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**CARING FOR ZOO ANIMALS? HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP AND
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN KORKEASAARI ZOO: THE VISITORS'
PERSPECTIVE**

Tourism Research, TourCIM

Master's thesis

Spring 2022

University of Lapland, Faculty of Social Sciences

Title: Caring for zoo animals? Human-animal relationship and wildlife conservation in Korkeasaari Zoo: The visitors' perspective

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Degree programme / subject: Tourism Research, TourCIM

The type of the work: Pro gradu thesis x Laudatur thesis

Number of pages: 87

Year: 2022

Abstract

Human-animal relationship is present in animal-based tourism services. Especially, visitor consciousness for animals' wellbeing has been under consideration in many tourism organizations. Within the field of tourism studies, wildlife tourism and zoos have gained most attention relating to human-animal encounters. Human-animal relationship from social sciences perspective provide a theoretical framework, from dualistic animal categorization, emotional and instrumental human-animal relationship to notion of care towards non-domestic animals.

The research seeks to better understand complexity of human-animal relationship and caring in zoo environment, and how they impact conception of wildlife conservation from zoo visitors' perspective. Empirical framework is focused on one of the top tourism destinations in Helsinki; Korkeasaari Zoo. The study is employing qualitative methodology and interpretive paradigm. An inductive content analysis is being conducted for 13 zoo visit blog posts discussing conservation and 9 online semi-structured interviews.

The results indicate visitors' human-animal relationship to be multifaceted, and they showed emotional yet abstract attachment to zoo animals. Even though characteristics were diverse, even inconsistent, animals were considered individuals with feelings and intelligence. A culture of care and responsibility were present. Visitors' connection with animals enhanced emotional human-animal relationship. These notions should be further addressed in zoo strategies and operations. Animals and their conservation statuses broadened visitors' understanding on wildlife conservation. Instrumental use of animals was accepted to preserve wildlife. Furthermore, zoos have the tools to enhance visitors' commitment and participation. Korkeasaari Zoo was a platform to expand visitors' personal conservation efforts. Otherwise, zoo conservation was considered to have an important but supporting role among wildlife conservation.

Key words: zoo visitors, human-animal relationship, care, zoo animals, wildlife conservation, wildlife tourism

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1. INTRODUCTION

The present research is participating in the scientific discussion on wildlife conservation from the visitor perspective, focusing on the zoo environment and human-animal relationship. The term ‘animal’ is used in this thesis to refer nonhuman animals. In 2020, the popular Netflix documentary series *Tiger King* presented the legal private wild animal, especially the ownership of big cats in the US. The documentary exposed problems to the worldwide audiences because of the wide discussion it created in various media platforms. The private zoo presented in *Tiger King* was closed short-term after its former owner Joe Exotic was arrested. Some charismatic zoo animals have made it to the headlines for unfortunate reasons, causing public outrage and questioning the existence of zoos. For example, Harambe the gorilla for being shot dead when a child fell into gorilla enclosure (Young, 2016), and Tilikum the orca who drowned his trainer in front of a crowd (Sidahmed, 2017). In 2016, TripAdvisor stopped selling tickets to hundreds of tourist attractions that are widely accepted as cruel to wild animals (Bale, 2016). The present research is partaking this current topic of zoo relevance in the modern time. Quoting the words of the reporter Robin McKie (2020), are zoos “outdated relics of a less enlightened era”?

A counter argument to the presented question is the role of zoos in protecting wildlife by enhancing nature and wildlife conservation (e.g. Hance, 2015; Ward, 2016). Conservation work is implemented in *ex situ* and *in situ*, inside and outside of the zoo environment, and both are advertised by at-the-location and social media communication, school visits, and donation possibilities. Zoos have a long history and have been adapting to different times and contexts; from royal menageries that symbolize royal power and colonialization (see Franklin, 1999; McKie, 2020; Rudy, 2011, p. 122) that offer entertainment to the rich and wealthy, to “Noah’s Ark” that contributes to the species conservation through breeding and reintroduction programs (Keulartz, 2015). Keulartz's (2015) research indicate that nowadays, zoos are shifting towards more of an “integrated approach” where they are seen as conservation parks. However, the current developments of zoos enforce uniformity and mammalocentric focus of modern zoo animal collections (Kawata, 2013, pp. 29–31) that show the challenges the zoos face today: financial choices lead towards charismatic and large animals over endangered invertebrates and less exotic species (Ehrenfreund, 2015). Paradoxically, biodiversity is becoming less presented inside the modern zoos themselves.

Zoos need funding to implement the conservation task, and one form of funding comes from zoo visitors. In principle, zoos are tourist attractions. For zoos to fulfil and coordinate their roles in education, entertainment, scientific research, and wildlife conservation, it is important for zoo management to take account visitor perceptions and opinions (Ryan & Saward, 2004; Äijälä, García-Rosell & Haanpää, 2016). It has been an issue of consideration whether zoos' base their culture more on entertainment value or educational value (Yasuda, 2013). Zoo visitors are mostly made of families who are motivated to visit zoos by spending time there as a family, feeling enjoyment, and finding relaxation (Clayton & Myers, 2015; Ryan & Saward, 2004). In addition, Carr (2016) found that while visitors want to see active, entertaining, and cute animals, they were also interested in their conservation statuses.

Due to growing interest towards the role of human-animal relationships, animal wellbeing and biodiversity conservation, this research has been conducted to understand of the current developments of human-animal relationship and caring involved with zoo animals and wildlife conservation. The series like *Tiger King* presents a narrative that all zoos and sanctuaries are the same (Nuwer, 2020) and public opinion in the media platforms turns towards negative, it is meaningful to research visitor experiences and their relations to conservation. Biodiversity conservation and preservation has been identified a tourism sustainability trend by the World Travel and Tourism Council, WTTC (WTTC, 2016; as cited in OECD, 2018, 72). Following the ongoing discussions and ethical debates around the topic, this research aims to understand complexity of human-animal relationship and caring in zoo environment, and how they impact the visitors' conception of wildlife conservation.

1.1 Previous research

In the literature review conducted by Äijälä et al. (2016), human-animal encounters in tourism studies have been discussed from three major perspectives: ethical, consumer, and management perspectives. Wildlife tourism and zoos have gained most attention (Äijälä et al., 2016, p. 49). In Finland, visitor perception of wildlife conservation and zoo conservation education has been researched by Ojalampi and Nygren (2018). Human-animal relationship and ethical dilemmas of zoo and animal-based tourism have inspired students to write

master's theses, for example in the University of Lapland (e.g. Alekova, 2019; Stefanov, 2020). Zoo visitor awareness and interest of conservation issues, engagement in conservation behaviour, willingness to accept conservation messages, aspects of the zoo visit that might make a difference, and the relative importance of the conservation related aspects of their zoo experience has been researched widely from multiple perspectives. However, in the literature review conducted by Ojalammi and Nygren (2018, p. 69), they conclude that analysis of the role of non-human animals in zoo encounters and the relationships between animal and human individuals is largely missing.

Zoo conservation is often implicitly portrayed in the articles as something that is done by someone else, without the visitors, and it is happening somewhere far away from the city or country where the zoo is located (Nygren & Ojalammi, 2018). Conservation messages are mainly focused on cognitive goals such as imparting knowledge and promoting awareness of animals, habitats, ecosystems, and conservation (Luebke & Grajal, 2011). Research conducted by Ojalammi and Nygren (2018) found that visitors do notice general conservation in Korkeasaari Zoo and ecological knowledge provided by the zoo, but the conservation message lacked information about individual and collective conservation actions. Visitors have a high level of knowledge and understanding regarding animal behaviour interpretation and a low level of knowledge and understanding towards more abstract concepts, such as ecological interrelationships and the effect humans have on animal biodiversity (Dove & Byrne, 2014). Therefore, more simplified, and relatable conservation messages are needed. Zoo visitors support the inclusion of conservation education in wildlife tourism experiences, especially hoping to get practical information about what they themselves can do to help protect the wildlife (Ballantyne, Packer & Hughes, 2009). However, the conservation theme of zoos seems to be distant and not related to visitors' lives (Chalmin-Pui & Perkins, 2016; Ojalammi & Nygren, 2018).

Personal and emotional attachment to the topic influences visitor's conservation motivation. Values affect whether visitor's level of adoption of environmental behaviours is positive or negative (Ballantyne, Hughes, Lee, Packer & Sneddon, 2018). Zoos have the resources and environmental setting that can go beyond information transfer type of education to evoke an emotional connection that makes environmental issues become more self-relevant and

increases environmental concern among visitors (Clayton, Luebke, Saunders, Matiasek & Grajal, 2014). Ballantyne et al. (2009) found out that after the wildlife experience, visitors were willing to pay more for the experience in order to support conservation of the animals they encountered during the experience. Several other studies support the similar willingness and engagement towards conservation interests after the visit (e.g. Hughes, 2013; Myers, Saunders & Birjulin, 2004). Despite the rich number of publications supporting emotional connections with animals and conservation actions, that connection has not been much emphasised in zoo strategies or messages (Luebke & Grajal, 2011).

Visitor's effort to support conservation afterwards reduces as time goes by. Research conducted by Ballantyne et al. (2009) states that visitors prefer a low level of commitment over a moderate and a high level of commitment, for example they prefer recycling over donating money to a conservation organisation. This indicates that visitors are willing to put more effort on things that are close to them, easy to do, and are connected to them on an emotional level. The positive impact lasts for a few weeks to couple of months and will eventually decline to pre-visit levels with little of practical change in their behaviour (Adelman, Falk & James, 2000; Ballantyne, Packer & Falk, 2011; Hughes, 2013). Hughes (2013, pp. 45–46) points out that a lack of long-term commitment can be affected by constraints that prevent engagement, such as preference of a low-level commitment, unsuccessful convert of provided materials and strategies into off-site actions, challenges relating institutional and economic factors, and barriers of conservation itself that is difficult to execute and achieve. Motivated and supporting environment to work on, and continuous repetition and guidance is needed for an effective, long-term actions.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The present research is contributing to the scientific discussion on relationship between humans and animals in tourism from the zoo conservation perspective. Previous research shows the mismatch and loose connection between consumer contribution and zoo conservation messages (see Chalmin-Pui & Perkins, 2016; Ojalampi & Nygren, 2018). Human-animal relationship from social sciences point of view provide a general framework for the approach to understand visitors' relationship and care towards zoo animals and its

influence on conservation in this thesis. Human relationships with zoo animals are shaped by social processes and institutions. Hence, to better understand visitor's mindset towards the issue, the research is seeking to answer the following research question:

How visitors' relationship and care towards zoo animals shape their understanding on wildlife conservation?

The following sub-questions were developed to support the research question:

1. How zoo visitors describe their relationship to zoo animals?
2. What kind of care is being embodied by the visitors?
3. How does conservation status affect relationships between zoo visitors and animals?
4. How visitors describe their conception of wildlife conservation?

The present research is consistent with interpretive social sciences paradigm. Saunders and Tosey (2012) summarise interpretivism as "focused upon conducting research amongst people rather than upon objects, adopting an empathetic stance so as to understand their social world and the meaning they give to it from their point of view." In other words, the present research follows interpretivism that is based on relativist ontology: reality is multiple, socially constructed, holistic and contextual (Decrop, 2004, p. 157; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 20; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). An epistemological view of this research is subjectivist, co-creation of understanding between the researcher and the subject of the research. Interpretivism is assimilated with naturalistic inquiry as the importance is in understanding occurring phenomena in their naturally occurring states. (Decrop, 2004, p. 157; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 20). Therefore, the research seeks to better understand complexity of human-animal relationship and caring of zoo animals. Researcher also wishes the results to enhance understanding on wildlife conservation.

1.3 Positioning the researcher

The reason this topic has been chosen is related to the researcher's background. At the time of writing the thesis, the researcher is employed in Korkeasaari Zoo. In line with the interpretive social sciences paradigm, researcher of this paper is an 'insider', present in the

social setting and experiencing first-hand the phenomena under discussion (Jennings, 2010, p. 42).

Wildlife conservation topic is discussed daily in the zoo community: how to improve animals' living conditions inside and outside of the zoos, how animals react to change, and how to help hurt wildlife animals, just to name a few. At the zoo, the discussion with visitors is focused on animal visibility and the wellbeing of the ones living in the zoo. It is important to note that interaction and discussions are quite short and small talk styled, therefore it does not tell the whole picture of visitor's ideas, values, and motivation.

Due to personal interest, the researcher finds the topic of conservation work important and based on personal experience and research that indicates the reasons to visit are mostly to spend time with family (Ryan & Saward, 2004), importance of conservation to the visitors is not visible in the working environment. The rise of ethical dilemmas in animal-based tourism consumption has awoken the research interest towards understanding more deeply how zoo visitors connect with and care about zoo animals and their influence on the conservation work.

1.4 Empirical phenomenon

This section briefly discusses the empirical phenomenon of the topic; history of zoo conservation and conservation work in Korkeasaari Zoo. There have been historical changes of socially accepted ways of thinking about animals and their welfare (see Broom, 2006; Keulartz, 2015; McLean & Yoder, 2005) and how those factors have influenced the way zoos have functioned before and now.

1.4.1 History of zoo conservation

External factors relating zoo existence, such as public concern, has been around for hundreds of years (Bostock, 1993) and has been gradually criticized since the 1970's (Powell & Watters, 2017, p. 220). Moreover, Powell and Watters (2017) argue that the welfare focus

on zoos has largely been driven internally; documents of zoo professionals' concerns with animal welfare can be traced back to 1940's when Heini Hediger, considered to be the founder of the term "zoo biology" (Powell & Watters, 2017, p. 221), published his book *Wildtiere in Gefangenschaft* in 1942, translated in English as "Wild Animals in Captivity" in 1950. The book critically evaluates zoo industry's capabilities to fulfil biological needs of animals (Hediger, 1950). According to Bayma (2012, p. 117), conservation efforts were challenging to implement in zoo environment in the early 20th century due to lack of institutional infrastructure that was needed to conduct cooperative programs. Furthermore, zoos were politically and professionally unorganized at the time (Bayma, 2012, p. 117).

Behaviour research of wildlife animals and the concern of the way animals have been captured in the wild has been present already since the early 20th century (see Hediger, 1950; Kawata, 2012) but the discussion did not elevate into conservation actions at the time. Around the 1960's and 70's, the first formal zoo behavioural research department was founded in Europe (Kleiman, 1992, p. 302). However, it is unclear whether the reasons of this development were welfare related, mission driven, or both. For maintaining populations of animals for the long-term conservation, education, recreation and research, reliable care and breeding are necessary to deliver that mission (Powell & Watters, 2017, p. 222). Species conservation through breeding and reintroduction programs is also known as the "Noah's Ark approach" (Keulartz, 2015).

Reintroduction programs have been presented due to the narrative of zoos' socially acceptable reason to exist and fulfil the purpose to captive propagation of endangered species. In-situ (meaning 'located out of the zoo') programs have been invented to release zoo animals into wild and those individuals are genetically valuable to the wild populations. However, reintroductions of zoo animals have been criticised in the literature, particularly suggesting that animals are not fit to be reintroduced into the wild due to behaviour modification in captivity (Snyder et al., 1996). Additionally, research conducted by Stanley Price and Fa (2007, p. 160) state that zoos do not house enough endangered species which would be suitable for reintroductions. Furthermore, there have not been high enough numbers of reintroduced individuals and number of successful programs are limited (Conway, 2003, p. 9; Frost, 2011, p. 9). Instead, Stanley Price and Fa (2007, pp. 169–170)

suggest zoos to “export expertise rather than repatriate animals”. Indeed, the process has not been going as smoothly as hoped; animals are not afraid of humans and human infrastructure, and it has been fatal for them. Zoos are increasingly making efforts to educate animals to avoid these unfortunate fates. Other in-situ programs include financializing local people and authorities at animals’ natural habitat to support environmentally and socio-culturally friendly approaches to live in a way that stop diminishing areas of animals by human agriculture and preventing poaching. According to Carr (2018), zoos are obligated to stop such unhealthy and non-sustainable processes, and therefore, they have an obligation to preserve species in high-quality zoos in the meantime: not just for human entertainment but primarily for the preservation of individual animals and entire species.

Evolution from the Noah’s Ark approach and in their ex-situ (meaning ‘located at the zoo’) conservation attempts, the modern zoos are shifting towards more of an “integrated approach” where zoos are seen as conservation parks (Keulartz, 2015). This development has introduced more natural looking environments for animals where enclosures are designed in a way that humans become objects of animal gaze (Carr, 2018). Bostock (1993) emphasizes the importance of providing fulfilment to animals’ natural needs, avoiding causing pain and suffering, and giving the animals the benefit of the doubt: the possibility for animal to decide if it wants to stay out of the sight or not, for example.

Powell and Watters (2017) state that professionals and academics of the field, in order to spread animal welfare knowledge, have published multiple newsletters and journals, inter alia Zoo Biology, Animal Welfare, and Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science. Conference series that solely focused on the wellbeing of zoo animals, International Conference on Environmental Enrichment, exists to support and develop zoo conservation (Powell & Watters, 2017). Influential associations, such as European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EAZA), World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) and American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) provide professional development opportunities, set guidelines, and present badges of institutional legitimacy, including accreditation standards and code of ethics that their members follow. These associations and conferences are operated and financially maintained by the zoo communities themselves. It brings questions whether or not some well-maintained but not most financially profitable zoos are

left out due to high membership costs or whether some bigger financial contributor zoos can continue being members even if their actions are not up to the standards anymore. Associations and umbrella organizations, among other similar ones, do promote their members' interests and are politically influential lobbies, one might question their position, power, and influence to be unbiased (see Bayma, 2012, pp. 124–126; Rudy, 2011, pp. 125–126).

Mace et al. (2007) argue that the contributions made by zoos and their impact on conservation can be difficult to assess due to the variety of projects involved. However, research conducted by Gusset and Dick (2010) considers zoos' contribution to improve the conservation status of high-profile threatened species and habitats in biodiversity-rich regions of the world. This challenges criticisms that generations of zoos have been unsuccessful to meet their goals (Hyson, 2004) and that most of the conservation programmes are unresponsive (Conway, 2003, p. 9). Bayma (2012) address the importance of institutional change in relations to responding the demand of more animal friendly and reputable organization and replying to both internal and external criticism. Previous research has paid attention on zoos' changing strategic focus from recreation and entertainment to conservation-based education (Keulartz, 2015; Wijeratne, Van Dijk, Kirk-Brown & Frost, 2014). For example, designed conservation themed courses for schools, and guides' role of sharing conservation message (Wijeratne et al., 2014) exist already to emphasise the strategic and institutional change. In fact, it is argued that due to urbanization and limited variability of biodiversity presented in zoos, conservation education might become the most vital function of zoos (Kawata, 2013, p. 35).

1.4.2 Conservation at Korkeasaari Zoo

Korkeasaari Zoo participates multiple international and domestic conservation programs, for example freeing European forest reindeer to Seitsemien national park in Finland (Salomäenpää, 2019), transferred two Przewalski's wild horse to Mongolia (STT, 2019), and investigating possibilities to transfer Amur leopards to the sanctuary nearby the Russian and Chinese border (Perttu, 2019). Furthermore, it is a founding member of EAZA and member of many associations, inter alia WAZA, International Union of Conservation of Nature,

International Zoo Educators Association, and LYKE, The Finnish Association of Nature and Environment Schools (Millaista suojelutyötä Korkeasaari...). Korkeasaari Zoo provides treatment for wild Finnish animals; people can call to ask guidance or bring injured animals to the treatment centre. Travel Wanderlust (Green, 2020) and Escape Here (Vanner, 2020) have listed Korkeasaari Zoo as one of best zoos leading the way in conservation efforts in the world. Wildcats Conservation Alliance announced on their website Korkeasaari Zoo to become “the head of the list of top zoo donors of 2019” with 102 207 € donation (Korkeaaari Top Zoo..., 2020).

Korkeasaari Zoo has been announced as one of the top attractions in Helsinki, according to MyHelsinki (Top 14 Nähtävyydet...), TripAdvisor (Korkeasaaren eläintarha), and several travel related websites such as Culture Trip (Wood, 2018), and Planet Ware (O’Donnell, 2021). The zoo has gotten media attention regularly from the Finnish media, relating to its conservation work especially at the treatment centre for wild Finnish animals. For example, when animals like grey seals and mute swans are being treated at the treatment centre (Malminen, 2018; Parma, 2020). Baby news are popular, for example successful breeding of endangered species like Bali starling (Salomaa, 2020), Barbary macaque (Helaskoski, 2019), and Amur tigers (Bäckgren, 2016) thrives media attention. Recent big media attention was around rescued European forest reindeer orphan who was found wandering in the city centre of Helsinki and it was brought to Korkeasaari Zoo to recover (Karppi, 2022) before releasing the animal back to nature.

Out of approximately 160 animals living in Korkeasaari Zoo, only one third of the species at the zoo have either endangered or critically endangered conservation status, and 20 species are part of EAZA Ex-situ Programme. Some least-concerned animals are rescued from illegal wildlife trade, some are donated former pets, and some are unable to return to nature. However, it is also being argued that animals that possess least-concerned conservation status are being kept because there is a possibility that the numbers might decrease rapidly in the wild (Korkeasaaren lajeista yhä..., 2020). It can be questioned is this kind of preparation for the worst-case scenario necessary considering the limited amount of space zoos have?

According to Luebke and Grajal (2011), conservation messages are mainly focused on cognitive goals such as imparting knowledge and promoting awareness of animals, habitats, ecosystems, and conservation. Korkeasaari Zoo is no exception. On their website, the zoo encourages people to participate conservation work by 1) visiting the zoo, 2) donating, 3) becoming a supporting member of Friends of Korkeasaari association, 4) sharing knowledge about different conservation projects and learning about nature, and 5) volunteering at the zoo (Miten voim olla...). Visiting and volunteering at the zoo supports the formation of an emotional connection that makes environmental issues become more self-relevant and increases environmental concern among visitors (Clayton et al., 2014).

1.5 Research methods and empirical material

The methodological choices of the present research are consistent with interpretive paradigm. Saunders and Tosey (2012) describe interpretivism to focus upon conducting research amongst people and adopting an empathetic stance to understand their social world and the meaning they give to it from their perspective. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) explain that interpretive paradigm applies a relativist ontology where multiple realities exist, a subjectivist epistemology where knower and subject cocreate understandings, and a naturalistic set of methodological procedures in the natural world.

The empirical material of the present study consists of blog texts written by Korkeasaari Zoo's visitors and interviews with volunteers at the zoo. Based on previous research, academics agree that blogs are especially suitable for researching tourism consumption habits from consumer centric perspective (see Bosangit, Hibbert & McCabe, 2015; Rahmani, Gnoth & Mather, 2017). Consumer-generated materials online, that blogs are part of, are agreed to be an important source of influence as tourism is a global industry with global consumers thus noticing differences in consumer-generated material adoption and use among different countries accordingly (Gretzel, Kang & Lee, 2008). The way people write about their tourist experiences can reveal features that provide insights not approachable by more commonly used data gathering approaches (Bosangit et al., 2015, p. 2). To extend understanding of multiple themes emerging from blogs regarding animals and zoo conservation, semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study to support and follow

the thinking processes of the participants (see Jennings, 2010, pp. 174–175). Qualitative research interview provides flexible and dialogical form of producing knowledge (Brinkmann, 2018). According to Seidman (1991, p. 3), interviews make it possible to understand the experiences of other people in depth.

Blog posts written by volunteers brought up the notion of being a visitor whose relationship towards animals influences conservation involvement. Therefore, volunteers were chosen for the interview phase. The blog posts are focused on the zoo visit experience and zoo's conservation issues whereas interviews emphasis understanding the thoughtful meanings and personal encounters of the human-animal relationships and the notion of conservation in more detail. Covid-19 precautions have been considered while interviewing volunteers. Materials were analysed with content analysis in which collected sample were organised for the purpose of finding meanings and forming conclusions of the empirical material (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2013). Ethical implications regarding blogs, interviews, and researcher's rights to use them as research material have been addressed and will be further discussed in the third chapter of this thesis.

1.6 Structure of the study

The present research consists of five main chapters. Chapter two is dedicated to theoretical framework: human-animal relationship in social sciences. It elaborates the discussion on human-animal relationship within western society and describes how the emerging concepts construct the phenomenon of human-animal relationship. Further, the part of socially constructed human-animal relationship highlights three aspects of the topic such as categorization of animals, nature of human-animal relationship, and its application considering wild animals specifically.

Chapter three introduces the methodologies of the research. Empirical material consists of blogs and interviews. This chapter aims to explain how qualitative research methods were used to gather blogs and semi-structured in-depth interviews. It also describes how the empirical material was examined using content analysis within the interpretive paradigm. Chapter four describe the analysis and discussion of the study. It indicates the main study

findings and demonstrates how visitors describe their human-animal relationship and care in zoo environment and how these influence visitors' conception of wildlife conservation. In addition, the chapter introduces aspects that are considered insightful considering zoo animals. The final chapter, chapter five, concludes the main findings and introduces the managerial implications and limitations of the study. Furthermore, it suggests directions for further research.

2. HUMAN-ANIMAL RELATIONSHIP IN SOCIAL SCIENCES

Human-animal relationship in social sciences research and literature has been human-centred, degrading the animal side of the relationship (Shapiro, 2020, p. 801). This research is focusing on the relationship of humans and nonhuman animals (hence ‘animals’), thus shortly implied as ‘human-animal relationship’. The name of this chapter might give the impression that humans are separate from animals. In this research, it is not intended to reinforce the idea of human exceptionalism. It is understood that the genericizing word ‘animal’ contains humans as well and that the term has been criticized for being paradoxical (Knight, 2018; Shapiro, 2008, as cited in Echeverri, Karp, Naidoo, Zhao & Chan, 2018, p. 51).

As an example of human-centred research involving animals, Haanpää, Salmela, García-Rosell and Äijälä (2021) observed in their study that asking permission to film and other rules of research conduct seemed to disappear when applied to other animals than humans during the fieldwork. In social sciences, it has been challenging to evolve concepts that better consider merging nature and culture, including animals (Sulkunen, 2002, p. 22). Change of societal human-animal relationship can be seen as a part of modern development of society where social relations, knowledge and moral philosophical questions are constructed in a new way and new meanings have been developed (Giddens, 1990). Shapiro (2020, p. 800) states that a relationship is a distinct phenomenon that is being co-constituted by two distinct entities and is constantly modifying. Urbanization, individualist lifestyles, enhancement of industrial production and globalization are modern social phenomena that has influenced the change of human-animal relationship in western societies (Shuurman, 2012, p. 43).

2.1 Western dualistic perception of animals

According to a recent study by Shapiro (2020), the most human-animal relationships are complex products of human construction even though the relationship is co-constituted by both the human and animal parties. This potentially decreases the animal side of the relationship because of the dense layers of constructions humans have of them (Shapiro, 2020, p. 802). For a long time in western societies, animals have been viewed in

anthropocentric manner: animals are below sentient human beings, and the core of animal treatment is based on providing better life for humans (McLean & Yoder, 2005, p. 135). Philosophers Descartes and Rousseau argued that animals lack reason, and hence they are like machines, without souls, intelligence, or feelings (Sheehan, 1991, p. 29). According to Franklin (1999), Christianity and church had a big impact on the ways humans perceived animals and how they were treated. Animals were considered incapable of having emotions and feeling pain, unlike humans, which made it socially acceptable for humans to do anything to animals. Violence of the time can be seen to highlight and maintain differences between humans and animals (Franklin, 1999). Darwin's evolution theory challenged the idea of a fundamental separation between humans and animals. Nevertheless, in terms of evolution, perceptions of inferiority and superiority were justified and explained (Mullin, 1999, p. 206; Sheehan, 1991, p. 32). Animals were defined to be insentient, hence not deserving same inherent rights and welfare needs as humans (MacFarland & Hediger, 2009, p. 1).

Rise of ecological movement in the 1960s and 70s started the change of people's mindset towards animals' existence, wellbeing, and ethics. Impact of tourism on animals and their environment started to get attention between the 1970s and 80s but the wellbeing of animals later in the 21st century (Äijälä et al., 2016, p. 46). Animal liberation theory and animal rights theory both denounces traditional morality for its human superiority and speciesism (Keulartz, 2015, p. 337). Anthropocentrism was seen as an attempt to ignore human dependence from nature and to establish a human supremacist role that has contributed to the alienation of people from themselves (Naess, 1973, p. 96). It is recognized now that an ever-increasing range of animals are capable of range of complex emotions (Duncan, 2006). In natural sciences, boundaries between human and animals have been critically appraised. It has been indicated that previously thought human-only qualities such as language, usage of tools and social structures are not only possessed by humans (Sulkunen, 2002, p. 22). Arluke and Sanders (1996, p. 169, as cited in Shuurman, 2012, p. 46) note that critic should be focused on how humans perceive animals in society: even though conceptions such as human-only qualities are revised in natural sciences, culturally these conceptions might not change (see also Buller & Morris, 2007, p. 474). They still are identified as objects and property by law (Rudy, 2011). However, legislation from multiple entities, such as in the EU and national decision-making entities, are increasingly established to ensure the welfare of

animals and regarding them as sentient beings (Fa, Funk & O'Connell, 2011). Scientific development, modernisation and civilisation have influenced more approving attitudes and better animal treatment among humans (Franklin, 1999), even though bad animal treatment still exists in western societies (Shuurman, 2012, p. 45).

Buller and Morris (2007) and Sulkunen (2002, p. 21) state human separation from non-human animal and nature has been one of the most crucial ontological dichotomies. Dualistic view of western human-animal relationship reflects dichotomy of the modern societal nature relationship towards both instrumental nature relationship that highlights differences between human and nature, and romantic nature relationship that highlights similarities between human and nature (Eder, 1996; Franklin, 1999; Sulkunen, 2002, p. 20). Dualistic and cultural nature relationship culminates when talking about animals. Research conducted by Buller and Morris (2007) indicate that on one hand, animals bring nature closer to humans and distinguishes boundaries between human and nature. On the other hand, animals can be seen as non-human in nature, as “objects” that are hierarchically in lower position to human, and as “another” which provide privileged position to human (Buller & Morris, 2007). Even though humans might not consider themselves as superior to others as before and animal wellbeing is considered when interacting with animals, humans still have the final say. Humans are in a position of power in relation to animals (Rudy, 2011) and people have obligation to ensure that other species' needs are met (Broom, 2006, p. 27). Hierarchical relationship, human power and responsibility is highlighted in encounters with human constructed spaces, such as food production or tourist attractions.

Despite the inequality of the power differences in a relationship, Shapiro (2020, p. 801) argues that the animals involved have at least some level of agency. This indicates that both parties are co-responsible for the impact of the relationship on the other party. For example, animals shape tourism encounters and the operations of product suppliers and retailing agencies through 1) their own actions and reactions and 2) the increasing sensitivity and changing values of tourists towards animal-based attractions (Haanpää et al., 2021). Challenging the boundaries between humans and animals in modern society has been seen as redefining cultural dichotomies and questioning them (Sarmicanic, 2007, p. 90).

2.2 Dualistic categorizing of animals

Animals' role in society has been construed through different categories. Categorization is a conceptual system where certain qualities and meanings are being associated with certain animals and they are categorized based on those qualities and meanings. Categorization is a form of constructing social reality (Kupsala, 2019, p. 25). Animal categorization is usually based on dualistic division between tamed and wild animals. Tamed and domesticated animals are being viewed as familiar, close, harmless, even dull whereas wild animals are unknown, distant, and dangerous (Bostock, 1993, p. 52; Buller & Morris 2007; Ilvesviita, 2005, p. 72). Wild also carries positive and modern, even romantic associations of animals living natural and proper, undisturbed lives (Bostock, 1993, p. 53). According to Arluke and Sanders (1996, p. 169, as cited in Shuurman, 2012, p. 46) animals are being categorized based on practical and societal needs of humans, not animals themselves. The notion of wild and domesticated animals makes sense because there are humans with whom animals may or may not have particular relationships. According to Palmer (2012, p. 3), wildness, in a sense of non-domestication, emphasizes the absence of a particular kind of human-animal relation, while domestication indicates the presence of that relation. Shuurman (2012, p. 46) presents categorization (see Figure 1) that partly follows the dualistic line of tame/wild, with a slightly more comprehensive distinction. A base of categorization is suitability of animals for roles society has created for them and from that point of view, animals have been divided into useful, companion and entertainment, wild, and harmful animals.

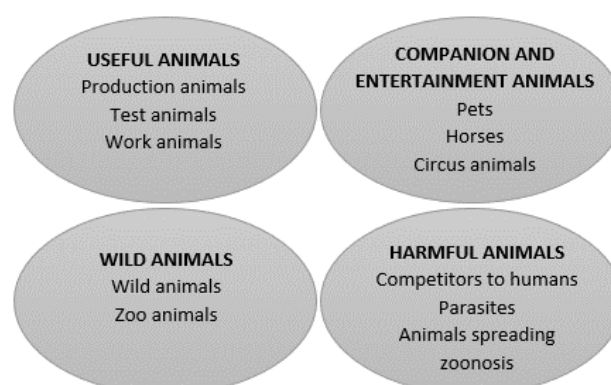


Figure 1. Categorizing animals from the point of view humans and society. Source: Shuurman, 2012, p. 46.

Animals that are close to humans, such as companion animals, and those considered useful, such as domesticated animals, are under the influence of society and culture, and thus change society and its meanings to some extent (Arluke & Sanders, 1996, p. 169, as cited in Shuurman, 2012, p. 46). Useless animals for humans, such as animals that fight for shared living space, parasites, and animals spreading zoonosis are considered harmful animals because they are harmful to humans or human concerns (Buller & Morris, 2007; Franklin, 1999; Ilvesviita, 2005, p. 176). Useful and companion animals are being appreciated while humans want to get rid of harmful animals. Wild animals include previously mentioned harmful animals, those living in natural wild habitat, endangered animals, zoo animals, and games. These categories are formed through meanings and values of human societies, and they have been used to strengthen relations and structures of societies or to criticize them by comparing them to nature (Shuurman, 2012, p. 47). Categorization has influenced how people consider and treat animals differently (Holloway, 2001). Animals can belong to different categories, for example, a mouse can be a companion, useful, harmful, or wild animal. In each category, different assumptions about the animal are being made.

Zoos challenge the distinction of wild and domesticated animal because wild animals live in human constructed environment where visitors aim to interact with wild animals like they would be tamed (Shuurman, 2012, p. 48). Zoo animals are rather in a semi-domesticated state because most zoo animals are born in zoos, they are in some relationship with humans, but at the same time it is possible in specific cases to reintroduce them successfully to the nature (Bostock, 1993, p. 55). This characteristic blur the division between wild and domestic and the boundaries between nature and society are crossed. Research conducted by Tovey (2003) indicate that opposite to wild and semi-domesticated animals, domestic animals are not easily positioned to be a part of nature because they are not in a direct influence of nature processes. Simultaneously, pet-owners are considering an ideal of keeping animals 'in their nature' and maintained to be as free and genuinely animal-like within the constraints of domestication (Macnaghten, 2004, p. 544). Still, humans have influenced nature processes, managed wild populations, and affected natural habitat as well (see Tovey, 2003). Furthermore, wild animals increasingly find themselves adrift in this landscape, not only because of the reduction and fragmentation of their natural habitat, but also due to climate change and increased transport and tourism (Swart & Keulartz, 2011, p. 192).

Everyday life is argued to be a vital context while forming nature and human-animal relationship (Eder, 1996). Due to change of human-animal relationship in western society, animals are seen more as individuals and members of communities and societies. Research conducted by Freeman (2011) indicate that individual aspects, knowledge, and subjectivity of animals could be lost if animals are being considered as part of nature, outside of society. Moreover, if animals are being considered as an agent and an active part of the relationship, they could be an influential party and considered a part of society (see Freeman, 2011; Low, 2011)

2.3 Emotional and instrumental human-animal relationship

Attitudes towards animals in modern society is not a new topic in research (see e.g. Almeida & Fernández, 2021; Franklin, 2007; Kellert, 1994). Research indicates that cultural, socioeconomical and demographical factors affect the attitudes and perceptions humans have on animals (e.g. Kellert, 1994). In general, women, young, highly educated, people living in cities and non-religious people tend to consider animals more emotionally than men, older people, less educated or religious people who tend to consider animal more instrumentally (Almeida & Fernández, 2021; Serpell, 2004, pp. 147–148). Attitudes are also influenced by profession, income level, ethnical background, and residential area (Franklin, 2007, pp. 9–10). Childhood experience, parents' attitudes, being with animals and personality had slight impact on attitudes as well (Serpell, 2004, p. 148).

While keeping animals and during human-animal interaction, animals are participating actively on their own in forming conceptions how they are being treated (Ratamáki, 2009). The way humans are in interaction with animals tells how they regard animals. Attitudes towards animals are mirrored and influenced by cultural meanings associated in different historical and societal contexts that exemplify animal representation for example in media (Podberscek, 1994). In addition, animal categorization leads people to consider animal in a certain way (Serpell, 2004, p. 146). In some account, biological features such as physical qualities and behavior influence the way people regard animals (Ratamáki, 2009). Taking account physical qualities might help to understand why notion of animals are similar in

different cultures and why some animals awoke positive emotions, especially big and charismatic animals (Serpell, 2004, p. 147)

Plenty of research have concluded that notion of animal is twofold and can be separate into instrumental and emotional human-animal relationship that include affective, moral, financial, and practical perspectives (see Macnaghten, 2004; Serpell, 2004, p. 146; Vainio, Kauppinen, Valros, Raussi & Vesala, 2007, pp. 15–16). In instrumental human-animal relationship, animal is seen as an object and target of exploitation. Vainio et al. (2007, p. 49) state that animals are considered as outsiders of moral communities which highlights differences of humans and animals. Opposite to instrumental is emotional human-animal relationship that promotes similarities between humans and animals, and both are members of moral community (Franklin 1999; Vainio et al., 2007, p. 49).

In emotional human-animal relationship, animals are regarded in a way where emotions and its meaning are central and recognized. Emotions are significant in establishing social relationship, institutions, and processes (Barbalet, 1998, p. 9). Central aspect of emotional human-animal relationship is emotional bond towards an animal as an individual or species in general. Research conducted by Macnaghten (2004, p. 538) state that human relationship towards animal individual considers emotionality in the context of regarding animals as either friends, companions, subject of empathy and compassion, or quilt provoking and scary beings. A culture of care and responsibility involves animals to receives love and respect, humans to spend time with them and wish them to live happy, healthy, and free from suffering (Macnaghten, 2004, p. 539). A sign of affection is also sadness that is being felt after animal passes away (Howell, 2002). According to Macnaghten (2004, p. 539) such sentiments were most prevalent amongst people who had pets but were shared across a variety of different social groups: “Farmers spoke in emotive terms about their livestock, wildlife observers spoke of the moral imperative of protecting and respecting animals in their natural habitat, and country sports enthusiasts spoke passionately of their intimate relationships with their working dogs”.

Instrumentalizing animals can be understood as their commodification when they are being discussed more in abstracts and mathematical terms than from the perspective of their individual qualities (Shuurman, 2012, p. 54). Therefore, instrumental dimension of keeping animals can be interpreted as implicit domestication deal where human feeds animal, protects it from danger and takes care of its health and in return, animal provide goods and services for humans (Larrère & Larrère, 2000). These animals are entrusted to human care or are placed in human environments and are therefore dependent on humans for their welfare and needs. Shuurman (2012, p. 54) clarifies domestication deal is fictive and meaning that humans are in favor to compensate domestication by providing better means to live under human care than in nature. In case of treating wild animals, they have been tried to exclude from human responsibility because the intrinsic value of wild animals implies non-intervention even if this leads to the reduced welfare of the animals concerned (Swart & Keulartz, 2011, p. 187). Making an animal's survival and wellbeing dependent on human action, human has become responsible for it, whereas such responsibility does not exist with respect to wild animals (Verhoog, 1999).

In their research, Connolly and Cullen (2018) present ethic of care framework which propose human-animal relationship to be either concrete or abstract alongside instrumental and intrinsic value. A concrete relationship refers to “a direct and personal interaction” whereas abstract is characterized by “an objective distance between human and animal” (Connolly & Cullen, 2018, p. 409). Four caring categories were identified within these framings. At first, ‘contractual care’ offers personal and direct care, but it is conditioned on the usefulness of animal and thus is instrumental in nature. Second, ‘no care’ presents the abstract and distant connection to the animal which is also end-focused. Third, ‘care about’ is about caring animals intrinsically but it is abstract in nature. At last, ‘care for’ sees animals to have intrinsic value and relationship is concrete. The framework was adapted to animal-based tourism (see Figure 2) by García-Rosell and Tallberg (2021). In their research, García-Rosell and Tallberg (2021, p. 117) found that visitors expressed ‘care about’ relationship towards animals. According to Tallberg, García-Rosell and Haanpää (2021), animals influence visitors’ interpretation of the level of care the animal owners provide to animal. They read animals based on their subjective human experiences influenced by culture, personal ethical judgements, beliefs, and values (Tallberg et al., 2021). In general, attitudes towards modern

instrumental and abstract use of animals are becoming more critical (Macnaghten, 2001, p. 8).

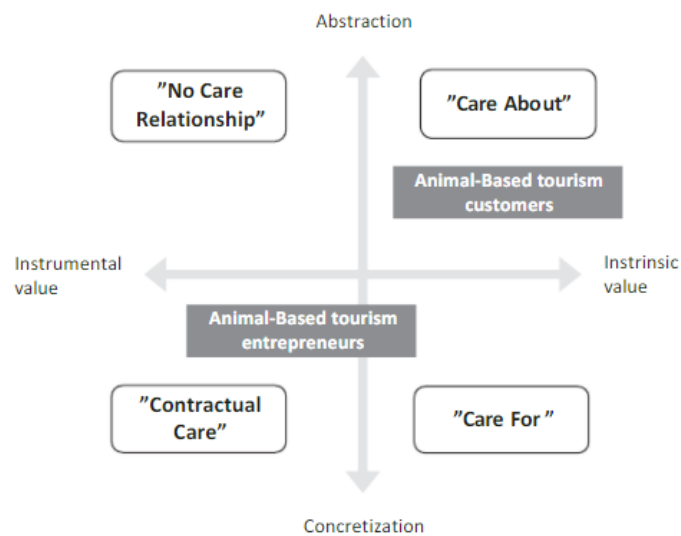


Figure 2. Ethics of care framework applied to animal-based tourism. Source: García-Rosell & Tallberg, 2021.

Instrumental practices that take advantage of animals are established in a manner that increased moral thinking has not completely affected it. Arluke and Sanders (1996, as cited in Shuurman, 2012, p. 55) state that emotional and instrumental relationship live quite peacefully side by side in modern western societies, despite the contradictions these two concepts have. Western culture provides means to live with contradictions without causing problems. Controlling the contradictions between emotional and instrumental relationship is about historical development. One kind of modern consensus stabilized in the beginning of the 20th century: people cared about animal suffering and wanted to restrict it, but societal development was prioritized which initialized the acceptance of animal instrumentalization (Franklin, 1999; Kupsala, 2019, p. 30). Highlighting emotional relationship conflicts with modern consensus and cognitive dissonance, human endeavor to shift ethical questions of animal production and testing out of sight (Macnaghten, 2004). Shuurman (2012, p. 55) argues that notion of animals has polarized because both emotional and instrumental human-animal relationship have separated and institutionalized. Whereas food, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries have increased the performance and use of animals instrumentally as objects, emotional relationship has created market for raising, training, nurturing pets and

providing related goods and services (Jyrinki, 2010) where pets become co-creators themselves.

2.4 Notion of care with non-domesticated animals

According to Giddens (1990), one characteristic of modern society is personal relationships where the focus is on sociability and being loyal along with authentic are important. Relationship is not based on family bonds or local communities like they were during pre-modern era and thus modern relationship forming require effort and construction. In a similar manner, human-animal relationship is being co-created constructively. Haraway (2008) expresses both human and animal being described in terms of significant otherness that highlights the equality of that relationship. Wild animals are generally not considered to have this kind of co-creative relationship with humans (Swart, 2005, p. 258) even though it has been stated that relationship between human emotions and attitudes influences the presence, absence, and recovery of wildlife populations (Herzog & Burghardt, 1988, p. 215). Despite the considered lack of co-creation, it does not mean the absence of the obligation of caring. Research conducted by Tronto (1993, p. 103) notes that caring is not restricted to dyadic relations and includes caring “for objects, and for the environment, as well as for others”. Conservation and sustainable development are considered in abstract and intrinsic ‘care about’ relationship (Connolly & Cullen, 2018, p. 415). An emotional connection makes environmental issues become more self-relevant and increases environmental concern, for example among zoo visitors (Clayton et al., 2014).

According to Norton (1995), humans respect wild animals and have realized that wildness implies a strongly dependent relationship with the natural environment, and thus care for that relationship and for the natural environment is required. Swart (2005, p. 258) states the importance of recognizing how human activities increasingly determine the environment of wild animals, and for that, humans have to make efforts to maintain animals’ living conditions and their dependent relationship with the environment. According to Haraway (2008), understanding of care as affective advocates for the development of a flourishing human–animal relationship. In a sense of affective relationships, Buller (2016) notes that caring for animals does not assume any particular feeling on animals’ part or require that

they respond. The term ‘non-specific care’, defined by Swart (2005), is being used for meaning care that focuses on maintaining and developing the natural environment of the wild animal and it is not directed at the individual animal. In general, non-specific care may be seen as measures that make it possible for wild animals to live their own lives. Non-specific care does not prevent suffering caused by natural conditions, since such conditions are “a fact of life in the wild” (Swart, 2004). As the counterpart of ‘non-specific care’, Swart (2005) suggests ‘specific care’ for animals kept by humans, including domesticated animals. Therefore, the naturalistic interpretation of intrinsic value implies non-specific care for wild animals, whereas the species-specific interpretation leads to specific care for kept and domesticated animals. Moreover, wildness and tameness must be considered as gradual concepts and, therefore, specific and non-specific care are gradually related to the level of wildness or domestication (see Figure 3).

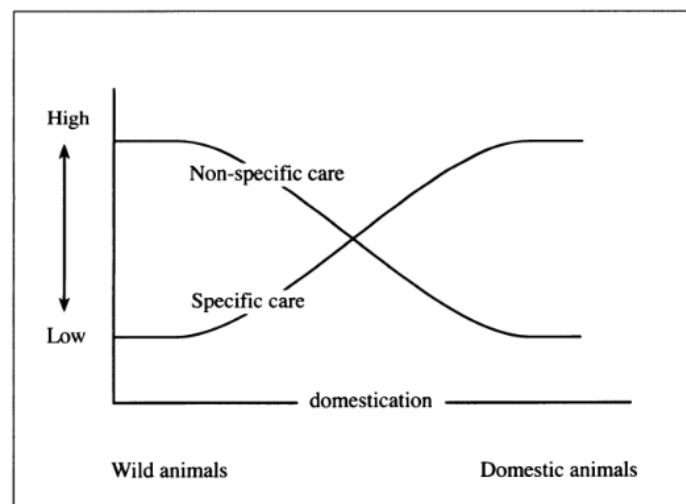


Figure 3. Specific care and non-specific care as a function of the level of domestication or wildness. Source: Swart, 2005.

Zoos bring forward the complexity of human-animal relationship. As mentioned, zoo animals represent the wild aspect of dualistic view of tamed/wild and they can be categorized as wild and semi-domesticated, in other words: non-domesticated. Hence, it is easy to think of them as outsiders, a part of the biotic community instead of society (Callicott, 1988, p. 167) and therefore, they represent those who should not be under influence of humans. The socially constructed way of considering wild conflicts with zoo animals because they are considered wild, but the environment of zoos is managed and operated by humans, hence

animals are under the influence of human presence. Some authors argue that zoos bring benefits to society (e.g. Bostock, 1993; Ward, 2016), and others say that these places should be closed down (see Jamieson, 1985). In zoos, culture and animal characteristics model the perception and lives of non-human animals where inter-species communication arise contributing to development of perceptions and attitudes towards different species and individuals inhabiting the zoo environment (Mäekivi & Maran, 2016). Without requiring that the animals oppose the powerful and political human structures around them, recognizing co-constitutions of human–animal relationships as involving “attachments and affinities” as well as “antagonisms and animosities”, notes the significance of affect in the practice of care (Williams, 2021).

3. CONTENT ANALYSIS OF BLOGS AND INTERVIEWS

In a literature review conducted by Nygren and Ojalampi (2018), they remark that human-animal relations have been mostly studied quantitatively and from survey material. As a means to offer a different perspective, the present study examines human-animal relations with qualitative methodology through interpretive social sciences paradigm. To further explore the topic, empirical material consists of preliminary and primary materials: blogs and interviews.

In this research, blogs operate as preliminary material. Unaltered by the researcher's presence, blogs are considered to contain naturalistic expressions and personal opinions of the bloggers themselves (Hookway, 2008). Blogs are used in this research because of their potential to give an indicative description of the connection between visitors and animals. Blogs introduced the themes discussed under the topic of wildlife conservation during the Korkeasaari Zoo visit. Furtherly, results of the blog analysis assisted to formulate the interview questions. Especially blog posts written by volunteers brought up the notion of being a visitor whose relationship towards animal influences conservation involvement. It inspired to further explore the volunteers' understanding and relationship to zoo animals through interviews.

Interviews provide interactive and dialogical form of producing knowledge (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 577; Jennings, 2010, p. 171). In this research, interviews function as primarily research material because it gives the opportunity for participants to share their knowledge and perspectives (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 94) and for the researcher to ask specified questions related to the research topic. Interviews with the Korkeasaari Zoo volunteers helped understanding the thoughtful meanings and personal encounters of the human-animal relationships and the notion of conservation in more detail. Inductive content analysis was used as an analysis method in this research. In this chapter, methodological choices are presented in more detail.

3.1 Blogs as preliminary material

Hookway (2008) defines blogs as publicly available, naturalistic data in textual form, that enable technically easy access to populations otherwise difficult to reach, providing insight into everyday life of the phenomenon in question. A blog is one of the principal platforms, readily available for the people in sharing information in accordance with their own interests, providing sentiment about a range of issues (Chen, Lu & Tsai, 2014; O’Leary, 2011). Therefore, it is particularly well-suited when researching subjective and personal opinions and experiences of visitors’ connection towards animals and zoo conservation. Archived nature of blogs gives an opportunity to study social processes across space and time in connection to animal and zoo conservation (see Hookway, 2008). The blogs of human-animal relationships tell the stories of both visitors and animals, as interpreted by the authors according to their understanding of the zoo animals.

Search engine Google was used as a platform to search blogs. Keywords “Korkeasaari”, “zoo”, “conservation”, and “blog” were used both in English and Finnish languages. Among multiple approaches to Korkeasaari Zoo visits, only those blogs were chosen for analysis that mention or discuss conservation. Purposeful sampling was thus used to fit the criteria associated with the study’s purpose (Jennings, 2010, p. 140) by using sampling technique defined in response to user initiative (Webb & Wang, 2014, p. 104). According to Patton (1990), the purposeful sampling lies in the richness of the information to study in depth. In addition, the purposeful sampling was selected considering that it gives “information rich” answers and offers “useful manifestations of the phenomenon” of the interest (Patton, 2002, p. 40). The method was suitable for the present research as the aim was to form an overall interpretation of the visitors’ conceptions towards animals and ideas of zoo conservation. The most suitable data was found from both individual blog domains and blogging platforms such as Blogspot, WordPress, and Lily.fi. Some of the entries in the sample were non-sponsored and some were sponsored by Korkeasaari Zoo. The blog posts were collected over the course of September 2020 and March 2021. The present research did not focus on the demographic qualities in blogs, such as nationality, age, or gender. The total number of 14 blogs were chosen. During the research process, one blog entry was deleted and became unavailable, leaving the total number of blogs to 13. 12 of them were written in Finnish and one in English. The blog entries were published between the years 2012 and 2020.

Bloggers were contacted by an email to gain informed consent to use their blog entries for research purposes. They were informed about the possibility to decline the permission to use their texts as research data. Four of the bloggers did not provide contact details, but their blog entries were still included in the sample because the posts were publicly available and accessible (Stainton & Iordanova, 2017). All other bloggers, nine in total, were contacted and informed of the purpose. One blogger gave consent to use the text but not the photographs of the post. One blogger did not reply. Nevertheless, blogger's post was included because it was publicly accessible (see Stainton & Iordanova, 2017). Blogs were analysed using content analysis. Based on the results of the analysis, the following themes were formed according to the relevance of the research question: 1) volunteering and relationship to zoo animals, 2) encounters with zoo animals, 3) wildlife conservation, and 4) animal welfare. The themes formed from the material guided the question setting process of the interview.

3.2 Interviews as primary research material

Qualitative research interview provides flexible and dialogical form of producing knowledge (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 577). In a sense, interviews can be seen as “conversations with a purpose” (Dexter, 1970, p. 149, as cited in Jennings, 2010, p. 171). Interviewing method is being used in this study to extend understanding of multiple themes emerging from blogs regarding zoo animals and conservation. According to Seidman (1991, p. 3), interviews make it possible to understand the experiences of other people in depth. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) mention that interviewing gives the opportunity for participants to share, pass on, and provide their own stories, knowledge, and perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the purpose of allowing participants to express themselves and speak about their connection to animals and conservation, by guiding them with questions. Ontological position of semi-structured interviews lies within multiple realities and epistemological stance is subjective which provides a possibility to follow the thinking process of the participants (Jennings, 2010, p. 172, 174). Questions were predetermined and designed by identified themes from the blogs, but the questions were left open-ended to give flexibility to the interview (see Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246).

Empirical material was collected through the semi-structured in-depth interviews with volunteers of Korkeasaari Zoo. Volunteers were chosen because blog posts written by them brought up the notion of human-animal relationship and its influence towards conservation involvement. Volunteers are interviewed in this research because of their potential to have plenty of insights and interest into the topic of human-animal relationship and conservation in the zoo context. Furthermore, Korkeasaari Zoo is a familiar destination to them. As participants are in an ideal position to give valuable first-hand information from their own perspective, the semi-structured interview method allows the researcher to gain valuable information about the research subject. Volunteers have received training but do not have the contract of employment with the zoo. According to Nylund (2008), their motives to participate vary and are connected to the commitment in volunteer work.

Invitation of participation was sent via email to Korkeasaari Zoo's event organizer which forwarded the invitation to volunteers twice. At the first round, a total of five volunteers responded to the invitation. To ensure saturation, invitation was sent again to get a couple of more participants. Invitation letter was slightly modified for the second email; estimated duration of the interview and the note of reward were added. At the second round, four volunteers replied to the invitation. In total, nine interviews were conducted. All nine interviewees were given two entrance tickets to Korkeasaari Zoo in return.

Interviews were conducted using online communication platform Microsoft Teams. The traditional option of undertaking face-to-face interviews has been challenging because of the legal restrictions and safety measures introduced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Self, 2021). The empirical material was gathered between May and June 2021. Korkeasaari Zoo is located in Helsinki which has been highly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the stage of the pandemic at the time of interviews, this research followed the recommendations of the city of Helsinki and the Metropolitan Area coronavirus coordination group. At the time of interviewing, the recommended restrictions limited face-to-face and close contacts to members of the same household or those considered as close as household members (City of Helsinki, 2021). Thus, online interviewing was chosen as a data collecting method. It is suitable for the present research because it mirrors face to face interaction (Sullivan, 2013, p. 54) while ensuring the safety of the researcher and participant, enabling flexible

scheduling, increasing perceived anonymity and privacy, and are less costly for both parties (Self, 2021). In addition, video-based software applications benefit researcher's role by allowing interviewing anyone willing to participate anywhere where the internet connection is available (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hanna, 2012, p. 241). Also, Hanna (2012) note that the interview can be conducted without imposing on each other's personal space. The Teams software was chosen because it does not require participant to create an account and they can decide to join the interview with a desktop or a mobile (Microsoft Teams). This way, in addition to one's personal space, privacy and anonymity were ensured.

Pilot interviews were conducted to test the structure of the interview, design of the themes and questions (see Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2008). It was also used to test the functionality of the Internet and the software. Software worked and recorded properly, and changes were made to a couple of interview questions after conducting the pilot interview. The final interview structure contained five themes formulated from the blog analysis and 26 interview questions. Questions were divided into the following themes: 1) demographic questions, 2) volunteering and relationship to zoo animals, 3) encounters with zoo animals, 4) wildlife conservation, and 5) animal welfare. The duration of interviews was between 30-60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, the native language of the interviewees. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, each participant received a pseudonym. Participants were assigned identifiers I1 to I9.

Transcription of the interviews was performed by using a transcription feature of the Microsoft Word software. The main focus of transcription is analysing the content of speech. For that reason, basic level transcription was chosen as an accuracy level: an exact verbatim transcription of responses and significant expressions of emotion are included, whereas repeats, cut-offs of words and sentences, fillers, and non-lexical sounds were excluded (see Processing qualitative data...; Ruusuvaori, 2010, p. 425). All transcribed interviews formed 80 pages of body text to use in the content analysis.

3.3 Inductive content analysis

Content analysis can be summarised to be a method in which collected sample is organised for the purpose of finding meanings and forming conclusions of the data (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2013). The main idea is to summarise and categorise a wide range of content, such as interviews, texts, documents, and images, by following codes constructed by the sample (Salo, 2015). According to Saldana (2013), a code “symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.” Due to interpretive basis of coding, it can be defined as “not precise science; it’s primarily an interpretive act” (Saldana, 2013, p. 4). While forming codes and categorizations, process shifts towards patterns and regularities, solidifying phenomena under research so that it is being formed and established and the knowledge gained is the risk of closure and stasis (MacLure, 2013, p. 662). An analysis of various type of documents can be extended to create models, and conceptual structures and maps from the data (Kyngäs, 2020). The results describe a phenomenon which is well suitable in the interpretive social sciences paradigm (Jennings, 2010, p. 85).

Content analysis can be conducted deductively by uncovering themes of an existing framework from the research data, inductively by forming themes from the research data itself, or abductively by combining inductive and deductive approaches (Graneheim, Lindgren & Lundman, 2017). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2013, p. 100) states that inductive deduction applies even when theoretical framework is added to guide deduction process, but only if it is done at the end of process. Inductive content analysis is being used in this research to understand the aspects related to the human-animal relationship and the notion of wildlife conservation. Also, inductive content analysis was being used to assist the construction of the relevant theoretical framework.

Inductive content analysis is implemented to create concepts, categories, and themes from the research material. The concepts identified during the analytical process of the research material are used to answer the research question (Kyngäs, 2020). Seitamaa-Hakkarainen (2014) notes that qualitative content analysis is more cyclic in nature rather than a final step of the research process. She explains that analysis process starts with reading the whole

material and forming the big picture of it. After forming the big picture and familiarize oneself with the material, coding process happens cyclically. Categories are being formed and they constantly change during the analysis process (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2014). To gain a comprehensive understanding of collected empirical material, following phases of inductive content analysis was performed several times: data reduction, data grouping and the formation of concepts (Kynäs, 2020, p. 14).

In the first phase of data analysis, the transcribed interviews were reviewed, and the empirical material was reduced to have the main categories concerning the research. Graneheim et al. (2017, p. 32) describe a category as “portraying similarities and differences that can be sorted in hierarchies”. In the second phase, the important parts of the empirical material were coded which formed the pattern for the analysis. The coding was implemented and reviewed via the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. The empirical material was read multiple times to achieve a better understanding of coding. As this process continued, the main categories and codes emerged from the data by marking thoughts, impressions, and opinions relevant to the research. Analysing these codes, following main categories emerged from the interviews: 1) multifaceted relationship, 2) characteristics of zoo animals, 3) connecting with animals in the zoo, 4) animals impact the conception of conservation, 5) zoo conservation as ‘important but indirect’, and 6) participative wildlife conservation. In the third phase, themes were formulated from the categories, having the research question in mind. According to Graneheim et al. (2017, p. 32), a theme “is described as a unifying ‘red thread’ running through several categories that brings meaning to a recurrent topic”. Two themes were identified: 1) human-animal relationship formation in zoo environment, and 2) visitors’ relationship to animals influencing understanding of wildlife conservation. Themes and categories formulated main findings to support most important issues.

3.4 Ethical considerations

The research follows the principles for responsible conduct of research and the ethical principles of research with human participants dictated by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research (see TENK, 2012; TENK, 2019). In this research, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity were first and foremost considered regarding both blogs and

interviews. In addition, reflection on the ethics of utilising blogs and using online communication platforms for interviews consist of online and offline principles, duty of care relating author's vulnerability, data protection, accuracy of data obtained, and whether it is being perceived as primary or secondary data source (see Stainton & Iordanova, 2017). In this section, these ethical principalities will be discussed in more details.

The study aims and objectives, the notion of voluntary participation, and usage of the content for only the research purpose were all presented by an email to all participants. Blogs in this research were used as a secondary data source and it has been debatable topic among researcher whether informed consent is required or not. Some argue that it does not require informed consent because using secondary data is perceived as non-intrusive based research (Kitchin, 2007, as cited in Stainton & Iordanova, 2017). Generally, informed consent is not required if a blog is published on a public domain (e.g. Hookway, 2008; Stainton & Iordanova, 2017). However, academic literature also supports the notion that informed consent must be gained if the research involves people and their identities can be traced back to them (Kosonen, Laaksonen, Rydenfelt & Terkamo-Moisio, 2018). In addition, multiple viewpoints need to be addressed. Firstly, the need of informed consent is based on the nature of the blog text, and how the blogs are perceived and used in the research (Hookway, 2008). Secondly, researcher's ethical and philosophical position with obligations and responsibilities needs to be addressed (Stainton and Iordanova, 2017). Thirdly, positioning of blog authors, and their rights and responsibilities; why is the content being published on public domain? Author either does not care or wish not to participate, desires to stay anonymous, or wishes to be credited (Stainton & Iordanova, 2017, p. 4). Safety issues need to be considered as well to make sure contacting does not cause harm for the bloggers or for the researcher herself (Kosonen, et al., 2018, p. 120). Blog posts that were analysed in this research contained personal opinions, but the topic of human-animal relationship and conservation itself is not sensitive or harmful. Even though blogs are preliminary material of this research, the researcher decided to contact the bloggers to inform that their blog entries will be used for research purposes.

To confirm confidentiality and privacy, participants were informed that identifying information will not be made available to anyone else than the researcher. For bloggers and

interviewees, this notion of confidentiality was informed through email. Also, at the beginning of each interview, the research outline was represented and recording process was explained. When participants have approved to participate, they give information regarding themselves for research purposes and might feel willing to share even personal and private information (Kuula, 2006, p. 64). Regarding interviews, it was mentioned more in detail how the interviews were recorded for transcription and used only for the research purposes. Furthermore, semi-structured in-depth interviews did not cause any harm or psychological issues, because interviews consisted only of questions related to the topic of human-animal relationship and notion of wildlife conservation.

To ensure anonymity, the name of the bloggers and their posts' titles were not published, and researcher used identifiers so that the names of the interviewees remained anonymous throughout the analysis stage. Leaving names out of the research gives a level of protection over the identities of participants. However, to emphasize the nuances of the relationship described by interviewees, names of animals were not deleted from published quotations. The risk of harm to individual animals is considered minimal in this research. However, it is worth noting that this research follows the notion made by Haanpää et al. (2021) that rules of research conduct are prioritizing humans and leaving animals unnoticed.

To ensure data protection from external threats, researcher decided to use software programs for interviews that did not require registration. It is important that information security of the software is solid so that ethicalness of the research does not become endangered (Hokka, 2020). According to Data Administration and ICT Services of the University, the University of Lapland's contract with Microsoft guarantees data protection while using the Office 365 cloud computing licence. It is guaranteed that the information used under this license is being stored accordingly in the EU, under the EU's data protection legislation (Data Administration and ICT Services). Researcher's computer software is up to date and the computers are being protected accordingly by the firewall and malware protection software. The data collection and the analysis phase of this research were conducted at home to provide a safe network environment.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and interpretations of the empirical data. In this empirical analysis, the main aim is to answer to the main research question: How visitors' relationship and care towards zoo animals shape their understanding on wildlife conservation? The empirical data is analyzed by using qualitative content analysis applying inductive coding approaches. The results of the blog analysis indicate that seeing animals alive in person affects visitors: it awakens emotional, intrinsic, and abstract 'care about' relationship (see Connolly & Cullen, 2018; García-Rosell & Tallberg, 2021) towards animals, which includes concern about their wellbeing, especially considering their living space. Also, the results identified visitors' emotional human-animal relationship to influence willingness to understand and contribute to wildlife conservation, but not necessarily completely approving zoos' ex-situ conservation. Thus, following themes from the blogs were formed according to the relevance of the research question: 1) volunteering and relationship to zoo animals, 2) encounters with zoo animals, 3) wildlife conservation, and 4) animal welfare.

As a result of the interviews, two themes were identified: 1) human-animal relationship formation in zoo environment, and 2) visitors' relationship to animals influencing understanding of wildlife conservation. Additionally, six main categories emerged from the data: 1) multifaceted relationship, 2) characteristics of zoo animals, 3) connecting with animals in the zoo, 4) animals impact the conception of conservation, 5) zoo conservation as 'important but indirect', and 6) participative wildlife conservation. Categories 1-3 support the first theme while categories 4-6 describe the second theme. It is worth noting that those who had volunteered at the zoo for over ten years and who visit the zoo monthly or more often shared similar, elaborated views of the topic. Otherwise, demographic factors such as gender or age did not seem to make much difference (cf. Serpell, 2004, pp. 147–148).

4.1 Human-animal relationship formation in zoo environment

In total three aspects were evident in defining relationship participants have with animals. Firstly, participants described their human-animal relationship towards zoo animals multifacetedly. Secondly, characteristics of zoo animals were identified which further

explains the complexity of relationship. Thirdly, participants' sense of connection towards animals showed how encounters affected the relationship formation with longstanding impacts. The present study supports the previous findings relating to emotional viewpoints of forming relationship (see e.g. Macnaghten, 2004). Additionally, the present study demonstrates that dualistic division of wild/tame is not that explicit in the context of zoo animals.

4.1.1 Multifaceted relationship

It was not unambiguous to describe relationship. In fact, it is worth to mention interviewees' responses when asked to describe their relationship towards zoo animals. The concept of having a relationship with them was portrayed vaguely. Some respondents had expressed themselves as following:

The relationship is slightly contradictory, I don't think every zoo should exist, just because they do not meet up with standards concerning animals. (I5)

Probably just greatly admirable and loving relationship towards the animals. (I6)

When the tiger approaches you by half a meter and slightly shows its teeth, you don't really get the idea that, okay, you are close to me, but I do respect and greatly appreciate those big animals. (I7)

The varied expressions exemplify that the question was unfamiliar. Some referred the relationship to be with the zoo as an institution while some focused to animals with an expressed uncertainty. The occurred variety of the concept, involving questions, for example how they consider the relationship, imply that zoo animals are in some extent not considered to have this kind of co-creative relationship with humans, in a similar manner with wild animals (see Swart, 2005, p. 258).

In an opposite position, personal human – animal relationship was compared to an assumption of closeness of zookeeper – animal relationship, indicating that co-creative relationship occurs. One participant state that “zookeepers probably have a different relationship to those animals than visitors or volunteers” (I9) while other points out that “you cannot have a relationship to zoo animal unless you are a zookeeper” (I5). In addition, one participant notes that “you discuss with zookeepers who use names when talking about

[animal] individuals” (I2). Thus, interviewees assumed that zookeepers’ relationship towards animals was closer than theirs, and their relationship could not be on a same level. Reflecting this to García-Rosell and Tallberg’s (2021) ethics of care framework in animal-based tourism, zookeepers were considered to have an intrinsic and concrete ‘care for’ relationship like tourism entrepreneurs and thus closer relationship whereas participants as customers themselves have ‘care about’ relationship. However, concrete aspects were present in participants’ description as well, for example when talking about signs of affection. In that sense, forming a close human-animal relationship with zoo animals is possible. Indeed, participants expressed features that dismiss the distant aspect of their personal relationship:

They will become dear to you. I have shed tears for Topias [Saimaa ringed seal] and Valma and Erkki [snow leopards]. (I3)

It cannot be described as close relationship, but I am not sure you can describe it distant either. I am interested in their wellbeing, after all. (I5)

When I visit Korkeasaari, I usually say to animals “Hi, how are you?” Kind of like they are my friends. (I7)

It emerged from the interviews that number of visits impacted the way participants described their relationship. Those who visited more often, monthly, weekly, or almost daily, had the tendency to describe the relationship close. For instance, one participant stated:

I have visited there for several years, so I have obviously formed a closer relationship to some animals, for example muskox, they do not notice me at all, but they are so lovely in my opinion. (I2)

While others who visited once or twice a year described the relationship to be more often distant and neutral, but sometimes close as well. One participant state that “I don’t visit Korkeasaari every month. The relationship is quite neutral, but positive of course” (I9). Other indicated the relationship “is not distant either, I see them as animal individuals, subject to appreciation” (I4). In addition, one participant points out how the relationship is “distant but in a good way, so that animals are respected as animals. Probably more close than distant after all if you must choose” (I8). Warm, admirable, and quite humane way of speaking was used when an animal was considered as an individual whereas distant and respectful tones were used when an animal was regarded as a representative of their species. It was considered to affect the relationship whether the animal was seen as an individual, a friend, a representative of their species or “just an animal”. Similar to Macnaghten’s (2004)

results, people were expressing culture of care and responsibility towards animals, expressing it through the establishment of emotional ties, and feelings of love and respect. Even though participants' first reaction was to consider relationship to be distant, the expressions were softened when they further elaborated how they considered animals. Even so that some participants wished to have closer relationship with animals than they currently have: "It's not as close as I want it to be. I should visit there more often, I do not remember their names, for example" (I4). These kind of expressions demonstrate that animals are being considered subjects with individuality and are respected and appreciated as they are.

Moreover, distant relationship was highlighted when talking about the zoo environment because touching and other active forms of interaction was not always possible. This enhances the abstractness of the relationship. As one participant describes it: "Maybe in that kind of milieu the relationship is distant, because you don't have the possibility to pet or touch" (I6). Touching was seemingly considered important factor while defining relationship, as other participant explains: "Relationship? This is tricky. All of them are like, you don't get to scratch them, except small goats during the past summers" (I3). For example, in contrast to pets, who can be petted and scratched, relationship to zoo animals was seen more distant than compared to them. One participant stated that "pet is a pet, and the relationship is close, but it is difficult to say about zoo animals whether the relationship is close or distant" (I5). This aspect support previous research that states domesticated animals are close and more connected to humans than wild animals who are distant in that matter (Ilvesviita, 2005, p. 72). This partly explains how complicated it is to form a human-animal relationship with zoo animals in a conventional way.

4.1.2 Characteristics of zoo animals

Regarding and intellectual parse of zoo animals are tightly connected to the way how and what kind of beings animals are being seen and interpret. Participants described zoo animals to be individuals, representatives of their species, familiar, strangers, important, valuable, wild, almost tamed, used to humans but not pets. It emerged from the interviews that the concept of zoo animals being wild was not that apparent. Many referred the animals as wild, but some participants questioned it:

These animals are not wild either because they are fortunately being taken from nature rarely, only when it is injured or it cannot be rehabilitated, instead they are born in other zoos. (I1)

I think that they are somehow different animals than those, for example small birds who fly around. Zoo animals feel more familiar and when you have known them for years and you know their story, it is not that they are unknown animals. (I2)

This implies that zoo animals are not totally unknown which mitigates their wildness. It supports Bostock's (1993) notion that zoo animals can be considered to be in a semi-domesticated state because most zoo animal are born in zoos. However, there were slight differences considering zoo animal wild whether it had arrived from nature after being hurt and unable to rehabilitate or whether they had been former pets or born in zoos. In addition, those who have been in contact with humans were considered less capable to survive in the wild because "they have gotten used to people so they cannot be freed just like that. They wouldn't make it" (I1). Zoo animals are placed on an edge between society and nature, being a part of wild but also a part of human lives, similar to pets and other domestic animals (Ilvesviita, 2005, p. 72; Tovey, 2003, p. 212).

The results confirm that there is a clear consensus that zoo animals are not considered pets. One participant strongly indicated that "even though they have names, they are not pets in that matter, and I especially point that out, they are not pets" (I1). Nevertheless, interviewees found similarities between zoo animals and pets' behavior. One participant stated that "it was so in a playful mood than when I approached the glass, it threw itself on its back like housecats do" (I1) and other mentioned that "the way they communicate between themselves, even though they are cat predators, it was so similar how dogs behave" (I5). Similarly, resemblances were found between cubs and children, as one participant describe: "It was interesting to see how a dam took care of its cubs and how those cubs were similar to children" (I8). These notions were made through observing animals' mutual communication and playfulness. This indicates that despite being different species, we as humans, and both domesticated and non-domesticated animals, share similar features and it evokes interest towards zoo animals. In addition, categorization where tamed and domesticated animals are being viewed as familiar and close, and wild animals are unknown and distant, is not applicable in this context.

Significant about zoo animal characteristic is their conservation status. Almost every interviewee mentioned paying attention to conservation status of endangered animals. Conservation status brought interest and worry. These actions were partly regarded to affect their own human – animal relationship. Nevertheless, being conscious about conservation status and animal species' state in the nature, people familiarized themselves more closely with an animal or species. For example, by finding more about their environment of natural habitat and its circumstances, as the following participants describe:

It affects in a way that, for example, when a golden mantilla frog arrived at the zoo, species that originally live in a teeny-tiny area somewhere in Madagascar. It made me wonder, how small the area is, and can they go extinct? Do they exist anywhere else? What is their zoo population? (I2)

For me, it creates interest, that if it is endangered, you probably read more closely all about it, what is being said about the animal, where does it live and how many free individuals exist, or do they even exist. (I6)

I like to watch the map that has for example distribution and then the conservation status /.../ and often there is additional information, how many individuals exist in the world. So, I read about them and if they say that it weighs 20 kilos, so I reflect that ok, is that one an average individual? So, I kind of combine the theory to the animal I see. (I7)

These notions are in line with previous studies where the results indicate that a zoo visit made environmental issues become more self-relevant and increases environmental concern among visitors (e.g. Clayton et al., 2014; Hughes, 2013). Similar worry and thirst for knowledge were expressed despite considering it to affect the relationship or not. It emerged from the interviews that participants were eager to share their knowledge of endangered animals to others: “I try to tell people more about animals that are endangered. So that it would start to make people think” (I3). It supports Hughes (2013) notion that emotional engagement increases desire, willingness, and engagement towards conservation interests and to save the observed species. However, conservation status did not seem to change the preference and likeability of animals. Qualities of animals had a bigger impact on preferences: “It does not affect my interests, it’s animal’s own qualities themselves. Inner qualities. Behavior and such” (I9). Thus, the results indicate that conservation status impacts in a way that the interest and care toward animal individual is broadened to consist of the whole species and their chances of survival. This shows that ‘specific care’ where the care is directed at the individual and ‘non-specific care’ that focuses on maintaining and

developing the natural environment of the wild animal (Swart, 2005) are both present in the zoo environment.

4.1.3 Connecting with animals in the zoo

Zoo animals are described active, functioning subjects when interpreting interaction between humans and zoo animals. Encounters with zoo animals came up when talking about human – animal relationship, describing the role of the other party in human – animal relationship when visiting Korkeasaari Zoo. One participant told “Risto [the barbary macaque] learned to recognize me from the crowd and when I went near the glass, he came and sat next to me” (I3) and the other participant stated:

Sometimes when I pass by, Tamur the tiger approaches and makes this soft sound, just like how they always talk. I think humanely that well, it is greeting me now. (I1)

It was described that animals were seen to react to people speaking, greetings and looking by coming closer or replying to interviewees.

It is worth noting that relationship was described positive, curious, and respectful when encountering animals. These notions in question were particularly made when encounters were related to touching animal or other active forms of interaction. Encounters varied: a peacock sat next to a person who was having lunch, tiger cubs wanted to play with people, and a barnacle goose attacked while protecting its’ nest. Seeing, hearing, and feeling a male lion’s roar had a big impact on people, as one of the participants described: “Male lion’s roar resonated through my lungs. If someone did not feel the connection or admiration, he/she would be a cold person” (I4). In addition, touching a snake changed the opinion of them towards more favorable because the warmth and softness of the snake made the feeling of fear fade. These encounters are in line with Haanpää et al.’s (2021) notion that animals shape tourism encounters by their own actions and reactions. Animals are increasing human sensitivity and changing values of tourists towards animal-based attractions (Haanpää et al., 2021). Encounters described by participants endorsed respectful and admirable relationship. Moreover, it highlighted animals as individuals and active subjects. Those who had visited once a month or often described more memorable interactions and seemed to have established close and proximate care relationship to some animals.

The results show that a sense of connection brought the relationship closer. Noticing small details and observing animals' actions for a longer period of time created closer, more loving, and admirable relationship:

It was endearing to see what the other was doing. Small, everyday details, they form a kind of... It kind of improves the connection and deepens the relationship. (I4)

Also, an opportunity to examine many kinds of animals in closer distance has made interviewees become interested in animals in broader and more versatile aspect than before, as the following example clarifies:

It is not about those beautiful big cats anymore, but you just think now that shame those axolotls have only mud left and no lakes anymore, so it is kind of expanding... How can I say it? That people might not consider worth saving for. (I2)

Moreover, participants showed fondness towards animals. In addition to animals in general, affection was shown towards certain animals. This was indicated especially when discussed of birth of cubs and decease of older ones. These occasions touched them: passing of Coco the Hoffmann's two-toed sloth and Valma and Erkki the snow leopards were emotionally moving. One participant described that "you still get attached to them, even though they are animals in enclosures" (I1). On the contrary to Swart's (2005) suggestion, participants showed 'specific care' towards wild animals. Special bond was formed when own suggestion for a name was chosen in naming of newcomers and cubs. Attachment was also shown to animals who had moved out from Korkeasaari to other zoos or to their natural habitat through reintroduction programs. In addition, participants felt proud of the connection that they had encountered animals face-to-face before parting ways and many followed the animals afterwards via remote access, for example via social media channels. Animals mentioned were among others a snow leopard called Hope who moved to another zoo, and Hanna and Helmi, two Przewalski's wild horses who currently live somewhere in Mongolia's steppe.

It emerged from the interviews that relationship towards animal individuals and species was maintained and strengthened through observation, reading species information signage at the zoo, asking news about animals from zookeepers, guides, and active visitors who visit the zoo often. In addition, remote access possibilities were used to maintain and strengthen the relationship. Those included reading Korkeasaari Zoo's newsletter, social media channels, websites and especially watching videos. Participants hoped Korkeasaari Zoo to publish webcams that show nocturnal animals to the public. According to Connolly and Cullen

(2018, p. 415), visitors might focus abstract ‘caring about’ relationship into direct action, for example, through increased awareness around information. However, not all felt necessary to maintain relationship to zoo animals:

I do not consider them as pets or friends, so I do not have the need to strengthen relationship to them as such. It is not their purpose to be there for me, not for me to hang out with them. (I1)

Overall, presence of covid-19 enhanced more outdoor time and connection to nature but the use of remote access methods in upkeeping relationship as well; alongside news about Korkeasaari Zoo from their own channels and national news media, other animal news, that were not Korkeasaari related, were followed as well. For example, a rescue operation of an orphan wild bear cub Aina (see Silfsten, 2021) and Avara Luonto (‘Wide Nature’) wildlife documentaries were actively followed. Still, seeing an animal alive in front of them had a greater impact on interviewees than watching a wildlife documentary or reading a book of related topic.

It is worth noting that while interpreting interaction between humans and zoo animals, animals’ way of thinking was considered in multiple occasions. “You can’t really know what they think” (I1), “I cannot go inside the animal’s head” (I5), or “I don’t know if the feeling is mutual” (I2) were stated, among others, while describing interaction, contentment, and happiness of animals. It demonstrates that animals are being considered subjects with feelings and intelligence. When animal is being interpreted as independent, intelligent, and active subject, it is pictured humane ways. Moreover, animals’ self-image was elaborated in more detail:

What is animal’s self-image? Most of animals cannot recognize themselves from a mirror, for example. You can measure stress levels, of course, but it is not unambiguous, all-decisive measurement. If apes, ravens, dolphins, and others can recognize themselves from a mirror, I would be mostly concerned about ravens in Korkeasaari because they are the only ones in that group living there. That is, if their happiness is being measured. (I9)

The results imply that when animals are being perceived as individual and intelligent subjects, their happiness and wellbeing are considered. In addition, one of the participants asked the following:

If humans cannot measure happiness between different cultures in practice /.../ So how do you measure some animal’s, a slightly different species’ happiness reliably? (I9)

Indeed, how applicable is the human construction of happiness when it is being defined by humans whose perception of happiness varies between cultures and individuals? Tallberg et al. (2021) argue that since visitors don't have a concrete connection to the animals, but they care for them, they read animals based on their subjective human experiences influenced by culture, personal ethical judgements, beliefs, and values.

4.2 Visitors' relationship to animals influencing understanding of wildlife conservation

Most of all, the aim of conservation is to do things in a way that species have proper and good possibilities to live and reproduce in nature. Absolutely not to let species go extinct or disappear. Conservation starts at grass root level and the concept is so wide that when you think about it, it is difficult to put into a specific context. (I6)

Visitors' relationships to animals influenced their understanding of conservation. All participants considered wildlife conservation important. The main purpose of wildlife conservation was described as conserving existence of species. In total, three aspects were mentioned when talking about zoo conservation: animals, in-situ and ex-situ work done by the zoo organization. Zoos in general were connected to a broader view of wildlife conservation. It was also identified that the zoo is an important platform for participant's own commitment to wildlife conservation. These findings are presented in more detail in the following sections.

4.2.1 Animals impact the conception of conservation

Zoo animals instrumental position appears when discussing how they particularly can be utilized to benefit the wild populations. In addition, emotional human-animal relationship towards zoo animals supports this form of animal usage. Animals were seen to awaken emotions for participants, and they were an incentive to be interested in volunteering at the zoo. Based on the results, care for animals was the starting point for participants to participate zoo and wildlife conservation by volunteering at the zoo events. As one participant puts it, love for animals "is the principle or the baseline" (I4). Thus, conservation seems to be the context where participant's emotional bond towards animals in the zoo and the wild becomes visible, as this participant states:

Animals themselves have inspired that all species are precious and important, that if one vanishes so it will affect many things /.../ It somehow concretizes for myself and for visitors as well how wonderful animals they are and that their real place is in nature, but then you need conservation actions so that these gorgeous species wouldn't vanish entirely. (I1)

Perceived relationship partly influenced how interviewees considered animals to influence their conception of conservation. One participant described how relationship to animals appeared to make the topic more tangible and broadening the definition of conservation itself:

Yes it [the relationship] reinforces that [conception of conservation]. When you know that there [at the zoo] are individuals who then strengthen nature population, for example European forest reindeer. (I3)

In other words, the conception of conservation was broadened by understanding the connection between zoo animals and local reintroduction programs. Specifically, how zoo animals could be utilized to increase wild population. Thus, based on the interviews, the purpose of ex-situ conservation is to support in-situ conservation. Additionally, animals did not have any effect for those who had more to do with conservation through work, and those who had previously formed strong perceptions of it, as one of the participants described: "I know the field so well, I already have that personal experience. It [the relationship] is not affecting my conceptions at all" (I9).

Based on the interviews, animals were seen to have diverse roles that had an impact on the conception of conservation even though they cannot do conservation per se. The results imply that emotional aspect is strongly present when defining roles for animals. Participants described the role of animals to be "role models", "representatives of their species" and "awakeners of human emotions". On the other side, instrumental qualities were added: roles included to be "ones who continue genome in zoo populations and nature through reintroduction programs", and that they are "educational for zookeepers and public". Moreover, the impact that animals had on participants' conceptions is the increased interest in species and through that, they raise knowledge about endangered species, wildlife conservation, and biodiversity. 'Specific care' towards wild animals is influencing 'non-specific care' for the same species in natural environment (cf. Swart, 2005).

In fact, a few participants emphasized that zoo animals are not there for human pleasure and entertainment, and it is not meant for animals to be there merely on display. One described that “surprisingly often people have the idea that they are there for them and that they are being purchased somewhere. That is just no” (I2). Others shared similar views:

When I think about conservation, it is important when people visit, that they would realize why those animals are being kept there. That it is not that yay yay I get to see animals, those animals are there for me and they should perform and do tricks and they should be allowed to be fed, like before it was possible. Those poor bears, sugar was fed and that sort of things. (I1)

I made a girl change her anti-zoo opinions more zoo approving once I told her about zoo’s different conservation programs. It is not that the animals are there on display, the purpose is much bigger than that. (I3)

This implies that animals are questioned to merely be objects of human gaze (see Carr, 2018). Furthermore, they are considered to be a part in “a greater purpose” which refers to conservation programs and objectives, and an existence of a zoo as an institution. Still, using animals as conservation ambassadors can be interpreted to present instrumental human-animal relationship because they can be regarded as objects that humans use in their endeavor to fix the loss of diversity.

4.2.2 Considering wellbeing of zoo animals

Regarding zoos’ ex-situ conservation, participants interpret and believe animals to be generally happy in Korkeasaari Zoo and in zoos where circumstances were properly handled, though noting that there is always room for improvements. Personal experiences abroad and homeland, excluding Korkeasaari, were shared where participants felt distressed and sad to witness seemingly unhappy and stressful animals in small, insufficient, and exposed enclosures. Being in the wild was describes as “the main purpose”, “right place”, and “the best option” whereas zoo environment “obviously is not animals’ natural habitat” (I7). Still, for some participants, a zoo was better option than nature in case an animal was unable to survive in the nature; it was either hurt, needed treatment, was born in a zoo, and was accustomed to human presence:

Those [enclosure] areas are not big and like I said, they live in captivity, but it is better to live well cared for in captivity, than being there at the mercy of the nature where there is not enough food or the thread of poaching or something like that is present all the time. (I7)

The results partly challenge the notion that humans cannot or do not want to intervene with harmful living and natural conditions which are “a fact of life in the wild” (Swart, 2004). Even though nature is considered to be untouchable and uncontrolled by humans, animals are assumed to live natural and proper, undisturbed lives (Bostock, 1993, p. 53), the challenges of natural habitat were identified. When it comes to nature and natural habitat, unsafety, unprotection and a lack of food were seen as weakening factors of animals’ happiness. In addition, human intervention has been addressed, for example the beforementioned poaching.

Even though all animals were preferable, most conversation about wellbeing was held around large and charismatic animals such as tigers, lions, and bears. Characteristics of animal such as physical, behavioral, or cognitive similarity to humans, aesthetically admirable, and vulnerability influence people’s affective responses towards animals (Serpell, 2004, p. 147). Especially with those large and charismatic animals, space was considered meaningful, as the one participant describes:

If I encounter people next to Amur leopards, tigers, or Asian lions in the Cat Valley, I will tell people about those endangered animals. It is an important matter, and it makes people understand why those animals are in enclosures. Because the reason why people are worried is that the animals are in enclosures. (I1)

Participants considered that all species did not have ideal environment to fulfill typical traits for their species when it particularly came to movement possibilities. Old buildings and enclosures in Korkeasaari Zoo were criticized because they are not designed in terms of animal conditions. Proper enclosures were required to have conditions suitable for animals and their characteristics, sufficient space, possibilities for animals to hide, stimulus to activate animals, and demarcation that humans cannot distract, and dangerous animals cannot get too close to humans. Despite the dangerous aspect of the case, a wolverine’s fleeing trip from Korkeasaari to Santahamina island a decade ago (see YLE Helsinki, 2010) was remembered smilingly. Moreover, emotional human-animal relationship was distinctly considered when discussing about happiness and satisfaction:

If you think that, are you happy that you have 100 meters times 100 meters sized cage? And in relation to some animals that is practically big. You need to think yourself; would you be happy if you lived the rest of your life in a hectare sized cage? (I9)

Is a starving lion in savannah more satisfied than a lion who gets regular meals in Korkeasaari? You compare different things. Some people enjoy the fells of Lapland

while others prefer the vibes of the metropolitan area, satisfaction varies. I think the animals are the same in that matter, some are more pleased to be in Korkeasaari while others favor savannah. (I4)

This implies the emotional relationship is applied in the context of animal wellbeing and it is being related to human consideration. Participants wish animals to live happy, healthy, and free from suffering, thus a culture of care and responsibility for animals to receive love and respect (Macnaghten, 2004, p. 539) were present. In a zoo environment, animal wellbeing was perceived to be a baseline, unconditional, important, and significant. To succeed in that, it was considered important to take into consideration individual's needs, make possible to fulfill typical traits for their species, provide quality treatment, and euthanize in case of incurable suffering. Some requirements for animal happiness were adaptation to Finnish climate, natural diet, natural and animal sufficient spaces, stimulus, appropriate treatment, and respect. Alongside those, it was considered important to provide possibilities for animals to have mutual interaction and wellbeing with each other, to have access to animal community.

Animal wellbeing was strongly associated with zoos and their conservation efforts. Participants experienced big variety of zoos' efforts to improve animals' wellbeing and conservation, both nationally and internationally. Zoos' strategic focus on monetary factors was considered to decrease animal wellbeing: "You see slightly different and alarming examples in the world how they don't care about animal wellbeing, as if the money is the main factor" (I4). It was noted to affect conservation intentions as well, as one participant describes: "There are different types of zoos and there are those quite wild ones somewhere abroad that have nothing to do with conservation" (I2). In addition, zoos' strategic focus on human entertainment were portrayed in activities and enclosures are designed that humans have a chance to see animal instead of taking account the animals' need to hide. One participant expressed how she "felt pity for that alligator, it seemed like it was not able to turn in that shack" (I8). Whereas the other participant stated:

It is pursued that all is not made for the audience to see in Korkeasaari. /.../ if you look at the new enclosures, it is not like they are made just for the audience to be able to get to the best spots quite easily. Instead, they are clearly made for the animals. (I9)

The results confirm that zoos that focus on instrumental human-animal relationship, where animal is seen as an object and target of exploitation, are being questioned as it noticeably conflicts with emotional human-animal relationship. Thus, the instrumental and abstract ‘no care’, and instrumental and concrete ‘contractual care’ relationships where the economic value of the animal is emphasized (see Connolly & Cullen, 2018) are being condemned. Hence, importance of regulated and accredited zoos emerged from the interviews because they are required to follow set rules that include what kind of enclosures are acceptable, how zookeepers and others can treat animals, and that zoos are being monitored. Moreover, it emerged from the interviews that visitors expected organizations’ level of care to emphasize intrinsic and concrete ‘care for’ human-animal relationship (see also García-Rosell & Tallberg, 2021). A possibility to see and experience organization’s operations behind the scenes while volunteering was a way for participants to observe animal wellbeing being handed appropriately in Korkeasaari Zoo:

Animal conservation is one of the important aspects for me, animal wellbeing and that, so then I want of course, even though I have good impression of Korkeasaari, so I want to see it by my own eyes how the animals are doing there. (I5)

Korkeasaari Zoo was appreciated among participants because they were considered to have professional zookeepers, vets, and whole organization who invest in animal wellbeing, contentment, and happiness. Especially, reintroduction programs were seen to be properly planned and well-coordinated.

4.2.3 Zoo conservation as ‘important but indirect’

The emotional relationship and care towards animals influence visitors’ interest in zoo conservation at large. The description of zoo conservation was manifold. It is worth to mention interviewees’ responses when asked to describe their notions of zoo conservation. The concept of conservation was seen to justify zoos as institutions. Some respondents had expressed themselves as following:

I’m not a fan of zoos, but I get the conservation point those zoos have. Though they need be regulated, anyone shouldn’t be allowed to manage a zoo. (I5)

I have sometimes wondered, is it really right to keep animals in zoos in general. But they do not look like suffering, and I consider it good what zoos do for conserving species. (I8)

These expressions exemplify that the wildlife conservation is considered essential part of zoos' operations. In previous sections, animals and their wellbeing were addressed in zoos' ex-situ conservation. When the term 'conservation' was discussed, the discussion focused more on universal, wildlife and societal aspects of ex-situ and in-situ conservation. Regarding Korkeasaari Zoo specifically, wildlife hospital, research work and acceptance of animals that have been struck and killed by drivers of motor vehicles on highways were seen as a part of zoo's conservation work. However, animals participating reintroduction programs were the most strongly present in discussion:

I kind of feel slightly proud for the connection that there has been the European forest reindeer project at the Salamajärvi and then those Przewalski's wild horses have been reintroduced to their own steppe, so when I see news about them, for example in the news or magazines, it is emotional in a certain way. (I4)

It has mainly stick into my mind when they reintroduced two Przewalski's wild horses, so it does increase the interest towards animals in those kind of conservation programs. And well, I have always been the most interested in conservation programs for those Amur tigers and snow leopards. (I5)

There are so many of those animals who are critically endangered, but luckily what is really good is that they have managed to reintroduce those horses now. (I7)

It emerged from the interviews that especially reintroductions of two Przewalski's wild horses in Mongolia and European forest reindeers in Seitsemien national park in Finland were mentioned. Those programs are the newest reintroduction programs that Korkeasaari takes part in, and they have gotten media attention in the Finnish press (see Salomäenpää, 2019; STT, 2019). In addition, participants highlighted zoo's properly planned and well-coordinated reintroduction programs. One participant stated: "How enormous work conservation is, that they are just not being tossed somewhere like 'run there free in the wild'. They [conservation work] are carefully considered and coordinated" (I2). In a similar manner, the other one expressed the process as following: "Somewhere abroad, they just released animals into wild from some zoo but in Korkeasaari the system is that they accustom animals little by little. That is important" (I7). Interviews support Clayton et al. (2014) argument that zoos have the resources and environmental setting that could go beyond information transfer type of education to evoke an emotional connection. The results imply that reintroduction programs are considered essential in zoo conservation and that they are expected to be handled with high quality and consideration.

In addition to reintroductions programs, educational and communicational roles were defined as zoo conservation. Luebke & Grajal (2011) point out that zoos' conservation messages are mainly focused on cognitive goals such as imparting knowledge and promoting awareness of animals, habitats, ecosystems, and conservation. Based on the interviews, enhancing, and upkeeping children and youths' connection to nature were regarded essential. Along with that, educating visitors about animals, nature, biodiversity, and wildlife conservation, and raising public awareness were considered important. In addition, having access to approachable electronic communication in relation to conservation, for example video footage, was considered useful to share information for larger audience and for those who visit the zoo rarely. Moreover, events such as the Night of the Cats where the main purpose is to support animals and conservation work were seen as a good way to increase knowledge about wildlife conservation, as one participant states:

I find it great that for example Night of the Cats distinctly highlights what species are being conserved because of their endangered conservation status and further enhance species' reproduction in the wild. (I6)

Based on the interviews, events and entertainment should be used as tools to draw attention to wildlife conservation. Therefore, both cognitive and affective methods are related to zoo conservation.

Furthermore, gene pools in zoos and international network were considered zoo conservation approaches. These approaches make it possible to revive species whose numbers are few or have gone extinct in the wild. One participant remarked:

One extremely important role is to preserve diversity of genome and there are species that practically do not appear in nature, their only living gene pool is in zoos. (I4)

To succeed in diversifying genome, international network of zoo communities is needed to enhance genetically valuable individuals as remarked by one participant: "Well, we know about Napsu the bearded vulture that Napsu will stay to diversify the zoo population. But that too is an important task for her" (I3). The expressed views indicate how this kind of instrumental use of zoo animals is considered acceptable. The outcome is to maintain and support wildlife and biodiversity: efforts of reviving species extinct in the wild through reintroduction and in vitro fertilization process from zoo population was shown for example in a news article about critically endangered northern white rhinoceros (see Sillanpää, 2021).

Furthermore, zoo conservation was seen important but indirect and secondary in the big picture. Zoo conservation was seen important to support primary conservation organizations that work on-site, directly in the area:

It is not Korkeasaari or other zoos' mission in general to be the primary conservation group. Rather it is someone else's mission, and they mainly need support. (I9)

Support in this context meant providing finance and research for organizations' use. In addition, one participant pointed out that fundraising focuses on certain organizations and thus certain animals:

Well, let's say about those cats, that there are many operators who conserve the same species. Okay, it is not a bad thing that it has been chosen to conserve "at the top of the food chain" species. It will become an umbrella species that when you conserve one, you conserve the whole environment and many other species at the same time. (I1)

So, many zoos fund same conservation programs which means that living condition of certain animals are being focused. For example, according to WildCats Conservation Alliance, sixty per cent of their support comes from the world's zoos (Our supporters). More time and money are being invested in one species by pooling donations than by donating alone while other animals are disregarded. However, as mentioned before, improving living condition of one animal, especially umbrella species, helps other animals that live in the area as well. Therefore, it implicitly supports the overall biodiversity upkeep of the environment.

Speaking of environment and natural habitat of wild animals, it requires living conditions to be well in order to succeed in in-situ conservation. As an example of the dynamics, one participant described wildlife conservation in a form of a pyramid (Figure 4):

...the basic infrastructure is one factor that the conservation work can even be possible in the first place. It is probably one conservation sector that is easily being forgotten. The focus is on the top of the pyramid. After all there is the whole base of the pyramid. (I4)

At bottom of the pyramid, infrastructure and local communities form a steady foundation where it is safe to build sustainable conservation network to support actions made in the destination. This was pointed out in multiple occasions:

You cannot just conserve the animal, you need to get the social environment, those people and everybody to participate. It needs to start at the grass root level. (I1)

It is not just those animals. You kind of think about their natural habitat and the heck they cut all the trees there, these lizards cannot live anywhere. (I2)

I find it important to remember these kinds of bigger entities or building the base. And I believe that the work offered by Korkeasaari and other zoos take into consideration that the [on-site] work can have the support they need. (I4)

Thus, zoos and their conservation work can be identified to be at the top of the pyramid. Those on the top have more of a supporting role when it comes to wildlife conservation. Other macro level wildlife conservation contribution of zoos was defined as establishing nature reserves, gene laboratories and scientific communities' research of wildlife conservation. Also, conserving biodiversity was included in wildlife conservation work. Both national and international coordination programs were identified to slow climate change and enhance biodiversity: "It is not just about zoo animals' lives and existence but overall climate change and preservation of biodiversity" (I1). Hence, success of managing the whole entity consist of multiple operators and their collaboration.

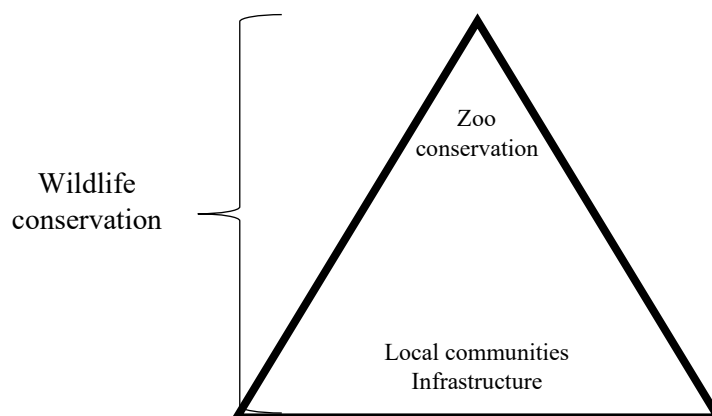


Figure 4. Wildlife conservation pyramid framework.

4.2.4 Participative wildlife conservation

Based on the interviews, participants were interested in and wanted to participate wildlife conservation. Zoos had a part in this by facilitating participants involvement. Buying an entrance ticket and visiting a zoo was considered a good and easily approachable way to contribute to conservation. However, none of the participant considered it the best way of contributing. Instead, the following suggestions were proposed:

I think one good way is for example to go and restore a meadow where we can for instance upkeep the environment for butterflies. Or to donate money so that land can be bought and conserved. (I2)

The best way is to give money and raise awareness. (I3)

I find it good way to investigate these matters independently and then maybe if it is possible, support these organizations who do conservation work with animals in question. (I6)

I think the best way is to participate conservation work by itself somewhere directly where there are locals involved. Or then donating to trustworthy source that doesn't abbreviate it to their own pockets. (I9)

These suggestions demonstrate how diverse possibilities exists and the topic can be looked from multiple standpoints. The two most preferred options to personally participate than a mere visit was volunteering and donations. Donating was seen one of the most important conserving approaches, as you can help even with a small amount. However, it varied where to donate and what to consider while donating. Whether to donate to zoos or other wildlife organizations or projects, the common goal was to use money to achieve wildlife conservation goals: preserve diverse wildlife. Donations to zoos and other organizations made it possible to carry out comprehensive conserving methods. Therefore, trustworthy organizations that use money for the right purposes were called for.

Volunteering included zoo volunteering, raising awareness of the topic, and participating in-situ conservation itself. For participants, zoo volunteering was a way to understand wildlife conservation, to expand the ways to support conservation efforts and to make it possible to be a part of international conservation community. Based on the interviews, working as a zoo volunteer had expanded and diversified understanding of wildlife conservation and taught more about the meaning and importance of it: "How different species have an impact on each other, how numerous different species exists in the world, some endangered, and how diverse conservation work needs to be" (I1). In addition, volunteering has taught to relate more tolerantly and broadmindedly towards various species. Thus, learning and getting to know animals, emotional human-animal relationship with expanding knowledge have increased will to help animals. At the same time, it has increased world-weariness in participants, a mood of sentimental sadness at the state of inadequacy of the world:

It is extremely sad to see the most endangered classifications. You easily start to look for reasons what has caused it. Can I do something about it? So yeah... Clearly, critically endangered conservation statuses awake certain level of guilt. (I4)

Interviews revealed that participants had different opinions regarding in-situ conservation, even though it is considered essential part of wildlife conservation. Some participants felt that everyone should be able to participate in-situ conservation because it is considered reliable and represent direct action. Some believed it should be done by experts, professionals, locals, and that “it is not use if everybody arrives at Vladivostok airport and state, they want to conserve leopards and tigers now” (I4). Therefore, in-situ programs, especially those located abroad, need to be well-coordinated.

Participative wildlife conservation consists of everyday actions of individuals. It was not considered distant and related to participants’ everyday choices in some extent. This is in contrast with Dove and Byrne’s (2014) notion that visitors showed a low level of knowledge and understanding towards more abstract concepts, such as ecological interrelationships and the effect humans have on animal biodiversity. One participant stated wildlife conservation “starts from individual citizens individual deeds” (I4), whereas the other mentioned “you can have more impact on conservation with your own choices” (I1). These micro level contribution approaches mentioned were recycling, preventing litter, considering what to eat, having a job related to conservation, and taking account animal wellbeing when travelling. One participant commented about travelling:

When you set out to travel, do you buy products made from endangered species? Or do you take pictures with lions or monkeys? Do not take those endangered animals as pets, or any wild animal whatsoever. (I1)

Visits to only responsible, regulated, and accredited zoos, and avoidance of unethical services and products were called for. As mentioned, not to take a picture with a wild animal and not to buy products made from endangered species. This indicate that instrumental use of animals that neglect animal wellbeing conflicts with emotional human-animal relationship. Visitors are aware of the impact their choices have on animals and nature. ‘Specific care’ towards animals is shifting more towards ‘non-specific care’ when discussing wildlife conservation on a wider scale. This shift or the fact that the animals are located at

the zoo, tourism destination, or in the wild does not reduce the emotional relationship visitors have on animals.

5. CONCLUSION

As a response to the increasing concerns regarding animal welfare in zoos as tourist attractions and growing importance of human-animal encounters in tourism, this master's thesis sought to provide an understanding of the human-animal relationship in the context of zoo environment and the notion of wildlife conservation. This thesis focused on Korkeasaari Zoo which has been announced as one of the top attractions in Helsinki (see e.g. Top 14 Nähtävyydet...; Wood, 2018). The research indicates how visitors' consideration of zoo animals is positioned with current western societal human-animal relationship conceptions and its implications to wildlife.

It emerged from the interviews that relationship formation to zoo animals was described from multiple angles, based on number of visits, zoo milieu, human-animal encounters, and animal wellbeing. It has been identified that zoo animals were referred to as both wild and semi-domesticated, and they are being considered subjects with individuality. Visitors were expressing culture of care and responsibility towards animals, expressing it through the establishment of emotional ties and respect (Macnaghten, 2004). Thus, emotional human-animal relationship is strongly present in human-animal encounters in Korkeasaari Zoo. It has been discovered that categorization where tamed and domesticated animals are being viewed as familiar and close (Ilvesviita, 2005, p. 72), and wild animals are unknown and distant (Bostock, 1993, p. 52) is not completely applicable in the zoo context.

Moreover, human-animal encounters highlighted animals as individuals and active subjects. While interpreting interaction between humans and zoo animals, animals' way of thinking was considered. This indicates that animals are being considered subjects with feelings and intelligence. Also, their happiness and wellbeing matter. Visitors addressed concerns about inability to know what animals think and without having a concrete connection to the animals, they are being interpreted based on visitors' subjective human experiences (Tallberg et al., 2021). Fondness was shown towards zoo animals and attachment was also shown to animals who had moved out from Korkeasaari to other zoos or to their natural habitat through reintroduction programs. Thus, after establishing emotional connection with an animal, the commitment can be long-term and does not require face-to-face encounters.

Significant about zoo animals is their conservation status. An opportunity to examine many kinds of animals closer has made visitors become interested in animals in broader and more versatile aspect than before. Even though the conservation status did not seem to change the preference and likeability of animals, it does have an impact in a way that the interest and care toward animal individual is broadened to consist of the whole species and their chances of survival. The results indicate that ‘specific care’ where the care is directed at the individual and ‘non-specific care’ that focuses on maintaining and developing the natural environment of the wild animal (Swart, 2005) are both present in the zoo environment. Thus, zoo animals help visitors to relate to a wider wildlife and diversify the understanding of wildlife conservation.

Wildlife conservations were considered to include actions and deeds of both individuals and universal entities. The results indicate that conservation participation seems to be the context where participants’ emotional relationship towards animals in the zoo and the wild becomes visible. The conception of conservation was broadened by understanding the connection between zoo animals and local reintroduction programs. As a result, it is suggested that visitors’ relationship towards zoo animals shapes their understanding on wildlife conservation, unless there are already formed conception, for example through work which is related to the topic. Working as a zoo volunteer and learning and getting to know animals had expanded and diversified understanding of wildlife conservation and taught more about the meaning and importance of it. Also, participative wildlife conservation was not considered distant and related to participants’ everyday choices in some extent (cf. Dove & Byrne, 2014). However, the most preferred options to personally participate in wildlife conservation were volunteering and donations.

It is also noteworthy that based on the results, visitors consider the purpose of ex-situ conservation to be supporting in-situ conservation. Specifically, how zoo animals could be utilized to increase wild population. Thus, instrumental relationship is accepted in this context. It was disregarded when instrumental, abstract ‘no care’, and concrete ‘contractual care’ relationships (Connolly & Cullen, 2018) where the economic value of the animal is emphasized. The use of animals focused on financial aims of zoo organization or other tourist attractions involving wildlife are being criticized. In-situ conservation was seemed

essential and the main aim for zoos even though ex-situ conservation actions like diversifying zoo populations and increasing knowledge were considered important. In a similar manner, the results indicate that visitors consider the wild as the best option for healthy animal who are not used to humans. The role of zoos was regarded as to take care of animals unable to survive in the wild. Alongside that, zoo conservation was seen important to provide research, gene pools in zoos and have international network to support primary conservation organizations that work on-site, directly in the area.

Ojalampi and Nygren (2018) bring forth the mismatch and loose connection between consumer contribution and zoo conservation messages. Similarly, Luebke and Grajal (2011) argue that despite the rich number of publications supporting emotional connections with animals and conservation actions, that connection has not been much emphasised in zoo strategies or messages. Based on this research, affective methods among cognitive ones are called for to be further addressed in zoo strategies, operations, and messages. As visitors interpret animals' wellbeing based on their experience, Korkeasaari Zoo and others should recognize visitors' multifaceted interpretation, and emotional yet abstract attachment to animals. Visitors need to be ensured that animals' wellbeing are prioritized. Also, the whole organization should emphasise 'care for' relationship. Furthermore, the results imply that zoos have the possibility to affect visitors' commitment to wildlife conservation. Providing volunteer opportunities, easy access to donation possibilities, and presenting visitors the work being done for wildlife conservation are ways to enhance visitors' commitment and participation.

Limitations are recognized within this study. Firstly, the results cannot be generalized to a wider population because of the empirical nature of the research. Blogs were collected by using purposeful sampling which is a subjective non-probability method. However, it fitted the criteria associated with the study's purpose (Jennings, 2010, p. 140). Moreover, interviews were conducted with zoo volunteers who might not consider themselves as regular visitors. Secondly, the interviewing via Microsoft Teams software limited to analyze the non-verbal language or facial expressions, since not every interviewee could not or preferred not to use a video camera during the interview. Thirdly, the current thesis focused on one zoo, Korkeasaari Zoo, the findings therefore apply only to this particular zoo and

research on others may lead to different findings. Besides these limitations, the chosen theoretical framework, methodology and empirical material created the validity and reliability in answering the main research question.

As a direction for further research, the human-animal relationship within tourism should be studied further by broadening the topic to different animal-based tourism operators. There is a need to enhance the understanding of animals and their wellbeing. For the further research, the topic could be analyzed qualitatively with different methods. For example, participant observation would enhance the research with a closer look to the visitors' human-animal relationships on-site, also to observe the interaction between tourism operators and animals. The results point out in the context of this thesis that zookeepers were assumed to have a deeper human-animal relationship towards animals than visitors. Relation to that notion, future research could also use qualitative interviews to find deeper understanding of relationships from different people who are involved in animal-based tourism. Furthermore, it would be worthwhile to explore the effect of human-animal relationship on future behavioral intention; how the established emotional connection with an animal lead to a long-term environmental and animal friendly actions towards preserving biodiversity? As this study was particularly focusing on the human-animal relationship in zoo environment, future studies could focus more in depth on the impact of the wildlife tourism.

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APPENDIX 1. Covering letter for blogs

This appendix presents the covering letter for blogs. The covering letter was sent to bloggers in Finnish.

Title: Use of blog text in the research

Hello,

My name is Asta Alatossava and I study at the Tourism, Culture and International Management master's degree program at the University of Lapland. I am writing my master's thesis about animals and wildlife conservation in Korkeasaari Zoo from the visitors' perspective. The research aim is to examine visitors' relationship towards zoo animals and wildlife conservation.

Part of my research material is collected through blog texts. I would like to use your text "XXXXXX" that was published on X.X.20XX because it fits perfectly for the research. The material will be used for this research only and it will be handled anonymously.

Please find attached the Letter of Consent. I would greatly appreciate if you could give permission to use your blog text. It contains valuable information for the research.

If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Asta Alatossava

TourCIM Master student

University of Lapland

XX@ulapland.fi

APPENDIX 2. The first covering letter for interview

This appendix presents the first version of the covering letter for interview. The covering letter was sent to interviewees in Finnish.

Hello Korkeasaari volunteer,

My name is Asta Alatossava and I study at the Tourism, Culture and International Management master's degree program at the University of Lapland. I am writing my master's thesis about animals and wildlife conservation in Korkeasaari Zoo from the visitors' perspective. The research aim is to examine visitors' relationship towards zoo animals and wildlife conservation.

I am collecting the research material through interviews, and I would like to invite you to participate. Interview will be conducted online via Microsoft Teams software due to current state of the pandemic. You do not need to register to use Teams and you can participate either via phone or computer. The interviews will be recorded. The material will be handled securely and anonymously. The material will be used for this research only.

You can participate the interview by replying to the email address mentioned below (XX@ulapland.fi). Please find attached the Letter of Consent. I would greatly appreciate your participation because your opinions and views are valuable for the research.

If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Asta Alatossava

TourCIM Master student

University of Lapland

XX@ulapland.fi

APPENDIX 3. The second covering letter for interview

This appendix presents the second version of the covering letter for interview. Estimated duration of the interview and the note of reward were added to this version. The covering letter was sent to interviewees in Finnish.

Hello Korkeasaari volunteer,

My name is Asta Alatossava and I study at the Tourism, Culture and International Management master's degree program at the University of Lapland. I am writing my master's thesis about animals and wildlife conservation in Korkeasaari Zoo from the visitors' perspective. The research aim is to examine visitors' relationship towards zoo animals and wildlife conservation.

I am collecting the research material through interviews, and I would like to invite you to participate. Interview will be conducted online via Microsoft Teams software due to current state of the pandemic. You do not need to register to use Teams and you can participate either via phone or computer. The interviews will be recorded. The material will be handled securely and anonymously. The material will be used for this research only.

The duration of the interview is approx. 35 to 60 minutes long. In return, I would like to give you two entrance tickets to Korkeasaari Zoo.

You can participate the interview by replying to the email address mentioned below (XX@ulapland.fi). Please find attached the Letter of Consent. I would greatly appreciate your participation because your opinions and views are valuable for the research.

If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Asta Alatossava

TourCIM Master student

University of Lapland

XX@ulapland.fi

APPENDIX 4. Interview structure

This appendix presents the interview structure. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, the native language of the interviewees. Finnish translation used in the interviews is included in italics.

Interview structure

Demographic questions *Demografiset kysymykset / Taustakysymykset*

1. Year of birth and gender? *Syntymävuosi ja sukupuoli?*
2. Highest level of education? *Korkein koulutus?*
3. Place of residence? *Asuinpaikkakunta?*
4. Are animals part of your everyday life? (Do you or your inner circle have domestic animals or pets?) *Ovatko eläimet läsnä arjessasi? (Onko sinulla tai lähipiirissäsi koti- tai lemmikkieläimiä?)*
5. How long have you volunteered? *Kuinka kauan olet toiminut vapaaehtoisena?*
6. How often do you visit Korkeasaari Zoo in your free time during a year? *Kuinka usein vieraillet vapaa-aikanasi Korkeasaarella vuoden aikana?*

Volunteering and relationship to animals *Vapaaehtoisuus ja suhde eläimiin*

1. What made you want to volunteer in Korkeasaari Zoo? *Mikä sai sinut ilmoittautumaan Korkeasaaren vapaaehtoiseksi?*
2. How do you find volunteering at Korkeasaari? *Minkälaista on ollut olla vapaaehtoisena Korkeasaarella?*
3. How your own values are present in volunteer work? *Miten omat arvosi ovat läsnä vapaaehtoistoiminnassa?*
4. How would you describe your relations to zoo animals? *Miten kuvailisit suhdettasi eläintarhan eläimiin?*
5. Is your relationship to animals close or distant? *Koetko suhteen olevan enemmän läheinen vai etäinen?*

Encounters with zoo animals *Kohtaaminen*

1. What animals are you looking forward to seeing when visiting the zoo? *Minkälaiset eläimet ovat suosikkejasi?*
2. What names do you use when you speak to animals? Do you call them by their own name or species name? *Millä nimellä kutsut eläimiä? Käytätkö niiden omia nimiä vai lajinimiä?*
3. Do you use nicknames to particular animals? *Käytätkö lempinimiä puhutellesasi tiettyjä eläimiä?*
4. Tell about your relationship to your favourite animal in Korkeasaari? *Kuvaile suhdettasi lempieläimeesi Korkeasaarella.*
5. Describe a special encounter with a zoo animal. What made it special? *Kuvaile erityinen kohtaaminen eläimen kanssa. Mikä teki siitä erityisen?*

6. What means do you use to strengthen and maintain relationship? *Millaisia keinoja käytät suhteen vahvistamiseen ja ylläpitämiseen?*
 - How have you followed animals during the covid19 pandemic? *Miten olet seurannut eläimiä korona-aikana?*

Wildlife conservation *Suojelutyö*

1. How do you get to know zoo animals and learn about them? *Miten tutustut eläintarhan eläimiin ja opit niistä?*
2. How animal's conservation status affects your relationship to that animal? *Miten eläimen uhanalaisuusluokitus vaikuttaa suhteeseesi kyseiseen eläimeen?*
3. What comes to mind when you hear the word 'wildlife conservation'? *Mitä sinulle tulee mieleen sanasta 'suojelutyö'?*
4. How your relationship to zoo animals has affected your understanding about wildlife conservation? *Miten suhteesi eläintarhan eläimiin on vaikuttanut käsitykseesi suojelutyöstä?*
5. In your opinion, what is the role of the animals in zoo conservation? *Mikä mielestäsi on eläinten rooli eläintarhan suojelutyössä?*
6. Do you think zoo animals need your support? What would be the best way for you to support zoo animals? How about wildlife conservation? *Tarvitsevatko mielestäsi eläintarhan eläimet tukeasi? Mikä olisi itsellesi paras tapa tukea eläintarhan eläimiä? Entä suojelutyötä?*

Animal welfare *Eläinten hyvinvointi*

1. What animal wellbeing means to you? *Mitä eläinten hyvinvointi merkitsee sinulle?*
2. Do you feel animals are satisfied in Korkeasaari? *Koetko, että eläimet ovat tyytyväisiä Korkeasaarella?*
3. Do you think a zoo is a safe place for animals or humans? Why? *Onko mielestäsi eläintarha turvallinen paikka eläimille tai ihmisille? Miksi?*
4. What is your opinion about the following arguments: *Mitä mieltä olet seuraavista väitteistä:*
 - a. Instead of entertainment, wildlife conservation is being highlighted at Korkeasaari zoo. Korkeasaarella korostetaan viihteen sijaan eläinten suojelutyötä.
 - b. Humans and animals are equal. *Ihmiset ja eläimet ovat tasavertaisia.*
 - c. Wild animals cannot be happy somewhere else than in their natural habitat. *Villieläin ei voi olla onnellinen muualla kuin vapaana omilla elinalueillaan.*
 - d. Animals are seen more as species advocates than individuals at the zoo. *Eläintarhoissa eläimiä ei kohdella yksilöinä vaan lajinsa edustajina.*
 - e. The best way to appreciate animals and to support their conservation is to visit a zoo to admire them. *Paras tapa arvostaa eläimiä ja tukea niiden suojelutyötä on mennä eläintarhaan ihailemaan niitä.*

Would you like to add something to the topic? Do you have any comments? *Haluatko lisätä vielä jotain aiheeseen liittyvää? Onko kommentteja?*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor José-Carlos Garcia-Rosell from the faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Lapland. I would like to thank you for the support and guidance you have given me. I appreciate all the insightful and valuable comments and remarks that I have received throughout the whole writing process.

I am very grateful to my colleagues at the marketing and customer service operations team at Korkeasaari Zoo who generously helped and supported me, and provided the tickets offered to the interviewees. My appreciation goes to my interviewees who took the time to share their valuable thoughts and knowledge with me. I would also like to thank bloggers for replying to my request and letting me use their writings for this thesis.

Lastly, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my wonderful family and dear friends who have been part of this process. Thank you for your patience, continuous support, taking time to listen to my concerns and giving valuable feedback. I am very grateful to everyone who helped and guided me during the process of researching and writing this thesis.