

Book chapter I

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11 Sámi indigenous tourism empowerment in the Nordic countries through labelling systems

Strengthening ethnic enterprises and activities

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Introduction

Tourism can have both positive and negative outcomes for indigenous Sámi communities. Indigenous tourism has been described in many studies as having negative effects for the local communities: for instance, it can exploit the natural and cultural resources and exclude the locals from the decision-making process in every area. Community-based tourism could be a solution to this kind of dilemma. The main issue is to find a positive balance between tourism and local communities, for example by introducing a label. By label we mean a set of predetermined criteria to which companies decide to adhere to gain visibility. A labelling system could empower indigenous communities, give more grounds for empowerment and benefit locals economically. It can also make the tourists, as well as the indigenous populations themselves, aware of the local culture and heritage by learning from each other. Furthermore, both parties can also learn about nature and how to respect it and not exploit it. This chapter is going to discuss different aspects of adopting labelling systems to indigenous tourism companies and other businesses and activities. With the help of labelling, tourists have the possibility to consciously choose to visit certified enterprises, which would provide them, not only with meaningful tourism experiences, but also with a story of Sámi culture told by the Sámi themselves.

The Sámi are the only indigenous population of Europe. The territory, collectively called Sápmi, is located through northern Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. It is not easy to estimate the numbers of the Sámi population, but it is estimated to be about 50,000, all countries included (Samer.se, n.d. (a)). The Sámi speak nine different languages. Reindeer herding is one of the main sources of sustenance, but a greater part of the Sámi population have conventional jobs (Josefsen 2007), such as tourism. In Sápmi, the main tourist attraction is nature and nature-based activities (Regional Council of Lapland 2015). According to Viken and Müller (2006), the indigenous culture is often only a minor attraction,

such as for example visiting museums or taking part in small activities organised by indigenous people, not the main reason to visit Lapland. Sápmi, as an area, has adopted tourism as one of the main livelihoods, but the actual Sámi culture has not been at the centre of tourism (Viken and Müller 2006).

The Sámi have also started to create and manage tourism companies to integrate tourism with reindeer herding or other traditional livelihoods (Müller and Pettersson 2006). The activities comprising Sámi tourism can be described under the definition 'indigenous tourism'. Smith (1996) has implemented four different categories to help define the term: *habitat* (geographical settings), *heritage* (traditions), *history* (acculturation, assimilation) and *handicrafts* (tangible, marketable products), widely known as the four *Hs* in indigenous tourism. They 'describe the indigenous tourism phenomenon, as a culture-bounded visitor experience' (Smith 1996: 287). These categories can help the local populations or indigenous communities to choose which way they want to participate in the tourism business and for researchers to understand indigenous tourism in all aspects (Smith 1996).

According to Hinch and Butler (1996), tourism in indigenous areas is defined as a type of tourism where members of indigenous communities participate in tourism as organisers, controlling activities held in the area, or indigenous culture is one of the pull factors in tourism in the area. There are many ways of controlling tourism in the area, and of how indigenous communities can accommodate it (Hinch and Butler 1996). Hinch and Butler (1996) also say that, for example, in certain areas indigenous culture can be visible, but actually the indigenous community has not been part of the planning, which means that it does not have control of tourism in that particular area. Nevertheless, there are tourist attractions that are moderated and operated by indigenous communities (Hinch and Butler 1996). The Sámi populations have had issues with control over tourism related to Sámi culture. For instance, symbols related to Sámi culture and customs have been used in the non-Sámi tourism industry in Norway, Sweden and Finland for many years (Müller and Pettersson 2001; Olsen 2006; Saarinen 1999). Despite the differences in the countries' tourism development related to the Sámi, in all of them the Sámi have felt irritation towards tourism. However, the Sámi have also seen it as a positive force from both a cultural and an economic point of view (Müller and Huuva 2009; Pettersson and Viken 2007; Tuulentie 2006; Viken 2006).

The Sámi have also been struggling politically. As many other indigenous populations, the Sámi have been fighting to achieve self-determination, to have more political power over territorial issues, identity issues and linguistic issues (Josefsen 2007). This has resulted in the creation of Sámi parliaments and of different Sámi-related associations in the Nordic countries, which have political power over Sámi issues (Josefsen 2007). Norway is the only country in Sápmi, which has signed the ILO-169 convention for indigenous populations (Josefsen 2007), while Sámi representatives and politicians in Sweden and Finland still fight for a signature (e.g. Sedlacek *et al.* 2014; Yle Uutiset 2015). In the context of this chapter, we propose some possible solutions, which could help the Sámi

in supporting their conventional livelihood with tourism, while at the same time giving them more control over their cultural heritage.

This chapter makes a contribution to the debate relating different forms of tourism to the commoditisation of culture and empowerment of local populations. The perspective of labelling has not been examined before, to our knowledge, as a possible solution to different kinds of problems that tourism may bring, so we suggest a new way that would positively associate tourism and empowerment.

In the following sections, we will be giving an overview of the concept of ethnodevelopment to then connect it with labelling as a way to achieve empowerment in the context of Sámi tourism. Labelling is meant here as the process of adopting a set of principles that distinguish the certified companies from other companies in terms of environmental and cultural sustainability. The practical examples of a label created in the context of Sámi tourism activities and in connection with souvenirs and Sámi handicrafts will be illustrated and problematised. These examples will serve as the basis for a discussion concerning the link between ethnodevelopment in tourism, labels and empowerment. There are positive and negative sides to this connection that will be considered. The conclusion of this chapter will include recommendations for future research and for application of the labels as a practical means of ethnodevelopment.

Perspectives on ethnodevelopment and empowerment

Development can be defined as a process in which there is a growth or a change. Furthermore, development means also advancement (Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d. (a)). Stavenhagen (1986) argues for the inclusion of ethnicity in the research and debates concerning development and explains how usually nations develop based on homogeneity regarding ethnicity, culture and language. Ethnodevelopment is a reaction to this kind of nation-building ideology (Stavenhagen 1986). De Lima *et al.* (2016: 5) illustrate two approaches by Stavenhagen (1986) on the definition of ethnodevelopment: one is about an ethnic group's economic development and the other is related to the development of the ethnicity of a group. However, they also mention that these two approaches do not exclude each other (Little 2002, as mentioned in de Lima *et al.* 2016: 5). Ethnodevelopment is also defined as a way for indigenous populations to contrast appropriation and commodification of their assets both related to culture and to the environment (de Lima *et al.* 2016).

According to Chernela, ethnodevelopment is a rather new term and it has also become part of the discourse on development in the context of UNESCO (Chernela 2012). Ethnodevelopment is defined by Stavenhagen (1986) as 'the development of ethnic groups within the framework of the larger society, which may become a major issue in the development thinking, both theoretically and practically.' Chernela (2012) explains how ethnodevelopment now refers to policies and processes related to development that deal with indigenous populations. Possibly, control should be in the hands of the indigenous populations, as Hinch and Butler (1996) also argue. Davis and Partridge (1999: 2) maintain that

programmes related to development are based on the ‘cultural strengths of the indigenous populations or entail their active participation’.

De Lima *et al.* (2016) talk about tourism and ethnodevelopment in Brazil and mention that the Kalunga population should find ways to self-finance themselves and become economically independent. In relation to this goal, de Lima *et al.* (2016) suggest the notion of ethnic entrepreneurship, which is meant to provide long-term development for the community and continuous generation of income. De Lima *et al.* (2016) review the common definitions of ethnic entrepreneurship and mention how they refer to the connections created by immigrants with a common origin. The definitions presented by de Lima *et al.* (2016) include some form of bonding. In relation to indigenous populations, these connections and bonds are given by different elements such as the environment, religion, artefacts, territory and identity, among many others (de Lima *et al.* 2016). As previously mentioned, de Lima *et al.* (2016) define ethnodevelopment as a way for indigenous populations to exercise control over their assets. In this kind of definition, the principle of sustainability is also included as a way to strengthen the indigenous populations.

Tourism and empowerment have been connected in several articles, especially pertaining to ecotourism or community-based ecotourism ventures (e.g. de Lima *et al.* 2016; Scheyvens, 1999; Wallace and Pierce 1996). The goal of empowerment through tourism has been described as having both positive and negative outcomes for the local and indigenous populations. Wallace and Pierce (1996), for example, argued that ecotourism ventures brought some benefits, but that possibilities for career advancements and training should be offered to prevent local populations from overexploiting the area with activities such as fishing and farming. As previously mentioned, de Lima *et al.* (2016) see empowerment in the context of tourism as the result of entrepreneurship, financial aids and partnerships, which would ultimately result, in one way among others, in alternative sources of income. Empowerment is also seen as a means to exert more control over tourism development (Scheyvens 1999).

Empowerment is one of the aspects of ethnodevelopment and both are related to obtaining more diversified income and with sustainable ways to stop commoditisation. Cultural experience labelling is considered a viable way to achieve all or some of the goals for the Sámi populations in the context of tourism. This also has the potential to be applied to other indigenous populations across the world.

Labelling and certifications, what are they exactly?

Labelling in itself is the act of giving something a label (Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d. (c)), but environmental and cultural labels are not so simple. The descriptions of environmental labels are also called certifications, and in this context both will be used without distinction. D’Souza *et al.* (2007) talk about environmental labelling and the understanding that the population has of them. They explain how there are different categories of environmental labels – for example there are the ones that are sponsored by the government (D’Souza *et al.* 2007).

In addition, the authors describe three kinds of labelling. The first type deals with environmental labelling schemes involving third parties. In this first type, a set of criteria is pre-defined, and when they are met, the company receives a seal to show they have done so. The second type refers to recyclable wares and similar. The third kind is similar to the first, but this time there is an independent third-party company checking that the criteria are met (D'Souza *et al.* 2007). The European Union has also created a common label to provide for the member states' information about the environmental superiority of products; the label is a third-party scheme and voluntary (Karl and Orwat 1999). Mainly, it is concerned with issues of pollution and waste (Karl and Orwat 1999).

Related to tourism, environmental labels have been considered beneficial for hotels since it signals to the tourists that there is an environmental commitment in place (Blackman *et al.* 2014; Peiro-Signes *et al.* 2014). Environmental certifications are also perceived by hotel managers as a solution to possible 'greenwashing' (Geerts 2014). 'Greenwashing' is defined as the fact that people are made to believe that a company is working for environmental protection when it does not actually do very much in that direction (Cambridge English Dictionary, n.d. (b)).

For what concerns cultural or ethnic labels, they are not only connected to tourism. Environmental labels are also called certifications and they have different formats, but they only exist in their context. Ethnic labelling has been used to describe belonging to an ethnic group, for example in the context of Sámi Norwegian adolescents (Kvernmo and Heyerdahl 1996). However, we have not been able to find any published connection between ethnic labelling and tourism. Cultural labelling, on the other hand, is related to the intrinsic identity of a destination, which is much deeper than its services and events. Cultural labelling has been described as an integration of 'a given atmosphere, style and identity, based on a form of cultural and historical consistency that underscores the value and attractiveness of the place' in the tourist destination (Corneloup *et al.* 2016: 59). Outside of tourism, cultural labelling has been connected with 'othering' (Heikkilä 2005) and seems to hold a negative connotation (Dubois and Laborier 2003; Wood 2016).

To avoid possible misunderstanding concerning labelling, this chapter will concentrate on cultural experiences which are considered the label's main focus. They will be discussed next with a few examples.

Sápmi Experience

Related to the labelling of cultural experiences, the Sápmi Experience label was created in Sweden and is based on another label called Nature's Best. The label is related to cultural protection and ecotourism principles (Nature's Best, n.d.). It is also the focus of the current section of this chapter and about how a label concerning Sámi ecotourism was developed in Sweden.

Lordkipanidze *et al.* (2005) talk about the Swedish label 'Nature's Best' for tourist activities. It was developed by the Swedish Ecotourism Association



Figure 11.1 The Sápmi Experience label logo.

together with the Swedish Travel and Tourism Council. The main goal of this label is to make ecotourism activities more environmentally friendly to contribute to conservation and viability. The criteria of Nature's Best are also the basis for a cultural and environmental label called Sápmi Experience created by the NGO VisitSápmi. The scope of VisitSápmi is to promote the sustainable development of Sámi tourism. This also has the goal of strengthening Sámi culture (VisitSápmi, n.d. (a)¹). The Sápmi Experience label has a symbol that the approved companies can show, as previously explained concerning the different kinds of labelling. The symbol shows the tourist that Sámi culture is being ethically presented at the certified destination. The goals of the label are to construct Sápmi in Sweden, Finland, Norway and Russia as a culturally and environmentally sustainable tourism destination. The point is to contrast the commoditisation of the Sámi culture in the context of tourism, and to promote cooperation between different companies (VisitSápmi, n.d. (c)). The criteria of the Sápmi Experience label are of three kinds, which are ethical criteria, service criteria and sustainability criteria. The first set of criteria is meant to support the Sámi culture and to be able to ethically communicate it to the world. The second set is about working with tourism in a professional way and to represent and market it correctly. The third set of criteria is about preventing negative impacts on the environment of Sápmi (VisitSápmi, n.d. (b)).

Currently, the label is not functioning. After the money and the project that drove its development and implementation ended the two main actors behind it left the supervision of the label. At that point, the label was given new leadership, but it virtually stopped operating (personal communication, 2016). The Sápmi Experience label is also featured in the latest edition of the Lonely Planet guide to Sweden (Ohlsen *et al.* 2015).



Figure 11.2 The Sámi Duodji label logo.

Sámi Duodji

The well-known handicraft trademark in Sápmi is Sámi Duodji. According to Lehtola (2006), the history of Sámi Duodji organisations varies in every country, for example in Finland it was established in 1975 with another name. The actual trademark was established in 1980 in Sweden, Norway and Finland and in 1996 in Russia, and it is the same in every country (Lehtola 2006). The juridical owner of the trademark is the Saami Council, but the right to give the licence and decide which craft producers are allowed to use the label is under different associations in each country (Sámi Duodji in Finland, Same Átnam in Sweden, Sámiid Duodji in Norway and Cepes Sami in Russia) (Lehtola 2006).

The aims of the trademark are to show the buyer that the producer is Sámi, to protect the quality of the trademark and to show to the public that Sámi handicraft production is a living culture (Saami Council, n.d.). There are strict rules on who is allowed to use the label: one has to be Sámi and has to have either an education or excellent experience in handicrafts (Saami Council, n.d.). The products need to represent traditional handicrafts, or new products that are made using traditional methods (Saami Council, n.d.). Products that are not made for traditional use and are marked as a souvenir are not allowed to use the trademark (Saami Council, n.d.). The latter is the actual basis for Sámi handicrafts: the products have always been made for use (Ylimartimo 1999), not to put on shelves as souvenirs. When visiting a Sámi Duodji shop this fact is visible. The shop sells, for example, scarves, knives, wooden cups (*guksti*), jewellery, leather bags and other products made from leather – everything is made to have an actual use in everyday life, even though they may act as a souvenir for tourists. Although the price for Sámi Duodji products is quite high, there are still tourists who are willing to spend money to buy quality authentic and locally made products.

Current challenges and opportunities of Sámi labels in tourism

When establishing a label and then selling cultural products according to its criteria, the procedure can have a multidimensional effect on communities. In this part of the chapter, we focus on these different dimensions of the labels Sámi Duodji and Sápmi Experience. We discuss the possible implications of the labels for the tourists visiting Sápmi and their possible role in attracting potential visitors. Finally, we consider the more ethical aspects of the labels.

Products with the Sámi Duodji label can represent souvenirs for many tourists. Graburn (2005) and Edelheim (2015) mention that souvenirs themselves have always been artefacts and memoirs from holidays and events, as well as reminders of different situations. Every souvenir has a different meaning to the owner: it can be a reminder of some person or even act as a piece of art in the home. The souvenir can also be a status symbol, to show others where you have been, how you relate to life and what kind of experiences you have gained (Graburn 2005; Edelheim 2015: 215). However, is a product bought from a souvenir shop or a service bought from a tourist company actually giving empowerment to the locals? Is it a status symbol for the community member?

Often souvenirs sold at shops are cheaply made, mass-produced artefacts (Kugapi 2014; Lüthje 1995). Hitchcock argues that imported goods exploit the local culture without giving the advantage to the locals (Hitchcock, 2005). This has been visible, for example, in the Finnish souvenir market for decades (e.g. Kugapi 2014; Lüthje 1995). In addition, according to Hitchcock, the seller is responsible for the authenticity of the product. Often the buyer believes that the seller has direct contact with the producer and the culture, but most of the time this is not true (Hitchcock 2005). Furthermore, tourism companies are responsible for the images they give about the indigenous communities, but, as our experiences show, the information given to tourists is often biased, based on the fact that guides are not necessarily from the area. Luckily, the label Sápmi Experience, for example, guarantees that the information is correct, and that guides will in fact have the knowledge required about indigenous culture.

As already discussed, the souvenir industry can damage local communities by giving false images and impressions of the culture itself (Timothy 2012). Johan Edelheim also takes up this issue in his book: the inauthentic souvenir shop steals the tourist's right to re-live the experience by not selling unique products (Edelheim 2015: 222). After the holiday, a tourist may not even remember where the product was bought, because the mass-produced imported souvenirs all look the same in every corner of the world. Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes initiate a discussion about how labels for souvenirs function as an advertisement for the place as well as differentiate the location from others (Pietikäinen and Kelly-Holmes 2011), which can also empower the locals by offering opportunities for earning extra income. Many museums in Sápmi have their lobby shops, where they sell handmade products made by local producers – the names of the craftspeople are visible for the tourists. When buying a product with a label, especially when seeing a craftspeople's name

on the label, the buyer does not only get satisfaction from the product, but also may feel pleasure because s/he has given economic support to the local craftsperson. In recent years, handicrafts have been seen as a solution to combat migration, the loss of business investments and services (Dlaske 2014), and have now started to become visible in shops. Furthermore, when visiting a place with the Sápmi Experience label (if the tourists are informed what the Sápmi Experience label stands for), tourists can trust that the product is authentic and that the economic input brought to the company remains in the area.

Currently, the Sámi Council is conducting research into the potential need for establishing another trademark alongside Sámi Duodji, which would be offered to people who are Sámi themselves, but not making handicrafts under the Sámi Duodji trademark (Torikka 2016). The products could be more artistic and not based on traditional patterns, but still the products would be made by locals, members of the indigenous community and the new trademark would show the authenticity of the product (Torikka 2016). Often the Sámi Duodji label has served as a good stepping-stone for the craftsperson's own career. However, if the craftsperson's wish is to be more creative and use modern styles alongside the traditional ones, the only solution has been to establish and manage a new trademark (Dlaske 2014). The good thing is that there is a space and need for both. Products made under the traditional Sámi Duodji label will show the traditions and history of the Sámi people, and the others – the own labels of craftspeople – show that it is not a dead culture; instead, it is a living culture. The idea of the new trademark is actually to show tourists that there are other options to imported products, and – little by little – make the imported goods less visible in souvenir shops (Torikka 2016). Nowadays, tourists are more culturally aware and are willing to spend more money if the product or service is actually made or provided locally. If there is no label, how can the tourist actually know the locality of the handicraft or service? Therefore, to make tourists more aware and to prove authenticity, there is a need for different labels.

Some challenges in the labelling process are, of course, that those who cannot or will not participate in the label risk being excluded. The exclusion can be related, for example, to the definition of a member of the Sámi community, which varies slightly in every country, but which is, in all cases, based on language or on provable family ties to the Sámi community (Samediggi, n.d.; Samer.se, n.d. (b)). This excludes those who consider themselves Sámi but who have lost the language and cannot prove their belonging. However, the label should be developed to be as inclusive as possible. It is important that the Sámi benefit from the label but it is also important to promote cooperation. The label should be designed, then, to include all parties that can respect and promote Sámi culture and the environment, but with particular attention to the fact that the certified companies are locally owned and operated. This is to make sure that the tourism income remains in the areas where the Sámi live and operate. All these actions are needed in order to ensure sustainable tourism in indigenous areas. The Sápmi Experience label does not, in fact, explicitly mention that the certified companies need to be run by members of the Sámi community, but only that Sámi culture

should be respected (VisitSápmi, n.d. (b)). This discussion is not meant to suggest that all members of the Sámi population should be part of the labelling project. For example, reindeer herding is the only source of income for many of the Sámi population and it does not need to be integrated if not needed or wanted. On the other hand, as previously mentioned, the labelling process should be as inclusive as possible for those who want to participate, since the Sámi are the rightful owners of their culture, and it can be a concern for them how it is labelled.

Conclusion

In the previous sections of this chapter, we have considered the concept of ethnodevelopment, and how labelling in the context of tourism can be a way for the Sámi to achieve control over the use of their cultural symbols in tourism and engage in an alternative livelihood, while at the same time applying sustainable practices to the development of their tourist enterprises.

The discussion on ethnodevelopment has shown how it is a concept related to ethnicity, culture and empowerment. More closely, ethnodevelopment is related to cultural development and contrasts with commodification. Ethnodevelopment should also translate into self-financing for indigenous populations. Labels can provide the tools for creating tourist activities that are based on the principles of sustainable development, for instance by adopting a label that is similar to the previously described Swedish Nature's Best. These principles would also ensure that the Sámi culture is represented in a respectful way, making it a source of pride while at the same time avoiding commoditisation.

Labels have the potential to create a favourable situation for the Sámi and other indigenous populations. The product (either tourist or handicraft) receives a label and therefore it gains a certain uniqueness. This uniqueness can be a way for tourists to be more willing to purchase the product and the extra income – that derives from the sale of tourism products – is one step towards alternative livelihoods and a source of empowerment for the indigenous populations adopting the label. At the same time, the label can also be a way for the tourists to know that their purchases are supporting the indigenous population they are visiting. This could make the standard souvenirs less attractive. Most of all, the labelling process, as one side of ethnodevelopment, would make people more aware of the only indigenous population in the EU. The source of empowerment, then, is both related to control over one's culture and income and to cultural preservation.

This chapter has suggested a new path to ethnodevelopment through economic stability and cultural preservation as empowerment tools. At this stage, this discussion is meant as a suggestion for further research. The only existing label of this kind, Sápmi Experience, should be further developed and spread to other countries in Sápmi. It would then be possible to start measuring its wider effects. Sápmi Experience is featured in the Lonely Planet Sweden guide so further research can be conducted into its potential effects on Sámi perception of their own culture and on the tourists' perception of Sámi culture, among others. Also, the development of the new trademark alongside the Sámi Duodji – the labelling

process, impacts on craftspeople and the concrete effects of the labels, among others – will definitely be worth researching.

Note

1. The website VisitSápmi has not renewed its certificate so some operating systems may block it as unsafe but by adding a security exception it is possible to access the content.

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