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**ANALYSIS OF TOURISM STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF TOURISM
DEVELOPMENT IN THE OULU REGION**

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ABSTRACT

Tourism development is considered as a tool for regional development due to its economic impacts and as an opportunity to revitalise the regions which have suffered a decrease in certain industries. Thus, previous studies consider tourism as a replacement for those industries and a source of employment. Furthermore, previous studies discuss that tourism has been considered by decision-makers as a way to improve economic diversity and as a source of increased tax revenues for the regions.

Previous studies have investigated the power of different tourism stakeholders and revealed that power impacts tourism development practices, distribution of resources, and the directions of development. However, while the previous studies have investigated power dynamics among tourism stakeholders and the motivations for tourism development, there seems to remain a gap in knowledge of stakeholders' perceptions and evaluations of tourism development and determining the roles of stakeholders.

Thus, to address the gap the main research question of this study is how the tourism stakeholders see tourism development in Oulu. Secondly, the aim is to investigate and create knowledge of the roles of stakeholders in tourism decision-making and development.

The empirical data of the study was collected via semi-structured online interviews in Teams targeting a variety of stakeholders in the region. The interviews were conducted with 2 participants from the DMO and a local entrepreneur. The collected data was analysed with thematic analysis to gain knowledge of the influential stakeholders and their impacts on the development and the stakeholder's considerations of tourism as a regional development tool.

The analysis revealed a strong presence of DMO as a stakeholder in Oulu. The role of the local city and local companies were perceived to be improved. The data suggests increased cooperation and communication between stakeholders and product development. The development was seen partly as unfinished mainly due to decision-making challenges, a lack of cooperation between the stakeholders and a lack of agenda in tourism development. The data set of this Thesis remained small which should be considered when evaluating the further research or generalisability of the results.

Keywords: tourism development, Oulu, stakeholder influence, stakeholder cooperation, tourism decision-making

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1.INTRODUCTION

Tourism has a crucial role in Finland by offering economic vitality. According to the previous studies by Maher et al.,(2014, pp. 9-10) economic vitality is achieved through employment opportunities, especially in the tourism sector, which is crucial in creating and providing jobs. Tourism development often focuses on building tourism destinations with supportive services. Challenges related to tourism seasonality refer to accessibility issues and reliance on winter tourism. For instance, Finnish Lapland struggles with limited flight connections and winter is the dominant tourism season. Summer tourism is still in the process of development (Maher et al.,2014, pp. 9-10).

Previous research such as studies by Kulusjärvi (2016, pp. 6-13) has revealed that tourism development has an economic impact on the destination communities, offering employment and acts as a motivation to develop tourism. In her other study, she discusses that the power imbalance is perceived as a challenge in tourism development. The power is perceived to remain in the hands of certain stakeholders. Particularly, the path focusing on growth is perceived to be favoured by the local municipalities and Destination Management Organisations (DMOS). However, the differing opinions among the tourism stakeholders are perceived not to be heard resulting in a power imbalance among the tourism stakeholders.

For instance, based on previous studies, smaller companies in the skiing resorts face challenges getting their opinions and viewpoints heard among the local tourism stakeholders in tourism planning procedures, limiting their impact on tourism planning procedures(Kulusjärvi, 2017, p. 45).

1.1 Background of the study

As mentioned above, the earlier studies such as the studies by Kulusjärvi (2017, p. 13) and Maher et al., (2014, pp. 9-10) have studied the impacts of tourism on the host community and the challenge of differing opinions and power distribution among stakeholders.

However, there remains a gap in knowledge of the opinions and viewpoints of the stakeholders concerning the tourism development and identifying the roles of the different stakeholders in tourism development. Thus, to address the gap this Thesis aims to increase understanding of the roles and influence of tourism stakeholders in tourism development and planning procedures and their perceptions concerning tourism development.

1.2 Purpose and methods of the study

This study aims to determine the roles of different stakeholders in tourism development and to create knowledge of stakeholder's perceptions concerning tourism development in the Oulu region. Oulu has not been the focus of previous studies concerning tourism development and the roles of the different stakeholders. Thus, this Thesis aims to address the research gap about the roles of different stakeholders and their perceptions concerning tourism development.

The study was conducted with the qualitative approach and the data was collected with semi-structured online interviews in Teams-environment. The results were analysed with thematic-analysis.

2. UNDERSTANDING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: TRUST, POWER, AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES

2.1 Tourism as a regional development tool and its impacts on the host community

There are various definitions of tourism. For instance, Johannesson (2005, p. 134) defines tourism as a multidimensional phenomenon with economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts on the regions. The tourism research discusses the importance of these aspects when conducting tourism development. The economical achievements of tourism are considered when discussing the tourism impacts on the region. However, tourism also has social, cultural, and environmental impacts on the destinations (Jordan et al., 2013, pp. 7-8). Tourism is often linked with specific geographic locations when defining it as a phenomenon. Tourism is impacted by the practices done by various actors (Johannesson, 2005, p. 134).

Another definition of tourism by Weaver and Lawton (2014, p. 3) describes it as a network of processes and activities. They are formed in relationships and interactive processes between the local community, travellers, tourism companies, and the local government entities. All of the actors in the network have their roles from the attraction of travellers to the transport of travellers. Additionally, tourism is defined by Smith (1995, p. 23) as an activity in which travellers are the main actors. Travellers go to a new environment which is different from their living environment and conditions.

For example, in Finland tourism is considered a revitalising tool for the regions that perceive tourism as an economic resource. Tourism is perceived as a tool to increase and improve the local services and infrastructure, resulting in benefits for the local communities (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, 2023, p. 14). Also, tourism is seen as a solution for economic well-being in destinations.

Tourism has been utilised as an alternative industry for the regions which suffered a decline in sectors previously providing income such as the forest industry or mining (Preters, 1995, p. 7). Also, Müller (2013, p. 116) discusses how tourism is a way for regional development and revitalisation. Tourism has been perceived as a way to bring employment in areas that have suffered industry reduction. These development practices have received financial support and guidance from the regional policy plans.

Furthermore, according to a study by Kim et.al., (2013, p. 527), tourism has been considered by decision-makers as a way to improve economic diversity and as a source of increased tax revenues. Also, often tourism focuses on the usage of local resources such as nature, culture, and traditions of the region. These resources are considered to act as a building block for developing tourism services and products, thus creating an economic impact on the region (Stolarick et.al., 2010, p. 243).

Also, Zaei and Zaei (2013, pp. 15-19) discuss in their study that tourism is perceived to have social and cultural impacts on the local communities. The increased employment due to tourism can improve the life quality of the local inhabitants in the tourism region. Tourism impacts are also visible in the destination's infrastructure, services and cultural life, thus benefiting the local community. They also discuss that improved services and infrastructure are believed to have a positive impact on the lives of the inhabitants in tourist destinations. The increased economic resources assists the local community in maintaining the local infrastructure or local traditions such as preserving wild animals or forests.

Mason, (2015, pp. 30-47) provided an example of tourism's environmental impact because tourism is considered to create negative impacts on nature for instance in the form of trekking and hiking routes for tourists. The creation of trekking routes has been associated with a negative impact on nature. The creation of routes is perceived to impact the natural environment by causing footpath erosion. Increased travel numbers are considered to increase the usage of the paths and to increase littering. One impact of tourism is considered to be overtourism. It is perceived to impact the lives of locals negatively by replacing traditional livelihoods, or creating too dependent relationships on tourism (Mason, 2015, pp. 30-47).

2.2 Role of trust in tourism development

The previous section discussed tourism as a regional development and how it impacts the local communities. It is suggested that tourism can enhance the well-being of locals by providing working places and by improving local services. However, there remains a gap

in knowledge of the tourism actors' perceptions of the success of tourism as a regional development tool. Building based on the mentioned perspectives the following section discusses the role of trust in tourism development.

Trust is perceived as an individual's expectations or thoughts concerning the other individuals in a social setting (Nunkoo & Smith, 2015, p. 1). Also, trust is perceived as an interaction between the local inhabitants and the local government or other organisations. Trust is considered as an outcome of a successful interaction or behaviour between individuals or between the local habitants and governments (Pagliara et.al., 2021, p.2).

In tourism development trust is perceived as crucial. Trust takes multiple forms between different stakeholders. For instance, trust between local government and tourism destination inhabitants or between governments and the public sector. Additionally, they discuss that when the stakeholders in the tourism destination trust each other it is perceived to impact positively on tourism development by boosting and enhancing the development. Also, trust among the key actors in tourism planning is perceived to assist in avoiding conflicts. Trusting each other assists in the practical execution of tourism planning procedures such as the execution of legislation for tourism planning procedures (Nunkoo & Smith, 2015, p. 2).

Particularly, the trust between the local community and local governments has been a subject of previous research. Managing, developing and planning of tourism destinations is perceived to be handled by the local governments. The government's influential role in tourism development is perceived to be impacted by its capacity to control the region with land use. Additionally, governments receive criticism from the local community. For instance, the governments are not seen to support tourism development by not having a strong vision of the development's directions. (Nunkoo, 2015, p. 625).

Additionally, Nunkoo and Gursoy (2016, pp. 27-28) discuss that it is perceived as necessary that tourism development happens with mutual trust between the governments and the local community. When there are trust issues among the key tourism actors such as mistrust between the local community and tourism companies it is perceived to result in failed tourism development or stopping the development entirely. Tourism development in a respectful manner by including all of the stakeholders is perceived to impact positively and result in successful tourism planning. Previous literature suggests collaboration and teamwork between the tourism stakeholders such as between governments and local

tourism businesses. This is considered to impact positively on the success of tourism planning outcomes and to increase trust (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016, pp. 27-28).

This section discussed the importance of trust in tourism development and its impact on the overall success of tourism development. As Nunkoo and Gursoy (2016, pp. 27-28) discuss in their study the trust of stakeholders towards the development practices and the key actors of it can either support or stop the process. Thus, it is crucial to investigate the stakeholder's attitudes towards tourism development as a development tool and to determine the key stakeholders to receive valuable insights for the further development and for evaluating the development. In the following section, the community attitudes and motivation in tourism development are discussed.

2.3 Community attitudes and motivation in tourism development

As discussed in the previous section, trust holds a crucial role in tourism development. Trust impacts the tourism development process and mistrust can slow down or stop the development process (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016, pp. 27-28). This section transitions from the role of trust to the role of community attitudes and motivation in the tourism development process.

Signh et al., (2003, p. 104) discuss that tourism development happens often without the local community as stakeholders in the development process. The “stronger” stakeholders with more resources such as economic resources or close relations to the government are considered to lead the tourism development which leaves the other stakeholders without or less power and this results as power imbalance. To achieve equal and successful tourism development, they suggest considering the community involvement in the development process. Including the local inhabitants in the development makes sure that the development respects the social, cultural, and economic values of the locals and the regional government (Signh et al., 2003, p.169).

Additionally, a study by Shen et al., (2017, p. 48) discusses that the locals attitude towards tourism development is impacted by the factors such as economic benefit for the locals or the time of residence in the tourism destination. Also, the previous study suggests that attitude towards tourism development is influenced by the current situation of tourism development. For instance, the previous discussion suggest that the slow-phase tourism development is perceived as more positive than the fast-phase tourism development.

Additionally, the longer time the inhabitant has lived in the region is perceived to impact negatively towards the tourism development. The economic benefits are also perceived as positive factors increasing the positive attitude towards tourism development. (Shen et al., 2017, p. 48).

Furthermore, according to Gursoy et al., (2019, pp. 8-9), locals' attitude towards tourism as a development tool is considered to be impacted by their views of the impacts of tourism on their home region. They discuss that impacts are considered to influence how locals perceive tourism as a development tool. Also, they suggest that tourism development should have the support of locals and provide them with personal benefits to motivate them. Thus, they suggest that tourism decision-makers consider the local benefits of tourism when tourism development is considered as a development tool.

Based on the case studies by Rastegar (2010, p. 207) conducted in Iran revealed the importance of locals' attitudes towards tourism development. The increased employment possibilities and increased life quality due to higher income were perceived as positive impacts. On the other hand, the case study illustrated the power imbalance because the locals perceived a lack of contribution possibilities as stakeholders in tourism decision-making. Power was perceived to be in the hands of the local authorities and government when setting guidelines, directions and policies of tourism development in the region.

This section discussed the role of community attitudes and motivation in tourism development. Gursoy et al., (2019, pp. 5-9) discuss the impact of locals' attitudes towards tourism development and how their attitudes are impacted by living as stakeholders inhabiting the region. Thus, the following section transitions from the community attitudes to competing interests in tourism which are crucial to discuss because they might impact the perceptions of tourism as a regional development tool.

2.4 Competing Interests in Regional Development

Regional development faces also challenges. For instance, in regional development land use is considered problematic. Previous studies by Hjalager (2020, pp. 3-8) have investigated land use issues as an example of regional development and power relations. Land use is perceived as an example of a challenge with regional planning but also as an example of challenges related to power relations in the regional planning context. The

involved actors are considered to have different types of power. For instance, there are actors with the power to impact decision-making largely such as government officers or actors because they are living in the region.

A case study in Denmark revealed issues with land use. Some of the tourism stakeholders such as governments were perceived to hold more power and to support land use for tourism purposes. In contrast, other stakeholders such as holiday homeowners were perceived to consider land use for tourism purposes problematic by creating harm such as noise or increased traffic in the region.(Hjalager, 2020, pp. 3-8).

Another example of power relations and the challenge of regional development are the contrary interests of tourism development and mining in Finland. The study by Similä and Jokinen (2018, pp. 149-155) discusses that mining often happens in remote areas which are dependent on nature as a source of living such as reindeer herding in Lapland. Mining is perceived to have impacts on the nature in which the mining operations have taken place. On the other hand, remote regions often utilise tourism as a tool for regional development due to perceived multiple positive impacts on the region such as employment possibilities.

Tourism is perceived as an industry which relies heavily on nature. Thus, in their study the mining operations are perceived to impact and set tourism at risk due to its dependency on nature as a source of tourism products and activities by disturbing the physical environment of the tourism destinations. The question of whether development should go towards tourism or mining is complicated. It is perceived to be impacted by the already invested tourism capital to infrastructure in which the opening of a mine is considered to disturb the success of the business.

Also, the local government as policymakers is considered crucial to addressing the challenges. The direction of development is considered to be impacted by their decisions. Additionally, the study conducted in Finland concerning Hannukainen mine revealed that there are divisions of interest concerning the development of mining and tourism. The research found that there was resistance to mining in the regions in which tourism was one of the primary sources of income. The resistance happened by the local tourism actors but also among the travellers who participated in the survey study. The possible building of a mine was considered by the visitors to impact the destination's image as a nature tourism

destination. The local tourism companies perceived the mine to impact the visitor numbers and destination attractiveness (Similä & Jokinen, 2018, pp. 149-155).

These previous studies provide examples of challenges of regional planning and the impact of powerful stakeholders such as governments shifting the direction of regional development. Regional planning faces challenges with competing industries and analysing the perceptions of all of the stakeholders is perceived as crucial to shifting the direction of the development. However, there is a gap of knowledge in previous studies concerning which of the stakeholders hold most of the power in decision-making and shifting the directions of development. In the earlier studies, the investigation has focused on the existence of differing paths of development and the role of government as a policymaker. However, the previous studies lack a deeper analysis of the stakeholders' perspectives of development and analysis of the most influential stakeholders holding power in development procedures of the regions and how the power of influential stakeholders is manifested.

This section provided examples of competing interests in tourism development and examples of situations in which one stakeholder is perceived to have more power than others. The following two chapters move towards discussions of power in tourism development and more in-depth about the types of power in tourism development.

2.5 Power in tourism development

In the literature, power is defined as organisations, humans being able to impact or aiming to impact directions of policies (Hall 1994, p. 13, as cited in Bowen et al., 2017, p.1).

Legitimate power is defined as the power of an individual's position in the organisation and how the individual can impact their actions in the organisation. Reference power defines the individual's capacity to impact others with personal skills such as charisma. Expert power is described as the possibility to impact and have power based on previous skills (Sotarauta, 2009, p. 8).

A study by Saito & Ruhanen (2017, p. 193) discusses and illustrates the impact of power relations and the challenge of various stakeholders, each of them having legitimate power to influence and direct the decision-making process. Stakeholders holding legitimate power are considered to be marketing organisations, airlines, and private companies. Their tasks include formulating strategies and leading project development. Additionally, the control

of the financial capacity remains with certain stakeholders, such as local or national government.

Financial capacity is defined as the possibility to access resources and utilise them for development practises such as building the necessary infrastructure. By having the understanding and management of legitimate and financial power among tourism stakeholders, tourism planning and resource distribution are perceived to be more effective and to help create sustainable tourism development (Saito & Ruhanen, 2017, p. 193).

2.6 Power Relations and Key Stakeholders in Tourism

Power relations in tourism planning have been investigated previously in the academic literature. Nunkoo and Gursoy (2016, p. 513) discuss in their research that power has a crucial impact on tourism development and planning processes. Also, they consider power as necessary to consider when analysing tourism development and its impacts on the local inhabitants and their perspectives and opinions of tourism. They suggest that it is crucial to consider power distribution when developing tourism in the destinations.

Power distribution should be considered by decision-makers and when policies related to tourism development are made. Furthermore, based on previous studies by Singh et al., (2003, pp. 100-101) the power's impact on tourism has been investigated. The decision-making of tourism, government practises, marketing strategies of tourism destinations, resource usage, and usage of local culture and heritage are all examples describing the impact of power in tourism destination development. They discuss that power relations in tourism are perceived to appear as a struggle of who owns the right to impact tourism development such as resource utilisation. Power relations are considered to result in a power imbalance if other stakeholders hold more power than others

Also, power relations impact the tourism development process's tourism planning, implementation and policy-setting. The way power is distributed among stakeholders has a crucial impact on locals and their attitudes toward tourism. Any power imbalance in the development process is considered to negatively impact the local's perception of tourism development. Previous studies revealed that stakeholders who perceive that they can take part in tourism development practices perceive tourism as a suitable tool to develop the region (Gursoy et al., 2019, pp. 9-10).

There are various definitions of tourism stakeholders in the literature. For instance, key stakeholders are considered as groups or individuals who maintain communication with the company or organisation. In the tourism context, the key stakeholder theory has been utilised to analyse the insights of the stakeholders who are taking part in tourism planning. The influence of stakeholders is evaluated for instance, with the power they hold, or the needs of certain stakeholders (Getz & Timur, 2012, pp. 234-235). Previous literature has utilised key stakeholder theory to identify the main stakeholders with the most influence. Based on this theory, the most influential stakeholders are considered as primary stakeholders. The most influential stakeholders own the highest power (Martini & Buffa, 2015, p.118).

Tourism development has also been studied from the perspective of stakeholder participation. A study by Byrd (2007, p. 8) discusses the stakeholder's participation. Examples of stakeholders' presence in tourism development are cooperation, work groups or public discussion events. Stakeholders' participation in tourism development is considered to benefit the development when all the stakeholders are taken with and their viewpoints are listened to. Also, it is discussed in the study that equal decision-making and time-management is perceived to impact the successful stakeholder participation in tourism development. If the development project lasts too long it is perceived to impact the outcome of the tourism development.

The following figure adaptation by Roxas et al., (2010, p.391) illustrates the various stakeholders involved in the tourism development process.

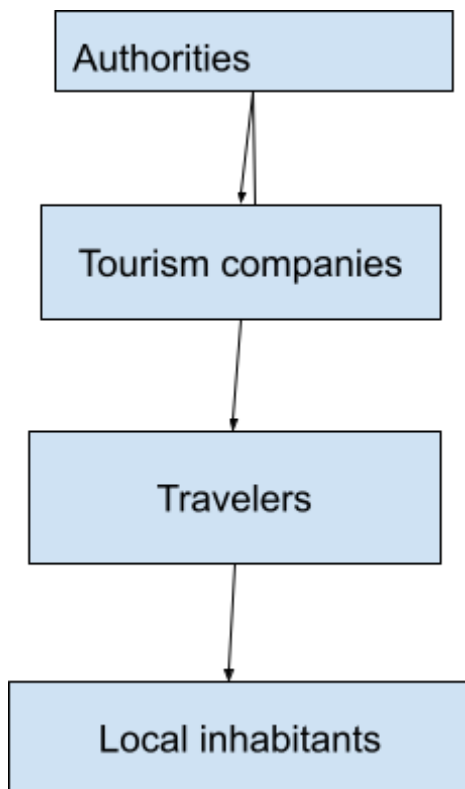


Figure 1. Stakeholder map of tourism stakeholders. Personal adaptation from the map by Roxas et al., (2020, p. 391).

As seen in Figure 1 the key stakeholders in tourism are considered as the authorities, tourism businesses, travellers, and local inhabitants. Roxas et al., (2020, p. 390) define authorities as actors operating in national, local or regional levels. They define authorities as actors working in institutions and handling issues such as policy-setting or setting guidelines. Authorities are also seen as actors who impact the decision-making in the destination. Based on this definition authors could be perceived as municipality representative or national representative. Tourism businesses are defined as companies and providers for tourism services such as creating tourism products and services and they have a capacity to create employment and benefit the local community positively.

Local inhabitants are perceived as actors living in the tourism destination and having their own interests and usage for the resources in the destination which are also utilised for tourism purposes. Tourists are considered as individuals visiting the tourism destination temporarily aiming to use the products and services provided in the destination or to visit the destination for health or education purposes (Roxas et al., 2020, p. 390).

When developing tourism in the regions it is considered important that a range of interests, different views, and opinions by various stakeholders are taken into account. It is considered necessary that all of the different perspectives are taken into consideration. The role of local and regional government bodies is considered as setting regulations and laws to ensure equal opportunities for all of the stakeholders to participate and succeed in the development practises. (Roxas et al., 2020, p. 391).

As seen in figure 1 from the studies by Roxas et al.,(2020, p. 391) the local community is considered as part of the stakeholder networks. Previous research by Bowen et al., (2017, p. 4) discusses the importance of including the local communities as stakeholders, as they inhabit the tourism destinations. It is considered necessary that tourism development has the support and approval of the local community. Also, non-government organisations (NGOs) are tourism stakeholders. They are vital in translating policies into practical actions within the tourism industry. They serve as actors facilitating the implementation of policies and ensuring that they are effectively turned into practice. For instance, they put the strategies such as the directions of development into practical use. Also, they are considered as actors between the government and private sector.

Additionally, in their study Bowen et al., (2017, p. 4) discuss the power division between the different stakeholders. They define local governments as the most influential stakeholders due to their capacity for controlling the economic resources of the destination and creating and deciding the policies and directions of the development as well as controlling the legislation of the destination. Power is also perceived to be in the hands of local companies. They are seen as influential stakeholders due to their economical capacity. Local community is seen also as powerful stakeholder due to their opinions and its value in the development and decision-making.

Brokaj (2014, p. 111) discusses that local governments own a crucial role in shifting and controlling the tourism development in the regions. Governments takes responsibility in various actions related to the functioning of tourism development. For instance, governments hold the responsibility and power to impact building the required infrastructure for tourism services, managing the environmental impacts of tourism by controlling that the visitor flows do not get too large, and building and supporting institutions which educate tourism professionals. Additionally, the role of government

includes control of land usage and working with the local economy so that it is capable of supporting tourism (Brokaj, 2014, p. 111).

According to Komppula (2016, pp. 67-69) Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) are considered as influential actors in tourism development practises having power and strong influence. They are considered as key actors working with the destination's competitiveness. Also, the management of the development projects within the tourism destinations is considered as a task of DMOs. Previous studies also discuss that local governments are having an influential role in leading and guiding the tourism development in the destinations. It happens by having the capacity of influencing strategy setting and impacting tourism-related decision-making. (Komppula, 2016, pp. 67-69).

Furthermore, according to Komppula (2014, p. 363) the companies are considered as influential stakeholders in tourism development. The role of the entrepreneurs is considered as developing the new services and products to the destination together with the DMOs Destination Management Organisations. The cooperation such as between the DMOs and local entrepreneurs is considered as necessary in the tourism destinations. Cooperation is considered to either help to benefit the destination or cause challenges if it is not working properly. (Komppula, 2014, p. 363)

This section introduced definitions of influential stakeholders and considerations of the key stakeholders in tourism. The following chapter discusses the stakeholders' role and impact on tourism development.

2.7 Stakeholders' Role and Impact on Tourism Development

Hassan et al., (2020, pp. 5-6) defines tourism policy as policies targeted specifically to the tourism industry which help to guide tourism development. The policies are perceived as crucial to providing guidelines and directions for tourism development in the regions. The creation process of the policies is a multidimensional process which involves various stakeholders from the national governments to international organisations. The final result of tourism development is considered to be impacted by the management of the policies in the net of various stakeholders. Also, tourism policies are perceived to have a linkage to power relations among the tourism stakeholders because some of the stakeholders are perceived to hold more power in policy creation than other stakeholders (Hassan et al., 2020, pp. 5-6).

Involving the local community to tourism development is perceived to impact the region positively without creating harm for the local inhabitants. Tourism development is perceived to impact the host community positively by creating working places or by bringing economical benefits to the region. Additionally, including locals to tourism related decision-making and development is perceived as necessary to avoid harmful situations such as overtourism (Rasoliimanesh et al., 2018, p. 339).

Furthermore, Muganda et al., (2013, pp. 55-56) suggests that involving the local inhabitants in tourism planning together is seen as building trust towards tourism as a regional development practice. Also, including locals in tourism planning and policy setting is perceived to assist in building satisfaction towards tourism as a development tool and in general increases satisfaction towards tourism. Also, as tourism development is perceived to be influenced by certain stakeholder groups such as governments and private companies it is considered to result in a power imbalance in which the local community is left out of the decision-making

An example of the stakeholders and their capacity to impact tourism development is the access to resources or the economic capacity which assists to boost their interests in tourism development (Fennel & Dowling, 2003, pp. 333-334). Another example of a certain stakeholder's capacity to impact tourism policies, resource usage or development directions is the case study done in Greece and Finland. In a Finnish case study a riding company was able to create a partnership with a forest owner which allowed the company to expand their riding routes and thus, they became the largest activity provider in the region. This is an example of how a stakeholder with higher economic capacity can impact tourism development. (Nastase et al., 2010, p. 144).

As previously mentioned by Mason (2015, pp. 30-47) overtourism is perceived as one of the impacts of tourism. The studies by Agius and Chaperon (2021, p. 117) conducted on Mediterranean islands revealed that fast-expanding tourism in the areas has resulted in negative consequences for the island and its inhabitants. They also discuss that managing stakeholders with governance and ensuring that power is in balance is considered crucial to holding control over the growing tourism industry. Thus, it could be discussed that power imbalance among stakeholders might lead to negative consequences such as over-tourism. Therefore, it could be argued that it is crucial to investigate stakeholders' perceptions of tourism as a regional development tool and to collect knowledge of the most influential

stakeholders. Such actions might provide equal opportunities for stakeholders to express their viewpoints but also to see if tourism is the only opportunity for regional development.

3. SUSTAINABILITY AND DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Sustainability in the tourism development practises

Sustainability is defined as a concept and guidelines for action that take into account environmental, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions when tourism is developed. It is considered crucial that tourism development is guided and supported by political authorities to achieve active participation among the tourism stakeholders (UNWTO, 2005, pp. 11-12).

Costa and Lima (2018, p. 51) discuss sustainability as a crucial part of regional tourism development in the destinations. Sustainability is considered to impact the local inhabitants and the whole community positively. Additionally, sustainable tourism development considers ecologic aspects which include ensuring the functioning of the ecological environment, the world's biodiversity and biological resources. The social aspect of sustainability includes the consideration of the local way of living and protecting it for future generations (Angelevska-Najdeska & Rakicevik, 2012, p. 211).

Thetsane (2019, p. 127) discusses that tourism development including the local community has become an interest of researchers. Community participation in tourism development practises is considered crucial to ensure that the development outcome fits the local way of living, does not disturb the local way of life, and receives the approval of the locals. It is suggested that local citizens be involved in the decision-making before the development proceeds further (Thetsane, 2019, p. 127). The role of governance is discussed to be a crucial part of impacting the successful outcome of tourism development focusing on sustainability. Governments are considered to be crucial in ensuring that the development aligns with sustainability and benefits the local community (Chili & Xulu, 2015, p. 28). Additionally, they argue that the government's responsibility is to promote the sustainable growth of tourism destinations. This is considered to involve establishing the main goal and plans for tourism development practises in the tourism destination.

3.2 The role of governance as a part of successful and sustainable development

The tasks of government in host communities are related to creating legislation and managing the tourism development in the host communities. The product and business development are perceived often as tasks of the tourism companies but governments are also working with building good relationships between the tourism companies, governments, local inhabitants, and other organisations (Bulilan, 2021, p. 273).

Controlling the tourism development and its impacts is also considered as a task of governments and as an example of successful governance of tourism destination. For instance, governments are taking a role in controlling the environmental impact of tourism on the host communities. (Bulilan, 2021, p. 283, 285). Also, good management and strong leadership is perceived as a part of a good governance of a tourism destination. Similarly, Saarinen (2020, p. 9) discusses the importance of local governance in sustainable tourism development. A functioning governance of a tourism destination is seen to positively impact on the success of sustainability goals.

3.3. Determinants of a successful tourism development practises

Based on the studies by Bornhorst et al., (2010, p. 573) successful tourism destinations are linked to functional management by Destination Management Organisations (DMOs). DMOs are crucial factors impacting the well-being of the local community via tourism development. The well-being of the community is achieved by social and economic well-being, which tourism is seen to offer. Also, it is argued that DMOs are responsible for the tourism destination providing tourism experiences for the customers. From the tourism experiences the revenue and the sustainable tourism development respecting the social, economic, ecological, and cultural aspects of the tourism destination are considered to provide well-being for the local community and act as determinants of successful tourism development.

Furthermore, the practical roles of DMOs are discussed to include acting as effective actors providing guidance and example for tourism development. Also, offering guidance and information for the travellers in the visitor centres is considered a task of the DMOS. Working with the national and international markets and attracting traveller organisations

and travel agencies to the destination is also a task of DMOs (Bornhorst et al., 2010, p. 573).

The role of local governments is considered as crucial for the success of tourism development in tourism destinations. For instance, Wilson et al., (2001, p. 135) discuss the role of local government to include providing economic capacity for developing tourism and managing the investments for required infrastructure for tourism such as airports, roads, and public transport. Also, the role of educating the tourism actors such as enterprises or investing in tourism education in the region is considered as a role of the local government.

Also, the collaboration between regional government and regional tourism enterprises is considered as crucial when developing and aiming to have a successful tourism destination and development. Governments are considered to be required to assist in problems which may prevent or harm the tourism development in the destinations (Wilson et al., 2001, p. 135).

Cooperation between tourism stakeholders is seen to impact the success of tourism development. Working together with other tourism companies or other tourism stakeholders is seen to strengthen the success of tourism development practices. However, not only the stakeholder cooperation is enough but also tourism development should respect the opinions and viewpoints of the local community. This is argued to ensure a successful outcome. (Maxim, 2015, p. 4).

4. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

In this chapter, the methodological choice, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations of this research are discussed.

In the context of this research the aim was to identify the roles of different stakeholders in the tourism development and decision-making in the Oulu region. Also, this Thesis aimed to create knowledge of the stakeholder's perceptions of the success of tourism as a regional development tool. This research was conducted with a qualitative approach.

4.1 Qualitative study method and social constructivism approach

Based on the literature qualitative study is utilised when the research aim is to analyse and find information concerning practises or improving certain practises. Furthermore, the qualitative method assists in research to gather views or insights from the research participants. The qualitative research approach is interested in how the research participants see, experience and feel the world.

Additionally, when investigating a phenomenon qualitative research assists in gathering the perspective of the research target and participants. Hypotheses and theories are not tested in research with a qualitative nature. Qualitative research aims to create new knowledge or approach topics without existing theory. Examples of qualitative data collection are interviews, email online discussions or online blogs. Qualitative data can be also collected via online or on-site observation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, pp.1-169).

According to Elomaa and Krapu (2023) A qualitative research approach is required to build open-ended interview questions for the Teams interview which is explained in more depth in the following chapter. Thematic analysis is considered an analysis method that includes the steps of organising, categorising, and describing the collected material. The data is organised into codes (Elomaa & Krapu, 2023). The interview data of this research is analysed by utilising a thematic analysis based on the transcriptions created from the interview recordings. The goal was to find repetitive themes or patterns in the response data and the interview data. Additionally, thematic analysis assists in gathering and recognizing the meaningful and necessary insights from the interview data.

This study utilised social constructivism as philosophy of science. It recognizes that reality and knowledge is socially constructed and the knowledge and social action go hand in hand. The knowledge is created in a social setting through language and interactions

(Young & Collin, 2004, p. 376). Also, social constructivism is discussed as a philosophical direction in which the world is constructed and impacted by the history, social setting and language (Botterill & Platenkamp, 2012, p. 32). Botterill and Platenkamp (2012, p. 32) add that the social constructionist approach is seen as a suitable philosophy of science in tourism research. It has been utilised to study tourist experiences, views, or goals in the development. Thus, it could be proposed that a social constructivism approach was suitable to study the perceptions of different stakeholders concerning tourism development and the roles of the different stakeholders in the development practises.

4.2. Data collection and ethical considerations

Data collection of this research focused on semi-structured online Teams-interviews with the different stakeholders from the Oulu. The interviews were recorded with the Teams recording tool with the permission of the participants. The semi-structured interview was chosen as an interview method to ask relevant questions with the pre-created themes. This assisted to answer the research questions. The interviews were conducted in Finnish because it is the native language of the participants. Thus, the interview questions and themes were also in Finnish.

The interview participants were collected by contacting stakeholders via email and calling and asking about their interest in participating. Despite actively contacting the different stakeholders the data collection was executed with 2 interviews with one entrepreneur and with one DMO representative. The interview participants were chosen based on their background in the tourism industry. It was crucial to get different perspectives and to have different stakeholders involved in the data collection. That is why I chose research participants from the organisation managed and assisted by the city (DMO) and a private entrepreneur. With their expertise in the tourism field this research received valuable insights. As earlier mentioned, the aim was to have a variety of stakeholders to increase the broadness of data but the data collection faced challenges.

Before the data collection, the potential respondents were contacted via email and invited to take part in the interview. Respondents expressing interest were contacted again and they received a letter of consent.

The data was analysed by conducting a thematic analysis and using the interview recording transcriptions for further analysis. As Clarke and Braun (2017, p. 297) discuss thematic

analysis is utilised to identify, analyse and to find repetitive patterns in the collected data. Thematic analysis assists to find repetitive patterns in the data and when the research aim is to gather experiences or viewpoints from the research participants. Furthermore, they discuss that thematic analysis is a flexible method allowing the researcher to produce research questions or to plan a data collection more freely. Thus, it could be said that thematic analysis as an analysis method supported the goals of this study and allowed the data to produce knowledge of the stakeholder's perceptions and what are the roles of different stakeholders.

Table 1. Table of participant information.

Interview participant	Position	Working years	Duration
Place/Date			
IP1. 15.3.2024	Company Manager	7 years	1 h 47 min
IP2. 26.3.2024	Marketing	no information	56 minutes

As seen in the table 1 the interview participants (IP) were a DMO representative and a tourism business owner. Tourism business participants' company have been operating for 7 years and the focus of the business is organising walking tours and guided tours to different destinations in Oulu. The DMO participant works in marketing in the organisation.

The interviews took place in a Teams environment. The duration of the interviews were 1h 47 minutes and 56 minutes.

The interview themes were background information, tourism as a regional development tool, different roles of stakeholders in development and decision-making, contribution possibilities in the decision-making, and thoughts or suggestions for the future. The interview questions are presented in the Appendix 1.

The ethical considerations of this Thesis included the careful explanation of the study for the participants. The interested participants were contacted via email and they received a letter of consent. In the letter, the aims of the study and the freedom to withdraw from the study were explained. Participants were informed that the research followed the instruction given by TENK the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity. The anonymity of the

research participants were secured by having the online interviews in a quiet and remote space to ensure the confidentiality of the discussions.

Additionally, the Teams meetings were recorded only with the permission of the research participant which was asked at the beginning of the interviews. The recordings were saved only until the analysis was finished. After the analysis the material was destroyed. If the data is collected from the participants in a sensitive position or role ethical review is utilised (TENK, p.19). The data collection of this Thesis did not require special permission other than participants agreement or ethical review because the participants were not presenting any sensitive group or position.

4.3 Background information of the Oulu city and the nearby tourist attractions

Oulu region is not defined only as a city but as a tourism destination with the surrounding locations and attractions such as Hailuoto and Nallikari. Due to the aims of this study the definition of Oulu region involves also the above mentioned surrounding locations. They are included in the definition because the tourism in the region does not only focus on the city itself but also the surrounding areas are tourism destinations. This definition is used to identify the roles of stakeholders and their perceptions of tourism development within the broader context. The nearby locations are included in the definition because the interview participants from the DMO and the local company discussed the importance of surrounding locations as tourism attractions.

Oulu is a city in the Gulf of Bothnia. The city of Oulu was established by King Carl IX. The city of Oulu is known for its rich tar and salmon culture. Nowadays Oulu is known for its rich technology-focused industries and is a city of multiple different business sectors. Oulu is a home for more than 250,000 citizens (City of Oulu, 2022). In 2023, Oulu's overnight stays were 1908 409. The part of the domestic overnight stays was 1633 97 stays and the international stays were 275 212 overnight stays (Visit Finland 2024).

The tourism industry in the Oulu region focuses on the concept of the Rengastie route which combines the different destinations different from each other within the 850km. The route includes routes for travellers seeking active experiences and the nature-experiences. It is possible to take a day trip from Oulu city to nearby Hailuoto island or go further to Syöte National Park and skiing centre. The Rengastie route concept focuses on developing tourism in a sustainable way and making Oulu more known among other Finnish tourism

destinations (Business Oulu, 2021). The Rengastie route is located in northern Finland. It includes a variety of locations offering experiences from the fjells to sea-experiences. The route can be travelled by caravan, car, public transportation or bicycle. It is easily accessible because it runs alongside the road (Pohjolanrengastie, 2024).

Nallikari beach is one of the most popular and known tourist attractions in Oulu. Nallikari Beach is a full-year round attraction. In the summertime the one kilometre long beach offers a place for enjoyment for swimmers, bicyclists, and sunbathers. In the winter, the beach offers a place to experience the sea ice and a place for ice fishing. Also, Nallikari offers nature experiences by having multiple walking paths alongside nature. Accessing the Nallikari is easy because it is located only a couple of kilometres from the city centre where the visitors can take a bus ride to the beach (Nallikari, 2024).

Hailuoto island is also a popular attraction in Oulu. It is a home for 1000 inhabitants and it offers nature-experiences to enjoy the beautiful nature with sand beaches. On the island, there are cultural experiences such as visiting the art galleries and museums. Hailuoto is accessible with a free ferry travel from Lauttaranta which is located 26 kilometres from the Oulu city centre. (Visit Hailuoto, 2024).

Also, Oulu is the European Capital of Culture 2026 with 40 municipalities. The culture, arts, and various events will be offered in the region. The aim is to increase the position of culture and arts in the life of the Oulu city and its development practices. The area included in the cultural programme consists of cities and municipalities from Kainuu, Sea Lapland, and Northern Ostrobothnia (Oulu 2026).

4.4 Reliability and validity

This Thesis utilised constructivism as a philosophy of science and the data was collected with semi-structured online interviews. Also, this study utilised triangulation to increase the reliability of this research.

As mentioned earlier social constructivism has been used as a philosophy of science in tourism research. It has been utilised to study tourist experiences, views, or goals in the development (Botterill & Platenkamp, p.34). Thus, it could be proposed that a social constructivism approach was suitable to study the perceptions of different stakeholders concerning tourism development and the roles of the different stakeholders in the development practises.

In this research project social constructivism as philosophy of science assisted to gather the perceptions and viewpoints of different stakeholders. Also, as mentioned earlier Young and Collin (2004, p. 376) states that social constructivism recognizes the importance of social relationships and interaction as important elements in knowledge and information creation. It could be argued that this is crucial when researching the roles of stakeholders and their perceptions. Furthermore, social constructivism recognizes that understanding and meanings are context-dependent and dependent on social factors. It could be said that this is crucial when researching tourism as a development tool and its success.

Triangulation is discussed as a tool in which the researcher utilises various data collection methods or collects the data from the various places at different times to ensure the reliability of the research. Also, triangulation is understood as a data collection method where the data is collected from the participants with different perspectives (Merriam et al., 2016, p. 245). To ensure the reliability of the research this Thesis utilised triangulation by interviewing participants from the different organisations with the different perspectives. This allowed broader understanding of tourism as a development tool, perceptions of the tourism development and the roles of the different stakeholders in Oulu.

The collected data was approached and analysed openly to add transparency and reliability. The transparency of this study is ensured with presenting the data with direct quotations from the transcription data. This ensures the transparency of the results and provides knowledge directly from the different stakeholders.

As mentioned in the data collection section the ethical considerations of this study included information concerning the research, possibility to withdraw and the careful presentation and storing of the data. While conducting the thematic analysis and presenting the results the names of the participants were hidden and replaced with words presenting their role as stakeholder as “DMO representative” or “entrepreneur” to avoid revealing any information of their identities in the data presentation. The participants were encouraged to contact in case of any questions before, during, or after the interviews.

5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results of the data collection concerning the Thesis' research questions which were presented in Chapter 1. This Thesis aimed to increase knowledge of the stakeholder's perceptions concerning tourism development in the Oulu region. Also, this Thesis aimed to identify the roles of different stakeholders in tourism development. The data collection included 2 interviews in the Team's environment. The recordings were used to write transcriptions which were analysed with thematic analysis.

During the data analysis, themes were created from repetitive codes in the data. These themes created from the transcription data include:

- I. Perceptions of the roles of different stakeholders
- II. Challenges and the significance of cooperation,
- III. Perceptions of the current tourism development in Oulu, and
- IV. Challenges of Communication and Perceptions of Contribution possibilities

Furthermore, interview participants shared their insights and perspectives concerning tourism development impacts in Oulu. These views did not occur as repetitive patterns but still provided important information which increased the knowledge from this Thesis.

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Theme 1. Perceptions of the roles of the different stakeholders

(DMO representative) "The role of DMO is very significant. Without a role of DMO the marketing is fragmented and it does not serve anyone. The cooperation between DMO organisations should be more active compared to the current moment."

(DMO representative) "The role of DMO is significant from the viewpoint of product development. Products must be tested before they can be marketed. Sales and marketing goes hand in hand."

(DMO representative) "The tourism entrepreneurs of Oulu should understand that DMO is one of their best clients together with DMC (destination management company)."

(DMO): "DMOs has the knowledge of the travel agencies and their customer segments and what serves them and their market best."

(Entrepreneur): "DMO Visit Oulu and DMC Business Oulu knows the actors within tourism development network."

(Entrepreneur): "I joined DMO because I will get the contacts through them."

(Entrepreneur): “ The DMO organises FAM-trips (familiarisation trips). Also, the DMO does not pay anything to the entrepreneurs but entrepreneurs offer their services to them and then they get the contacts.”

Both participants expressed opinions concerning the role of DMO. The role of DMO was seen as both significant and already present. The roles of DMO were seen as a source of contacts for entrepreneurs and as the driving force of marketing practices. The data suggests that both of the participants views the role of DMO as necessary.

Visit Oulu is the DMO organisation within the Oulu region. Visit Oulu is founded and managed by the city of Oulu and the nearby municipalities, tourism centres and tourism companies. The tasks of Visit Oulu include managing and implementing the marketing of Oulu and nearby areas. The most important tasks are marketing to attract visitors by having a common marketing strategy and common collected resources which are used to market the region with Visit Oulu and Rengastie brands.(Visit Oulu ,2024).

Also, the participants expressed opinions and viewpoints concerning the role of the local city. The role of the city is seen both as active and passive. The role of the city is hoped to be increased. The DMO is more active compared to the city. From the viewpoint of the entrepreneur the city is not seen to invest much in tourism development.

On the other hand, DMO representative views the role of the city as sufficient as long as the tourism product development is functioning. The role of the city is seen as a provider for an enterprise-friendly environment. On the other hand, the city is viewed as passive and not putting effort in tourism development. There is a consensus among the participants viewing the role of the city as crucial for further tourism development. The interview quotations concerning the role of the city are presented below.

(Entrepreneur): “City does not put effort. City should put in more effort.”

(Entrepreneur) “ City is very little invested in tourism development compared to DMO.”

(Entrepreneur) : “ City should understand to start taking part in the development. I dont think it will happen any time soon.”

(DMO representative): “ I dont see that the responsibility lies only on the city. They offer the infrastructure and services. If the products are well-organized the infrastructure and services are the smallest of the problems.”

(DMO representative)“ I do not see the infrastructure and services as the problem.”

(DMO representative) “ Maybe the city could assist in keeping the companies here and creating a functioning space for them and that they are well-treated. City gives facilities and entrepreneur-friendly atmosphere is important.”

The role of the local companies was seen to be improved especially from the viewpoint of cooperation.

(Entrepreneur) “ We should get more small companies included in tourism development and practises. The more offerings we have as a destination the more interesting we are.”

(Entrepreneur) “ Developing the collaboration between the tourism companies interests me. By working together everyone would get customers and the tourists would integrate better to the local life.”

(DMO representative): “ If I were an entrepreneur within the tourism field I would contact everyone with international contacts and ask them to try my products and provide me a feedback. Familiarisation trips are important because behind them are all the contacts. The customers are nearer than in Japan or in the middle-Europe. This should be a priority for entrepreneurs and they should be invited to test their products.”

(DMO representative)“ It is worth mentioning how the entrepreneurs have time or energy to contact the travel agencies and request a feedback. Instead of expecting that DMO will ask for feedback, they should ask for it themselves and be active.”

Both of the interview participants expressed wishes for strengthening the role of local companies within tourism stakeholder networks and development practices. The role of the local companies was viewed as passive but crucial. The local companies were viewed as crucial for cooperation to strengthen the image of the tourism destination and to make it more attractive. Also, the data suggests that the role of the local companies was viewed as passive and a more active attitude is suggested to gain feedback and target the attention of DMOs and their contacts.

The role of Business Oulu which is a local organisation financed by the city of Oulu was viewed as active and crucial from the entrepreneur's perspective.

(Entrepreneur) “ Business Oulu organises the tourism development in Oulu and receives funding. The city does not put effort even though it should put more effort.”

(Entrepreneur) “ From the viewpoint of local entrepreneurs I view that the Business Oulu could be more active. They have the resources. I have requested concrete help from them to create contract templates and advice with the commission and such matters. By receiving help from them I do not have to do it myself because they are concentrating on development. They are a large organisation and sometimes as a taxpayer, I wonder what they are doing because it does not seem active outside. I wonder if they can improve the situation.”

The data suggests that participants view the DMO as the most active stakeholder in tourism development. The role of DMO is viewed as crucial to receiving contacts and customers. The role of the city is viewed as active and passive among the participants. The city is viewed as passive and not putting effort in tourism development. On the other hand, the city is seen providing the required infrastructure and services for the tourism development.

Business Oulu organisation is seen as crucial by one of the interview participants. Participants wish to receive practical help from them to assist in business operations. The main tasks of Business Oulu include increasing the attractiveness and vitality of the Oulu region by creating opportunities for the region, inhabitants and companies. The organisation assists in helping the companies to develop their activity and operational environment and attracting a suitable workforce. There is cooperation between Business Oulu, educational centres, and social actors(Business Oulu, 2024). The role of the Business Oulu is seen also as active and suggestion for the future is to receive practical help from the organisation for implementing tourism.

The results support the studies by Bornhorst et al., (2010, p. 573) concerning Destination Management Organisations(DMOs) and the connection between the success of tourism destinations and the functionality of the DMOs. DMOs are seen as crucial actors impacting tourism development and as actors providing guidance for tourism development practises Bornhorst et al., (2010, p. 573).

The DMO representative's perception in the data of the role of DMO seems to support the discussion by Bornhorst et al., (2010, p. 573) as an active stakeholder guiding and leading the development of the destination by assisting with marketing. Also, their study supports the viewpoint of DMO as a source for the contacts as the entrepreneur mentioned in the interview.

The result of DMO's role in Oulu's tourism development also supports the earlier study by Komppula (2016, p. 67) concerning the different roles of stakeholders in tourism development. DMOs are seen as influential actors in tourism development having power and working the destination's competitiveness and image as well guiding and working actively with the tourism development (Komppula, 2016, p. 67). The strong influence and presence of DMO in the Oulu's tourism development aligns with the earlier discussion of the strong role and importance of DMO in the development practises and increasing the competitiveness of the destination

Additionally, the results support the discussion by Brokaj (2014, p. 111) of the role of local governments as controllers of the tourism development and providers of the required infrastructure for tourism, economical capacity and environment required for tourism (Brokaj, 2014, p. 111). Particularly, the viewpoint of the DMO representative concerning the local government as a source for required infrastructure and supportive environment for the companies supports the earlier discussion. Additionally, the entrepreneur perceived the role of the city as relevant for tourism entrepreneurs which supports the earlier discussion of the relevant and crucial role of the local government.

Overall, the results support the discussion by Brokaj (2014, p. 111) that the role of the local governments such as city government is to provide an environment for tourism development and for the tourism companies. However, the earlier studies had not analysed how the role of the city was perceived by the different stakeholders.

Thus, this study provided insights from the Oulu region and the perceptions of the two different stakeholders concerning the role of the local government. The study provided important information that the city is perceived partly as an effective stakeholder providing infrastructure and services. On the other hand, there is a perception that the city is not investing enough on tourism development. These are valuable insights which can be evaluated in the future development and decision-making.

The role of the local companies was perceived as passive but crucial. The participants viewed that companies' role could be improved in the tourism stakeholder network and development practises. The data included indications for a need for increased activity of local tourism companies in the decision-making and development practices.

This finding supports the earlier study by Komppula (2014, p. 363) about the roles of different stakeholders. The local companies are considered as important stakeholders in developing new products and services for the destinations together with the DMOs (Komppula, 2014, p. 363). Also, in Oulu the data suggests that the role of the companies could be increased in decision-making and development to improve the image of a destination and to have new products and services.

The previous studies by Wilson et al., (2001, p. 135) discuss that cooperation between the government and tourism companies is considered as crucial in successful tourism development. Similarly, Nunkoo and Gursoy (2016, pp. 27-28) discuss the importance of

cooperation between different stakeholders as a tool for success in tourism development. Thus, the findings of this study suggested that cooperation among the different tourism stakeholders especially between the DMO's and entrepreneurs is hoped to be increased and this aligns with the earlier discussion. Thus, it could be argued that the interview participants perceive the cooperation as a key for successful tourism development in the Oulu region which has been also discussed in the previous research.

The previous studies lack of analysing the perceptions of tourism stakeholders concerning tourism development in Oulu. Thus, this study revealed that stakeholders indeed perceive the cooperation as necessary to improve the tourism development in Oulu region and to make it more successful. Especially, the cooperation between tourism companies and DMO was seen as crucial to enhance the tourism development and its success.

Theme 2. Challenges and significance of cooperation

(Entrepreneur) “ *We would need more travellers to Oulu. But unfortunately starting cooperation is difficult in Finland.*”

(Entrepreneur) “ Recently I offered local hotels my walking tours. But no they are not interested. I see that the 600 eur cost would be a investment in marketing. For example in Vaasa hotels cooperate with entrepreneurs by offering their walking tours.”

(Entrepreneur) “ There should be more cooperation. I should do everything myself. Others do not see the power of cooperation. The extra value that it would bring is not seen.”

(Entrepreneur) “ There is a problem in cooperation having trust to each other.”

(Entrepreneur) “ How the local companies could understand that here in Oulu operates various companies and how the cooperation could be added. It requires resources and that someone does it. I have tried this all the time by myself. But yeah it is like talking to the walls. Everyone is so centred with their own work and I can not understand it.”

(DMO representative) “ Tourism development is good when everyone is involved. Cooperation is important and doing things together is important.

(DMO representative) “ There should be more product development and cooperation between companies and DMOs.”

(DMO representative) “ When we think about the story around the product and how it differentiates the tourism destination from the neighbourhood destination. Why does the customer choose Oulu over Kuopio? In that situation the cooperation between DMOs and enterprises is important.”

In the data analysis, various mentions concerning the challenges and opportunities in cooperation within tourism development appeared. From the entrepreneur's perspective there is a need for increased cooperation which helps to attract more travellers to Oulu but it is viewed as challenging. Even though the entrepreneur is putting effort to increase the cooperation the response has been viewed as negative and that the power of cooperation is not seen and the entrepreneur views being left alone.

Additionally, the DMO representative discussed the importance of cooperation in tourism development suggesting increased cooperation between the companies and DMOs to assist in product development and differentiation from other destinations. The participants viewed that the potential of cooperation is not seen. Building trust and cooperation between the tourism entrepreneur and between entrepreneurs and DMOs was suggested. Also, there are indications for a need of improvement concerning tourism stakeholder cooperation. The entrepreneur perspective indicated that there is a challenge that cooperation is considered as problematic because other stakeholders are not involved and extra value of cooperation is not seen.

Similarly, Maxim et al., (2015, p. 4) discusses the importance of cooperation between stakeholders to ensure the successful tourism development. Thus, it could be argued that the stakeholders in Oulu perceive that the cooperation between the stakeholders would assist to improve Oulu as a tourism destination and to add the competitive advantage. Also, the interest for cooperation could be perceived as a tool towards more successful tourism development in Oulu.

Furthermore, according to the entrepreneur's perspective there seems to be a challenge in communication and trust among the stakeholders and the tourism companies are not aware of each other and each other's products. Also, the entrepreneur expressed a feeling of being left alone with development. DMO representative perceived cooperation as crucial for increasing the competitive advantage of Oulu as a destination and suggested further product development together with DMO and tourism companies.

The challenges of communication and trust are linked to earlier discussion by Nunkoo and Smith (2015, p. 2) about the importance of trust between the tourism stakeholders to assist in successful tourism development. This study provided valuable insights concerning the need for communication which could be evaluated in the future research or development practices.

Theme 3. Perceptions of the current tourism development in Oulu

(Entrepreneur) “ Compared to Rovaniemi we are behind twenty years. Yesterday I discussed with other tourism entrepreneurs what kind of destination we are hoping to be. To avoid the situation that we have buses loaded with masses of tourists.”

(Entrepreneur) “ Tourism development is at the beginning without an agenda. I perceive that agenda is very necessary to have in tourism development.”

(DMO) “ When there is tourism there is increased services. It brings positive impacts to region not any negative.”

(Entrepreneur): “ When tourism is developed then there is services available also for the locals.”

(DMO representative) “ At the present moment it is very challenging to create products in Oulu.”

(DMO representative) “ Product development should be improved. If one of the company representatives gets sick there is no one to call. Who else can take over? If they even have more than one employee there.”

(DMO representative) “ There is so much to do before we can happily present what we have. At the moment we just take the leftovers from Lapland.”

(DMO representative) “ For instance, the city hall of Oulu is not utilised. I would like to really utilise the local food in the product development.”

(DMO) “ The internal workshops could be utilised by the companies more. The companies does not even know each other or their products.”

Both of the participants viewed the tourism development in Oulu as unfinished. Also, they viewed that development is behind compared to other destinations such as Lapland. The participants viewed product development as important, especially the usage of local food. The participants viewed the challenges in tourism development as the lack of resources or skills, and the lack of entrepreneurs involved in tourism development and cooperation.

The decision-making by the local city was seen differently by the participants. The DMO representative's view was that the city is serving tourism well with tourism by offering facilities and services but views the product as problematic. The entrepreneur viewed the decision-making as not functioning and not serving the tourism development or operational environment of tourism.

(Entrepreneur) “ I see if tourism development would improve there would be more services also for the locals. The problem is that there is division between travellers and locals. They do not understand that the same facilities could be used for locals and tourists.”

(Entrepreneur) “ The decision-makers should understand a little bit more. There is so much crazy decision making. It is completely senseless from the viewpoint of a tourism entrepreneur. They want everything but nothing gets ready. There is a huge problem with decision-making. Tourism entrepreneurs just go with the wind and where the wind takes us.”

(Entrepreneur) “ Everything is really at the beginning. The tourism actors do not know each other and products.”

(Entrepreneur) “ For example, organizing an ice skating trip for travellers. There is not even an ice-skating place near the city. These things go to decision-makers, they make problems so much.”

(DMO)“ They do a lot of things and I do not expect that city to do it all. They offer the services and infrastructure. If the products are functioning the infrastructure and others are the smallest problems.”

The results suggest that the perceptions concerning tourism development were perceived as unfinished and the decision-making shared viewpoints. Decision-making by the local city was seen not as supportive but creating challenges for developing tourism in the region creating division between services for locals and services for travellers. On the other hand, the city was seen as effective and providing infrastructure and services for tourism.

This finding aligns with the previous discussion by (Wilson et al., 2001, p. 135) that the local government's actions are considered as crucial to achieve a successful tourism development. This study revealed that in the Oulu the decision-making by the local city does not seem to fully support the tourism development practices and the decision-making is partly perceived as confusing. This finding could be considered as very relevant for the further development activity in Oulu.

Also, based on the data the tourism development in the Oulu region seems to struggle with cooperation among different stakeholders, challenges with communication, and a passive presence of local companies in the development practises. The participants hoped for a

more active role of the local companies. It was suggested that the companies could take more responsibility and express their wishes. This way it was perceived that tourism development would serve them better.

Additionally, the tourism development is seen to be in the beginning stage and the development of the region is perceived as not uniform but segmented into development for travellers and locals separately. The data suggest that the development is seen as partly successful due to the required infrastructure for tourism. However, there is need to improve the product development, cooperation among tourism stakeholders, and the tourism decision-making is seen as messy and not supporting the business operations in the region.

(DMO) “ The active ones in development are the ones with required capacity. If their situation is good they are in. They have time and they are interested in it. International tourism is their thing. They have the resources.”

(DMO) “ Then there are those who are interested to take part in but they are watching from the side. It might be because of lack of money or language skills. There is so much to do about it.”

(Entrepreneur) “ Its really about resources. The development is impacted by the project financing. The city should invest more. They do not invest enough. I do not really see that it happens any time soon. I do not know if it helps if there would be other organisation. It would take more resources.”

(Entrepreneur) “ The decision-making is made based on money. They think about only money instead of considering the people. If they would consider the people it would be different. It would save money. Now they just think about money.”

On the other hand, companies' willingness to take part in decision-making and development was seen to be impacted by the economical capacity and the courage to bring up hopes and ideas. The active stakeholders in the development practices were perceived as those who have required capacity and economic resources. This result builds on the existing discussion of the importance of economic capacity in tourism development. Fennel and Dowling (2003, pp. 333-334) discuss that economic capacity assists to have more influence in tourism development practices.

The stakeholder's perceptions of contribution possibilities in tourism development in the Oulu region was not studied earlier so this study provided valuable insights of the impact of economical capacity and other capacity such as skills impacting the participation in tourism development.

Impacts of tourism were seen positively by both of the participants. Tourism was seen to benefit also the locals and as an important livelihood. The services created for tourists were also seen to benefit the locals. Participants viewed that tourism does not bring negative impacts. The impacts of tourism were seen as positive and it was seen to benefit the region by providing services and products not only for the travellers but also for the locals.

This result builds on the previous discussion by Kim et al., (2013, p. 527) of considerations concerning tourism's capacity to improve the economical conditions of the host communities. Also, Zaei and Zaei (2013, pp. 15-19) discuss that tourism is perceived to have social and cultural impacts on the host communities. Tourism infrastructure built for travellers is seen to benefit also the locals. The interview participants from the Oulu region perceived that tourism benefits the region which builds on the existing discussion of tourism and its benefits. Also the perceptions of positive impacts of tourism were a new finding. The impacts of tourism have not been researched previously in the Oulu region.

(Entrepreneur) “ I see that tourism development also benefits the locals. The services created for the travellers are also services for locals. The problem is creating things separately for tourists and travellers.”

(DMO) “ I do not see any negative impacts of tourism in Oulu. The more tourism services we have the more services we have in the city. Tourism does not bring absolutely anything negative to here. Lapland is a different case. I see the problem. They do not have anything else than reindeer herding or small industries. “

The success of tourism development is perceived to be impacted by ensuring that everyone is taken with and listened. Cooperation and discussion possibilities are viewed as crucial by both of the participants. However, they expressed some differences. DMO representatives view product development as the most important in tourism development. In contrast, the entrepreneur views involving and listening to everyone as the most important in the successful tourism development.

(Entrepreneur): “ Tourism development is functioning well when everyone is listened to and taken with. It is very important.

(Entrepreneur) : “ Discussion possibilities with everyone is very important. Also, the small companies are taken with and appreciated. At the moment it works well.”

(DMO): “ I see that when everyone is committed and cooperating then the development is working well. Working together. Above all it is about the products. The reasons to visit such as events or visiting places. They have to be in condition that they work. International websites are working. In a way that the functioning of the products is guaranteed.”

The participants suggested improvements with product development and increasing the understanding of the decision-makers was required to avoid creating services separately to travellers and locals. Involving everyone in tourism development practices was seen as crucial to have successful tourism development. This result builds on to earlier discussion by Sing et al.,(2002, p. 169) that involving everyone including the local community to tourism development is seen as necessary and assists in having a successful tourism development.

However, the result of this study does not directly build on the earlier discussion because it discussed the role of the local community. The result of this study provides a new insight in which the role of every stakeholder is seen as crucial not only the importance of the local community. Also, this study provides a new insight concerning the importance of increasing the understanding of the decision-makers that the current decision-making is not fully seen to support tourism development.

Theme 4. Challenges of Communication and Perceptions of Contribution possibilities

(DMO) “ Discussion between DMOs and entrepreneurs is very important.”

(DMO) “ I have contacted one company by sending an email. I did not receive any reply. I think that if you do not have resources to reply or you seem not interested then I am not interested either. I can not recommend such a company to travel agencies. It is a risk. I guess I am not welcome there then.”

(DMO) “ Honest discussion is important. Without feedback development can not happen.”

(DMO) “ I do not see that anyone prevents others from joining the discussion. But I would hope that companies would be more active. They should express what they expect and want instead of just passively waiting. The more you ask for the more you will get than if you were just silent.”

(DMO) “ The more resources you have the more you can impact compared to the small companies.”

(Entrepreneur) “ The decision-making is made based on money. They think about only money instead of considering the people. If they would consider the people it would be different. It would save money. Now they just think about money.”

(Entrepreneur): “ The communication with some of the organisations is difficult. When I tell my own opinion they are looking at me a bit like what? Meetings turn into fights. So yeah I have to develop things pretty much by myself.”

(Entrepreneur) “ Sometimes it feels like talking to the walls. Everyone is concentrating with their own work and I can not understand it.”

(Entrepreneur) “ There is no channel to bring up opinions. But I can discuss with DMO organisations and they are listening but it does not always help. With the tourism actors I can discuss.”

Both of the participants view the communication challenging but important. Entrepreneur views that opinions are not always listened to and that there is no channel or place to express opinions. However, it is possible to discuss with DMO and other tourism actors. DMO representative perceives contribution possibilities as functioning and hopes for a more active attitude from the companies which would assist them to benefit more from the development.

A DMO representative views that the companies could improve their communication and respond to emails and other forms of communication. Resources are seen to impact the possibility to contribute in tourism development and decision-making. Also, the entrepreneur views that money is driving decision-making and impacting it.

In conclusion, the communication is perceived as challenging by both of the participants. They perceive that there is a possibility to bring up opinions and views with certain stakeholders such as DMO or other actors but with some of the actors the communication is perceived challenging. Communication challenges and their importance in tourism development practices could be considered as a new and unique finding. This result is not supported by earlier studies, thus it provides an unique perspective for the further development practices and research concerning tourism development.

6. CONCLUSION

Results indicate that the DMO is the most active and influential stakeholder in the region. Local companies even though they are perceived as crucial could increase their presence. That way they could benefit more from the development. The perceptions concerning the role of the city are mixed. On the other hand, the city is seen to provide a required infrastructure and enterprise-friendly environment. The decision-making is perceived as ineffective and hindering the development practises and segmenting the services separately for travellers and locals.

The findings of the role of DMO as facilitator and as a source of assistance for tourism development supports the earlier studies by Komppula (2014, p. 363) of the DMO's role as supporter and facilitator in development practises and Brokaj (2014, p. 111) of local governments as controllers of the tourism development by providing infrastructure and economic resources.

However, this study provided new insights of the local government's decision-making which was perceived partly as not functioning which could be argued as an relevant finding for the future research. Also, the perceptions concerning the role of local companies could be argued as crucial for further development. The crucial roles of the local companies and local city in the future development are suggested to improve the development.

The data collection of this Thesis revealed that the tourism development and its success is perceived partly as unfinished. Tourism development is perceived as without agenda and behind other tourism destinations. The product development is seen as crucial to improve the competitiveness of Oulu as a tourism destination.

Also, the data indicates that tourism is perceived to improve the life of the locals and to bring positive impacts to the region.

The cooperation together, product development and communication among stakeholders was seen to be improved. The challenge of communication among stakeholders could be argued to provide an unique perspective for further development.

Decision-making among stakeholders was perceived partly as functioning and everyone was included if they wished so. On the other hand, decision-making by the local city was perceived not to serve the development practices and it was perceived as confusing.

This Thesis provided new knowledge concerning the roles of different stakeholders identifying the DMO as the most active stakeholder in the region and revealing the stakeholders who were perceived as less active. The role of local companies and government was suggested to be improved. Also, this study provided knowledge of tourism development as unfinished and impacted by the decision-making of the local city.

Many of the results aligned with the existing research. However, this study provided new knowledge from the Oulu region which have not been studied from this perspective previously. This study created new knowledge of the roles of different stakeholders and the stakeholder's perceptions of tourism development in the region. Also, this study provided new knowledge about the unfinished state of tourism development, challenges in communication and cooperation and decision-making was not fully seen to support the development. It could be proposed that these are all findings which could be utilised for further tourism development in the Oulu region.

6.1. Limitations

It is crucial to point out that the data set is small and the results cannot be generalised or kept as facts about the stakeholder's perceptions of tourism development and about the different roles of the stakeholders. The larger data set would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the stakeholder's perceptions of tourism development and about the different roles of the stakeholders. The final data set was small with 1 interview with DMO and 1 interview with a local entrepreneur. More interviews would have provided more knowledge and allowed a better triangulation.

The data collection faced challenges of targeting many interview participants despite a long time invested to reach suitable research participants. Despite the small data set this research provided valuable insights and opinions of the current state of tourism development in Oulu and the roles of the different stakeholders. Thus, the data collection indicated the most active stakeholders and the stakeholders whose role is perceived to be improved which were the goals of this study. Also, the results indicated how the tourism

development is seen in the region and how the impacts of tourism are seen. Thus, this study addressed the research gap of roles of stakeholders in tourism development and their perceptions of tourism development in Oulu.

6.2. Future suggestions

The most active stakeholder in the Oulu is the DMO but it is suggested to include the local companies, city and to increase the cooperation and communication between stakeholders. Also, improved product development would benefit Oulu by making it a more competitive tourism destination. Avoiding the separation of services to locals and travellers, and having a clear vision for tourism development practises could help Oulu to reach its full potential as a tourism destination.

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APPENDIX 1. Interview template.

OULUN haastattelukysymykset.pdf

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Matkailutoimijoiden taustatietoja:

- Minkälaisessa asemassa toimit matkailuyrityksessä? Minkälaisia työtehtäviä teet?
- Minkälaisia palveluita organisaatiosi tarjoaa? Tai minkälaisia tehtäviä organisaatio hoitaa?
- Kuinka kauan yrityksesi on ollut toiminnassa?

Matkailu aluekehityksen keinona:

- Miten koet matkailun aluekehityksen keinona ja voisiko se olla jotain muuta?
- Minkälaisena koet matkailun alueelliset vaikutukset?
- Koetko, että matkailusta on positiivisia vaikutuksia Oulun alueeseen? Millaisia?
- Koetko, että matkailusta on negatiivisia vaikutuksia Oulun alueeseen? Millaisia?
- Tekevätkö sidosryhmät mielestäsi tarpeeksi yhteistyötä Oulun alueella?
- Millaista on mielestäsi toimiva ja menestyksellinen matkailun kehitys?

Eri sidosryhmien roolit matkailun päätöksenteossa:

- Miten kuvailisit matkailuun liittyvää päätöksentekoa tai kehitystoimintaa?
- Minkälaisia rooleja eri toimijoilla on matkailuun liittyvässä kehityksessä ja päätöksenteossa? Ovatko jotkin toimijat mahdollisesti aktiivisempia?
- Voisiko joidenkin toimijoiden roolia mielestäsi vähentää tai lisätä?

Osallistumismahdollisuudet matkailuun liittyvässä päätöksenteossa:

- Missä määrin yrityksesi/sinä olet ollut mukana matkailun kehitysprosessissa?
- Minkälaisena koet matkailun kehittämiseen osallistumisen?
- Koetko jonkin vaikeuttavan tai estävän osallistumistasi kehittämiseen?
- Koetko matkailun kehitykseen ja päätöksentekoon liittyvän haasteita?
- Miten haasteet voitaisiin mielestäsi välttää tai voittaa?
- Millaisena koet mahdollisuudet antaa mielipiteitä tai osallistua liittyen matkailun kehitykseen tai päätöksentekoon?

Ajatuksia tai ehdotuksia tulevaisuuteen:

- Mitä muutoksia tai ehdotuksia sinulla on matkailun tulevaisuuden kehittämiseen ja päätöksentekoon liittyen?
- Voisiko Oulun aluetta kehittää jollain muulla tavalla, kuin matkailun avulla?
- Heraako muita ajatuksia?

15. toukok. 15.48 FI