs on how to

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handle it. Situations would differ; I would try to make it as hasty as possible to find a solution for it."

4.3.4 Post-test: Assessing and dealing with client dangers

Two themes emerged during the post-test interviews: (i) 'I learned a lot'; (ii) 'my self-confidence improved'. Interviewees 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 15 indicated they had learned much from BASAGYP. Interviewee 7 explained:

"With our client's hair getting caught in the harness, we were taught that if that happens to you, immediately stop the descent, and help the client to get their hair loose. As for feeding the wild animals, and it is a strictly no-feeding zone, you brief them and if you are on the road, you make sure that they don't feed the animals."

Interviewees 6 and 8 stated that their self-confidence improved. Interviewee 6 explained:

"I am a lot more comfortable dealing with people, and I feel I will be well able to handle it. My people skills have improved".

This correlates with what Kellert and Derr (1998) and Galloway (2000) found. They found that participants of a gap year training programme had more self-confidence and better instincts when dealing with others in situations that could lead to possible dangers or risks.

4.4 Most influential activities contributing to hard skills

The last question asked the participants to identify the most influential activities contributing to their hard skills development. The post-test revealed that the three most mentioned activities were rock climbing, hiking and navigation and the survival course. As Interviewees 2, 5, and 10 stated:

Interviewee 2:

"We were trained on the safety, wild animals, survival and how to plan, how to walk up and down a hill" (Navigation).

Interviewee 5:

"We were also taught different knots to hold you during the rock climbing" (Rock climbing).

Interviewee 10:

"They taught us a lot, like how to survive and how to do all the skills, they gave us so much information during that week that would help you one day if you want to go in that direction. It really helped us a lot. Everyone understood more of those skills after that week" (Survival skills).

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4.5 Least influential activities contributing to hard skills

The post-test revealed that the three activities that contribute least to hard skill development, according to the participants, are bungee jumping, facilitation, and mountain biking. As Interviewees 6, 15 and 9 stated:

Interviewee 6:

"It was doable and it contributed to my confidence. It did not have any influence on my hard skills. Only taught me to trust the people there as well as myself" (Bungee).

Interviewee 15:

"According to them it is the most important activity but according to me it was just a waste of time. I am sure I might get it later on" (Facilitation).

Interviewee 9: "It did not teach me much about technical skills" (Mountain biking).

5 Conclusion

First, the researchers found that the BASAGYP programme did contribute to the hard skill development of gap year participants. Thus, it does contribute to participants' hard skillset development needed in adventure leaders. These skills are key for adventure leaders to possess when adventure activities are conducted with participants and can further contribute to the overall skillset that people need for everyday life. This is supported by Kellert and Derr (1998).

The second finding is that all the participants indicated that they had learned a lot about first aid as a hard skill. As first aid is such an essential skill for adventure due to its level of risk, it is recommended that all adventure training programmes must have a comprehensive first-aid training component. This skill can also be useful in everyday living situations, as one never knows when someone will need first aid assistance.

The third finding is that this type of programme helps to improve self-confidence among participants, which is an indirect result of hard skills improvement. This is confirmed by Kellert and Derr (1998), who found an increase in self-confidence, self-esteem, independence, autonomy, and initiative among participants in outdoor wilderness/adventure programmes. People with self-confidence tend to be more successful in life. Bandura (1986) as in Druckman and Bjork (1994) states that self-confidence is considered one of the initial motivators and regulators of behaviour in people's everyday lives.

The fourth finding from this research is that the gap year appeared to have made a valuable contribution to safety skills, such as dealing with environmental dangers (risks) and dealing with client dangers (risks). Environmental dangers are always a big concern with most adventure activities, as nature is unpredictable. Therefore, adventure guides must always take note of the possible environmental dangers. Coupled with this, people or adventure participants (cli-

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ents) are critical in any adventure programme. These adventure guides must be able to identify possible risks emerging from clients. This gap year programme contributes largely to fostering and developing these safety-hard skills.

Last, the research revealed the least influential activities contributing to hard skills development (see results). This information can be used by adventure training or gap year programme organisers to improve their programme quality, by either excluding these activities or enhancing the hard skill aspect development of these activities.

As there is still a paucity of research on gap year programmes and their importance in developing the participants' hard skills, this study addresses that gap. Besides being an addition to this under-researched area, this study has theoretically contributed to the studies on hard skills, as discussed in the literature and results sections. Practically, this study is one of the few studies that used pre- and post-test interviews to ascertain the development of hard skills in gap year programmes. Thus, the study reveals that the BASAGYP programme successfully transfers hard skills to its participants.

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Tourism student perspectives on inquiry learning – Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus as learning lab

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Abstract: *New approaches to teaching and learning have been introduced at many tourism and hospitality university programmes worldwide. Students studying for a future career in the tourism industry should develop competencies such as critical thinking and adaptability to be able to work in an industry with continuous disruptions, such as pandemics and natural hazards. This study aims to gain an understanding of how students at Haaga-Helia UAS Porvoo perceive their learning and the competences they gain through the inquiry learning approach. In all, 18 students from the Finnish tourism programmes and the international programmes in Tourism and Event Management and Aviation Business took part in focus group interviews. The findings show that even if students perceive the inquiry learning approach as stressful and somewhat unclear, they (do) see that they develop competences needed in their future careers in projects they conduct with industry.*

Keywords: *Inquiry learning, tourism and aviation business programmes, Porvoo campus*

1 Introduction

During the last decades, the tourism industry has faced several crises such as the economic downturn in 2008 and the pandemic in 2020 (Gokpete et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024). Moreover, digitalisation and artificial intelligence will have a major impact on the industry in the years to come, contributing to improved operational efficiency and reorganisation of tasks (Al-Romeedy & Alharethi, 2024; García-Madurga & Grilló-Méndez, 2023). Students enrolled in university programmes in tourism, hospitality and aviation business need to gain competencies required to tackle challenges of a disruptive industry and to improve their employability in tourism as well as other industries during crises, decreasing the demand for employees in tourism and aviation industries. In Finland, enhancing employability through developing competencies of students is a responsibility of the universities stated by political decision-makers. The public funding of universities is even dependent on how well the graduates manage to find a job in the industry they are educated for. Thus, universities also have an interest in improving the employability of students throughout their years at the university. One way to tackle this challenge is to change teaching and learning approaches (Ezeuduji et al., 2022).

Even if lecturing still dominates university teaching, many universities have, during the last decades, introduced new approaches to teaching, such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, case-based teaching and inquiry

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learning. Prince and Felder (2006) call these approaches inductive approaches to teaching and learning. Inspired by Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model, these approaches have been commonly implemented at higher education institutions both in Finland and in other countries (Borah et al., 2021; Holmberg et al., 2022).

A new curriculum based on an inquiry learning approach was introduced at Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences degree programs when the Porvoo campus opened in 2011. The campus, offering business and tourism programs, can be seen as a living lab for creativity, learning, and innovations (Ritalahti, 2015).

This study was carried out with the aim of gaining an understanding of how tourism and aviation business students at the Porvoo campus experience inquiry learning. The research questions were:

Q1: How do tourism and aviation business students understand the inquiry learning approach at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus?

Q2: How do students describe the approach to gain the competences needed in their future careers?

Q3: What are the potential solutions for improving the learning experiences and the competences of future students in the tourism and aviation business programmes at Haaga-Helia-Porvoo Campus?

2 Inquiry learning – a student-centred teaching approach

The discussion on how people learn is a debate that has been going on for a long time. Teaching used to be teacher-centred (Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017; Zabit, 2010). Wide-ranking research indicates that students should have an active role in the learning process, that has been acknowledged at all levels of education, including universities. (Mueni et al., 2023). The current pedagogical change taking place at many universities worldwide has been influenced especially by constructivism. Constructivism is a philosophy of learning highlighting that students learn by reflecting on their previous experiences (Bhattacharjee, 2015; Olusegun, 2016; McKinney, 2021) and teachers' responsibility is to facilitate this process (Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017). New teaching approaches enhance students' deeper learning and motivation (Birkle et al., 2017; Ritalahti, 2015).

Inspired by constructivism, universities are developing curricula emphasising learning through real-life problem-solving and collaboration with industry to support the learning of the students (Borah et al., 2021; Holmberg et al., 2022; Korkmanz & Kalayci, 2019; Lakkala et al., 2008). The change is enabled by modern technology, a new generation of students and demand from industry (Ertmer & Newby, 2013). Jakubik (2020) highlights that there is a need for a university pedagogy that inspires, motivates, and supports the development of competencies and skills of the students. When students take responsibility for their own learning, they gain competencies needed for future work (Barman &

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Konwar, 2011; Lu, 2021). Inquiry learning is also an approach to activate and motivate students to engage in their studies.

Mueni et al. (2023) describe inquiry-based learning as a teaching and learning technique where students are actively involved in the learning process, and the teacher facilitates it. It is possible to apply inquiry learning to a single lecture, a course or a whole degree (Aditomo et al., 2013; Kori, 2021). Inquiry learning is a process during which students seek information, question, and find solutions. The benefit is that students will learn to apply the knowledge to real-life situations when they actively take part into the learning process (Kaiser et al., 2018; Kuhlthau et al., 2007; Wood, 2004). Today, when knowledge is easily and cost-efficiently accessible to most people, the ability to apply knowledge and understand the phenomenon in question becomes more important than memorizing facts (Jonker, 2013; Ritalahti, 2015; Rothkrantz, 2015). As Hutchings (2007) points out, memorizing facts is against our natural way of learning through discovery.

In traditional teaching, the teacher defines learning goals clearly and concretely. In the inquiry learning setting, students create their own learning agenda and are also responsible for setting goals. Inquiry learning thereby triggers students' own curiosity about the project they are working with. Students seek knowledge and answers to solve real-life problems, and this gives them satisfaction and increases their motivation. Inquiry learning is always a collaborative effort; working in teams is a starting point enabling the students to share information with each other. Thereby, together, students will be able to come up with a new, more complex understanding of the phenomenon, and they can support each other when viewing the task from different angles (Archer-Kuhn & MacKinnon, 2020; Jonker, 2013; Lakkala, 2012).

As an inquiry learning problem or task is often rather complex and open, students used to teacher-centred learning sometimes feel stressed and anxious. (Archer-Kuhn & MacKinnon, 2020; Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017). Students learning through inquiry learning also tend to complain about being left alone, not listened to, and ending up in conflict with other project team members (Holmberg et al., 2017). Factors such as the functionality of the teams, the commission (task) itself, the lecturers coaching the project, and instructions perceived as unclear can influence students' motivation negatively (Birkle et al., 2017).

Inquiry learning is often seen as a process with different phases and sub-processes. Some studies show the process as more linear, while others claim that it is cyclic. In a cyclic process, the answers and solutions become starting points for new inquiries (Hakkarainen et al., 2004; Ritalahti, 2015). In inquiry learning, learning is often independent of time and place. Learning through inquiry allows students to make individual decisions and make their own interpretations. Empowerment of students is important to enhance students' ability to cope with challenging work-related tasks and projects also in the future. The learning tasks are supposed to be challenging enough to awaken the students' curiosity and interest in the topic in question (Birkle et al., 2017). When students

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have a genuine interest in learning, they will take responsibility for their own learning (Archer-Kuhn & MacKinnon, 2020; Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017; Lakkala, 2012). Students will especially develop excellent communication skills as they are required to gather ideas, debate, reflect and design actions (Agrusti, 2013).

Bringing in an inquiry learning approach results in a huge change in the role of teachers, who also need to take actions to improve students' enthusiasm and motivation for learning (Kuhlthau et al., 2007) and to enhance trust between all partners involved in the learning process (Archer-MacKinnon & Kuhn, 2020). In inquiry learning, teachers are facilitators, information providers and learners (Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017; Savery, 2006). The aim of the inquiry learning process is not only to manage the project to its goal successfully, but to create competencies through inquiry, while working on the project. Competences in focus are, for instance, teamwork, project management, problem-solving (Aditomo et al., 2013; Lakkala, 2012), and life-long learning skills (Archer-Kuhn & MacKinnon, 2020). Moreover, Kaiser et al. (2018) highlight that the whole process of inquiry learning requires scientific reasoning skills in addition to content-related competencies.

3 Teaching and learning at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus

The Porvoo campus of Haaga-Helia UAS, opened in 2011, was developed and designed for the needs of its users. The campus is also available to the public, giving local people access to the student restaurant, library, and open spaces for meetings (Haaga-Helia, 2021). The campus hosts approximately 1,100 Haaga-Helia students who can complete bachelor's degree programmes in Hospitality Management and Business Administration in Finnish or in English. The campus is also very international, with students of about 50 nationalities. The number of teaching staff is around 50 (Haaga-Helia, 2021).

The development and design of the campus building were simultaneous with the development of a new curriculum, as it was acknowledged that the new campus needed a contemporary pedagogical approach. The development process of the new curriculum engaged and involved different campus stakeholders. The most important stakeholders were students and academic and administrative personnel (Ritalahti, 2015). After discussions with pedagogical experts and visits to university campuses in Finland and abroad, inquiry learning was chosen as a pedagogical starting point.

The implementation of inquiry learning at the Porvoo Campus is based on the inquiry learning model developed by Hakkarainen et al. (2005). The model of Hakkarainen comprises six steps (see e.g., Hakkarainen et al., 2004; Lakkala, 2012;) ranging from setting up the context, presenting research problems, creating working theories, searching for more knowledge and to come up with new insights and solutions. To get the best results, it is important that students know

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the inquiry learning model and understand the process (Hakkarainen et al., 2004).

Figure 1 presents the phases of inquiry learning in the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus.

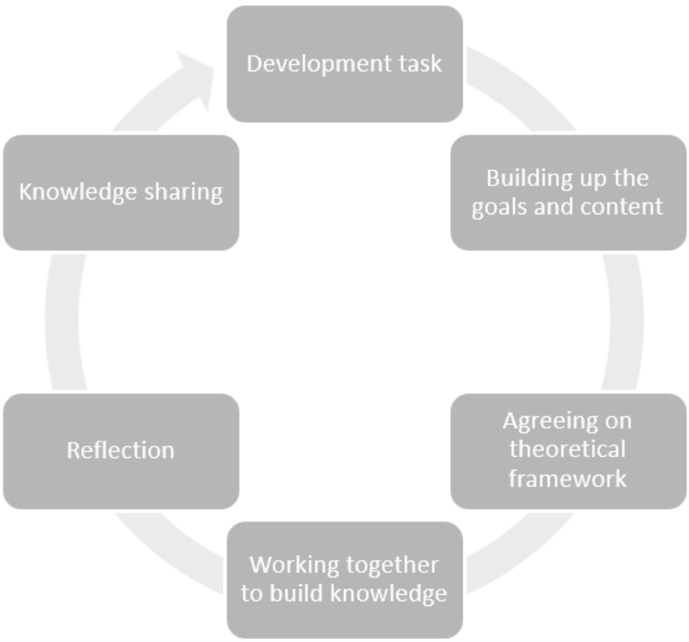

Figure 1: Inquiry learning process

Source: Ritalahti, 2015

Note: An overview of the main phases of inquiry learning from receiving information of the task to sharing the solution.

The inquiry learning model guiding learning at the Porvoo campus is rather similar to the original model presented by Hakkarainen et al. (e.g., 2004). The main difference is that at the Porvoo campus, the whole process starts with a development task, whereas the model of Hakkarainen et al. (e.g., 2005) could be applied at any educational level. Thereby, the initial phase in the model of Hakkarainen et al. is referred to as "setting up the context". At the Porvoo campus, the development task is often given to students as a written brief (Holmberg et al., 2017). After the brief, knowledge is created in student teams together with teachers and non-academic collaborators who are called commissioners (Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017; Ritalahti, 2015). Thus, the inquiry learning approach at the Porvoo campus is rather close to service learning. In service learning, students learn through making a difference in society, which also

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incorporates learning together with stakeholders of the university, such as companies (see, e.g., Fougère et al., 2019).

Following the principles described in Birkle et al. (2017), in the first phase of the inquiry learning model at the Porvoo campus, students are familiarized with the task and its context. Furthermore, in this phase, teachers usually deepen students' understanding of the task through lectures and reading circles (Rothkrantz, 2015). It is important to have a shared understanding of the phenomena and the goals of the learning process before the students start formulating meaningful questions.

The next phase in this inquiry learning process includes developing the content and identifying the objectives (Figure 1). At the beginning of their studies, students may need more support during this phase. However, students get more independence as they advance in their studies (Ritalahti, 2015). Rothkrantz (2015) emphasizes that the main idea of inquiry learning is that students learn by defining questions to be answered in the following phases of the learning process. After identifying the questions, students construct the theoretical framework supporting the development process of the project.

During the phase "working together to build knowledge", students collect data, explore and experiment to find answers to the questions identified in the previous phase. Data is analysed to find patterns, explain phenomena, evaluate and finally provide a solution (Pedaste et al., 2015). The final phases of this inquiry learning model are reflection and knowledge sharing. Reflection and knowledge sharing are especially important as they provide a possibility to deepen and expand learning (Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017; Lakkala, 2012; Lakkala et al., 2008).

At the Porvoo campus, the students are usually involved in at least one inquiry learning project every semester. The learning during the semester is planned and implemented through a team of teachers responsible for the courses offered to the students in each study program (Birkle et al., 2017; Ritalahti, 2015). Inquiry learning often requires interdisciplinary teaching as working with only one subject at a time rarely fulfils the needs of complex inquiry learning tasks (Agrusti, 2013; Holmberg et al., 2017). Team teaching, i.e., two or more lecturers working together to plan, deliver and evaluate learning activities, is therefore common (see, e.g., Lee, 2013). An example of how this can be done in practice is presented by Holmberg and Ritalahti (2017). The teacher teams comprise, for instance, often a teacher with expertise related to the project in focus and a specialist in research and development methods.

4 Method of research

This study relied on the case study approach as the main objective of the study was to find out how inquiry learning is implemented at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus from a student perspective. Case study research aims at reaching a comprehensive understanding through a process known as thick description.

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The process involves an in-depth description of the entity being evaluated and the circumstances influencing it. Case study research is usually regarded a qualitative research methodology. Standard data collection methods are interviews and observations (Yin, 2009).

The empirical data collection phase of this project was planned in the PoPeda group, which is the group of teachers responsible of the pedagogical development of Porvoo campus. A semi-structured interview was chosen as the data collection strategy, as it offers a rather flexible way to conduct interviews (e.g., Saunders et al., 2016) and the aim of the interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the learning experiences of the students. The interview guide comprised eight themes derived from the literature review. The themes identified were:

- inquiry learning as a learning approach
- the process of learning
- the role of theory
- strengths of the approach
- weaknesses of the approach
- changing role of students
- changing role of the teachers
- competences developed

In this study, focus group interviewing (see, e.g., Ojasalo et al., 2014) was chosen for data collection to encourage students participating in the interview to interact with each other and thereby provide more in-depth insights (Veal, 2011). The focus groups were implemented in such a way that 2 members of the PoPeda team were interviewing a group of students they had not worked with before to get the students more relaxed. The students participating were all volunteers, no one was forced to join the interview. The original project comprised students from all seven programmes of Haaga-Helia Porvoo Campus. This chapter focuses on students in Tourism and Aviation Business programmes. These programmes are structured in the same way and strive to offer students similar competences during the 3.5 years of active studies, and in fact, many of the graduates from the Finnish tourism programme end up working in the aviation industry. Four to seven students from the tourism and aviation programmes available at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus participated in the focus groups (Table 1). All the focus group interviews were conducted in April 2020 via Zoom due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The interviews with students studying in the Finnish degree programmes were conducted in Finnish, and the interviews with students from international programs were conducted in English. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by an external service provider. The authors of the paper conducted the analysis of the transcribed interviews and categorized the findings into themes.

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Table 1: Summary of interviews

Group	Abbreviation	Number of participants
Students of Finnish Tourism degree programme	Pomo	7
Students of degree programme in Tourism and Event Management	Tempo	5
Students of the degree programme in Aviation Business	Abba	6

Note: The table summarises the focus groups for data collection.

Source: author's work

The starting point for the data analysis was thematic analysis. The analysis followed four steps: getting familiar with the data, coding, finding themes and analysis (e.g., Saunders et al., 2016). After reading through the transcribed interviews several times and coding, the following themes were identified:

- understanding inquiry learning
- the role of the teachers and students
- the strengths and weaknesses of the approach

More detailed findings for each theme will be presented and discussed in the next section.

5 Findings and discussion

5.1 Understanding of inquiry learning

As many students entering university are used to traditional teaching methods (Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017; Zabit, 2010), the inquiry learning, creating the framework for learning at Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus, is usually presented to all new students at least during the introduction week at the beginning of the first semester. The students participating in the focus groups, though, had huge difficulties with coming up with a proper description of what inquiry learning means. Mostly, inquiry learning was seen as an active way of learning. Students in the groups described inquiry learning in the following way:

"Doing yourself and experiencing what you learn rather than listening (Tempo)"

Some students were not even sure that they had had inquiry learning, as one stated:

"No idea, have we even had inquiry learning?" (Pomo)

As Lakkala (2012) points out, the inquiry learning model has been developed to visualise and describe the process of inquiry learning and how knowledge can be created in a collaborative way. It would be important to provide the students at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus with an understanding of why inquiry learning has been chosen as the pedagogical approach. Thereby, the students will

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acknowledge that they can acquire competencies and skills needed in the job market by actively participating in the projects.

Even if some flexibility exists, the benefit of the inquiry learning model is that it offers clear steps for both the students and the lecturers involved about how a development task or real-life project could proceed. As inquiry learning can create anxiety for both students and lecturers (Archer-Kuhn & MacKinnon, 2020), a clear process to follow offers some structure to the practical work. The main phases of the inquiry learning model, from setting goals to information sharing, were difficult to recall for the students in the focus groups. Basically, no focus group was able to name all the main phases. However, the students in the international tourism programme had some understanding about it, as the students described the process like this:

> *"You have a problem you need to work on and start asking questions, seeing that everyone understands the same. Then when all are at the same page you go further, to the research phase, do research and then you move on to solving." (Tempo)*

Students participating in one of the focus groups were critical and pointed out that no clear model or process seems to exist as a starting point for inquiry learning at the Porvoo campus. One student argued the following:

> *"The projects have been kind of mess all over the place, no clear structure at all." (Abb a)*

A clear process with in-between deadlines will help students to keep up their motivation during a project, which often has its ups and downs (see e.g., Birkle et al., 2017). The six main phases of the inquiry learning process could preferably be identified as in-between deadlines for students. A whole semester with only one deadline towards the end will easily result in a lot of stress by the end of the project.

5.2. Role of teachers and students

The changing role of teachers is discussed in most literature related to inquiry learning (e.g., Archer-Kuhn & MacKinnon, 2020; Lakkala, 2012). In the past, teachers used to be experts sharing their knowledge in front of the class. In inquiry learning, teachers become coaches and part of the reciprocal learning process (Holmberg et al., 2017; Ritalahti, 2015). Students participating in the focus groups discussed the role of the teacher extensively as they acknowledged that the teacher in inquiry learning does not act as traditional teachers. From the interviews, the conclusion can be drawn that most teachers at the Porvoo campus have adapted to a new way of working. Students described the teacher in inquiry learning for instance like this:

> *"The teacher is no authority stating things from above, more like a coach." (Tempo)*

Kulthau et al. (2007) highlight that students need to be able to think, learn and create in the chaotic world they are currently facing. Thus, educational institu-

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tions must change, and students must be encouraged to think about themselves and learn throughout their lives. The participants in the focus groups highlighted that the students at the Porvoo campus cannot just passively participate in classes; rather, they must be active throughout the semester. A student described the learning experience in the following way:

> *"All the responsibility is put on the shoulders of the students." (Abb a)*

Setting your own goals for learning is important in inquiry learning (Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017; Kultahau et al., 2007). The fact that inquiry learning requires taking ownership of one's own learning process was also discussed by the students as they stated:

> *"You have to figure out what you are learning yourself." (Tempo)*

> *"You have more responsibility yourself to get the learning outcomes." (Abb a)*

Based on the interviews with the students, it seems like both teachers and students at the Porvoo campus have acknowledged their changing roles compared to traditional teaching methods. From a student perspective, this can though have both benefits and drawbacks.

5.3 The strengths and weaknesses of inquiry learning

Based on a study by Ikechukwu et al. (2022), the stakeholders of university programmes in tourism and hospitality identify competencies such as social skills, teamwork, adaptability, and creative problem-solving as crucial for graduates to succeed in their careers. Competencies of students are intensively discussed among the academic staff at the Porvoo campus, and there is a clear vision of which competencies are in focus during each year of the 3.5-year program. Students mentioned teamwork as one of the main benefits of inquiry learning. The following was, for instance, stated during the interviews:

> *"Learning to work in teams" (Pomo)*

> *"I know how to do and not to do things in a team" (Abb a)*

According to Archer-Kuhn and MacKinnon (2020), inquiry learning can enhance the motivation to learn and the self-confidence of the students at the same time as lifelong learning skills are developed. The more practical approach to learning at Porvoo Campus was appreciated by most students participating in the focus group interviews, as they, for instance, stated that:

> *"If only theory and no projects, it would be difficult to step into working life." (Pomo)*

> *"You remember things better when you have done them yourself." (Pomo)*

Birkle et al. (2017) found in their study about the motivation of tourism students in an inquiry learning project that working with real-life projects increases the motivation of the students to commit to their learning process. This

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point was confirmed in this study as the possibility of working with projects commissioned by companies was appreciated by the students. For instance, the following was identified as one of the benefits of inquiry learning as carried out at the Porvoo campus:

"Working with real companies." (Tempo)

"Connecting with commissioners is really useful. (Abb a)

The inquiry learning model applied at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus comprises phases like agreeing on a theoretical framework and collaborative knowledge creation (Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017; Ritalahti, 2015). To some surprise, the students participating in the focus groups identified the lack of theoretical knowledge as the main drawback of inquiry learning. The students in the Abb a, Tempo, and Pomo programmes discussed that the projects are often too practical and there is too little time to investigate theory thoroughly.

Archer-Kuhn and MacKinnon (2020) highlight the fact that inquiry learning focuses on the process rather than the final product, and thus, students cannot procrastinate their work towards the end of the semester. Some students might also face anxiety as the teacher does not have the answer to all the questions that arise. Students participating in the interviews mentioned that inquiry learning requires much work. Other challenges they mentioned were related to unclear guidelines and advice from teachers. A fact is, though, that teachers do not have the answers. Teachers are learning together with the students and the organisation offering the commission (Holmberg & Ritalahti, 2017; Ritalahti, 2015). Some students mentioned that inquiry learning can be a stressful approach if you do not get the support needed from the teachers:

"It's a little bit that you are thrown into the sea to check whether you can swim or not." (Abb a)

As inquiry learning is characterized by collaborative learning in student teams, the creation of the teams is an important phase at the beginning of the project. If the students cannot collaborate, their motivation and commitment are lost (Birkle et al., 2017). The conflicts in the teams of students doing the project were widely discussed during the interviews. Especially in the international programs (Tempo and Abb a), there seems to be a lot of conflict between the students in teams due to different levels of ambition among students.

5.4 Main findings

As the tourism industry is vulnerable, students in tourism programmes must have the capability to adapt to the changing needs of the industry after graduation (Edelheim, 2020; Minquez et al., 2021). Based on our findings, tourism and aviation students at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus can see the benefits of gaining competencies such as teamwork, stress management, and project management. Some students, though, criticise the lack of theoretical foundation in the projects. One reason for this identified drawback could be that sometimes

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the teachers, students and commissioners are eager to get results quickly. Instead of spending weeks reading literature and learning from previous projects, the focus is immediately on the "working together to create knowledge phase" of the inquiry learning model.

Inquiry learning is, when it works well, an excellent way of offering students the possibility to gain competencies needed in the tourism and aviation industry after graduation. To gain the benefits of a learning approach based on constructivism, the teachers involved need continuous training and mentoring. Most teachers have, as students, mainly experienced traditional approaches to learning and teaching. Inquiry learning means stepping out of the comfort zone for the teachers as well (Archer-Kuhn & MacKinnon, 2020). If teachers lack understanding of inquiry learning ideology, the learning experience of the students will be influenced negatively. Through continuous debate and sharing best practices, tourism and aviation business students will get even better learning experiences at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus and thereby they will have the competency to tackle wicked industry problems such as climate change and biodiversity loss when they step into the industry. As crises are likely to continue in the tourism and aviation industries, experiential learning approaches in such as inquiry learning is therefore a must in programmes aiming at preparing students for employment in these sectors. As Nikadimovs et al. (2017, p. 28) highlight "competencies are learnable but not teachable" and graduates with a range of competences and interest in continuous learning are likely to have successful careers in a job market that is very competitive (Putra et al., 2022).

6 Conclusion

Inquiry learning has been implemented at the Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus for 10 years. The beginning was not easy, and it took several years before most of the program directors and teachers accepted the new way of working. This is even if the choice of inquiry learning as the pedagogical approach was a joint and strategic decision. Still, there seems to be some variety of interpretations among the teachers of how inquiry learning should be implemented in practice, which is partly due to many new colleagues who were not involved in the initial development process. Some students have thereby been confused and uncertain about their learning in the projects. This study, though, confirms that students in tourism and aviation business programs can see the strengths of the learning by working with real projects. Students see the competencies they developed as beneficial, even though they would like to gain a deeper theoretical understanding as well.

To get the full use and benefits of inquiry learning, there is a need for a better focus on how to implement inquiry learning as a pedagogical approach. There is a need to Improve teachers' understanding of and commitment to inquiry learning as an approach to guarantee the quality of education in the tourism and aviation programmes at Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus. Inquiry learning offers a unique opportunity to give especially tourism and aviation business

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students an opportunity to gain competencies required by the industry. Especially as work in the tourism industry is usually rather operational and the industry expects graduates to cope with practical everyday challenges to be solved immediately.

This study confirms the challenges related to inquiry learning that have been discussed in numerous feedback sessions with student groups throughout the years. As only 18 students participated in the interviews, more interviews, as well as interviews a year after graduation, might have given different results. Many of the students participating in the interviews were rather critical at the time of the interviews. A fact is that in Finland, it is usually these students who volunteer to participate in interviews.

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The impact of sustainability in luxury hospitality and tourism education

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Abstract: *Over the last 30 years, there have been changes in what is considered luxury. The birth of luxury conglomerates and master's degree qualifications in luxury have emerged. However, at present, the luxury hospitality/tourism industry is in a paradoxical situation – while some people are demanding more and more luxury, others are demanding that luxury needs to be more sustainable. The worldwide hospitality/tourism industry is seen as being able to have a major impact on the sustainable development goals of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO): What role does education play in this context? There are 75 master's degree programmes in luxury worldwide, 71 of which are taught in English. Of the English programmes, ten of those are dedicated to hospitality/tourism/travel; however, little is known about what level of sustainability knowledge is imparted in these programmes. This chapter investigates current hospitality/tourism master's programmes in luxury (taught in English) and discusses how teaching sustainability could influence and create change in the luxury hospitality/tourism industry.*

Keywords: *Luxury, Education, Hospitality, Tourism, Sustainability*

1 Introduction

Luxury is certainly not a new concept. It can be traced back to the Palaeolithic period when luxury was perceived as a collective spiritual concept, and since that period, perspectives on luxury have changed dramatically. Over the past 30 years, interest in luxury has increased tenfold, the market has expanded significantly despite the economic downturn (Bain & Company, 2023) and research within academia has widened (Chandon et al., 2017); for education, this has resulted in the introduction of a master's qualification in luxury. Like luxury, master's degrees have been in existence for centuries, and their origins can be dated back to the medieval era. The Institut Supérieur de Marketing du Luxe (Sup de Luxe) was founded on the initiative of Cartier and introduced the first Master of Luxury degree in 1990 (Sup de Luxe, 2024). At present, worldwide, there are 75 master's in luxury programmes; the majority of these master's qualifications concentrate on the management, fashion, marketing and branding elements of luxury, and only ten concentrate on the hospitality, tourism, or travel element. For the purpose of this chapter, these ten programmes are examined to determine what academia is teaching in the area of sustainable luxury within the context of luxury hospitality and tourism postgraduate education.

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While perceptions of luxury have changed considerably since the Palaeolithic period, so has luxury itself – how it is defined, its changing values in regard to consumption, its experiential aspects, and how it has become more unconventional and sustainable. Defining luxury has always been problematic and, to date, there has been no clear definition as to what luxury is. Luxury used to be a privilege reserved for the affluent, and it was linked closely to wealth and position (Llamas & Thomsen, 2016). Luxury is associated with conspicuous spending, causing it to be perceived as elitist, exclusive, symbolic, prestigious, costly, and closely linked to products and their qualities (Godey et al., 2013). Apart from these traditional interpretations, there is currently another interpretation known as "new luxury", which is a hedonistic and emotional viewpoint on luxury defined by the subjectivity of the consumer's emotions, desires, and enjoyment (Godey et al., 2013). It has been suggested that contemporary luxury buyers use their purchases to find self-actualization and relief from stress by looking for values like equilibrium and balance (Hemetsberger et al., 2012). According to Eckhardt et al. (2015), the shift in luxury consumption towards experiences can be seen as discrete consumption, which also suggests that status is no longer the primary motivator for luxury (Cristini et al., 2017). Recent studies have identified the new form of luxury as unconventional luxury, focusing on consumers' private understandings of luxury and how it is experienced in response to the rise in discrete and private luxury consumption (Thomsen et al., 2020).

Therefore, our changing values regarding the consumption of luxury are adding to the multiple perspectives on luxury. The shift from product consumption to experiential luxury consumption is a notable trend in the luxury sector (Cristini et al., 2017). It has been suggested that luxury has evolved into a consumer's quest for significance by moving from owning to experiencing and from having to being (Cristini et al., 2017). This change has also seen some people demanding more from luxury, in the form of luxury experiences which are exclusive, have a high quality of service, are unique, rare and authentic, deliver perceptions of comfort and social status demonstrate conspicuous consumption, offer a personalized service, and have high levels of emotional and hedonic values (Harkison et al., 2018). On the other hand, other people are demanding that luxury be more sustainable. This has evolved from a change in consumer values, driven by a heightened awareness of sustainability and a growing demand for authentic and responsible experiences which are now reshaping the luxury tourism landscape (Manfreda et al., 2023). Consumers are increasingly integrating ecological, ethical, and environmental considerations into their luxury purchases. These factors have been identified as key influences in shaping the perceived value of luxury consumption, particularly among younger generations (Mora et al., 2018). For example, Gen Z and millennials account for at least 30 % of luxury brand sales, and by 2025 this is anticipated to increase to 45 % (Jain, 2020). Additionally, 73 % of millennial buyers would be prepared to pay a little bit extra for a luxury if it originated from a socially or sustainably conscious brand. This demonstrates that millennials are becoming more aware of global prob-

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lems and are motivated to act to improve things (Jain, 2020). The changes in consumers' values also affect the traditional luxury industries as they need to find ways to compete in the customer's mind in the sustainable luxury market. Batat (2019) argued that consumers want ideological value in the form of ethics or spirituality with the new forms of luxury.

In 2023, tourism was one of the top ten industries in the world by revenue ($2,029,7B) (WTTC, 2024) and it is estimated that, by 2030, there will be 1.8 billion arrivals (20 % of the population of the world will be travelling) (Mirashi, 2016). That means that every day, 5 million people will be crossing an international border for business, leisure or visiting their family and friends. Tourism sustainability is one of the significant potentials for fulfilling UNWTO's sustainable development goals by 2030. There is an extensive literature that has enabled us to have a better understanding of the role of higher education institutions in the pursuit of sustainable development. Unfortunately, however, there is a lack of literature that shows us what has been achieved (Findler et al., 2019; Piramanayagam et al., 2023), and there is even less literature for the specific case of hospitality and tourism education (Liu et al., 2017). At present, there is a consensus among stakeholders that academic institutions in Asia are not keeping pace with the rapid changes in the hospitality and tourism industry, particularly in terms of technology-driven advancements and sustainability practices (Teare, 2023).

So, as previously highlighted, due to its size, the luxury hospitality/tourism industry worldwide could be seen as a force to be reckoned with as it starts or continues to aim for the UNWTO's 2030 goals. And education on sustainable practices while people are studying could start to shape future hospitality/tourism leaders. This chapter aims to highlight how much sustainability is part of luxury master's programmes concentrating on hospitality/tourism/travel, and it seeks to raise awareness of and discuss how educators could teach sustainability in luxury tourism/hospitality postgraduate programmes.

2 Literature review

Before the UNWTO's sustainable development goals were launched in 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had launched its own initiatives for sustainability for academia in 2005 via the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014 (Piramanayagam et al., 2023). Sustainable development meant fostering peace, fighting against global warming, inequalities, the marginalization of females, and poverty, and having a different vision of the world (UNESCO, 2005b). The purpose of these initiatives was to encourage an integration of sustainable development beliefs, concepts and applications into all forms of education. It was expected that higher education institutions would change people's behaviour and ensure economic viability, environmental integrity and sustainability for present and future generations (UNESCO, 2005a).

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Paris (2016) had argued that, in higher education, the integration of sustainability is important for managers of the future to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to promote sustainable hospitality/tourism business activities. But Camargo and Gretzel (2017) stated that students lacked an understanding of sustainability concepts and only concentrated on the environmental part of sustainability. This was highlighted by Zhang and Tavitiyaman (2022), who stated that the triple-bottom lines (TBL) of environmental conservation, social justice, and economic growth were all as important as each other and that students needed a balanced understanding of all three areas. Previously, Dhiman (2008) had supported sustainable development beliefs but had suggested that it was important for stakeholders to stress there had to be a balanced understanding of the TBL. Optimizing the environmental, financial and social impacts of sustainability will become critically important to ensure that all businesses meet their goals in the future (Zhang & Tavitiyaman, 2022).

As previously stated, even though there is an extensive literature that has enabled us to gain an understanding of what role higher education institutions have had in the pursuit of sustainable development, there is still a lack of literature on what hospitality and tourism education has achieved. However, Zizka (2017) highlighted that there was a knowledge variation among first-year students in an international hospitality management programme in Switzerland regarding ethics, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), which had been formed by the influence of parents, friends, and school on students' knowledge. There was a high interest in learning about sustainability, followed by ethics, and a lower interest in learning about CSR among students, as they perceived sustainability as the most important topic, followed by ethics and then CSR (for both their academic and professional lives). Yet Arrobas et al. (2020) stated that sustainability had still not been fully integrated into hospitality/tourism education, and inequities between local communities and tourists were starting to become visible due to the growth in the hospitality/tourism industry.

Berjozkina and Melanthiou (2021) suggested that sustainability implementation in tourism/hospitality education is at a development stage, with a need for more integration into programme learning outcomes. Tourism/hospitality education is crucial due to the global importance of the industry and its significant employment opportunities. The evolution of tourism/hospitality education includes various academic levels, from diplomas to doctoral programmes. For example, Cyprus relies heavily on its tourism sector, with a significant contribution to the country's GDP, leading to growth in institutions offering related education. Challenges and opportunities in sustainability education emphasize the importance of equipping learners with skills to address sustainability issues effectively.

Zizka and Varga (2021) noted that over 67 % of higher education students in their study rated sustainability as extremely important for their professional lives, even though research had highlighted that embedding sustainability into

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all courses showed that students' knowledge improved more by conducting one intensive course. Zizka and Varga (2021) stated that higher education shaped future leaders, and played a significant role in doing so, their research was only conducted in degree programmes. So, they suggested that more research needed to be conducted in the other levels of higher education, for example, doctoral and master's programmes.

Hussain et al. (2023) highlighted that if hospitality and tourism programmes were to be sustainable practice-ready then the trainers and educators would also need to be ready, and that may also involve a change in mindset. They saw that there are challenges ahead in terms of the adaptability and motivation of hospitality educators in dealing with the trends and changes that are defining the hospitality industry. Kapoor et al. (2023) suggested that there is a need and opportunity for employers to step in and be part of engaging interns while they are on placement with them. Due to most hospitality programmes having a mandatory internship in their curriculum, this would give students an opportunity to experience theoretical sustainable practices in real life. Kapoor et al. (2023) also noted that industry is ahead of academia regarding sustainability practices and that students can be the change agent for academia – by being exposed to industry sustainability practices, they can go back to their institutes and push for them to embrace industry practices and introduce sustainability into the curriculum.

Sharma and Srivastava (2021) suggested that there were various ways courses can be modified so that undergraduate hospitality curricula can incorporate sustainability, and that it is important to try to reduce the gap that exists between academia and industry in their orientation towards sustainability. However, more recently, Kim (2023) noted that there are many curricula in higher education that are still overspecialized, unbalanced and mono-disciplinary – graduates are solving problems in isolation. A proposed solution to overcome this is to offer specialized sustainable development degrees but, although sustainability has started to be integrated into higher education, there have been limitations on who has been doing it and what has been done. Hughes et al. (2024) suggested using sustainability decoupling in hospitality education and employing the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Alzen, 1991) as a lens for assessing student sustainability attitudes – comparing sustainability commitment across different academic programmes. Hospitality programmes at university level emphasize environmental sustainability and have stronger faculty influence. Structural equation modelling showed a programme's impact on student sustainability intention through attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. It can be seen that hospitality/tourism education has a part to play in developing the leaders of the future, but with little literature on what is being taught in the postgraduate luxury space, research needs to be conducted to gain a clearer picture. Currently, no studies have been conducted on luxury education, and discussion about sustainability within the context of academia revolves around diverse perspectives – can luxury be sustainable and

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are the elements of sustainability impacting luxury experiences and luxury value?

3 Methods

The data that was used for this chapter is taken from a wider study the researchers had previously conducted on the introduction of luxury master's programmes. It is secondary data and collected from the curriculum of the ten master's in luxury programmes in hospitality/tourism/travel worldwide. Secondary data saves time and money, it is more easily available and accessible through online social media, annual reports, publications and websites (Connelly, 2017). Through a Google search in English, both researchers (one located in the northern hemisphere and one in the southern hemisphere) determined that there were 75 luxury master's programmes, with ten of them having 'travel', 'tourism', or 'hospitality' in the title or in the name of the institution. The data from these programmes was then taken from their websites and analysed via the website content analysis process where, after formulating the research question, the next step was to select a sample, define categories, train coders and determine reliability, then analyse and interpret data (McMillan, 2000). The research question was to determine if sustainability was taught in these master's programmes. Aiming to answer the research question – how sustainability is visible in the curricula of the programmes, the sample was ten master's programmes – Table 1 shows the titles of these programmes and the university. The data was manually coded by the researchers in Excel sheets, and each researcher's work was checked by the other to ensure the continuity of the analysis and interpretation of the data. The findings obtained from this data are shown below, followed by a discussion.

Table 1: Titles of master's degree programmes

Titles of Master programmes
MSc in International Hospitality Management – Institut Lyfe
Masters in Marketing and Management for Luxury Tourism – Les Roches
Digital Hospitality and Travel Leadership – MSc – University of West London, Meridean Overseas Education Consultants
Luxury Hospitality Management – MA – University of West London, London Geller College of Hospitality and Tourism
Master of Hospitality Management: Luxury and Lifestyle – Université Saint Joseph
MBA International Hospitality and Luxury Brand Management – CMH
Master in Luxury/VIP Management – HTL – International School of Hospitality Tourism & Languages
Master of Science (MSc) in Luxury Experiences Management – The Hong Kong Polytechnic University – School of Hotel and Tourism Management

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Titles of Master programmes
MSc in International Hospitality Management – Institut Lyfe
Master of Science in Luxury Management and Guest Experience – Glion Institute of Higher Education
MSc Ferrières – International Leadership and Innovation, Hospitality and Luxury Management – Ferrières Hospitality & Luxury Management School

Source: author's work

4 Findings

Upon analysis of the master's degree programmes in luxury hospitality/tourism/travel and the rationale behind them, four general themes emerged (see Figure 1). The first theme is globalization, which gives students a focus on luxury both domestically and globally. Second, a recurring subject area is the future of luxury in terms of products and services. This is demonstrated by trends and insights that indicate experiential goods will be major factors in future luxury. Real-life or authentic assessment, which exposes students to industry practice and techniques through real-life projects and problems, is the third theme. Finally, studies in hospitality and tourism put a strong emphasis on management and leadership skills as students advance their careers, gaining knowledge from a variety of interdisciplinary fields, developing their research skills, learning about technology trends, marketing strategies, and innovation.

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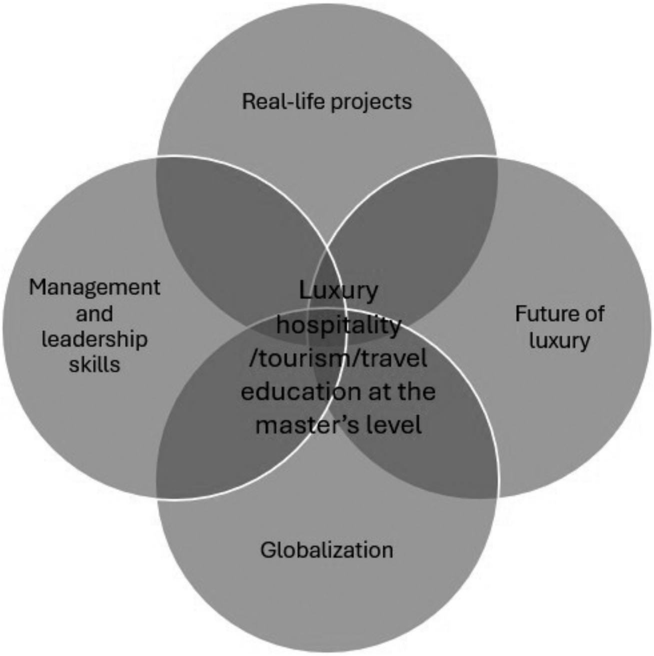

Figure 1 Content of luxury hospitality/tourism/travel education at the master´s level
Source: author's work

However, the findings relating to sustainability are disappointing. Before any more of the findings are presented, it is noteworthy that the data from the wider study showed that sustainability, a key aspect of the contemporary luxury industry, is found in the title of only one of the 75 luxury master's degrees. However, it is highlighted within the marketing text of 12 of the 75 programmes.

Among the ten luxury master's in hospitality/tourism/travel, sustainability is mentioned in just one curriculum. In this programme, the course is part of the compulsory studies titled Sustainable Luxury and Design, which raises the question of whether the content of the course is about sustainable luxury in the hospitality and tourism industry or it has a generic perspective on sustainability. In addition, as only one of the luxury hospitality/tourism/travel programmes discusses sustainability, it raises the question of what sustainability teaching is happening, and what its impacts are on students and at what level. Furthermore, as there is no clarity regarding the content, it is hard to determine what, if any, form of sustainability is actually integrated into the programmes. In addition, it needs to be highlighted that although sustainability may be missing from an institution's website, it does not mean to say that it is not being taught in that institution's luxury master's programme.

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5 Discussion

As previously discussed, the hospitality/tourism industry and the education sector involve a vast number of people. If 1.8 billion people are travelling in 2030 – (20 % of the population will be on the move) (Mirashi, 2016) – this will affect the sustainability of the world, and education will play a pivotal role in addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the growing travel and tourism sector.

The UNWTO acknowledges that education, training, and research are crucial elements in guaranteeing the long-term viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations (Grandcourt, 2020) If the industry does not acknowledge the importance of sustainability and ensuring sustainable practices, it will also negatively affect the entire sector. As the industry grows, there will be a growing demand for qualified people who are educated about sustainable practices. Education programmes can prepare students to meet these demands by preparing skilled professionals, adding to the industry's overall sustainability. As previously noted by Bakker (2005), luxury hospitality and tourism research has the opportunity to serve as a role model, and research into customer experiences can be incorporated into other service industries. Furthermore, the negative connotation which is sometimes attached to luxury consumption (Eckhardt et al., 2015; Goor et al., 2020) may be diminished by taking sustainable practices into account. However, based on the findings of the present study, luxury hospitality and tourism education programmes should incorporate sustainability principles into their curricula to answer the call of the UNWTO. The lack of education in sustainability suggests a potential area for improvement in these programs' curricula.

The lack of sustainability education, at least as evident from the programmes, may have many causes. According to Munjal and Sharma (2023), faculty members at educational institutions often lack comprehensive expertise or training in, or understanding of sustainability challenges, their implications, and viable strategies. Consequently, their ability to contribute meaningfully to the classroom discussion on the subject matter is limited, and they lack knowledge of the practical methods employed by the industry. Munjal and Sharma (2023) suggested that in order to increase understanding, training sessions should be organized in a train-the-trainer approach, with the explicit goal of equipping faculty with the necessary skills and knowledge in sustainability. This will enable them to enhance the teaching and learning experience by imparting valuable skills and knowledge in this area. Furthermore, most educational institutions do not adopt significant policy measures to effectively implement sustainable practices on their campuses, resulting in a lack of tangible evidence of their commitment. This further weakens sustainability practices' narrative and scholarly expression (Munjal & Sharma, 2023). This can easily be modified by making sustainability thinking one of the main visible goals of institutions and the education they offer.

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The challenge with luxury is that cultural characteristics are acknowledged as significant factors in comprehending luxury. Previous research has observed differences in how luxury is perceived in various nations (Hennigs et al., 2012). As the perspectives on luxury may differ, the link to sustainability from the industry is not always clear. The luxury market, which has been traditionally defined by extravagance, exclusivity, and richness, frequently contrasts sharply with the ideas of sustainability. Environmental conservation, moral behaviour, and responsible resource management are prioritized by proponents of sustainability. It needs to be noted that sustainability can be implemented very differently in each luxury sector: in the car industry, regulators are putting pressure on manufacturers with actions being taken partially voluntarily. However, the luxury lodging/hospitality sectors have been very active in recent decades, in terms of environmental sustainability, yet the jewellery/watch industries continue to face challenges related to the ethical sourcing of raw materials. Therefore, in the context of luxury literature, the scholarly research on luxury has presented differing viewpoints on the potential contradiction between luxury and sustainability, ranging from pessimistic to optimistic (Amatulli et al., 2021). These dichotomies may impact the understanding of the importance of sustainability in luxury education. However, as previously noted, due to shifts in luxury and consumer culture, luxury consumers have become more diverse (Iloranta, 2021), and they now seek many forms of value from their luxury purchases (Hennigs et al., 2012). Some researchers have suggested that luxury consumption is shifting towards inconspicuous kinds of consumption (Eckhardt et al., 2015). The changes in the understanding and purchase of luxury can be attributed to the influence of 'masstige' (the blending of luxury and mass-market appeal) (Eckhardt et al., 2015). Additionally, the consumption of luxury is no longer limited to specific socioeconomic classes or conspicuous brand names (Hemetsberger et al., 2012). According to Mora et al. (2018), the shift in consumer behaviour suggests that people now view an abundance of consumer goods as a sign of wealth and affluence, leading to a focus on intangible factors like wellness and happiness as the ultimate indicators of contemporary luxury. Research indicates that experiences, with their intangible elements, are more likely to make individuals happier than material belongings (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012). Experiences, as opposed to material belongings, are more closely self-related, and are less prone to cause regret in the way a person has spent their money (Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2012), since they aim to produce enduring memories and hedonic values (Nicolao et al., 2009). These changes may also be connected to the slow transition from materialistic to post-materialistic ideals in Western cultures (Belk, 2020). The perception of luxury is evolving in societies as a result of economic, technological, social, and political influences (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Therefore, as Jain et al. (2023) emphasized, sustainability is an essential aspect of luxury hospitality and should be integrated into the business model and effectively communicated to all stakeholders through proper channels of communication. Nevertheless, it is vital to carry out the activity in a manner that upholds the luxury aspects and provides a luxurious

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encounter for customers (Jain et al., 2023). Kapferer and Michaut (2015) argued that sustainability is intricately linked to luxury since it embodies the notion of superior quality from the standpoint of luxury consumers. When discussing luxury tourism, sustainability is acknowledged as encompassing authenticity and promoting a sense of significance in luxury experiences (Iloranta, 2019, 2021; Iloranta & Komppula, 2022). In summary, the changes in luxury consumption and the dichotomous perspectives on sustainability as a part of luxury in this context may also have implications for luxury education as they are the missing link between it and sustainability.

To tackle these challenges, universities and other educational institutions offering luxury hospitality/tourism programmes should also demonstrate their commitment to sustainability through their own operations and campus initiatives. It is not only educating students about sustainability in a luxury context and how the negative impacts can be minimized. Institutions need to incorporate sustainable practices into their campus operations (using energy-efficient buildings, renewable energy sources, water conservation measures, and extensive recycling programmes). Making sustainability visible on campuses, and in daily operations, shows commitment and underlines its importance. From the social sustainability perspective, creating an inclusive, equitable, and supportive environment for all members of the community is essential. This can be done by integrating social sustainability topics in the curriculum across various disciplines, including courses on social justice, equity, and community engagement in luxury business. Universities may develop policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, including the provision of support services for underrepresented and marginalized groups and creating safe and accessible spaces for all students, staff, and faculty to gather, collaborate, and express themselves. The social perspective should not only be visible inside the university but should also foster partnerships with local communities to address social issues and create mutual benefits (in, for example, service-learning projects, community-based research, and volunteer programmes).

In addition, encouraging research and innovation in sustainability within luxury hospitality/tourism education is essential for advancing knowledge and practices in this field. An institution's dedication to advancing sustainable solutions is demonstrated by prioritising research that addresses sustainability concerns (Ralph & Stubbs, 2013). Obtaining grants or offering reward systems in their salaries for educators who research could emphasize sustainability issues, and the innovations, and practices in a particular field (Munjal & Sharma, 2023).

Establishing collaborations with sustainability-oriented organizations can amplify the institution's endeavours and generate tangible outcomes. From the practitioner perspective, providing students with experiential learning opportunities focused on sustainability is crucial. Collaborating with luxury hospitality brands, sustainable tourism organizations, and environmental non-governmental organizations can expose students to real-world sustainable initiatives. Engaging with stakeholders is crucial for acquiring knowledge about sustain-

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ability in the hospitality/tourism sector. Nevertheless, disparities arise in the way industry professionals/students perceive sustainability matters. Therefore, student internships should be utilized to facilitate the transfer of research and knowledge regarding sustainability-related practices between academia and industry, resulting in reciprocal advantages. There is a chance to incorporate project-based learning initiatives into academic credit programmes. However, these programmes will require the integration of internships where students can observe, document, and learn about sustainability practices in hospitality/tourism businesses, in addition to the current focus on operational learning (Munjal & Sharma, 2023).

Furthermore, as the perspective in the master's studies is managerial, educating future leaders in the luxury hospitality/tourism industry about ethical and responsible leadership is fundamental. This is vital as some countries are suffering from a lack of employees and are having difficulty keeping the industry attractive. Integrating sustainability concepts cultivates a perception of ethical leadership among students. It is hoped that individuals who complete these programmes will uphold these ideals in their careers, thereby exerting a favourable influence on the industry.

Luxury hospitality/tourism education should also emphasize the importance of community engagement and social impact. Only one curriculum explicitly mentioned sustainability but it did not mention the perspective of the hospitality/tourism industry. Tourism is different from many other industries, as the number of stakeholders is large and the industry requires specialist knowledge about its impacts on sustainability for it to be regarded as 'regular luxury'. Teaching sustainability in the context of tourism/hospitality is, therefore, essential. Participating in sustainability projects with the local community and different stakeholders can showcase an institution's dedication to creating a beneficial influence outside its campuses while giving practical skills to their students and community.

Examining the programmes' curricula and their delivery raises questions about these curricula, which may be partly outdated or may not have room for contemporary issues such as sustainability and climate change. Munjal and Sharma (2023) also noted this in the Indian context. However, consumers are increasingly seeking ethical and environmentally friendly products and services, leading to a market shift towards sustainability. By conforming to this prevailing pattern, educational institutions guarantee that their programmes stay pertinent and sought-after. Furthermore, integrating sustainability into the curriculum demonstrates a commitment to educating students about the significance of sustainable practices.

Sustainability could also be used as a marketing message and added value in programmes, differentiating them from others and offering a competitive advantage to them. Programmes that integrate sustainability ideas might differentiate themselves from conventional offerings, appealing to students seeking education that corresponds with their values. The new generation of students

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values sustainability issues in the context of luxury. Contemporary students are increasingly aware of ecological and societal concerns. They actively search for organizations that align with their dedication to sustainability, particularly in industries linked to luxury, where the effects of consumption are more noticeable. By adopting sustainability principles, educational institutions can enhance the competitiveness of their programmes and their graduates, aligning with the market's increasing focus on sustainability. Educational institutions that incorporate sustainability into their curriculum are seen as progressive and pioneering.

Sustainability represents more than simply a temporary trend; it signifies a lasting transformation in the way organizations function. Sustainability needs to be made visible and measurable and must have someone in the organization in charge of it. Providing transparent and open information about sustainability goals, efforts, and achievements may ensure that the institution is held to be responsible for and demonstrates its commitment to ongoing improvement. By researching the structures and challenges relating to why sustainability is missing from luxury hospitality/tourism, institutions can understand it better and recognize how it can be added to their structures.

Concentrating on the points noted above may highlight the importance of sustainable luxury hospitality/tourism education on many levels. Making it one of the goals of education will enhance the willingness of staff, students, and industry practitioners to readily accept and adapt to change. The sector can benefit from global best practices and research by exploring these choices. By integrating sustainability into their curricula, educational institutions equip their students with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to thrive in the industry's future, ensuring long-lasting value (Zhang & Tavitiyaman, 2022).

6 Conclusions

Ultimately, including sustainability principles in luxury hospitality/tourism master's education programmes serves as both a direct reaction to the UNWTO's request and a strategic measure to equip the industry for a sustainable future. It guarantees that the sector makes a positive contribution to global sustainability while training people to run the industry responsibly.

This chapter raises questions about the level of sustainability in luxury master's programmes and what has been done so far. Is sustainability embedded in all courses, or is it a separate course? Is this being done on a superficial level, or are students given practical examples that require them to reflect on sustainability. In companies where they do their internships, can they bridge the academic–practice gap? It may be easier to conduct sustainability education in undergraduate degree programmes in countries such as Finland and New Zealand, as ideas about sustainability are embedded in regulations and laws that support the practices of tourism companies. For the luxury industry to develop

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towards sustainability, there needs to be a real impact on education, showing examples of how to put sustainability into practice.

Naturally, there are limitations in doing a web content analysis: it did not give a full picture of what is taught in each module, and future research could help to determine what is actually being taught, but initial indications are disappointing. Furthermore, there is so much that academia and industry could do together to ensure the advancement of a much-needed sustainability agenda; it could be said that it is already too late, so it is essential that we start to collaborate now. Educators have the ability to influence future leaders before they go into industry and provide them with the tools they would need to change the hospitality/tourism industry. And the industry needs to ensure that this change also starts now with the employees they have, and by supporting future employees.

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Coaching as a tool for enhancing entrepreneurship among tourism students

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Abstract: *Entrepreneurship education (EE) and entrepreneurship hubs have been introduced at universities worldwide. These hubs are influenced by innovative and experiential ways of teaching and learning, e.g., coaching. At its best, coaching can result in meaningful learning experiences for students interested in entrepreneurship. As coaching is a fairly novel approach to teaching and learning at universities, and especially in tourism programmes, the focus of this paper is to gain an understanding of how coaches work to advance entrepreneurship among students, a perspective that has not been studied that much before. The data collection was done through semi-structured interviews with six experienced entrepreneurship coaches of the entrepreneurship hub "Haaga-Helia StartUp School". The main findings of the study indicate that successful coaching results in the learning and personal growth of the student coachees. However, coaching must be based on a clear process, including trust and commitment, as well as efficient communication between the coach and the coachee. Coaches should focus on listening and asking questions as well as empowering the coachees. In this study, the perspective of the coach is narrated in the form of a persona, Coco the Coach.*

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, University Students, Coaching*

1 Introduction

Tourism is a very labour-intensive industry, representing around 10 % of all jobs worldwide and generating about 10 % of global GDP prior to the pandemic (WTTC, 2024). Gaining entrepreneurial competences is especially important for tourism and hospitality students as many tourism companies are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) or family businesses, where an entrepreneurial mindset along with an attitude for innovations and transformations are essential for thriving and surviving (Chang, 2011; Kuratko, 2005). The idea of enhancing an entrepreneurial mindset and entrepreneurial skills has been brought into university education especially in tourism and business programmes (Ahmad et al., 2018; Kuratko, 2005). Entrepreneurship education aims to equip students with entrepreneurial skills and encourage them to venture into business by advancing an entrepreneurial mindset needed to make SMEs successful through innovation and business transformation.

Across the world, the traditional teaching methods of universities have given way to more innovative and experiential approaches (Charrón Vías & Rivera-Cruz, 2020; Holmberg et al., 2022). In these student-centred methods, coaching

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students individually or as groups has a lot to offer. Coaching competencies have been an integral part of teacher transformation. Many lecturers have undergone in-house coaching training to better fit their new roles. For instance, at the university in focus for this article, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences, all students receive coaching in one form or another. At Haaga-Helia UAS, coaching is an important part of helping students to proceed in their studies, especially when students work in projects together with the industry (see e.g., Ritalahti, 2015). At Haaga-Helia UAS StartUp School, coaching is offered to aspiring student entrepreneurs and to students who already have a business of their own (Haaga-Helia, 2024). The lecturers working as coaches at the StartUp School entrepreneurship hub have experience from business or from running their own company, usually from the service industries such as hospitality and tourism. There is limited understanding of what constitutes a successful entrepreneurship coaching process from the coaches' perspective.

The entrepreneurship centres and the coaching of students have been studied in a traditional university setting in Sweden (Mansoori et al., 2019), but so far, coaching for entrepreneurship has mostly been studied on a theoretical level, relatively few empirical studies exist (Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018). Moreover, most studies have focused on the concept of mentoring (see Nabi et al., 2021) in research related to student entrepreneurship. This study brings in the perspective of coaching for entrepreneurship at a university of applied sciences in Finland.

Recognising the consensus that university students require practical tools for their future careers as entrepreneurs, this study aims to explore coaches' perspectives on what constitutes a successful coaching process for students aspiring to become entrepreneurs. Coaching is a participatory, self-directed and experiential learning approach, answering the calls for novel pedagogical approaches at universities (e.g., Birkle et al., 2017; Holmberg et al., 2022; Motta et al., 2023; Somià et al., 2024).

The paper first presents the literature review and the method of data collection. Then, the results of the interviews and the narrative are provided. The paper finishes with a discussion and conclusions.

2 The changing nature of entrepreneurship education

An entrepreneur is someone who creates a new business in the face of risk and uncertainty to achieve profit and growth by identifying opportunities and assembling the necessary resources to capitalise on them (Mouammar & Bazan, 2021; Zimmerer & Scourborough, 2006). In short, entrepreneurship is about creating value (Bjerke, 2007). Entrepreneurs are often seen as heroes as they can bear risks and face uncertainty better than average people. A successful entrepreneur is often described as someone having a strong drive for independence and success. In the postmodern society, where, for instance, globalisation, climate change, and digitalisation create both challenges and opportunities, entre-

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preneurship is regarded as a source for innovation, providing opportunities for the development of completely new business models and industries (Lozic et al., 2019).

Entrepreneurship is perceived to increase economic prosperity and innovation. Currently, university students appreciate the opportunities to develop an entrepreneurial mindset, characteristics like risk-taking and skills like problem-solving due to the success of entrepreneurs like Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, and Richard Branson. Thus, various kinds of entrepreneurship education (EE) are offered at many universities worldwide (Mansoori et al., 2019; Pokidko, 2020). There are also numerous examples from around the world of entrepreneurship education offered to students in tourism and hospitality programmes. EE is developed to increase the employability and self-employment of graduates and to enhance innovation capacity needed to make tourism and hospitality SMEs successful. (e.g., Ahmad, 2015; Bhat, et al., 2023; Chang, 2011; Ntshangase & Ezeuduji, 2023.)

All education institutions want to equip their students with the skills they need in their jobs when they graduate. The curricula at universities are constantly being developed to respond to the skills sets of tomorrow. The most urgent skills graduates need to develop are the transversal skills, along with digital skills, all needed in entrepreneurship (Ezeuduji et al., 2022). Offering students a possibility to work with their own business idea together with a coach is one method to enhance transversal skills and an entrepreneurial mindset in a business-like context. As traditional industries, tourism intermediaries included, are challenged by disruptions such as artificial intelligence, there is a constant need for new companies to replace the old. Thus, the more university graduates eager to start a business, the more likely it is that the disappearing job opportunities can be replaced with new ones (Laguna-Sánchez et al., 2020; Putans et al., 2022).

EE is a learning process of developing knowledge, skills and attitudes to create pathways to transfer creative ideas into entrepreneurial action (du Toit & Kempen, 2020; Haneberg et al., 2022; Kotte et al., 2020; Pihie & Arivayagan, 2016). First and foremost, entrepreneurship education aims at enhancing the entrepreneurial mindset which is related to creative thinking. The mindset is also dependent on competencies such as self-management, resilience, and the ability to learn from failure (Carolis & Litzky, 2019; Phie & Arivayagan, 2016). Entrepreneurial skills could be developed in a university setting (see, e.g., Arranz, et al., 2017), even if the process of learning about entrepreneurship skills is complex in nature (Holmberg & Habyiakare, 2018). Thus, a typical business school curriculum can seldom enhance skills and mindsets related to entrepreneurship (Pihie & Sani, 2009; Carolis & Litzky, 2019; Motta & Galina, 2023). At universities, teaching entrepreneurship is often influenced by a business school model, i.e., entrepreneurship studies are offered through courses in finance, accounting, marketing, and business planning. By acquiring this knowledge, it is expected that graduates have the competencies to become entrepreneurs (Mouammar & Bazan, 2021). University teaching and learning in a traditional

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way can even contribute to making students too analytical and risk averse (Arranz et al., 2017). To be highlighted is that EE in its purest form aims at taking the entrepreneurial intention into actual behaviour, preferably already during the time at the university (Donaldson et al., 2023; Mansoori et al., 2019).

Since entrepreneurial skills, according to Daniel et al. (2017, p. 66) are related to "an individual's ability to turn ideas into actions, and includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives" there is a need for a new pedagogical approach. Carolis and Litzky (2019) highlight that the entrepreneurial mindset required of future entrepreneurs can be supported at the university by taking a learning approach enhancing creativity, empathy, resilience, self-sufficiency, and ability to learn from failure. Thus, the twenty-first-century approach to learning entrepreneurship at university level should focus on giving students tools to learn and act as an entrepreneur, and even as an employee of a company, they can behave enterprisingly as intrapreneurs.

As learning about entrepreneurship is a process, the learning environment where EE takes place should support the learning (Ritalahti, 2015) and the teaching approach should preferably be experiential (Carolis & Litzky, 2019; Daniel et al., 2017; Motta & Galina, 2022 Pokidko, 2020). Moreover, students often decide their career paths and prepare for life after graduation during their studies. In the volatile, uncertain and competitive world with rapidly changing technological, consumer and environmental trends, tourism and hospitality graduates need to be equipped with entrepreneurial skills. These skills will make it more likely for them to consider entrepreneurship as a career option or to behave more like an entrepreneur within an organisation, utilising non-cognitive skills like proactiveness, creativity and problem-solving, and having a meaningful professional life (Daniel et al., 2017).

Universities have an important role in enhancing entrepreneurship, as dynamic entrepreneurship ecosystems depend on new innovations and new entrepreneurs (Arranz et al., 2017; Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018). One approach to encourage entrepreneurial intentions and attitudes at universities is to establish an entrepreneurship hub, sometimes combined with an incubation centre. These hubs offer courses, training, mentorship and coaching to students interested in learning and often pursue the first entrepreneurial steps (Banele et al., 2023). Moreover, the idea of the hubs is to enhance the entrepreneurial mindsets of students and to support the local or regional entrepreneurial ecosystem. From a tourism student perspective, these hubs offer an opportunity to experiment and explore, test, and even fail with their business ideas and to develop the abilities to reach their dreams (Allahar & Sookram, 2019; Mouammar & Bazan, 2021). Students trying out entrepreneurship at an incubator hub established by the university are usually supported by one or several coaches. As coaching is an individualistic and active way to learn entrepreneurship, it has been introduced in different entrepreneurial contexts, including universities and their ecosystems.

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3 Coaching for entrepreneurship

3.1 Coaching in different contexts

Coaching and mentoring programs have grown in popularity in recent years. Coaching practices have roots in sports, education and psychology. The methods used in coaching were developed already in the medieval times when apprentices learnt the tricks of the trade from the experts. During the last decades coaching has become popular also in a business setting (Audet & Couteret, 2012).

From a scientific point of view, the concept of coaching has been defined in different ways. What is common for all definitions is that coaching plays an essential role in the developing skills and competencies (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018). According to Roša and Lace (2021, p. 233), coaching is a process where the coach facilitates the self-directed learning of individuals to trigger knowledge creation and transformation by revealing their potential and enhancing awareness of new opportunities and points of view. Coaching can also be defined as a professional partnership between the coach and the coachee to increase the professional competency and career capital of the coachees (Salomaa, 2017; Al Hilali et al., 2020, p. 42). In this study, the authors adhere to the definition by Audet and Couteret (2012, p. 516) stating that coaching is a support structure that facilitates learning and development of the coachee's potential.

The terms "mentoring," "coaching," "supervision", or even "therapy" have been used interchangeably in the literature (Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018; Mok & Staub, 2021). When comparing mentoring and coaching, though, mentoring is a knowledge transfer process between a more experienced person and a novice (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Mouammar & Bazan, 2021). Coaching, on the other hand, focuses on behavioural changes and an increase of self-awareness (e.g. Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018; Grant & Stober, 2006; Roša & Lace, 2021; Somiá et al., 2024). Ellinger and Kim (2014, p. 130) state that coaching enhances the performance, effectiveness, improvement, and diverse skills of the coachees. Self-efficacy, i.e., an individual's belief in their own capacity and the motivation of the coachee, have been identified as key components in the coaching process as coaching concentrates on setting goals and finding solutions to reach them (Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018).

As becoming an entrepreneur is demanding, most new entrepreneurs benefit from external support from a coach (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Kuratko et al., 2021). However, in an entrepreneurship context, the concept of coaching lacks a clear definition (Kotte et al., 2023). Entrepreneurial coaching has been defined as individualised support provided by a coach to entrepreneurs in early start-up stages of their entrepreneurial activities to help them develop, grow, and acquire necessary skills (Audet & Couteret, 2012, p. 516; Mansoori et al., 2019, p. 38). Entrepreneurial coaching, however, is not always limited to the phase

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when it is time to start up a business; it comprises the whole process of finding and exploiting novel opportunities (Kotte et al., 2023).

A coach supporting new entrepreneurs needs mainly business relevant knowledge and to a lesser extent experience from entrepreneurship. Moreover, entrepreneurial coaching is usually personalised, i.e., instead of focusing on business related challenges, the focus is on self-awareness and personal growth as an entrepreneur (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Somià et al., 2024).

Entrepreneurial coaching relationships can be divided into functionalist, engagement and evolutionary coaching relationships. Functionalist coaching is advice-driven and characterised by single-loop learning, whereas engagement coaching emphasises the improvement of routines with some focus on learning and change. In the evolutionary coaching approach, the aim is transformation, i.e., fundamental change in how the coachee thinks. The emphasis is on the coachees taking ownership of their learning and development (Mansoori et al., 2019). The relationship between the coach and the coachee is important. The success of the coaching process depends on factors such as equality of power, experience of collaborative learning and communication. In a well-functioning coach-coachee relationship, the coach is more a facilitator or catalyst for learning than a traditional teacher (Audet & Couteret, 2012). Thus, unnecessary hierarchical barriers should be avoided, as the relationship between the coach and the coachee should be based on mutual respect and trust (Somià et al., 2024).

Coaching in a university setting is often seen as a form of “mentoring” (Bettinger & Baker, 2014) or facilitation of learning (Mansoori et al., 2019; Roša & Lace, 2021). Coaching has also been used to engage students in their studies, to improve academic success and student retention (Bettinger & Baker, 2014; Robinson & Gahagan, 2010), student experience (Lancer & Eatough, 2018), and online career planning (Lee et al., 2022). When working with students interested in entrepreneurship, coaching can also be seen as a start-up consultancy (Kotte et al., 2023). In recent years, coaching has become an increasingly popular learning approach at universities, especially in entrepreneurship and business idea creation (e.g., Holmberg & Habiyakare, 2018), accelerator and incubator programmes (Mansoori et al., 2019), and in design thinking (Konttinen & Moilanen, 2021). Coaching provides students with a way to reflect on their interests, motivation, resources, and plans, especially in the early phase of their entrepreneurial path. Coaching students for entrepreneurship enhances the development of entrepreneurial skills and competencies such as self-awareness and commitment (Roša & Lace, 2021; Somià et al., 2024). The coaching sessions must support the development of the necessary skills and expertise as student entrepreneurs often lack knowledge and experience (Mansoori et al., 2019). Coaches can prepare and encourage students to become more able to take on and complete complex tasks and with competencies such as time management, communication skills, creativity, complex problem-solving and collaboration, many of them critical to entrepreneurial activity as well (Saukkonen et al., 2016).

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Thus, the twenty-first-century approach to learning entrepreneurship at university level should focus on giving students tools to learn and act as entrepreneurs (Somià et al., 2024). Coaching is also a creative process to maximise potential. For university students, coaching can speed up their development and progress as entrepreneurs, give them increased control and confidence over their work, better balance and focus as well as new perspectives on various issues. Successful coaching outcomes, though, require a sufficient coaching process.

3.2 The coaching process

According to Bachkirova (2010), coaching involves an intervention, a structured interaction with various strategies, tools, and techniques including open questions and listening. Coaching promotes sustainable, positive changes for the coachees who, however, are responsible for their own development and activities. Moreover, coaching enhances the performance, effectiveness, improvement, and diverse skills of the coachees (Ellinger & Kim, 2014). In short, coaching is a development process of the coachees, aiming at behavioural change and shifts in thinking (Roša & Lace, 2021). The process typically lasts for a relatively short and predefined period (Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018).

Even though coaching is a relatively new tool for supporting development, the approach is often applied. Although there is limited research about the usefulness and effectiveness of coaching and the need for coachability in an entrepreneurship context (e.g., Roša & Lace, 2021; Somià et al., 2024) there are some publications (e.g., Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Kilburg, 1996; Salomaa, 2017) that discuss the process of coaching. Entrepreneurial coaching usually follows the same process as any other coaching process. Robinson and Gahagan (2010) identify, for instance, phases such as reflection, planning, goal setting, and individual support. The coaching process promotes sustainable, positive changes for the coachees (Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, offline coaching was often replaced by online coaching processes. There are already studies about the effects of virtual coaching (e.g., Cilliers et al., 2022), which is often seen as a cost-effective way to enable professional development and reach a large audience but lacking the kind of support given in face-to-face sessions. Technological issues and poor internet connections have also been known to hinder virtual coaching, especially in developing countries. However, there is also research about achieving similar benefits through online coaching and learning processes than face-to-face coaching (e.g., Konttinen & Moilanen, 2021). New technologies can at least give coaches a wider reach to conduct coaching across geographical boundaries.

Even though there is no official or universally accepted coaching process set in stone, a successful coaching process, be it face-to-face or online, is usually based on clear goal setting, planning and reflection.

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3.3 Elements of successful coaching

Coaching practices usually share some elements. Successful coaching at universities and businesses always includes asking questions, helping coachees to set up goals and ways to measure them, keeping in regular contact and following up on progress as well as offering encouragement along the way. The coachees are, by no means, passive receivers of coaching, but need to act, report on progress, and engage with the coach throughout the development process. Coaching is an active and collaborative way of learning, where both the coach and the coachee learn along the way, the coach facilitating and speeding up learning (Mansoori et al., 2019).

To be effective, a coach needs to understand coaching as a method as well as its styles and techniques (Al Hilali et al., 2020). The role of the coach is to listen, clarify and encourage reflection (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Mansoori et al., 2019). According to Batista (2015), coaches focus on connecting with the coachees and inspiring them, helping them to do their best and grow during the process. This is done by asking questions, listening, and empathising. Even if the coaches are professionals, they do not need to have domain-specific expertise in the field they are coaching (Salomaa, 2017). From the beginning, the coach should build trust and mutual respect (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Somià et al., 2024). The coaching relationship between the coach and coachee is not authoritarian, but rather egalitarian and collaborative, and has been described as a partnership. The coach can be seen as a "fellow traveller", an energiser, trainer or adviser, who can crystallise visions and values together with the coachee (Audet & Couteret, 2012).

Figure 1 summarises the principles of the coach. The coach should be motivated and committed, be prepared to give continuous feedback and support and believe in the potential of the coachee (FME, 2013; Somià et al., 2024). The coach should empower the coachees to make their own decisions (Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018).

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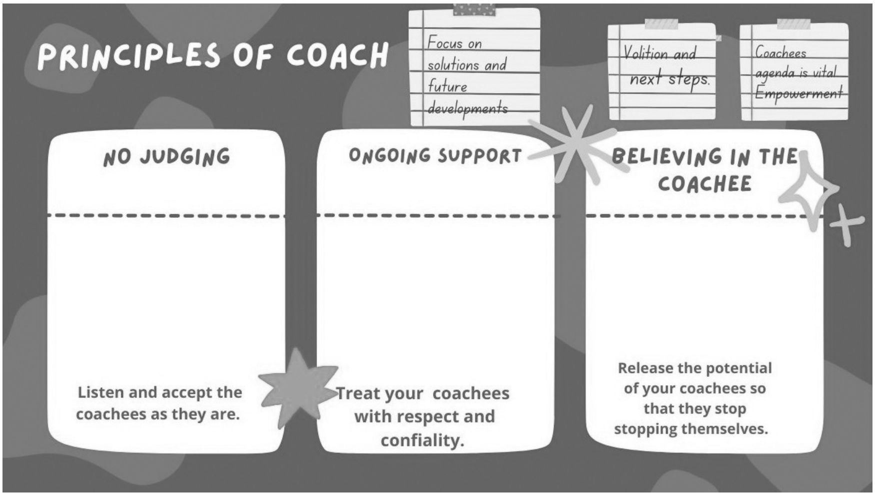

Figure 1: Principles of the coach
Source: Adapted from FME, 2013

For successful coaching, the coachees should show coachability, i.e., they should have willingness to learn and have an ability to react to feedback (Kuratko et al., 2021; Somià et al., 2024). Coachability is a competency that can be improved over time. Coachability can be defined as competencies crucial for the achievement of coaching goals such as self-awareness, commitment and capabilities to implement what is learnt during the coaching sessions (Somià et al., 2024). The coachees should be prepared to change and commit to the coaching process to provide the coach with the information needed to make the process successful. The coachees are always responsible for the outcomes of coaching (Al Hilali et al., 2020; Somià et al., 2024).

For the coachees, coaching is a development process, which should encourage a shift in thinking (Roša & Lace, 2021). The process is participatory and systematic, fostering ongoing growth and self-awareness in the coachees (Grant & Stober, 2006). Parppei (2018) examined self-regulation in the coaching process, and it seems that self-regulation is connected to motivation and volition. In volition, a person decides to put something into action and shows willpower and agency to act (see Boekaerts & Corno, 2005). Cognitive self-regulation includes raising awareness, self-observation, and self-regulation. The coaching processes enhance individual structures that impact goal and action controls as well as goal achievement. Cognitive skills and strategies increase during coaching discussions, and the coachees may adopt self-regulation strategies that the coach uses during the coaching process. Therefore, coaching develops the self-regulation and volition of the coachees (Parppei, 2008; Parppei, 2018).

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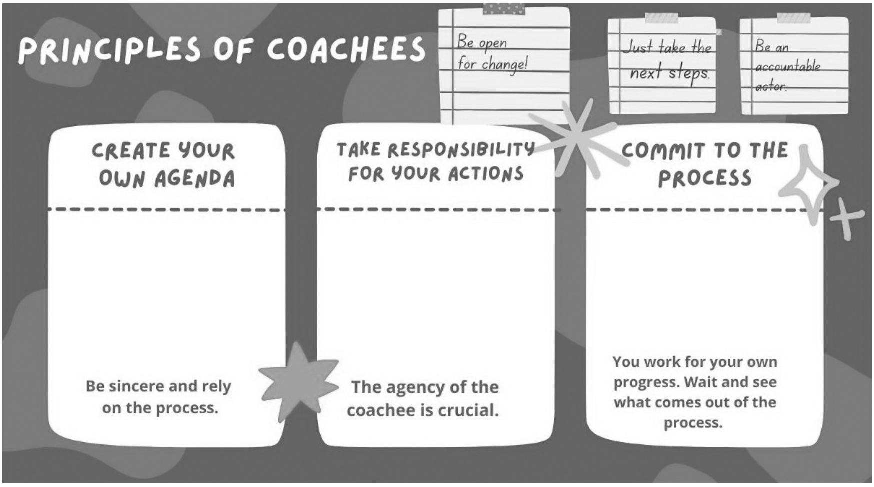

Figure 2: Principles of coachees
Source: Adapted from FME, 2013

As can be seen in Figure 2, the coachees are responsible for the coaching process. They decide on the coaching agenda as well as commit and take the next steps agreed in coaching. This is aligned to the student-centred view on learning and teaching and enhances entrepreneurial mindset.

4 Method

This study is characterised by its social constructionist orientation (Gergen, 1994). The social constructionists argue that there is not one shared and objective reality, but the individuals construct their own meanings of it, just like it is done in this paper. Although many researchers (e.g., Roša & Lace, 2021) have studied the outcomes of coaching with quantitative methods, considering them to provide a more objective assessment, the process of coaching is essentially a subjective experience. Researching subjective experiences requires a qualitative approach.

4.1 Data collection

To collect useful insights on coaching students for entrepreneurship, the researchers interviewed six coaches who had ample experience coaching students for entrepreneurship at the StartUp School of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. StartUp School is a programme for students who are interested in entrepreneurship, and it also supports students who already have their own businesses. The sampling method was purposive as the number of lecturers with experience from coaching students at the StartUp School is limited. The Startup School offers coaching, courses, events, and students can also earn credits while following their own passion (Haaga-Helia, 2024). The Startup school has evolved and developed over the years, but one thing has remained:

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lecturers with interest and experience in entrepreneurship can work at the StartUp School as coaches.

The coaches interviewed were asked questions relating to their coaching experience, methods and techniques, their views on the coaching process, about pitfalls and success factors for coaching as well as asked to give recommendations for a colleague considering starting coaching for entrepreneurship.

Thus, the textual narrative was collected through semi-structured interviews. All coaches, contributing to the narrative of the paper, were experienced in entrepreneurship and coaching. They had taken courses in coaching and three of the coaches were certified business coaches. Others had taken a training course called EntreCoach aimed at learning entrepreneurship coaching. Only one of the coaches was self-educated in coaching.

Two of the interviews were conducted in Swedish and four in Finnish. The interviews took place in January and February 2023. All interviews were either audio or video recorded. In this study, there were four female and two male interview participants. All of them were assigned letter codes to keep their identities anonymous. Each author conducted two interviews and made field notes. Six narratives were enough to reach saturation as the stories began to repeat themselves.

4.2 Data analysis

Narrative analysis has been recognised by many social scientists as a powerful method for creating an in-depth understanding of social realities (Czarniawska, 2004). Narratives can be collected as text, photo, video, painting or other visual formats. According to Mura & Sharif (2017, p. 195), people's stories can be used to analyse social reality. In this study, narrative analysis can lead to an understanding of how coaching is understood by experienced coaches. The outcome of the narrative analysis is the persona Coco the Coach.

A narrative approach is appropriate for coaching studies, as they can be conducted under conditions of anonymity (Willis, 2019, p. 472), and the collected narratives can be true or imagined as they are evaluated. The authenticity of the stories is important; they need to be logical or seem true even if they were invented. It is essential what is said and how. Narratives cannot be generalised as they are based on human thoughts. Narratives do not let the people, and their stories become disconnected from the academic study (Rae, 2000, p. 148).

Narrative analysis can be done in different ways, and here it is done through a so-called composite narrative (see, e.g., Wertz et al., 2011; Willis, 2019) to create a persona. A composite narrative is composed from several individual interviews to tell only one story that blends with the voice of the researcher (Johnston & Wildly, 2021; Willis, 2019). The narrative persona does not exist, i.e., in this study, Coco the Coach is a composite narrative, a fictional character. The story of Coco is a composite narrative of six interview transcripts, constructed into a single narrative persona to make the coach in the coaching process more

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approachable. Even though there were both male and female interview participants, the views and reflections of them were not gender specific.

At the first analysis stage, the six collected narratives were thematically analysed and categorised based on the interview questions. The reconstructed story describes a coach called Coco as the name reminds us of coaching and refers to a female person, as female entrepreneurs are still a minority of entrepreneurs. In this narrative analysis Coco is talking about her work at the university as a coach for entrepreneurship students in the process of initiating and developing their firms. The quotes in Coco's narrative are direct quotes from the narratives of the six StartUp School coaches. They are translated from Finnish or Swedish to English.

5 Findings and discussion

In 2024, Coco is a 45-year-old Master of Science (Economics and Business Administration) (M.Sc. Econ.) and a vocational teacher at a business university of applied sciences in Helsinki, Finland. Coco is a typical example of a multitalented lifelong learner. She has a keen interest in many topics and, thus, continuous learning, reading and self-development are integral elements in her life. After graduating from a business school, she worked in the industry and even started several businesses. When developing the businesses, she became interested in learning and teaching. That is why she completed the 60-credit vocational teacher education, after which she applied for jobs at universities and vocational schools. However, she never stopped being an entrepreneur. After collecting a few years' experience as a senior lecturer, she got a dream job as a startup school coach at a prominent business university of applied sciences. As she was very ambitious, Coco decided to study coaching at a business coaching institute in Helsinki. After completing the coaching training and practice, she became an accredited member of the International Coaching Federation. She now feels that she has found her calling in coaching.

5.1 Working as a coach

As Coco is enjoying her work at the startup school, she mentions several aspects that she found crucial for her success as a coach. First, Coco states that she loves education and coaching students. Coco says, for instance:

> *I am energised after coaching sessions, because it is rewarding to see how people get inspired and start to plan things. Encounters mean so much. I can be part of giving hope to others. (Respondent 2)*
>
> *I genuinely enjoy coaching — I do easily get a good contact with the coachees. — I am present with all my heart. (Respondent 4)*
>
> *I get close to coachees and can support them. They can find their own path and make their own decisions. (Respondent 5)*

The discussion just goes on and it is like dancing in the moment. (Respondent 2)

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Coco explains what coaching is and how it is conducted in practice with the students. There needs to be a proper process with a definite beginning and a clear end. Moreover, an agreement between the coach and the students involved can be beneficial, as it states clearly the responsibilities of the actors involved. It is important to clarify that the coach is never responsible for any business decisions made, the process and the decision -making is always the responsibility of the coachees.

According to Coco, coaching for entrepreneurship does not necessarily require experience of being an entrepreneur. Being a coach requires some understanding of how to conduct business, though, and some training in coaching methods and tools is certainly beneficial. All this in line with the literature (see, e.g., Roša & Lace, 2021; Somià et al., 2024).

5.2 The coaching sessions

The agenda for the coaching sessions is created based on the needs of the coachees, who come to coaching sessions out of their free will. The coach is just a facilitator of the process. The startup school has a list of questions ready that help to steer the session, but the coachees and their issues determine how it will evolve. It might well be that Coco every now and then must take the coach hat away and look for the mentor hat instead, i.e., in certain situations students might need some clear advice. Setting up coaching sessions needs to come from the students, as Coco argues:

> *It is crucial that the student comes to coaching voluntarily and with strong motivation. As a coach you don't contact the student(s) to invite them to a coaching session, they contact you. (Respondent 5)*

> *The student should come to the session prepared, with some thoughts about what to pursue and what kind of goals to advance together in the session. We will then perhaps do mental exercises and set up goals for the next session. (Respondent 2)*

For a coach it is vital to ask open-ended questions from the coachee. Coco emphasises that when asking questions, it is of the utmost importance to listen to the words and to the tone of voice of the coachees, as well as to look at their gestures and expressions – keeping all senses open (see e.g., Audet & Couteret, 2012; Mansoori et al., 2019). If there are uncertainties or feelings involved, the coach can ask for more information and dig deeper to find out what the underlying problem or challenge is at any given moment. Thus, Coco describes the coaching situations in the following way:

> *Listen. Ask open questions and then mirror back what you hear and see. (Respondent 5)*

> *I am free from knowing things, as a coach I don't have the right answers. (Respondent 4)*

> *I help the student see positive developments along the path. (Respondent 2)*

> *It is useful to remove obstacles [in the minds of the students] and make the open their eyes. (Respondent 4)*

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> *I let the students tell what their challenges and problems are and then we try to solve them together. — Then I introduce diverse plans and canvases, and we agree on the next steps. — Good to be supportive and encouraging. (Respondent 1)*

Volition (see Parppei 2018), the power of choosing or determining, is a central concept in coaching. Coaching is solution-focused and an iterative process, boosting multiple activities and testing, says Coco the Coach.

> *Testing is part of design thinking and entrepreneurship as the entrepreneur takes financial risks, always. Therefore, fail fast and test if someone is willing to pay for your products and services. It can be a good result if the students find that the business idea is not profitable. Many businesses fail. (Respondent 3)*

> *I need to find out what the students know and what they have done for their business. After that, I can ask questions. I help them to walk the talk. (Respondent 1)*

Not all coaching sessions run smoothly and sometimes coaches find it difficult to think positively about the business ideas of the students. Thus, it is also important to have an understanding about the challenges involved.

5.3 The challenges in coaching for entrepreneurship

When Coco describes the difficulties in coaching students for entrepreneurship, she tells that sometimes the students do not understand that coaching is not only about the sessions, but it also includes a lot of work between the meetings. Also, the process should include three to five meetings in total. Coco sees her way of working in the following way:

> *It can be demanding, too. (Respondent 5)*

> *Sometimes if the students do not speak, are quiet, it can be challenging. Normally they are not. — Once I coached a person that was complaining and doing nothing. But finally, she got a better salary after the coaching process even if I thought that nothing would happen. (Respondent 2)*

> *It is good to be careful, not to expect superior results and income immediately. Luckily, there are multiple choices, such as light entrepreneurship. (Respondent 3)*

When it comes to coaching students towards entrepreneurship a critical question is whether all students should be given the opportunity for it, as coaching requires a lot of resources from the university. Coco argued that usually it is possible to say whether a student has genuine drive and motivation at an early phase. If the students are really determined and put processes into action quickly, they are more likely to be successful. One can sense if there is positive energy, a buzz, or volition in the air. It is wonderful if the students develop a profitable and sustainable business already before they graduate. It brings satisfaction to the coach, too. Coco has not seen any differences between students of tourism and hospitality or business students regarding enthusiasm for entrepreneurship. They all face similar challenges.

> *Students can be very different. The important characteristics are that they are genuinely interested and that they are ready to act on their ideas. (Respondent 2)*

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Being an entrepreneur is all about doing things! (Respondent 1)

Thus, creating an atmosphere of doing is crucial for students to get the tools and competences needed for entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship cannot be learnt by just reading books.

5.4 Measuring the success of the coaching activities

Entrepreneurship coaching at a university is time consuming, and there are some factors that Coco wants to emphasise. Coaching represents a significant investment by the university, necessitating follow-up to ensure that the efforts at the start-up school bring tangible results. According to Coco, there are various ways to approach the need for results, such as:

Group coaching is efficient. The students love peer group activities. They learn from each other. (Respondent 2)

The university counts the produced credit points, i.e., students participate in the start-up activities through courses being part of their study plan. There must be results in this activity. (Respondent 1)

The success of entrepreneurship hubs is often measured in terms of number registered new companies, but if could also be evaluated through the "buzz (activities) offered by the centre. (Respondent 5)

On the other hand, Coco points out that not all students interested in the start-up school have sufficiently developed business ideas to launch their ventures during their time as coachees. Therefore, the whole idea of offering entrepreneurship education at the start-up school should also be seen as a learning process. After working some years in the industry, the coachee might become more mature and develop the kind of expertise needed to realise the dream of becoming an entrepreneur. Coaching for entrepreneurship is never in vain.

5.5 Summary

This study confirms that coaching can be used as a learning approach to enhance an entrepreneurial mindset and support the start-up phase of student entrepreneurship. CoCo the Coach highlighted that learning always needs to be in the focus (Kotte et al., 2021), whether students really manage to start their own company is not that important. During the process, students develop competences such as commitment, self-efficacy and relationship building (e.g., Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018; Somià et al., 2024), which also will be of value for their future careers in tourism both as employees and as entrepreneurs.

Based on the results from this study, the coaching process itself should be iterative and should last a limited period. It is important that the students have the motivation, are committed to the coaching process and are willing to change (Ostinelli 2016; Patti et al., 2015). There is an abundance of work involved in starting a business in an industry like tourism. It is important that the students understand that they must put a fair amount of effort into the coaching process themselves, also between the sessions, and develop their entrepreneurial mind-

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set, too, along the way. According to Coco the Coach, there is though no need for a different type of an approach when coaching tourism and hospitality students or when coaching business students.

Coco emphasised that coaching is about asking the right questions. A coach does not need to have the right answers, rather they should try to empower coachees to act. As stated by Ellinger & Kim (2014), coaching should help students to take responsibility for their own development. The agenda for the coaching sessions should come from the students who are prepared to react to feedback and make decisions. It is important that student coachees understand that the business is their responsibility, and the coaching lecturers are not accountable for any poor decisions. According to Coco, coaches should demonstrate empathy by actively listening to the highs and lows experienced by student entrepreneurs in their initial stages. However, it is also important to be realistic as a coach, as all business ideas are not good enough to be tested in practice – which is a valuable outcome, too.

Figure 3 sums up the thoughts and beliefs of Coco the Coach.

Figure 3: The persona of Coco the Coach, including thoughts and beliefs regarding coaching – the perspective of the coach.

Source: author's work created in Canva, based on the interviews

6 Conclusion

The value of coaching as a tool for EE should not be underestimated. Given that entrepreneurship is recognised as a catalyst for economic growth, job creation

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and regional development, there is a growing interest in its application within the tourism and hospitality sectors. Since the authors have witnessed an increasing interest in entrepreneurship among tourism students over the recent years, there is a pressing need for new student-centered approaches to entrepreneurship education.

In this study, the authors categorised the narratives of the coaches and searched for the best practices for coaching students for entrepreneurship at universities. The narratives were also synthesised to one story to show the universal trends and perspectives of the coach, and to make the material more approachable and easier to read.

The main best-practice points that can be concluded based on the narrative of Coco the Coach are that coaching for entrepreneurship at university is to listen, be interested and encouraging, to rely on the process and the students. It is a mutual learning process. However, it is crucial to empower the students and give the responsibility to them. For coaches, it is beneficial to ask questions and be curious. The coach can challenge the students, too. If the coach is too easy on the coachees, the students will not be fit for fight in the business either. Volition needs to be boosted, and next steps agreed, always. Coaching is a method that works and delivers results. Wonderful things start happening when the coach and coachee find the way for continuous development and improvement, like in design thinking. The coachees stop stopping themselves, i.e., they overcome their self-imposed limitations.

The experienced coaches interviewed for this study highlighted the importance of the process and the practical competences needed for coaching. All coaches are individuals and have their own ways of approaching coaching, but they all stress the role of trust, goal setting and the ability to listen.

Coaching tourism students for entrepreneurship is, first and foremost, a learning process (Shepherd 2004; Somiá et al., 2024). It might be that the students realise that their business idea is not good enough. On the other hand, the students starting their entrepreneurial path have gained knowledge about business ideas, finances, and marketing, and developed transversal skills and competences like commitment, stress management and self-awareness (see, e.g., Charrón Vías et al., 2020). The knowledge, skills and competences gained in entrepreneurship education and coaching will be valuable in the job market for any student in a tourism and hospitality programme.

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Conservation education at zoos and aquaria: Avoiding long distance travel to experience wildlife

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Abstract: *Raising awareness of biodiversity loss is an important goal of conservation science. Tourism observing wildlife in the natural habitat has long been believed to be the best way to convey conservation messages to the public. However, the often-required long-distance journeys to wildlife tourism destinations are unsustainable. In contrast, zoos and aquaria provide an alternative to observe and interact with wildlife in a local context. Many zoos and aquaria see themselves as avenues for conservation education. Research demonstrated that the provided conservation education often does not appear to be effective. To understand the potential and gaps of conservational education, qualitative research was conducted. Results show that interpretation may contribute to conservation education and the content can influence visitors' post-visit opinions. The main gaps include different understandings of definitions of conservation; and conservation issues were not the dominant category of the interpretation. This research proposes a model for better conservation education design.*

Keywords: *Conservation Education, Interpretation, Zoo, Aquarium, Interpretation Model*

1 Introduction

Towards the third decade of the 21st century, environmental problems and loss of biodiversity have become increasingly obvious and urgent around the world (Balakrishnan, 2018). Human induced habitat loss and wildlife extinction also negatively affect the subsistence of human beings. For example, deforestation caused by the expansion of cities and farms not only leads to the loss of wildlife habitats, but also to climate change and more extreme weather (Wu et al., 2021). The unprecedented pandemic of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) resulted in more people thinking about the relationship between humans and wildlife. Most scientists believed that this new virus was transmitted from wild animals to humans (Shereen et al., 2020), and humans' invasion into wild habitats may cause more cross-species infections (Walsh et al., 1993). Therefore, conservation is not only related to the existence of wildlife, but also related to every human being (Mace, 2014). Conservationists also argue that the conservation goals of maintaining wild habitats and biodiversity cannot be achieved without the participation of the public (Ardoin & Heimlich, 2013). Thus, conservation education (CE) has become a significant domain, transferring concepts from conservation researchers to the general public, increases public awareness of biodiversity issues, and may change humans' behaviour towards a more biodiversity-friendly lifestyle (Spring, 2017).

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According to the Cambridge Conservation Forum (CCF), conservation entails the enhancement of ecosystems, habitats, species, and populations in the wild, without harmful effects on human well-being (Kapos et al., 2008). As the wild is an accepted definition in conservation science, it emphasises that the success of conservation should happen in the wild. It also indicates that the goal of successful conservation is not only related to the populations of individual species, but also the wider health of habitats and ecosystems, which are the foundation of wild populations. Referring to the goals of modern conservation science, Kareiva and Marvier (2012) argued that conservation science has the major goal of improving human well-being through environmental management, and the distinction between conservation science and environmental science lies in strategies to jointly extend subsidies to humans and biodiversity. A major underpinning of this concept is that humans depend on a healthy ecosystem to live, as much as wildlife does. Consequently, if all wildlife were extinct, humans would not be able to exist on Earth. Protecting the ecosystems for wildlife is equivalent to safeguarding a healthy environment for humans. Therefore, in the narrative of conservation, human beings are not only the saviour of wild species but are making efforts more for their own future.

With the permanent goals of promoting conservation beliefs and behaviours, CE addresses broad issues and contains a variety of activities. It can be supplied by conservation institutions and organisations, tourism attractions (nature reserves or parks), schools, and cooperatives. Whether CE can achieve its goal largely depends on the design and plan of the programmes. As Jacobson et al. (2015) argued, successful CE requires the providers to understand the demands, interests, and behaviours of their target population. Wildlife tourism plays an important role in informal CE, since visitors can receive conservational knowledge by reading or listening to interpretations during their visits. However, in many cases observing wildlife in their natural habitat requires (often long-haul) travel to remote locations. In contrast, the recently rising airfares due to increasing fuel costs (Pal & Mitra, 2022), personnel and aircraft shortages and other factors, may not be affordable for large parts of the general public any longer. This means that access to conservation education is limited for a large proportion of the population. Thus, the output of CE may be limited (Morris et al., 2007; Stern et al., 2008). Furthermore, travelling long distance by air also causes significant CO_2 emissions, and exacerbates the climate changing (Ritchie, 2020).

In contrast, zoos and aquaria provide an alternative where the public can observe and interact with wildlife in local settings: first, the main exhibitions in zoos and aquaria are wildlife, which are also the major target of protection in conservation; second, according to the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), zoos and aquaria engage a large number of visitors worldwide (more than 700 million per year); and third, most zoos and aquaria state that conservation is their primary mission (WAZA, 2021). Some studies have been conducted to determine whether zoos and aquaria have undertaken conservation work as well as they are claiming. Most of these studies involve education

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output as an important indicator for evaluating the conservation achievements of zoos and aquaria (Buckley et al., 2020). Some authors argue that zoos and aquaria are very successful in CE and have irreplaceable roles in conservation (Packer & Ballantyne, 2010; Pearson et al., 2014), whilst others argue that CE in zoos and aquaria is not sufficiently successful, and requires significant improvement (Kelly & Skibins, 2020).

Interpretation plays an important role in addressing environmental and conservational issues to the public, Orams (1997) proposed a model for improving environmental education through wildlife tourism. This model aims to promote behaviour change of tourists at ecotourism attractions. There are five main techniques in the model: 1) appropriate questions can inspire curiosity towards wildlife; 2) using stories can affect visitors' emotions of sympathy; 3) information concerning environmental problems and simple solutions can motivate visitors to act; 4) it is important to provide opportunities for the visitors to act, such as enrolling in conservational organisations and using environmentally friendly products; and 5) effectiveness assessment and feedback on the programmes is important for improving interpretations.

Why are opinions about CE in zoos and aquaria so controversial? To understand the potential and the gaps of conservational education to the public by zoos and aquaria, qualitative research regarding the contents of interpretive panels, organisational websites, and visitor reviews was conducted. This study also aimed to understand the role of the content of CE interpretations at zoos and aquaria. It also proposes a specific model regarding the content of interpretation for improving CE in zoos and aquaria.

This research selected Auckland Zoo (AZ) and SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium (KT) as the two study sites. Their organisational functions met the requirements for the target sites of the research and data required for this research were available from these two institutions. AZ is the largest zoo in New Zealand, and located in the Western Springs area of Auckland, and home to more than 120 species in an area of 17 hectares. As one of Auckland's most famous attractions, it has welcomed more than 28 million visitors since its opening in 1922 (Auckland Zoo, 2021). AZ is operated by Auckland Unlimited (AU), an Auckland Council controlled organisation aiming to maximise cultural, social, and economic benefits for residents and visitors to Auckland (Auckland Unlimited, 2021). It is a not-for-profit wildlife conservation science organisation and has been involved in multiple conservation works. The staff of AZ established the Auckland Zoo Conservation Fund in 2000, which has received NZD four million for conservation projects in and out of New Zealand. The zoo is also successful in breeding and releasing native endangered insects and birds, which contributes to in situ conservation. SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium, located close to Auckland's city centre on the waterfront of the Hauraki Gulf, is a well-known attraction featuring ocean creatures and Antarctic themes. It has the largest penguin colonies in captivity in the southern hemisphere, the only turtle hospital in New Zealand (SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium, 2021), and welcomes

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citizens and tourists to discover the undersea world. Working with the SEA LIFE Trust, KT also participates in conservation work. Besides rescuing and releasing sea turtles, the aquarium organises beach clean-up activities.

2 Methods

Data collection for this research was conducted in three parallel phases from March to June 2021 (Table 1). First, the first author visited AZ and KT multiple times, photographing interpretive materials available to the public, to analyse the written content of the interpretation available. Second, pages of the official websites of the two institutions were investigated in order to identify the mission of the organisations. Third, reviews on TripAdvisor were captured and imported into Excel files, to study the views of the visitors. The study included reviews written between 1st January 2018 and 1st June 2021. The data collection yielded 584 visitor reviews on AZ and 644 visitor reviews on KT.

To analyse the interpretation material from the AZ and KT, this research adopted a manifest qualitative content analysis method. As Bengtsson (2016) argued, manifest analysis aims to describe what was stated with no interpretation of possible implicit meanings. This part employed a four-step procedure: 1) *Decontextualisation* (open coding), which suggests the segmentation of materials into small meaningful units containing useful information for answering the research questions; 2) *Recontextualisation* means to make sure all aspects of the necessary information have been coded; 3) *Categorisation*, which are groups of broader contents according to the research topic. The results of this step can be named as categories. 4) *Compilation*, serves as a bridge between the data analysis and the presentation of findings. It also reflects the researchers' role in the analysis process and their adaptation to the results (Bengtsson, 2016).

This research applied a reflexive thematic analysis method (Braun et al., 2019) to study data from the official websites and information panels of AZ and KT. This phase includes six steps: 1) *Familiarisation with data*; 2) *Generating initial codes*. Codes reflect a characteristic of the data relating to the analysis of questions and are basic elements of the raw materials. 3) *Searching for themes.* A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and is on a broader level than codes. 4) *Reviewing themes.* Suitable themes, their inter-relationships, and the relationships between themes and the whole data set should be clear and coherent. 5) *Defining and naming themes.* 6) *Producing the report.* Choosing the most vivid examples to demonstrate the themes (Braun et al, 2019).

This research adopted the netnographic method to analyse visitor reviews on TripAdvisor, after their visits to AZ and KT. According to Kozinets (2020), netnography is a type of qualitative research devoted to comprehending the cultural practices reflected in the threads and structures of social media. This research phase employed five steps: 1) *Collating* prepares data for coding. 2) *Coding* in netnography refers to breaking data into small meaningful segments and label-

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ling them. 3) *Combining* organises related codes into higher level elements, naming each as a pattern code. 4) *Counting*, as a quantitative tool, can also contribute to qualitative research, which accepts that the researcher makes comparisons between the identified or pattern codes. 5) *Charting* can help explain the findings of a netnographic study more clearly (Koznet, 2020).

Table 1: Data collection and analysis of the three research phases

Phase	Data Source(s)	Type of Data	Analysis
Phase 1: Content of Interpretation Panels	Interpretation panels throughout A and KT	Text data of information panels, photographed for analysis	Manifest content analysis
Phase 2: Content of websites	Websites of AZ (https://www.aucklandzoo.co.nz/) and KT (https://www.visitsealife.com/auckland/)	Text data on websites, specifically mission statements	Manifest content analysis
Phase 3: Visitor reviews of AZ and KT	TripAdvisor	Text data	Netnography

Source: First author

3 Findings

3.1 Contents of interpretive information

Interpretive materials are important media that convey information from attractions to their visitors. The content is crucial to the learning experience and has to be engaging but also factually correct.

3.1.1 Main contents in the interpretive information at Auckland Zoo

At AZ, an abundance of interpretations is delivered to visitors, an example is shown in Figure 1. Although the types, styles, and emphases of the interpretation panels vary between different exhibition zones, they can be categorised according to the content of the textual information. In general, six categories of contents were identified: biological knowledge, knowledge about animal habitats and ecosystems, Māori culture, conservation information, information about the zoo and its work, and visitor information. The proportions of the content in the six categories were uneven. Biological knowledge was the most dominant category of AZ's interpretations, including names, distributions, classifications, physical features, habitats and adaptation, behaviours, and values. Codes in this category occupied nearly half of the interpretation content. "Conservation information" was the second category in the content of interpretation materials at AZ, although the number of codes was only about half that of the first category. There are four sub-categories of this category: species' endangered facts and reasons, conservation advocacy, conservation history and achievements, and conservation programmes and methods. The first two sub-categories were the dominant contents in this category. There were also interpretations

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introducing the zoo and its work. The three sub-categories in this category are work of the zoo, organisational information, and zoo animals. Visitor information was considered a vital part, providing promotions, locations, and timetable information to visitors. Knowledge about ecology and Māori culture, as supplementary knowledge, enriched the interpretation content of AZ.

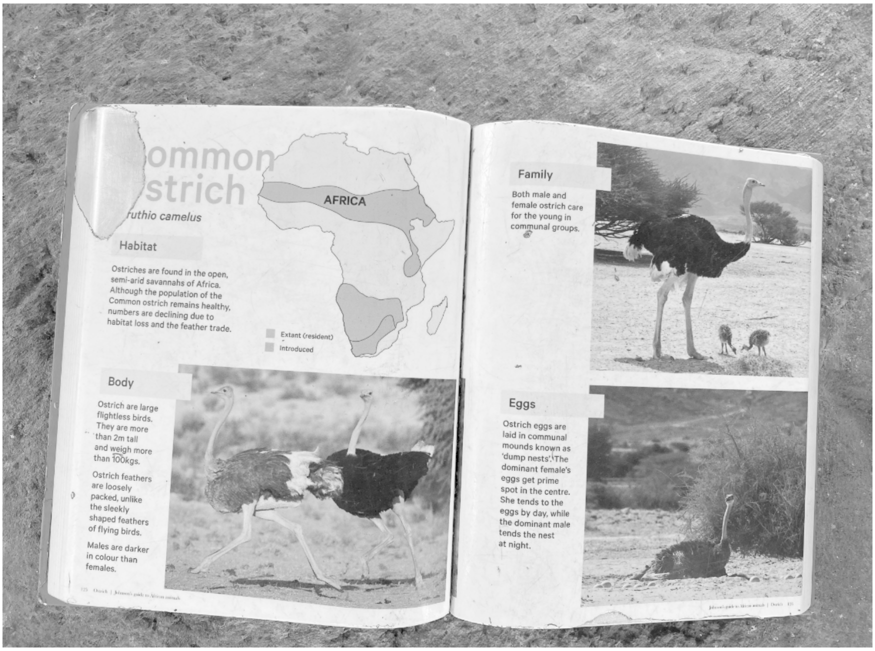

Figure 1: Interpretive Panel in the Africa Track, with Information about the Common Ostrich

Source: First Author

3.1.2 Main contents in the interpretive information at SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium

KT provided rich textual interpretations for visitors in an indoor environment, see the example in Figure 2. The major categories of the interpretive materials were biological knowledge, conservation and environmental information, information about the aquarium and its work, visitor information, knowledge about Antarctica, ecology knowledge, Māori culture, and brain teasers. Biological knowledge was the dominant content at the aquarium, followed by conservation and environmental information, and information about the aquarium and its work. Visitor information was also a vital part of the aquarium. The aquarium also provided knowledge about Antarctica, ecology, Māori culture, and some brain teasers to enrich the interpretations.

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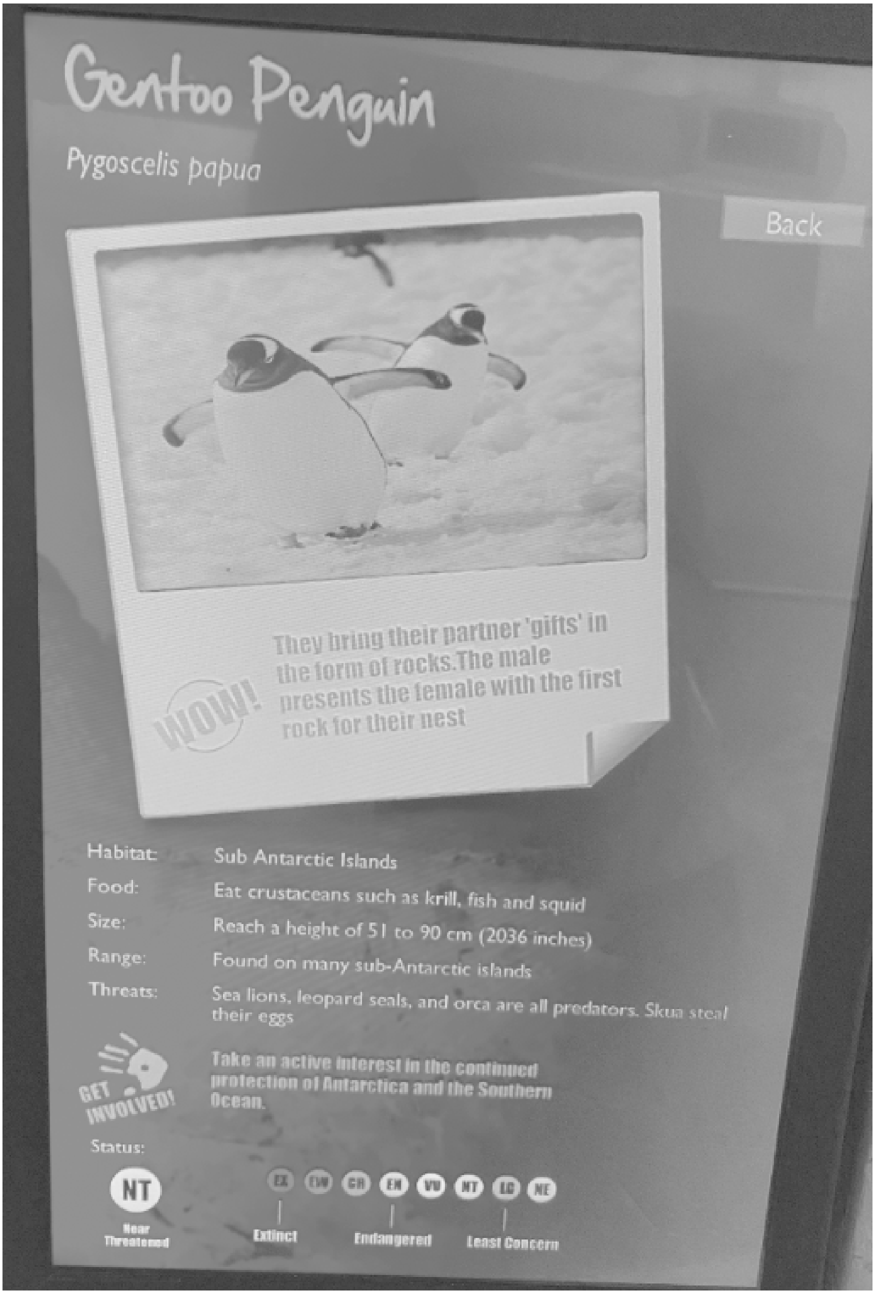

Figure 2: An Example of Electronic Panel in SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium
Source: First author

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3.2 Organisational mission and conservational work

An organisational mission is crucial for most organisations, and the foundation for the strategies and actions of the organisations. Mission statements of zoos and aquaria commonly include conservation and education elements (Maynard et al., 2020) and guide the contents of interpretation materials. Conservation work conducted by zoos and aquaria provided materials for the CE interpretations at the attractions. The official websites of both AZ and KT provided specific information about their organisational missions and conservational work.

3.2.1 Organisational mission and conservational work of Auckland Zoo

AZ mentioned its mission several times on its website. Although the descriptions were slightly different, the main ideas were similar and presented as Theme Z1: *The mission of AZ is to bring people together to build a future for wildlife*. Two elements demonstrated the organisational mission of AZ, Sub-theme Z1-1: *to build a future for wildlife*, and Sub-theme Z1-2: *to bring people together*.

"To build a future for wildlife" was the ultimate goal of the mission statement. There was some information on the official website explaining the kind of future for wildlife that the zoo aimed at: "A future where people value wildlife, and species are safe from extinction." It was evident that "a future" referred to all species being safe from extinction. It was also observed that the zoo used an absolute expression, "all," and emphasised a future when no species would become extinct. Furthermore, the mission statement did not indicate whether it referred to the future for wildlife in the wild or in captivity. The zoo also stressed that the future for wildlife is not naturally formed but "being built" by the zoo and other people. The second sub-theme indicated that AZ sought to unite and lead the public to achieve its ultimate goal. As a popular attraction with a group of experts, the zoo did have the potential to impact and lead the public to make efforts to meet its goal. In terms of targeting people, the website explained that the zoo had welcomed over 28 million visitors since its opening. In terms of professionalism, AZ was clearly proud of the advanced work of zookeepers and staff of the vet hospitals.

As the website also explained, "in practice, this [mission] is wildlife conservation science at work or what we here at the Zoo call Wild Work." The statement stressed that "Conservation is at the heart of Auckland Zoo." Theme Z2: *Everything we do at Auckland Zoo directly contributes to our conservation efforts*. In practice, their conservation work includes five sub-themes. Z2-1: *Care for zoo animals with humanisation*. As AZ considers caring for zoo animals as its most important conservation work. Z2-2: *Wild work*. The wild work of the zoo comprised a range of work, such as fieldwork in and outside New Zealand, breeding and releasing programmes for endangered species, and rescues of injured or sick wild animals. Fieldwork referred to the work zoo staff conducted in the wild, such as pest control, health checks for endangered species in the New Zealand wild, and conservational work overseas. Z2-3: *Conservation fund*. The zoo's conservation fund provided economic support for various conservation efforts, and

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visitors could donate to the zoo feeding through the fund. The fund also supported zoo staff's fieldwork and the conservation work of overseas NGOs. Z2-4: *Sustainable management of the zoo*. AZ information stated that minimising the environmental impact was another important part of assisting conservation work. Z2-5: *Connect people with wildlife conservation science*. The zoo staff tried "to connect people with wildlife conservation science" through education, sponsorship, and its conservation fund. Education from the zoo consisted of both education programmes for school students and free choice learning to the public through interpretations at the attraction.

3.2.2 Organisational mission and conservational work of SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium

KT did not address its organisational mission with conservational issues. Instead, it stated its vision about the conservation of ocean creatures and their environment. Theme A1: *Our vision is of a world where our oceans are healthy, properly protected and full of diverse life*. The aquarium first emphasised the health of the oceans and that the ocean should be properly protected. This statement implied that without active protection, our oceans would not be able to maintain their health. It also suggested that the result of healthy oceans is that they could be full of diverse sea life.

Conservation is one of the most important tasks of SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium. Theme A2: *The aquarium cares for and creates love for the oceans and lovely ocean creatures*. The aquarium did not provide an obvious theme of the aims of conservation work but expressed love for animals and the sea. Their conservation work includes four parts. A2-1: *Wildlife rescuing and releasing*. Marine wildlife rescuing and releasing was the main conservation practice of the aquarium. Tanks for exhibition in the aquarium provided a refuge for sick turtles, where they could recover and prepare for being released. A2-2: *Conservation trust*. According to the website, a non-profit organisation, the Kelly Tarlton's Marine Wildlife Trust, was created mainly for raising funds to cover the cost of the rescue and rehabilitation of sea life and scientific research. A2-3: *Sustainable management of the aquarium*. The aquarium's website emphasised efforts to reduce the use of plastic by removing plastic bags and encouraged visitors to use their own cups for a discount on their café purchase. A2-4: *Community involvement*. The aquarium provided some tips for the public to ensure responsible activities for wildlife and the environment. Staff organised conservational events to engage communities in their conservation work. They also advocated for donations from the public to their conservation trust and SEA LIFE Trust.

3.3 Visitors' reflections on conservation issues

Visitors' opinions on the conservation content provided by an organisation – in this case AZ and KT – may provide valuable insights into the success of such efforts. It is acknowledged that these are highly subjective, and different visitors experience zoos and aquaria differently; however, it is claimed that many orga-

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nisations design their educational content based on factors other than visitor preferences and thus miss the mark with their success.

Publicly available visitor statistics about AZ and KT are limited but Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED) states that 28 % and 20 % of domestic tourists visit AZ and KT, respectively (ATEED, 2020). Furthermore, Toitū Envirocare (2024) noted that AZ is visited by 50,000 school students each year.

3.3.1 Visitor reviews of Auckland Zoo and their reflections on conservation issues

As reviews online about any attractions, visitor reviews of AZ reflected the authentic feelings of the visitors after their visits. It was found that the main concerning aspects of the reviews included feelings around seeing animals, concern for animals' welfare in captivity, complaints about unpleasant confrontations, and understandings of the functions of the zoo. There was also some information about visitors' profiles. It shows that one of the most important aims for visitors to visit the zoo is to see animals. Pattern codes were generated for understanding visitors' views regarding conservational issues in the zoo.

Pattern code Z1: Concerning animal welfare. Reviews also showed that visitors not only cared about seeing animals, but also about the welfare of animals in captivity. A main theme of the review data showed that visitors expressed concern for zoo animal welfares, such as the enclosure conditions and care provided at the zoo. As part of this, visitors expressed concern about the animal enclosures.

Pattern code Z2: *Conservation work is a main focus of the zoo*. Ten reviewers believed that the zoo stressed conservational work a great deal. For example: "Conservation is obviously a priority for Auckland Zoo. Kudos!" (AZ 1).

Pattern code Z3: *Visitors' understanding of conservation work of the zoo*. Reviewers expressed their feelings about specific conservation work by the zoo, such as animal welfare, rescue and captive breeding programme, sustainable management of the zoo, conservation funds, and inspiring conservation understanding. A few reviews discussed the breeding programme for native endangered animals.

Pattern code Z4: Interpretations. Less than ten percent of the reviews discussed interpretations and information provided at the zoo. Most of these were positive about the information and some learned animal information from the signs, especially from information about native animals. Visitors also found that information on panels not only provided concise biological information but also specific facts about the animals. About one third of the reviews referring interpretations argued that the signs did not provide enough information and needed improvement.

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3.3.2 Visitor reviews of SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium and their reflections on conservation issues

Similar to reviews of AZ, reviews of KT were related to visitors' feelings about exhibitions, their complaints, their understanding of the function of the aquarium, and animal welfare. Seeing exhibits in the aquarium was the most frequent topic in the reviews.

Pattern code A1: *Concerning animal welfare*. An interest in animal welfare was not very dominant in the reviews. Overall, only a small number of reviewers believed the animals were well cared for and in good condition. However, there was more concern at KT than at AZ, where reviewers thought that the aquarium did not provide appropriate enclosures for animals in captivity, especially observing that the penguins' enclosure was too small for so many penguins.

Pattern code A2: *The aquarium makes some effort to preserve animals and the environment*. About ten visitors mentioned the conservation work of the aquarium, mainly in two aspects: protecting wildlife, and the marine environment. Another ten reviews were related to the turtle rescue and rehabilitation programme, which was the most noticeable conservation work of the aquarium and is discussed in the next pattern code. Two reviewers had positive attitudes towards the conservation education effect of visiting the aquarium. However, a few reviewers assessed the conservation of the aquarium critically. Some argued that some aquarium business practices were inconsistent with their conservational concepts, such as "selling plastic gifts." (KT 1) Another visitor thought that in a conservational organisation, penguins in captivity should be rescued and released, but not living in captivity lifelong.

Pattern code A3: *Turtle rescue and rehabilitation*. Some visitors were impressed by the rescue and rehabilitation of sea creatures, especially the work for rescuing sea turtles. For example, "Good experience very informative along with the information that they are a rescue centre who assist sea life back into the environment they came from." (KT 2). However, a few visitors were conflicted about the rehabilitation programme, since they wanted to see more turtles in the aquarium.

Pattern code A4: *Interpretations*. Over ten percent of the reviews were related to information provided by the aquarium. Over 30 reviewers thought the aquarium was very informative: "Very interesting and informative with an awesome range of sea life." (KT 3) Some visitors noticed the interpretations of Scott Base and the Antarctic, and information about the founder of the aquarium, Kelly Tarlton. A few reviews mentioned the turtle rescue programme.

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4 The potential and the gaps of conservational education to the public by zoos and aquaria

4.1 The potential

Modern zoos and aquaria have been recognised as educational and conservational attractions and have the potential to transmit conservation education to the public. Interpretive materials at the attractions can play important roles in transferring conservational concepts to visitors. The findings of this research supported these arguments in two aspects: the target population, and visitors' attention to interpretations. Zoos and aquaria host a large number of visitors, and these visitors are the targets of CE. As the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) claimed, zoos and aquaria around the world attract an immense number of visitors each year (WAZA, 2021). However, the target population of CE is the general public, who are not experts in conservation issues (Thomas et al., 2018). The profiles of visitors of AZ and KT suggested that most of the visitors were general New Zealand residents without much conservational background. Results from the reviews of the zoo and aquarium showed that most of the visitors were families. Therefore, zoos and aquaria such as AZ and KT, have the privilege of imparting CE to the public.

4.1.1 Interpretation may contribute to conservation education

Comparing findings between the contents of interpretive information with their conservational work, it was found that the interpretation reflects the conservation work conducted by the zoo and the aquarium. It helps to transmit this work to the public. Firstly, interpretations at the zoo represented how the zoo cared for animals. Secondly, interpretations at the zoo also presented the "wild work" of the zoo. As identified in Sub-theme Z3-2, the wild work of AZ included fieldwork, breeding and releasing programmes, and rescues of injured or sick wild animals. These efforts of the zoo were also presented in interpretations. Thirdly, regarding the zoo's conservation fund, some panels at the zoo encouraged visitors to donate to the fund. Fourthly, interpretations at the zoo connected visitors with wildlife conservation science in two ways: on one hand, interpretations conveyed conservational knowledge and information to the public. Many interpretations at the zoo were related to this, such as endangered species facts and reasons, conservation history and achievements, conservation programmes and methods, and most of the information regarding work of the zoo. On the other hand, interpretations told visitors how to contribute to conservation work in practice, which was evident in conservation advocacy.

Interpretations at the aquarium reflected some of the conservation work of the aquarium as well. Theme A2 showed that KT conducted conservation work as an expression of love for the ocean and sea creatures. There were four subthemes under this theme: wildlife rescue and release, conservation trust, sustainable management of the aquarium, and community involvement. Firstly, there were interpretations about the aquarium's wildlife rescue and releasing

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work, especially the sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation work. Secondly, interpretations were found regarding the SEA LIFE Trust. Thirdly, information on a rubbish bin stated that the aquarium was selling compostable coffee cups, which was related to the sustainable management commitment of the aquarium. Fourthly, regarding community involvement, the interpretation provided conservation tips for visitors and some conservational slogans and advocated for donations. There was also a banner at the entrance area of the aquariums, illustrating beach cleaning activities organised by the aquarium. Overall, interpretations at the aquarium partially reflected its conservation work, although information was not provided in detail.

4.1.2 The content of interpretation can influence visitors' opinions after their visit.

Comparing findings from visitor reviews on TripAdvisor and those from interpretive materials at the two attractions, it was evident that some visitors noticed interpretive materials and agreed with the main contents of the interpretations. First, both visitors to the zoo and the aquarium mentioned information about interpretations, which showed that visitors do pay attention to interpretations at attractions. Second, visitors showed their general feelings about the attractions in reviews, which may have been influenced by interpretations, as reviews about the educational and conservational functions of the attractions may have resulted from the visitors' reading of the interpretations at the attractions. For example, visitors believed that they could learn animal names and facts when visiting the zoo and aquarium. Coincidentally, Category Z1 and Category A1 showed that most interpretations of the zoo and aquarium were about basic biological knowledge. Third, the main contents of visitor reviews agreed with the main categories of the interpretations at the two attractions. Visitors to both attractions cared about seeing animals during their visits, and they noticed animals' morphological characteristics and behaviours. While biological information was the most dominant category of the interpretations.

Visitor reviews regarding conservation issues numbered around 30 for each attraction, showing that not many visitors were commenting about conservational issues. One reason for this might be because conservation interpretations were not the major themes at the attractions. Another reason might be that visitors are not particularly concerned about this issue when visiting a zoo or aquarium and thus do not share such thoughts in their reviews. However, the pattern codes regarding conservational issues reflected the interpretations at the attractions. First, visitors' understanding of the importance of the conservation work of the two attractions agreed with the interpretations, which reflected the organisational missions and visions of the zoo and the aquarium. As Pattern code Z2 and Pattern code A2 showed, visitors could see that conservation work was emphasised by the zoo, and that the aquarium made efforts to preserve animals and the environment. Additionally, information about specific conservational knowledge and work can also contribute to visitors' understanding of how the zoo stresses its conservation work. Visitors stated that the aquarium

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made some effort to preserve animals and the environment, which agreed with interpretations at the aquarium. Second, visitors' understandings of the main conservational work of the zoo and the aquarium agreed with that shown in interpretations. As Pattern code Z3 showed, visitors could see multiple kinds of conservational work conducted by the zoo. Some reviews linked animal welfare with conservation work, as the zoo emphasised in its interpretations. Visitors also mentioned rescue and captive breeding programmes, sustainable management of the zoo, and how their tickets contributed to conservation funds. The most likely information resource for these reviews was the interpretations at the zoo. Visitors to the aquarium considered that the most important conservation work of the aquarium was the sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation programme, as Pattern code A3 showed. This also agreed with the findings of Sub-category A3-1, which showed that the most important work of the aquarium was the turtle rescue and releasing programme. Therefore, visitors' reflections on conservation issues after their visits to the two attractions agreed with conservational interpretations at the attractions.

4.2 The gaps

4.2.1 Different understandings of definitions of conservation

The definition of conservation is the most important issue in understanding CE, the content of CE, and the relationships between interpretations and CE. During the analysis of data, it was found that AZ and KT have different understandings of conservation than conservation experts. Therefore, before discussing how the content of interpretation may contribute to CE, it is important to discuss the definition of conservation from different viewpoints and identify any inconsistencies.

In contrast, AZ, as a member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), has a different understanding of conservation. As presented before, AZ claimed that conservation was at the heart of its work. As a conservational organisation, the zoo stated its organisational mission to be *"to build a future for wildlife, where people value wildlife, and species are safe from extinction."* This mission statement showed that the zoo emphasised more the species level, and successful conservation to the zoo meant no extinction of any species. The zoo did not indicate the future of wildlife being either in the wild or at the zoo and did not provide much information on why they should conduct conservation work. Additionally, the zoo promoted the idea that caring for animals in captivity is the most important conservation work. AZ's understanding of conservation could also include the understandings of WAZA, since WAZA also values caring for zoo animals in its conservation strategy (WAZA, 2005). Additionally, KT considered healthy oceans as the foundation for the maintenance of the sea. The aquarium suggested that doing conservation is an expression of love for the oceans and wildlife living in the oceans.

From this information, it is evident that conservation scientists and AZ and KT hold different understandings of the definition of conservation in three aspects.

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First, most conservation scientists believe that conservation means the maintenance of both species and their ecosystems in the wild. KT held a similar understanding to those of conservation scientists on this point. However, AZ focused only on the non-extinction of species, and did not emphasise that the objectives of conservation work should be animals in the wild. As existing research shows that a large proportion of animals in captivity cannot live independently in the wild, conserving animals in their wild ecosystem and protecting animals in captivity are quite different (Kapos et al., 2008). Second, conservation scientists argue that the ultimate goal for conservation is to protect the ecosystem where humans live, whereas AZ and KT did not emphasise this goal. In their statements, the foundation for conservation work is more related to emotional and ethical reasons.

Third, in the context of conservation science, caring for animals in captivity is not an important issue, but at AZ, caring for zoo animals was the most significant of its conservation work. Caring for zoo animals is related to animal welfare and the relationship between animal welfare and wildlife conservation has been debated for some years (e.g., Hutchins & Wemmer, 1987). It is believed that these two topics belong to two different domains and are sometimes contradictory in specific circumstances, since conservation science is primarily concerned with species and ecosystems, while animal welfare primarily refers to individuals. The origin of animal welfare is related to farm animals and pets that are under the control of humans (Paquet & Darimont, 2010). Thus, animal welfare is mainly a topic related to the treatment of captive animals. The welfare of zoo animals is an extension of this topic, as zoo animals are also in captivity. Animal welfare may contribute to wild animals' conservation (Paquet & Darimont, 2010), because according to animal welfare logic, humans should not hunt wild animals. However, sometimes animal welfare may be inconsistent with wildlife conservation. For example, when pet cats and dogs are allowed to wander in wild areas, they can have devastating effects on birds and other animals. Additionally, the welfare of zoo animals may help them live a high-quality life but may not contribute to their wild population recovery. Therefore, animal welfare and wildlife conservation are two different topics. According to this analysis, the zoo and the aquarium used the concepts of conservation and animal welfare interchangeably.

4.2.2 Conservation categories at Auckland Zoo and SEA LIFE Kelly Tarlton's Aquarium

In order to explore the content of CE provided through interpretations at AZ and KT, this research categorised textual interpretations at the two attractions. Interpretations of the zoo were grouped into six categories: biological knowledge, knowledge about animal habitat and ecosystem, Māori culture, conservation information, information about the zoo and its work, and visitor information. The major categories of the interpretive materials of the aquarium were biological knowledge, conservation and environmental information, information about the aquarium and its work, visitor information, knowledge about Antarc-

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tica, ecology knowledge, Māori culture, and brain teasers. It was found that both organisations provided plenty of knowledge in their interpretations, and basic biological knowledge was the dominant category, although conservation information was also provided in the interpretations. Conservational interpretations at the zoo were more specific than were those at the aquarium. The aquarium also addressed ocean environmental issues in its interpretations. These findings show that conservational issues were important content in interpretations of the two attractions, but not the most stressed part.

4.2.3 Other issues regarding the content of interpretations towards conservation education

Generally, AZ and KT both achieved some success in CE, since both attractions addressed conservation issues in their interpretations. Additionally, visitor reviews showed that the zoo seemed more successful than the aquarium in CE, as more visitors believed that the zoo was a conservational organisation and gave positive reviews about CE at the zoo. The reasons for this can be considered from three perspectives: firstly, the zoo presented its conservation mission in the interpretations, which was therefore very obvious for visitors. Secondly, the zoo provided scientific facts and statistics about biodiversity issues, which were objective and scientific. Thirdly, the zoo provided specific information regarding the reasons for population decline and procedures for the conservation of some species. This information may have helped visitors understand more about conservation.

Not many visitors expressed their post-trip behaviour changes in the reviews at neither of the two studied attractions. Despite the reasons discussed before, this paragraph discusses some other reasons associated with the weak commitment to conservation issues. First, the conservational theme in the interpretations of both attractions was not clear, and mixed with information about animal welfare, adorable characteristics, and stories of individual animals. This directed visitors' attention to topics other than that of conservation, such as caring for captive animals and being willing to contact animals up close. Second, interpretations of the two attractions did not provide clear information about why humans should protect biodiversity. Thus, visitors could not see the relationships between conservation and their lives, so did not experience much motivation to change to conservational behaviours. Third, some interpretations were not rigorous. For example, the aquarium stated the threat of sea turtles as humans and sharks that feed on adult turtles. There were two problems in this interpretation; firstly, sharks are natural predators of sea turtles, so should not be seen as a threat for a species, according to conservation science (Washington, 2019). Secondly, this interpretation did not explain the relationship between boat collisions, pollution, and hunting for turtle eggs, which are the main human-induced threats to sea turtles (Alae Eddine et al., 2020; Mejias-Balsalobre et al., 2021; Sala et al., 2021). The zoo also demonstrated similar shortcomings in the interpretations of their mission, as information argued that the zoo was willing to build a future for wildlife where there would be no extinction

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anymore. However, species extinction happens in nature, so conservation science focuses only on human-induced extinctions (Washington, 2019). Due to this kind of interpretation, visitors may become confused about the main problems of conservation, which may lead to less behaviour change. Fourth, some interpretations in the zoo were not objective, as they over-emphasised their contribution to conservation work and persuaded visitors to contribute just by visiting the zoo or donating to their conservation fund. This information may have misled visitors to believe that conservation is the zoo's work but not that of individuals. Most conservation experts agree that conservation does not depend on conservationists, and without the participation of the public, conservation goals will never be achieved (Mace, 2014). Indeed, visitors could contribute more to conservation through their everyday behaviour than by visiting the zoo.

5 Making conservational education in zoos and aquaria more effective

5.1 Adjusting organisational understanding of conservation to conservation science

This research identified organisational understanding of conservation as an important factor in the CE of zoos and aquaria. It is also determined that although AZ particularly emphasised conservation, its understanding of conservation was different from that of conservation science. AZ considered caring for captive animals as the most important conservational work, but most conservation scientists do not emphasise this aspect. This unexpected inconsistency could profoundly influence the effectiveness of CE in zoos and aquaria, because an over-emphasis on caring for captive animals may not lead to conservational behaviour. Therefore, to achieve a better conservational effect through CE, more adjustment of the approach of zoos and aquaria to that of conservation science is required.

Both zoos and aquaria, and conservational organisations can make efforts to improve CE in such attractions. Firstly, most zoos and aquaria claim that they prioritise conservation work, but they need to be clear about their conservation and CE goals. Certain conservation goals as presented by the Cambridge Conservation Forum, can contribute to the public's better understanding of conservation issues (Kapos et al., 2008). Secondly, more cooperation between zoos/aquaria and conservation organisations without captive animals is required. Through this cooperation, interpretations at zoos and aquaria may be closer to the perspectives of conservation science, so visitors can receive more comprehensive information about conservation issues.

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5.2 Improving conservation education effectiveness through appropriate interpretation design

5.2.1 The role of content of interpretations and interpretation design in conservation education

As discussed, the content of interpretations at zoos and aquaria may influence visitors' conservational learning, and various factors can affect the content of interpretations. This section discusses the role of content of interpretations in CE and the relationships of relevant factors, by proposing a relationship map, as presented in Figure 3.

Visitors' CE learning is the goal of CE interpretations at zoos and aquaria. Two important factors have been discussed as affecting visitors' CE learning; one is the content of interpretation, and the other is visitors' understanding of animal and conservational issues. This research argues that visitors' understanding of animal and conservational issues is affected by the content of interpretations in zoos and aquaria, as findings from this research showed that visitors do notice and learn from interpretations during their visits.

This research identified factors of CE in zoos and aquaria. Organisational missions, functions, and the understanding of conservation, are significant factors influencing the content of interpretations in zoos and aquaria. Visitors' profiles and their understandings of animal and conservational issues may also affect the content of interpretation, which should be considered by interpretation designers. Therefore, interpretation design may be an important procedure that serves as a bridge linking the influencing factors with the content of interpretation.

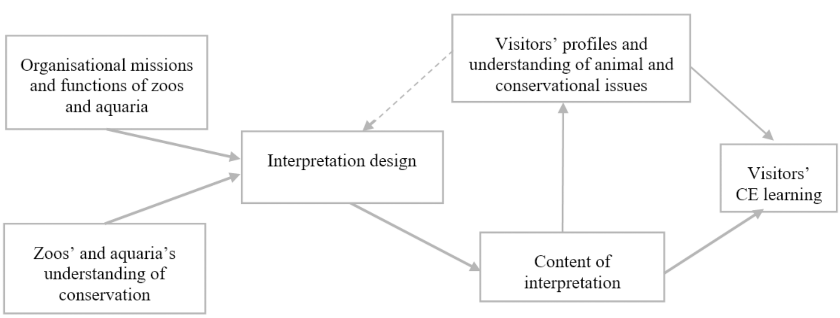

Figure 3: The Role of Interpretation Content in Conservation Education
Source: Author's work

5.2.2 A model for effective conservation education interpretation design at zoos and aquaria

The content of interpretation is an important factor influencing visitors' CE learning, as it not only affects visitors' CE learning directly, but also indirectly,

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by influencing their understanding of animal and conservational issues. This research argues that interpretation design commonly dictates the content of interpretation. Thus, this section proposes a model for effective CE interpretation design at zoos and aquaria, which is a content-centric model based on Orams' (1997) model.

This content-centric model includes four phases, as shown in Figure 4. The first phase is that of conditions and considerations, which are crucial for the interpretation design. Before designing interpretations for zoos and aquaria, it is imperative to consider information from both organisational and visitors' perspectives. Organisational missions and functions are guidelines for interpretation design, so it is important to adjust organisations' understandings of conservation to those of conservation science. An appropriate interpretation design also needs to consider visitors' profiles and their conservation foci, which determine their tolerance and capacity for CE interpretations. After clarifying the conditions and considerations of interpretation design, the second phase is that of pre-interpretation design. This step sets a structure for the interpretation design at zoos and aquaria. In this phase, clear CE goals and the proportion of CE in interpretations needs to be determined. The CE goals should agree with conservation science and can be composed of a strategic goal and some sub-CE goals. The sub-CE goals may be associated with some conservational programmes.

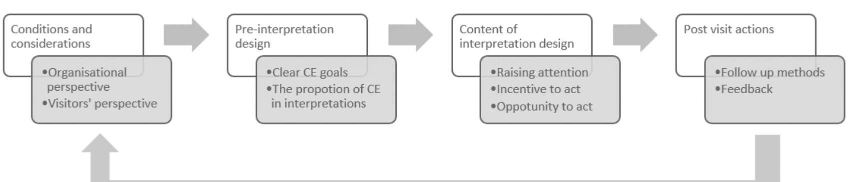

Figure 4: A Model for Effective Conservation Education Interpretation Design at Zoos and Aquaria

Source: Authors

The third phase of the content of interpretation design is the core phase of this model. The content of CE interpretation is divided into three parts derived from Orams' (1997) model. As Figure 4 shows, the content of CE interpretation includes raising attention, incentive to act, and opportunity to act. Specific information is suggested for each part, as shown in Figure 5. There are some differences between the raising attention aspect of this model and Orams' (1997) model. In Orams' model, interpretations can use the affective domain and curiosity to increase public attention to conservation issues, but as discussed in this chapter, visitors' thinking about animals and conservational issues have changed, and too much emotional connection may lead to undesirable outcomes for conservation. Therefore, a more scientific basis to encourage public

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attention is emphasised in this model. This could address topics in relation to why everyone needs to participate in conservation work, the facts of endangered animals, human induced reasons, and the effects of species extinction. This research argues that conservation is not only the work of conservationists, but of every human, because if all animals disappeared, the environment would no longer be suitable for humans. This point should be emphasised in the interpretations at zoos and aquaria.

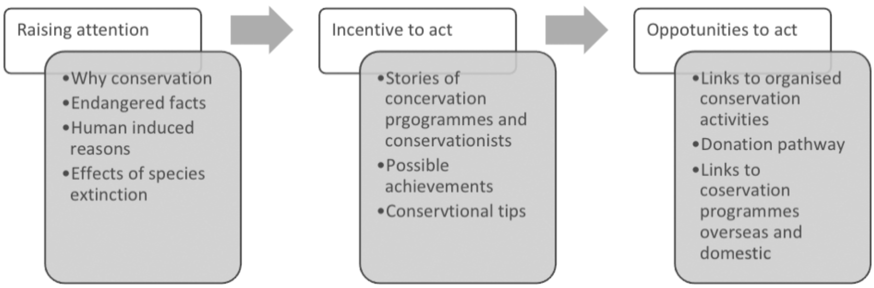

Figure 5: The Specific Content of Interpretation Design
Source: Authors

Content encouraging visitors to participate in conservational behaviour could include stories of conservation programmes and conservationists, possible achievements for the public, and conservational tips to practise in their daily lives. This research also argues that zoos and aquaria could provide more opportunities for visitors to participate in conservational activities. Besides donation boxes, they could provide QR (quick response) codes for visitors who want to donate through an online payment system, and application forms for local organised conservation activities and links to conservational programmes, both overseas and domestic.

The last phase of this model is that of the post-visit actions, which could extend the effects of interpretations. Zoos and aquaria could conduct multiple follow-up methods to make a long-term connection with visitors and provide more in-depth CE information. Social media and social media groups could contribute to this method. Additionally, understanding visitors' feedback about conservation issues is also important. Zoos and aquaria could collect feedback from visitors on numerous tourism websites and social media. Such feedback could contribute to the first phase of this model, so organisations could change their interpretations according to the profiles and understandings of their visitors; interpretations at zoos and aquaria are not fixed but require change.

6 Conclusion

In the context of the changing climate and global wildlife diversity crisis, conducting conservation education in zoos and aquaria can be an effective way to transmit conservation information to the public. Although most zoos and

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aquaria claim that conservation is one of their most important works, the effectiveness of informal conservation education to the public is often not satisfactory. Qualitative research was conducted to explore the underlying content of conservation education provided to the public by zoos and aquariums. The study focused on analysing interpretive panels, organisational websites, and visitor reviews from AZ and KT in New Zealand. The findings indicate that current interpretation efforts may indeed contribute to conservation education and that the content of interpretation can significantly impact visitors' perceptions post-visit. However, discrepancies exist in the understanding of conservation definitions, and conservation issues are not consistently prioritised in interpretive materials. To enhance conservation education in zoos and aquariums, it is recommended that these institutions align their understanding of conservation with scientific principles. Additionally, the research proposes a model for designing more effective conservation education programmes within the context of zoo and aquarium tourism, with a focus on improving the quality of interpretive content.

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