



LAPIN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

**Developing domestic summer tourism towards Lapland through
understanding customer perception**

University of Lapland

Tourism Research

2024

TCIM0301

Thesis

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Title of the thesis: Developing domestic summer tourism towards Lapland through understanding customer perception

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Degree programme: Tourism Research, TourCIM (Tourism, Culture and International Management)

Sort of the work: Pro gradu thesis

Number of pages: 69

Year: 2025

ABSTRACT:

While Finnish Lapland's winter season has established itself as a popular tourism destination, the region's summer months have yet to achieve similar success. This research aims to identify strategies for promoting growth in summer tourism through domestic travel, with the ultimate goal of developing the social, economic, and ecological sustainability of Finnish Lapland. The core premise is that increasing domestic tourism during the summer months could also serve as a foundation for strengthening the region's summer seasons international appeal.

The research was done through semi-structured interviews with residents of southern Finland who are fairly unfamiliar with Finnish Lapland's summer offerings and are not frequent visitors. The data gathered was analysed using thematic analysis, with these findings finally interpreted through the Theory of Planned Behaviour. This method was aimed to identify the issues and perceptions that potential domestic visitors may have, when considering travel to Finnish Lapland during the summer season.

The findings reveal that common obstacles for domestic travellers include the perceived distance to Lapland and the prevailing perception of the region as primarily a hiking destination during summer. Additionally, the existing land-based travel options were often regarded as outdated and insufficient.

A limitation of the study is the limited number of respondents and the focus on a single segment of potential visitors. Nonetheless, the results provide valuable insights for the future development of regional marketing strategies and highlight areas for further research

Keywords: Domestic travel, seasonality, land-based travel, theory of planned behaviour.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This thesis is titled, *Developing domestic summer tourism towards Lapland through understanding customer perception*. As the title suggests, this research was done to understand the perceptions and issues underlying the reasons as to why domestic tourism is still relatively small towards Lapland in the summer season. While this research concentrates on understanding the Finnish domestic tourists push and pull factors towards Lapland in the summer months, the research also aims to realize how Lapland's reachability affects it. With the results, this research aims to underline the perceptions and intentions of the potential customer and suggest developments that could be made to increase domestic land-based travel towards Lapland, in the summer season.

Finnish Lapland is a region in the northern-most Finland. Lapland is an active outdoor destination that's known for its incredible, year-round light phenomena known as the Northern lights or the Aurora Borealis, vast arctic nature, and Santa Claus. The land of the indigenous Sámi people, known as Sámi homeland or Sápmi, also crosses the northern part of the region (Visit Finland, 2024). The region inhabits around 175 000 people (Tilastokeskus, 2024). During the winter season, December to February, around 2 million tourists come for a holiday. Around half of these visitors are international (Visit Finland, 2024.) During the summer season, the numbers fall to around 800 000, of which only one fourth is an international visitor. While there are domestic visitors, it is worth pointing out that this number is only 9% of Finnish domestic travellers in the summer months (Visit Finland, 2025).

Lapland as a winter destination is highly regarded, and well-known for Finnish people in general, but the summer season has been long overlooked, especially considering the visitation numbers. An argument can be brought up that it is not due to the Lapland's tourism strategies, where seasonality is much embraced, but rather the unknowing of what the season offers. Further knowledge of what it offers, combined with the development of method of transport could be transformative to Lapland reachability and to further end, its sustainability. This combination of distance and image has, in the researcher's hypothesis, led to there being untapped potential to create an all-year-around destination. This untapped potential could help to create a more socially and economically sustainable Lapland, that could further focus on

growing, creating a more sustainable destination and thriving, in a world where the interest towards the Arctic is ever-growing.

To conclude the importance, there are many growing (mega) trends in tourism, that support the notion of growing the services and infrastructure for the summer months. More people are looking forwards to “cool-cations” (Oladipo, et al. 2024), which the Lappish summer could offer. Adventure tourism is on the rise, and more travellers are looking to enjoy something different (Sand, Gross, 2019) – whereas Lapland is a rather unique destination in Europe. Sustainability being an important factor in choosing a holiday destination (OECD, 2018) also attributes towards building a destination that is not only reachable with sustainable methods, i.e. train, but where the travel could also be a part of the holiday, could be a major pull-factor to the region.

Focusing on sustainability brings further positives and goals that this research attempts to establish. The belief is that more focus on domestic land-based travel will lessen the air traffic towards and out of, which will increase the social sustainability and ecological sustainability of Finnish Lapland considering the ecological impacts of aviation (Graver, et al., 2019). As mentioned in Lapland’s tourism strategy (Lapin Liitto, 2021, p.15), year-aroundness (ympärivuotisuus in Finnish) is one of their main focuses for the future, as it provides even income, as well as changing seasonal jobs into continuous, thus strengthening their social sustainability.

Social sustainability in itself enforces the confirmation of basic necessities of people, and this includes umpteen numbers of issues such as fair labour practices, gender bias, sexual harassment, education, equal opportunities, community development, child labour, work-life balance, health and safety, protection, human rights and wellness (Muthu, 2020).

This, in the rather remote northern region of Europe, could be an important step to keep the area developing and creating new work opportunities, that would last further than the winter season. Thus, it is the research’s belief, that all of the above are critical, in creating a destination that gives the visitor value – that would in feed itself in the coming years, with domestic tourism creating the base of it.

While domestic travel has been studied before, this particular research aims to fill a gap on an issue that has been recognized as one of the key development concepts of the region (Lapin Liitto, 2021, p.15) – creating a year around tourism. The way this research attempts to tackle the issue is simple, yet very telling research on the actual perceptions of the potential visitors. While this particular issue has been previously investigated, the present study seeks to adopt a more targeted approach, both in terms of the selected region and the specificity of the questionnaire employed. What the research thus aims to do, is to study the perceptions of potential customers, finding the parallels be it issues or positive aspects. From these results, the research aims to give a clear answer on what the start point would be on the developments.

The method chosen for this research is semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen because the researcher wants to understand the perceptions and find the meaning behind the obvious conversations. The collected data was then analysed through thematic analysis, and finally, theory of planned behaviour was used to visualize and analyse the data even further. These methods were chosen to truly understand the customer behaviour – the perceptions of issues, challenges and positives.

If I put the research goal in marketing terms, we will notice that knowing your market is one of the core priorities in the field (Kingsnorth, 2019a, p. 2). Following the thought process to segmentation of marketing, this research will conduct this with potential domestic visitors from the capital region of Finland. This is simply for the reason that this is the largest region in population in Finland – thus the most efficient group to target. Understanding the perception of the chosen segment is the key, both in business as in marketing in general (Kingsnorth, 2019b, p. 23). This is ultimately the aim of the research; to understand the perception of the chosen segmentation. With this knowledge, development of the region will surely become more effective.

1.2 Previous research on the empirical phenomenon

For this thesis, the focus is in finding the perceptions that the residents of southern Finland have towards Lapland as a travel destination through a process of interviews and analysis of this data.

Domestic tourism towards Lapland during the summer months has been researched, but not overwhelmingly so. As the majority of Finland's population is based on the southern part of the

country, this brings its own challenges in the traditional domestic tourism sense. Most importantly, the difficulty in accessibility to Lapland.

Proximity tourism, a more recent concept, which has been gaining popularity with the ongoing climate crises and sustainability in general, but remains still scarcely researched (Salmela, et al., 2021) could be argued to be relevant to the research, but as the distance between Lapland and Finland's capital area exceeds 800km, this research has decided to lean on domestic travel and will further use it as the term to define.

While domestic tourism has been researched, domestic tourism is surpassed by the interest of academics on international tourism (Bayih, Singh, 2020.). Moreover, it is difficult to find tourism marketing and management research that systematically analysed the interrelationships between domestic tourist motivations, satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. Such gap, in general, can make it challenging for policymakers to develop effective policies and strategies on tourism management, marketing, and sustainable development.

Thus, while we have the numbers to argue of the importance of domestic tourism, we are still somewhat lacking in academic research on the topic, considering its importance: foreign tourists accounted for EUR 3.4 billion (23%) of total demand and domestic tourists for EUR 11.4 billion (77%) in 2022 (Ministry of economic affairs and employment of Finland, 2022).

There has been some extremely thorough research done on the profile of Finnish domestic travellers under the Ministry of economic affairs and employment of Finland, by Honkanen et al., (2021). On this report we can see some interesting statistics, such as 24% of Finnish people seek nature and culture for their domestic vacation and 19% were profiled as active vacationers. These are already large numbers that fit perfectly to the profile of what summer in Lapland can offer.

Another interesting study was also done by the Ministry of economic affairs and employment of Finland (2019) on developing domestic travel in Finland. The study reveals large number of opinions, for example something that will be very relevant in this research. It was that, during interviews with local operators, they saw the most potential for growth in domestic tourism, in segments of visitors who travel international rather than domestic, and who might have dated perception of what domestic travel has to offer, for example, their pricing or their quality. For this research this is very relevant, as this is one of the hypotheses that the researcher believes the respondents will have in this research.

Some of the studies within similar general idea have been done as other Master's theses such as *Tourism imaginaires of Lapland: a content analysis of the views of domestic tourists* by Mira Garcia-Rosell (2023) and *Nuorten aikuisten mielikuvat Lapista kesämatkailukohteena* (Lepänaho & Pulska, 2019). While these researchers' have approached the subject on a different manner as this research intends to, they still provide an important resource to the research of the topic. For example, Garcia-Rosell argues in her thesis that while the domestic tourism towards the north has been growing, the travel account is still negative as many Finns choose to travel abroad on their holidays instead of choosing a domestic holiday.

The results show the need for new kinds of products and services that better take into consideration the needs and wants of the domestic tourists. This in itself leaves open the question of what type of refurbishment would be needed to grow the domestic tourism to compete with international tourism, as this research does not hypothetically believe that Finns won't simply visit, because it is Finland. Finally, in relevance to domestic travel towards Lapland, Tuovinen (2023) observes in his study on the most desirable Finnish destinations, that Lapland is the most desired.

Another important aspect of this research would be the chosen method of arrival. The previously mentioned distance between the south and north of Finland, combined with the continuous growth of tourist's awareness in sustainability, on which Expedia's (2022) survey found that 90% of travellers seek sustainable options when booking. Half of the surveyed would be willing to pay more for a trip if it aligns with sustainable practices, which indicates economic benefits for destination communities. Fullagar, et al. (2012) argue that a clear conscience about the low environmental impact of one's own tourism is a significant underlying factor. This could then be argued to point towards the raising of interest on land-based travel – but with reasonable understanding, that eight or more hours on a train, while a flight would be cheaper, is something that needs to be considered as an understandable difficulty. This leads to entertaining possibilities on how to make the land-based travel more attractive. This phenomenon also has been researched, for example by a Swedish research programme, that points out the possibilities of a high-speed rail network from the south of Scandinavia to the north, called the Gröna tåget (Fröidh, 2007). While ideas such as this are forward-thinking and interesting, this research seeks to discover more specific reasons for the choice of transportation, without having to change the whole system.

1.3 Theoretical approach and research questions

This thesis is titled, *Developing domestic summer tourism towards Lapland through understanding customer perception*. The planned research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What is the common factor that domestic travellers have in not choosing Lapland as their destination?

RQ2: What common factors deter domestic travellers from choosing Lapland as their destination, and how could land-based travel options address these factors to make Lapland a more appealing choice?

For hypothesis the research lists three:

Hypothesis 1: The distance between Lapland and southern Finland is so long that it's imagined as almost international travel.

Hypothesis 2: It is too expensive for Finnish travellers.

Hypothesis 3: The tourists do not know what Lapland's summer offers.

The research feels as these questions will ultimately give us answers that will provide an advantage in planning domestic tourism, as well as tempting domestic visitors to Lapland by land-based travel.

The data for analysing will be collected through semi-structured interviews. The data will be analysed with thematic analysing, and finally, the theoretical framework will be supported by the Theory of planned behaviour in this research.

The main theory of this research will thus be the Theory of planned behaviour (TPB). TPB considers the interrelationship between such concepts as beliefs, attitudes, norms, intentions and behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1975). The theory has been used in tourism before with mixed results, Therefore, the adequacy of the TPB for predicting travellers'

intentions of choosing a destination may be questioned (Yuzhanin, Fisher, 2016). But even with mixed results in the past, or lack of academic evidence in this particular sub-genre of academia, this research intends to use the model as a base to understand the domestic tourists perceived image of Finnish Lapland. The main reason for choosing this theory is the ornate belief that while Lapland holds the interest of even the domestic traveller, the perceptions and knowledge of the region are one-dimensional. The researcher feels that due to the relative simplicity and clearness of the theory, the results will be easier to comprehend and utilize.

The researcher also argues that while studying perceptions, the theory is an excellent way to understand the behaviour in it. In the end, to create something for the travellers, it is required to understand their needs, issues and interests. Understanding your potential customer, is the first step of marketing and business development (Ellering, 2024), and this is the ultimate aim of this research; to understand the potential visitor, and proposition ways to interest them in your product.

The purpose remains to understand the perception and to understand better the motivations of domestic visitors, and finally, to ideate new solutions to overcome them. On top of this, the researcher believes that the results will most certainly lead to answers that the research wouldn't expect. Finally, the aim remains in helping to define the key factors to develop further and to increase the domestic visitations in Lapland.

1.4. Methodology

The research will be done as a qualitative study, which is a research method that can be introduced as inductive approach to knowledge building (Leavy, 2014). This method is commonly used to investigate and learn about social phenomena. In this research, we believe that this method is the appropriate way to proceed as we try to explore, describe and explain the phenomenon of domestic seasonal travel, and the ecological aspects of travel tied to it (Leavy, 2017, p. 9). For these aforementioned reasons, qualitative research came out as the only viable option for this research, as the research is dependent on gathering opinions, answers, and thoughts of the potential domestic tourists.

The data collection will be done with semi-structured interviews, collected through ten interviews. The sample pool will consist of residents of the Helsinki area, young adults that

have no close ties to the region of Finnish Lapland, nor are regular visitors there during the summer months. The interviews were done at the first few months of 2025, thus being recent at the moment of writing this thesis. As a clarification, neither the Covid-19 period, nor its effects will be a part of the interview questions. These were left out of the interview questions solely on the basis that the research would expand too large, if another layer was added. If the discussion leaned to Covid-19 organically it was allowed.

Semi-structured interviews are a data collection method that relies on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework. However, the questions are not set in order or in phrasing (Tegan, 2023). This type of study was chosen, as the idea is to collect honest opinions to questions that aren't formulated to be only yes or no questions, which achieve to only finite possibilities of answers. This research is excited for the opportunity that the interviewer and interviewee have the possibility to explore particular themes or responses further – thus gain possible new perspectives on the research questions (Oberoi, 2024). As such, qualitative data will present us with new ideas and perspectives, for insights we might otherwise miss (Dye, 2024a). For these reasons, it is why the researcher feels that with semi-structured interviews we could get more answers that could in themselves be excellent ways to develop, enhance and provide a true advantage in planning for the future – for the domestic visitors themselves.

The data analysing will be done with thematic analysis, which is a form of analysing collected qualitative data, generally used to identify the patterns that emerge from text by grouping content into words, concepts, and themes (Dye, 2024b). Another way to look at the positives of content analysis is, that it is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts, or in this case oral, that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner. It is a very flexible method that can be applied to a variety of different media (Bryman, A. 2020, p. 289). This was chosen on the basis of being able to find as many similarities as possible within the answers – and to pinpoint the unexpected answers, that might bring new perspectives to the research questions.

With the analysed data, the researcher will create a Theory of planned behaviour model. The results will be analysed accordingly, to see if any discrepancy arise. Using the TPB framework will help the research in answering its research questions, by understanding how the seasonality is perceived in Finnish Lapland, by defining how the summer season is perceived by individuals and their social circle, and its effect on their behaviour. The ease of operation will provide an

understanding of how the distance is viewed by potential domestic visitors. The research focuses on using these results to answer the research's secondary question as well; How is the land-based travel perceived.

The method of this study, combined with the research question, has led the researchers to realize that the research's paradigm is, by its nature, interpretivist research, which in this case is the belief that the researcher is nothing more than a listener who observes the data that will be collected throughout the research – the data analysis will provide the results (Jennings, 2010, p. 60).

1.5 Structure of thesis

This thesis is structured into eight chapters, of which each contributes to a thorough understanding of the research topic.

The thesis starts with *Introduction* chapter. This outlines the background of the study, highlights the previous research on the empirical phenomenon and introduces the theoretical and methodological approach and finally presents research questions.

The second chapter, titled *Empirical Framework* establishes the core concepts directing the study. It presents an overview of domestic travel, focusing on the current situation and potential for land-based tourism in Lapland. This chapter also investigates the region's existing infrastructure, transportation methods, and the potential for seasonal travel, finally concluding with a discussion on the implications of the research for regional development.

The third chapter, called *Theoretical Framework*, the researcher discusses the Theory of Planned Behaviour as the core theory of this thesis. This theory forms the basis for examining the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control that influence behaviour and intention.

The fourth chapter called *Methodology* introduces the research design, highlighting the use of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. It discusses why these methods were chosen, how the data collection process was done, and finally the ethical considerations within this thesis.

The fifth chapter is *Analysis*. It discusses the data analysis process, concentrating on open code coding and developing of themes. It defines how the thematic analysis was performed, and how the coded data is linked to the theoretical framework.

The sixth chapter is titled *Findings*. It presents the results of the thematic analysis and explains them through the Theory of Planned Behaviour. This chapter discusses emerging themes and their connection with theoretical constructs, specifically focusing on attitudes, subjective norms, and how behavioural control connects to domestic travel choices.

The seventh chapter is *Discussion*. It compares the findings within previous literature and research, identifying common factors that influence domestic travel decisions and observing if land-based travel options could address the challenges. It also assesses the hypotheses proposed at the beginning.

Finally, the eight chapter is titled *Conclusion*. It summarizes the research aims and key findings while discussing the study's limitations. It also suggests opportunities for further research.

Following the main chapters, the *References* section lists the academic sources used, while the Appendices provide additional materials, including the interview questions and the letter of consent.

2. Empirical framework

2.1 Introducing core concepts of the research

The empirical framework of this research leans heavily on themes that relate to tourism in general. Domestic travel and seasonal travel are age-old concepts, that have defined tourism for its whole history but are everchanging, especially in the modern world. Method of transport and sustainable tourism are topics that are progressively getting more and more important in the world of tourism – especially as the consumer is getting more observant of these issues.

To understand the perceptions of the potential domestic visitors the researcher feels that it is important to firstly understand what domestic travel is, and what it can achieve. For further clarification, it is important to understand Lapland's current infrastructure and capability of the tourism industry.

Method of transport shall also be introduced in this section of the thesis, as it will be mentioned frequently, being an important part of the research.

Finally, we will discuss seasonality as a concept. This is one of the most important themes for the whole research, as it ties up the research together.

2.2 Domestic travels current situation & potential

Domestic travel is, in its simplicity, a trip with a main destination within the country of residence of the visitor (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division., 2010, p.15). Domestic tourism is historically an important part of tourism, and still to this day the most important part of global tourism, with domestic tourism representing 73% of the total global tourism spend in 2017 (WTTC, 2018, p. 1). While this data is over seven years old at the moment of writing – COVID-19 changed the data to a pandemic setting, which the industry is just recovering from, thus making this data quite a reliable measure of normalcy.

In Finland, the statistics follow the suite quite a bit with statistics from 2024, where of the 19,2M overnight visitors, 14,2M were domestic (Visit Finland, 2025b), which amounts to ~70%. Nationwide Finland thus follows the average, but Lapland differs with quite a bit. The region's statistics from 2024 show that out of 2,6M overnight visitors, 1,3M are domestic (Visit

Finland, 2025c) – thus dropping the percentage to 50%. While these in themselves are great numbers, they do raise the question of; could the domestic amount be grown, thus creating an even more popular attraction?

As the numbers tell, domestic tourism is a very important aspect of tourism, which plays an essential role in the tourism industry and contributes to the overall economic development (Oyunchimeg & Gantuya, 2021a). Domestic travel is globally expected to grow 3 percent annually (Tufft, et al. 2024). Understanding the complications, issues and worries of the domestic traveller, especially in this research case of southern Finns towards Lapland, is the most crucial aspect in being able to develop this industry.

As mentioned beforehand, creating a more year-round sustainable tourism – summer season, in this case, is one of the priorities of the Lapland's regional council, the importance domestic tourism can't be overlooked. As mentioned by Oyunchimeg & Gantuya (2021b) domestic tourism is the backbone of creating a sustainable tourism system, that can thrive and become alluring to the international traveller as well. To understand the mentality of the domestic tourist, or their issues, can be looked as a simple first step in creating better understanding between each party, more or less co-creating, or fashioning services that work as a pull factor towards the chosen segment of tourists.

While domestic tourism doesn't necessarily need to be the *one* driving factor of a destination, something that without, they have no chance of success doesn't either mean that it should be forgotten about. It still holds its own benefits, even excluding monetary gains. As Jafar questions in his article from 1986:

In order to attract foreign exchange and promote understanding across the boundaries, perhaps each country should first look within and develop its domestic tourism industry for internal bridges of understanding and stronger economic structure. Then the country can more surely receive international tourists for foreign exchange and promote cross-cultural communication for a global community.

While the question posed in the article is almost thirty years old now, it still remains something to consider, when planning tourism futures. Still, the focus on domestic tourism doesn't only rely on building a concrete base for furthering international tourism and increase

of revenue, but also creates the potential for easier repeat business, greater flexibility, lower marketing costs and reduced risks (Elphick, 2024).

Domestic travel is not only the biggest part of tourism, both globally and in Finland, it is also something that is seen as vital for growth. It is also seen as vital for year-aroundness, as Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment's (2019) Study on the development needs of domestic tourism reveals. The same report also reveals that over 75% of travel organizations in Finland feel the need for a stronger nationwide coordination for domestic travel. Other important aspects for Finnish domestic travel that the report found are that the travel organizations think that biggest issues in it are how difficult it can be for the potential guests to form a large picture perception of the versatility in Finland's tourism offerings. The biggest issues lie on marketing, branding, co-operation and reachability. The biggest issues for growth were found to be pricing, lack of marketing resources, reachability and the timing of schools' summer holidays. The forementioned study brings out a lot of excellent points for issues in domestic travel in Finland, which are reflected clearly in this research.

2.3 Lapland's infrastructure to support tourism & Where is the potential with current infrastructure

Lapland's tourism lays heavily in its winter season and its international tourism. This is observed well within Lapland's official tourism boards, with it being the main goal of their tourism strategy, (Lapin Liitto, 2021, p.2-13), their end goal being that the revenue of the snowless period of the year (May-October) would reach 40% of the yearly tourism revenue.

Lapland is one of the leading regions in Finland in the field of tourism, with its overnight stays doubling in the 2010's. (Lapland Business, 2025a). The visitors are increasingly from abroad with British, German, French and a steadily growing number of Asian tourists. This correlates to a share of 5,7% of the BKT of Lapland, while the general median is 2,5% in Finland. The divide between the summer season and winter season still leaves a lot of untapped potential to the area. The need of more beds for the winter season has already been notarized within the tourism industry, with plans for new hotel constructions, with the example of Lapland Hotels. During winters the hotels are full, and around 8000 seasonal workers are hired (Lapland Business, 2025b). This leads to a drop for the summer season with for example the combined number of overnight visitors according to Visit Finland's databank Rudolf (2025d) on 2024

reveals that there were 1,48M overnight during the winter months (December, January, February) in Lapland, compared to 0,61M in the summer months (June, July, August). The argument where the infrastructure already in place, along with the skilled workforce, ends up not being fully utilized.

This leads to problems in both creating new infrastructure, maximizing profitability, social sustainability and fully utilizing the already built infrastructure. This research leans heavily on the belief that creating a strong domestic tourism base is the first step in increasing international as well. This theory could be used to develop the need visualized in both Lapland official tourism strategy (2021), and the study of Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2019) which highlight the need and want for year-around tourism.

The belief is that creating a strong domestic tourism base will help lease tension on the off-season and create possibilities to build on more services and infrastructure for international visitors as well. The concept is simple: create for domestic crowds, and using that as a basis, create more pull towards international tourism as well. With infrastructure already in place, along with the services and the growing interest in Lapland, sustainable travel (OECD, 2018), arctic travel and cool-cations (Allard, 2023), developing the understanding of what the customer wants is necessary.

There are many growing trends in tourism that fit the Finnish Lapland's summer rather well and could be utilized in marketing and developing the region for their goals for summer tourism. Coolcations for one are a growing trend, that Lapland could start developing for their summer tourism. Coolcations are simply escaping to a moderate-to-cooler climate region during the warmer months (Friedrik, 2025). They are a growing trend in travel and will continue to do so with climate change affecting the weather conditions. Studies show that tourists are already booking more to cooler Scandinavia during the warmest months (Paulson, 2024). Lapland offers naturally colder summer climate, which could be utilized in marketing for this type of travel trend.

Adventure tourism is another trend that could be utilized. It is tourist activities such as rafting, trekking, scuba diving, and climbing, which offer excitement beyond their comfort zone. Travelers explore newer kinds of tourism activities and prefer visiting undiscovered travel destinations (Fortune Business insights, 2025.). The global adventure tourism market size was valued at USD 804.51 billion in 2024.

Lapland could invest in this, with their already strong understanding and knowledge in it, in their winter season. Adventure tourism is a growing tourism trend, and as Adventure Travels (2024) report from statistics in 2023 reveals the hottest trending destinations were the Mediterranean, Western Europe, Scandinavia, and North-East Asia. With Scandinavia growing in popularity, Finnish Lapland could surely gain traction in the trend. The same report also lists the top trending activities as hiking/trekking/walking, culinary/gastronomy, cultural, safaris/wildlife viewing, electric bike cycling, and wildlife/nature photography. These are all activities that Finnish Lapland already has a large competence in.

Sustainable travel, which is one of the biggest trends in tourism, is defined as sustainable practices in and by the tourism industry. It is an aspiration to acknowledge all impacts of tourism, both positive and negative. It aims to minimize the negative impacts and maximize the positive ones (Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2025). Awareness of sustainable tourism has grown significantly and, in 2024, over 80 percent of global travellers believed sustainable travel was important (Statista, 2025). This shows how large the industry is, and what the interest in it is. Lapland, and Finland in general, has strong knowledge on sustainable tourism, the method of transport to support it, and a possibility to be one of the growing stars of this type of tourism. This is a trend that could shape the future of the whole region, if developed accordingly.

Off-season travel, which is a trend that has been growing for the past two years, is a phenomenon in which travellers are looking to travel to a destination at non-typical times or seasons. The benefits include fewer crowds, lower costs and the opportunity to find once-overlooked beauty in pivotal times of the year as the seasons change (Villa-Clarke, 2024). This trend is almost a perfect fit for the current situation in Finnish Lapland's summer. This could be used to build upon the development of summer tourism for the area, effectively giving the chance to prototype what kind of services and infrastructure is of interest to tourists.

2.4 Transport method and the future of it

Page (2005) argues that tourism and transport should consider three main aspects: transport clearly encouraged tourism, but tourism itself promotes the transport sector – and thirdly, when carried out on a specific means of transport, the trip itself becomes a tourism experience. Thus, transport for tourism, tourism for transport and transport is tourism. This exacts to the reason

why this study includes the transportation method as a part of the research, due to it being tied up to the whole concept of tourism in the first place.

Finnish Lapland is located on the north of Finland, with around half of it being in the Arctic Circle. It has land connections to Sweden, Norway and Russia. This leads to the area being quite difficult to reach. The most common way to reach it is by a private car, which is how 80% of the visitors arrive (Lapin Liitto, 2019, p.26.) The other important methods include flights, of which there are more than fifty direct connections to airports all over the world. All together this amounted to around 1,4M travellers in 2019 (Finavia). The third one is the track system, which has the capacity to carry around 1M passengers yearly from the south of Finland to the North, with VR expecting and thriving for 5% yearly growth (Lapin Liitto, 2019 p. 13).

While maintaining excellent flight connections is extremely important for the region, the growth of sustainable travel points towards a growing trend of finding methods on how to travel more ecologically. There are already a few projects globally tackling the problem, but within the European bounds one of the most important ones would be the EU's trans-European transport network (TEN-T), which is a key instrument for planning and developing a coherent, efficient, multimodal, and high-quality transport network comprising of railways, inland waterways, etc. with its aim to reduce the environmental and climate impact of transport (European Commission, 2024a). Their requirements include the development of more sustainable transport, as well as the development of rail tracks, that by 2024 are able to support at least speed of 160km/h and upwards. It also aims to unite Europe under European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS): The single European signalling system will be deployed across the entire TEN-T network, enhancing rail safety and efficiency. National systems will be phased out (European Commission, 2024b). This could give Finland the possibility to unite their track width to European standards, making transnational train travel an interesting, and sustainable possibility to reach Lapland, even with Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications preliminary estimates show that the costs of the considered alternative implementations are significant in relation to the benefits (Ministry of Transport and Communications, 2023). Currently, there are new research and clarifications being made to the possibility of mixed track width, or a whole change (Tanskanen, 2024). The same article from Tanskanen open up interesting possibilities with the idea of a night train from Oulu to central Europe – perhaps this could be a way to reach Lapland in the summer seasons easier, cheaper and more efficiently, even domestically, with possible competition to VR.

However, the importance of more functioning European trail network would signal an importance in land-based travel, and the importance and easing of it for the future. Even with different track width, the travellers could reach Finland and its track system with more ease than before. This all leads up to the researcher believing that keeping ahead of the curve, or trend, on the development of land-based travel systems is extremely important for the future of Finnish Lapland as a sustainable tourism destination.

2.5 Seasonal travel

Seasonal travel in its simplicity means exploring destinations during specific times of the year based on climate, activities, or cultural events. Seasonality is a measurable feature with significant economic and social impacts (UNWTO, 2025.). While seasonality brings in a lot of potentially positive things, such as social and economic gains, it also brings negatives with destinations with high fluctuations in seasonality often facing various challenges, such as overcrowding, high prices, inadequate infrastructure in peak seasons, as well as a lack of services and job opportunities in shoulder and low seasons. This in itself, is already taken into consideration within Lapland's tourism strategies (Lapin Liitto, 2021, p.1-20), as the issues are becoming more and more clear.

Seasonal travel as such should be addressed to an extent, as unemployment, seasonal employment and turnover of staff (UNWTO, 2025), which has been pin-pointed as one of the issues of the seasonality in tourism, found in Lapland (Lapin Liitto, 2021, p.14-15).

Seasonality, within its issues, is also a very large potential to develop. Not only could it, on paper, be developed into four seasons, that are all as popular as the winter season, but having full-time employees increases their professionalism and infrastructure and services in general. The possibility of building around a year-round popular tourism destination would most certainly help both the tourism business as well as the social and economic prospects of the whole region.

Seasonality could be built upon a new rising trend in travel – coolcations. This is a concept in where tourists are now seeking destinations in the summer, where the weather is actually cooler, than for example, southern European summers. For example, this year, Following the “coolcations” trend that emerged in recent years, European destinations with more moderate

climates, including Scandinavia, Iceland, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, have thus far seen a 263 percent year-over-year increase for travel already booked for this summer (Turner, 2025). This type of a rising trend, that unfortunately builds itself upon an ever-heating Earth, should be considered for a destination that could hold more visitors during the summer, such as Lapland.

2.6 What could the research provide for the development of the area?

The research gap that this thesis aims to fill is as follows: *‘What are the perceptions of domestic tourists of Finnish Lapland as a travel destination during the summer, and how could it be developed.’*

While the perceptions have been studied to an extent, the research feels that it could build upon this, especially by adding the topic of transportation to the mix. The research also firmly believes that semi-qualitative interviews as a method will help to pin-point the problem, especially by deducting the results using a model based on Theory of planned behaviour. With these methods, the research aims to understand the perceptions, difficulties, issues, and where they come from.

As already argued beforehand, the researcher feels that there is much potential for development of the region for year-round tourism. The seasonality aspect, and how it affects the region, can be either seen as possibilities or issues, and this research is focused on looking for the possibilities.

Cool-cations, the future of transportation and the already in place infrastructure, professionalism and knowledge of tourism in general in the area, are all pointers that could theoretically be used as possibilities in creating a year-round, stable, sustainable and growing tourism for the region. While this could be done through as many means as creativity explores, the researcher believes that the singular most effective and sustainable way would be to focus on domestic tourism as the first step.

There is already development in creating a year-round strategy for Lapland, but the gap that this research aims to fill, is to not ideate and create the services and infrastructure for it. The research aims to fill the gap of understanding your customers. The idea is to understand the

perception, that domestic visitors from the south of Finland have of Lapland as a summer destination – a laying bring, if possible, to understand better who the development and strategy is made for. As mentioned beforehand, the first step on building a marketing strategy is to understand your customer – their wants, needs, perceptions and most importantly, their issues and how they view these difficulties. This, in particular, is a research gap that the researcher is trying to fill – the perceptions that are there. Understanding them, strategizing for the future of the region’s tourism turns simpler, as the issues are understood and perceptions are clear.

The research also believes in its own importance in creating a more stable yearly tourism to Lapland, by aiming to find the reasons for seasonal domestic tourism. As mentioned before, the belief that strong domestic tourism would work as a base towards creating an also more international tourism. Creating a more popular and stable tourism during the summer season as well could be argued to bring more social sustainability to the area, by creating all-year-round jobs. This in itself could bring more stability to the region in general, bettering the tourism services all-year-around, not to mention the possibility of developing tourism industry on the surrounding regions as well.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Theory of planned behaviour

The theoretical framework of the study is based on collecting data through semi-structured interviews, then analysing that data to find results. The results shall be examined through the lens of Theory of Planned Behaviour, mostly known as a psychological tool examining individual customer behaviour, which the researchers found to be an important aspect of the research.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) is a famous social psychological theory of human behaviour. The theory assumes that what a person does in each context the formation intentions reflect three motivational influences, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

As mentioned, the three motivational influences represent:

1. *Attitudes represent “the degree to which a person has a favourable or unfavourable evaluation or appraisal of the behaviour in question”.*
2. *Subjective norms represent “the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour”.*
3. *Perceived behavioural control is “the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour – assumed to reflect past experience as well as anticipated impediments and obstacles” (Ajzen, 1991).*

Basically, these concepts can be shortened, respectively, to a person’s belief in the outcome of performing the behaviour, the belief in what other people want them to do, and their ability and availability of resources (for example time) that will allow them to perform the behaviour (Renzi & Klobas, 2008). Furthermore, the theory of planned behaviour makes the antecedents of preferences or attitudes explicit, and more importantly, it acknowledges social influence on personal behaviour (Jackson, 2005).

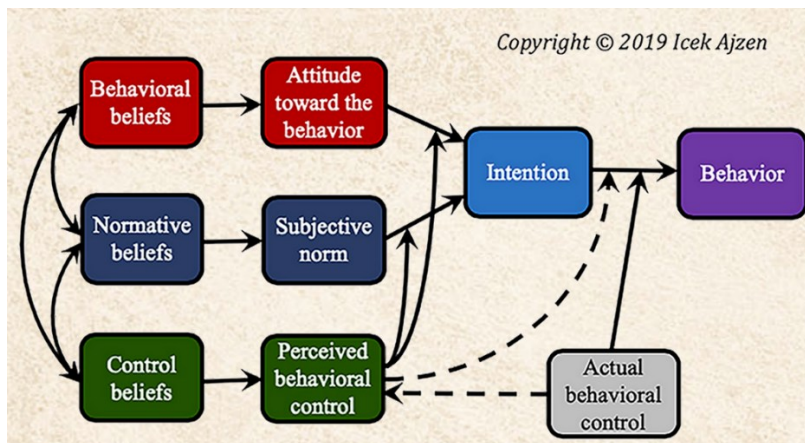


Figure 1. Visualization of the Theory of planned behaviour.

Source: Ajzen, 2019

As shown in *Figure 1*, the beliefs lead to intention, which in its turn has a high impact on the behaviour itself.

This research aims to apply this theory precisely to understand the consumer; to be able to create service, infrastructure and develop understanding as to what the consumer might want. This, in itself, is an extremely important aspect of marketing as understanding your consumers preferences is the key to a successful marketing strategy (Radu, 2025). The theory of planned behaviour fits well in this aspect, as with it we can investigate whether beliefs about reachability (e.g., travel difficulty, cost, or time) act as a barrier. We can also dwell deeper and examine how social expectations (e.g., norms around Lapland's seasonal appeal) shape perceptions.

While the Theory of planned behaviour has not widely been used for tourism studies, nor qualitative research in the past, there are a few examples of how it could be applied. Renzi & Klobas (2008) successfully applied TPB on their study, arguing that it was clear to highlight substantial differences in the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control among the three groups.

Theory of planned behaviour, while being a popular tool to understand human behaviour, has also been the target for much argumentation. It has faced quite a lot of criticism over the years, with scholars arguing that that behavioural intention does not always lead to actual behaviour (Norberg, et al., 2007). Orbell & Sheeran (1998) argue that in particular the problem of individuals who form an intention and subsequently fail to act, has been a recognised limitation

of the TPB that remains unaddressed by the theory. Moreover, its scientific validity has been questioned in the primary function of a theory. It has been argued to not accurately communicate accumulated empirical evidence. That TPB has become an empty gesture to tick the box that science should be theory-based (Sniehotta, et al., 2014). Then again, Armitage & Conner (2001) claimed that although prediction is superior for self-reported than observed behaviour, the TPB is still capable of explaining 20% of the variance in prospective measures of actual behaviour (i.e. a medium to large effect size).

While these are all valid concerns, for both for and against, the researcher would like to point out that while the theory of planned behaviour will be used in this research as a scientific theory, it does not believe that human behaviour, or human psychology, is as simple and straightforward as believing that it can be fully explained with three metrics. The results will be reviewed as guidelines, or indicative, more than complete and absolute facts on the matter.

For these reasons Theory of Planned behaviour was chosen as the main theory of this research, as well as semi-structured interviews for data collecting, to truly get and understand the motivations of the target segment.

4. Methodology

4.1 Semi-structured Interviews as data collection method

Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative research method that involves oral communication with individuals in a way that is self-conscious and based on a partially structured methodological course (Longhurst, 2012, p. 113). They are conducted by collecting data by the researcher asking information with a series of predetermined but open-ended questions” (Ayres, 2008, p. 810). The process usually starts with finding a target group, a segment, of whom will participate in the interviews. This process can be done in many different ways, for example recruiting through commercials, social media or surveys (Longhurst, 2012, p. 145). The method is often used in research and is considered to provide new information about how people interact with your products and services and shed light on the underlying reasons behind these habits (Miroslav, 2023). The interviews don’t have a set time limit, nor a participant amount, but considering the time the analysing might take, it needs to be thought thoroughly. The time and effort required to do the planning, interviewing and analysing of it right is considerable (Adams, 2010).

The reasons why semi-structured interviews were chosen, are because it allows the researchers to acquire in-depth information and evidence from interviewees while considering the focus of the study (Ruslin, et al., 2022.) It also allows flexibility and adaptability for the researchers to hold their focus as compared to an unstructured interview, where its direction is not fully considered. Hence, the semi-structured interview could potentially enable qualitative researchers to amend their research questions throughout their studies while maintaining their track.

For this thesis in particular semi-structured interviews were a perfect fit in the researchers opinion. Firstly, the researchers felt that interviews give more of a chance for the interviewee to express their opinions, perceptions and difficulties more clearly than a survey, where their varied and nuanced opinions are going to be left to be quite black and white. Secondly, the researchers felt that this topic is something that the interviewees might not have spent much time pondering previously, thus the research aims to give them time to formulate opinions and reveal any underlying perceptions or issues.

These are all important aspects, when trying to find out why perceptions exist, even if the participant might not be well-versed, or even considered the topic beforehand. The method of collecting data also puts the researcher themselves in a similar situation, as the respondent. There are not large quantities of data on the subject, thus, to understand the perceptions of the participants needs to be done in a way where both the participant and the interviewer can find new, interesting, or unthought-of answers.

4.1.1 Details on the Interviews

This method was chosen for this particular research for beforementioned reasons, of which understanding of the consumer behaviour is the main goal. As the research aims to understand the perceptions and challenges of the consumers, domestic travellers in this case, we felt as giving them a possibility to discuss it is the most effective practise to understand them. To understand the perceptions and perceived difficulties of it, the researcher also found that following a data collection process, that allows for adjusting the research questions, according to the perceptions found, is extremely important to keep the research relevant. The interview structure can be found as *Appendix 1*.

The segment chosen for this research was young adults who live in the capital area of Finland, who aren't already frequent travellers to Lapland.

The study interviewed 8 participants, all of whom passed the above-mentioned criteria. The interviewees were looked for through volunteer social-media posts, or recruited through known acquaintances.

This group of volunteers ended up being quite diverse, with half being women, half men and all within an age-range of twenty-nine to thirty-two. Their educational, or career backgrounds weren't assessed. This group of interviewees included respondents that had never been in Lapland during the summer, some who had visited as children, and finally two, who had visited previously as adults, as represented in *Table 1*.

For this analysis the respondents are referred as I:1-I:8 (Interviewee One, Interviewee Two, etc.). This is done to ensure their privacy, and to keep the analysis as easy to read as possible.

Table 1. Presentation of interviewees.

Interviewees	Female	Male	Has visited Lapland in the summer?	Visited as a child
I:1	x		2	1
I:2		x	0	0
I:3		x	0	0
I:4	x		0	1
I:5	x		0	1
I:6		x	0	0
I:7		x	0	0
I:8	x		2	1

The interviews ranged anywhere from fifteen minutes to forty-five minutes. Some included very lengthy conversations, while some followed a stricter formula. The interviews were done either face-to-face and recorded, or through a video call. The audios were then transcribed as a text, of which came out as around fifty pages after scrapping the non-relevant parts of the interviews.

The people chosen for these semi-structured interviews falls under three pre-chosen aspects.

1. *The interviewee must be at least eighteen years old, and under thirty-five.*
2. *The interviewee must reside in the municipality of Uusimaa in Finland.*
3. *The interviewee must not have an extensive experience of travelling to Finnish Lapland during the summer.*

The interviews were done orally face-to-face or through Microsoft Teams. Both types were recorded for audio and transcribed to writing on a later date, by the researcher. This, time-consuming method of manual transcription was chosen as a way for the researcher to get familiar with the data – making the qualitative thematic analysis easier in the long run.

While the interviews remained only semi-structured, some of the questions were chosen to support the finding data to be able to research the main theory of the study, the Theory of planned behaviour.

Firstly, the questions start with some, so-called, warm-up questions. These were mostly yes, or no questions to ease the respondent into the interview and help them get a comfortable chat started before the more serious inquiries began (Adams, 2010, p.370). These included visiting Lapland, be it winter or not, to get the interview flowing.

Secondly, they were planned to give the respondents a possibility to talk and consider openly of their opinions and perceptions. Being a semi-structured interview, the general idea was to give space for their opinions, and a possibility for the interview to take its own track.

Thirdly, questions were also structured to be able to lead the conversation forward, with special attention being taken in consideration with possible answers leading the interview to different directions. This is to have better control over the course of the interview, and to keep them from getting completely off-topic, or too lengthy and to keep the flow of the interview stable.

The interviewee segmentation was based on the belief that domestic travel is the backbone of the travel industry with WTTC (2018) report showing that domestic tourism accounts for 73% of total travel and tourism spending globally in 2018, and the imbalance of seasonal travel in Lapland altogether. The perceptions of young adults were chosen, as the researcher felt the need to understand the perceptions and difficulties of this particular generation, that will remain an important segment for domestic tourism for years to come.

The underlying idea of the research, and what it hopes to better with understanding of perceptions and perceived difficulties of operation, is to develop a stronger base of summertime travel towards Lapland. This foundation could be built with stronger domestic travelling, which in turn, translates to infrastructure and services, to build up international summer tourism as well. Strengthening Lapland's summer travel is also their own strategy's priority goal (Lapin Liitto, 2021, p.15).

4.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was chosen as the method of analysing the semi-structured interview data. The analysis itself is a method for analysing qualitative data that involves reading through a data set and looking for patterns to derive themes (Damyanov, 2023). This method was chosen for this thesis for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it was felt to be the most fitting, as themes and patterns are precisely what the research hopes to find. Secondly, the method also requires being

familiar with the interviews and their contents. The researchers felt that this was an extremely important aspect in understanding the perceived perceptions and especially the difficulties, needs or wants, that the research in itself is trying to unearth.

This method of analysing was chosen for a few reasons; content analysis through a thematic study was deemed as the best possibility to analyse, and present the results found in the study.

Simply put, thematic analysis is the study of patterns to uncover meaning. Or in other words, it's about analysing the patterns and themes within your data set to identify the underlying meaning (Jansen, 2025). It also gives another possibility to find new perspectives, perceptions and results that the researchers didn't expect to find, or didn't include in their hypotheses.

The thematic analysis utilized in this research started with studying and getting familiar with the transcriptions of the interviews.

To start the thematic analysis of the collected data, the first step was to create the codes, or in other words, important concepts in the data, through a qualitative coding. Thus, open coding is the first stage of qualitative data analysis, where the researcher broke down interview transcripts into small segments and assigned labels (codes) to identify patterns. The data was then colour-coded in a separate word document. The codes were chosen with an inductive coding, where the codes are derived from the data itself (Crosley, 2020). This method was chosen to further the research's position of not assuming but understanding the perceptions of the interviewees.

These codes were not only chosen to answer the research questions, or the hypotheses made in general, but they were the concepts that emerged and were repeated throughout the data.

The coding phase was done manually by first transcribing and then familiarizing with the data, finding similarities between the interviews. Afterwards seeing how they would adopt to themes – that would answer the research question. They changed quite rapidly until the final phase presented in Figure 2, seen in subheading 5.1. In the final phase of the coding process, the data, transcribed and collected to one Word document, was colour-coded accordingly to Figure 2.

After the coding of the data, the codes are then transformed into themes: to put it simply, codes are the building blocks for themes, (larger) patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central organizing concept - a shared core idea which provide a framework for organizing and reporting

the researcher's analytic observations (Clarke & Braun, 2017). These themes help us keep the sheer number of codes organized, and allow us to analyse the data more efficiently, whilst keeping the results easily understandable and see-through.

The important aspect of the chosen themes was to find an answer to the research's underlying theory – the Theory of planned behaviour. For this exact theory we needed to find answers to interviewees attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control – e.g. their own perception, their social circles perception and finally their perceived difficulty of operation, in this case, hypothetically, the distance and the price. Thus, the naming of some of the themes, as can be seen in figure 3 presented in the subheading 5.2.

While the research intends to use the data, the themes provide to fulfil the Theory of Planned Behaviour as part of this research, the data provided in these categories is quite broad and can be used to other research purposes as well.

The themes themselves helped the researcher to find logic, and evidence to create a analyse of the data collected.

4.4 Ethics

Ethical review in itself is advance scrutiny and evaluation of a research plan in the light of the ethical practices generally followed in that particular discipline of science, with special emphasis on preventing any harm that the research or its results might cause to the research subject (Tenk, 2024). The ethicality of the research, and the ethical perspectives in general, would consist of the interviews, their storage, usage and on presenting the findings. The study will be careful to keep itself ethical, by focusing on the privacy, and rights of its participants.

Voluntary participation will be a certainty, nor will their words be changed, altered or in any way modified. Anonymity will also be considered, and none of the participants names will be revealed – only basic information such as general area they're living in, their sex, or other aspects that are necessary to the research. None of the respondents will be able to be identified throughout the research.

AI will not be used for the research thus all of the raw information and data will strictly be for the researcher only. The data itself will be stored only on the researcher's personal hard drive.

Consent will be taken in the form of Letter of Consent, which can be found as *Appendix 2*. The data itself will only be kept within the researcher's personal devices, or on the University of Lapland's cloud storage. None but the researcher will have access to the information.

The interviewees had all read and agreed to the letter of consent. The most important ethical issue was not releasing any of their names, ages, or any other specific information as the interview itself didn't include any personal questions.

5. Analysis

5.1 Open code coding

The thematic analysis of the gathered data begun with open code coding.

Studying the transcribed data from the interviews raised multiple codes that the researcher began employing. These preliminary codes chosen were quite numerous, so with further delving into the data, and preliminary coding, the codes were cut down to:

- Nature, which is represented with the colour green for coding in the transcripts.
- Midnight Sun, represented as yellow.
- Calm, represented as blue.
- Mosquitos, represented as red.
- Not much to-do, represented as purple.
- Social media, represented as light blue.
- Friends, represented as orange.
- Train, represented as light green.
- Plane, represented as pink.
- Expensive, represented as brown.
- Distance, represented as dark blue.
- International, represented as grey.
- Car, represented as brighter purple.

Codes

Nature	M. Sun	Calm	Mosquitos	Not much to-do	Social media	
Friends	Train	Plane	Expensive	Distance	International Travel	Car

Figure 2. Final coding in Excel.

These codes were not only chosen to answer the research questions, or the hypotheses made in general, but they were the concepts that emerged and were repeated throughout the data.

5.2 Forming themes

After coding the data, the research moved towards creating themes with them. While, again, the theming proved to be a lot of trial and error, the researchers found suitable themes for all the codes that were fit to answer the research questions and raise new questions alike.

The codes derived into these preliminary themes:

- Nature, midnight sun, calm - Positive perception
- Mosquitos, not much to do - Negative perception
- Social media, friends - Heard positive from others/ Heard negative from others
- Train, plane – Negatives of the distance/The distance isn't worth it // Positives of the distance/Travel is part of the vacation
- Expensive – Pricing/It isn't worth it monetarily
- Would rather choose something else/nothing for me/ Doesn't feel like a vacation/Why would I travel domestically without a need to

The theming continued similarly to the coding part, and some themes were changed, or combined, until the research settled into the final theming, which can be seen below in *Figure 3*.

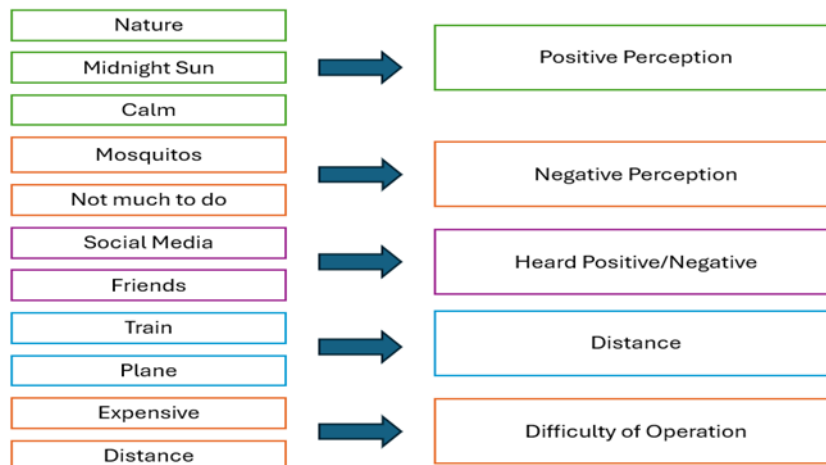


Figure 3. From Codes to Themes.

6. Findings

6.1 Summary of the objective

The analyse was done to find the answer to a larger picture than what might have been found with more conventional methods, i.e. survey. The idea behind choosing a semi-structured interview, and analysing that with a thematic analyse, especially with inductive coding, was to find answers that the researcher themselves had not hypothesized or given as an option already for the correspondent.

The structure of the interview's leaned heavily on the theory of planned behaviour. This, commonly used in psychology research, is a method in where the researcher attempts to find the reason for customer behaviour with three major aspects: their attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control – their own perception, their social circles and generally society's opinion or attitude and finally perceived difficulty of the operation. Again, while this theory was of major importance to the chosen questions and themes, this assignment won't go through the Theory of planned behaviour which will be applied later in the re-researcher's thesis.

To start from the planning of the semi-structured interview, a few of the questions were pre-planned to find out the larger themes of their perception, their perceived social perceptions and the difficulty of the operation. These were namely, (1) How they perceive the summer travel in Lapland, (2) Have their friends, or relatives, travelled there in the summer and have they talked to you about it, and finally, (3) what kind of challenges they believe to be in themselves travelling there? Is it tied to distance or cost?

For this purpose, the inductive coding found the codes that were repeatedly used by the interviewees to describe these factors. Nature, midnight sun and calm were all words used to describe what they thought of the Lappish summer. These were in turn all used in a positive light – turning these into a positive perception -theme was then done.

On the opposite, mosquitos and not much to do were used in a negative light, thus theming these to negative perception -theme.

Social media and friends -codes were combined together to heard positive/negative -theme. Train and plane -codes were combined into Distance -theme, and finally distance and cost -codes to difficulty of operation -theme.

6.2 Preliminary findings of analysing

To set up the analysis, the research will present the straightforward statistics found in the analyse.

- 5 out of the 8 respondents have visited Lapland in the summer beforehand, with only one respondent having done it multiple times. The others have only done so during their childhood.
- 5 out of 8 interviewees always consider land-based travel as a priority in their travel plans
- 7 out of the 8 respondents feel as if travel is already a part of the journey
- 8 out of 8 of the respondents feel that they would choose to travel to Lapland in the summer over other domestic destinations
- 3 out of the 8 respondents would firmly consider Lapland as their summer destination over international travel, 2 would consider it, while the final 2 wouldn't see it as a realistic option.

These statistics show us that there is quite a lot of interest in visiting Lapland in the summer, but the preliminary hypothesis is to believe that the perceived difficulty affects the decision.

Table 2. Preliminary data of correspondents.

Interviewee	Always considering LBT	Choosing LL over international	Choosing LL over domestic	Have you been?	Travel is a part of the journey?
I:1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/ Outwards
I:2	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
I:3	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes/ Outwards
I:4	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes/ Outwards
I:5	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes
I:6	Yes	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes
I:7	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
I:8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Total	Yes= 5/8	Yes=4 / No=2 / Maybe=2	8/8 Yes	5/8 Yes	8/8 Yes
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Table 2 shows us the preliminary data found through the interview. Firstly, it shows us *Always considering LBT (Land-based travel)*. This category shows us that in their own opinion, do the interviewee feel as they always consider land-based travel as an option while planning a holiday.

Choosing LL (Lapland) over international travel answers the question of could the respondent seriously consider a summer vacation to Lapland over travelling internationally. *Choosing LL (Lapland) over domestic travel*, answers the same question, but over other domestic destinations.

Have you been simply answers that has the respondent ever been to Lapland. Finally, *Travel is a part of the journey*, answers if the respondent feels that travelling is already a part of the journey, or just the necessary part to reach your destination.

6.3 Analysing the data

The analysis itself took much longer than expected. The derived themes created from the codes were qualitatively researched, with the intention of finding an answer to our research question. Firstly, our respondents perceived image of the Lappish summer were generally very positive. Most of the respondents had a perception of midnight sun (*yötön yö* in Finnish), nature and peace – adjectives, that the official tourism strategy of Lapland uses as well. The consensus seems to also reach the idea, that while Lapland is geographically in Finland, to many of the respondents it still feels like it is almost unreachable due to its distance.

The general negativity of their perception was very deeply rooted to mosquitos. These were mentioned in all the interviews, as one of the first things that the respondents thought, when describing the summer in Lapland. This could even be seen with respondents who had never even visited Lapland in the summer. For example, I:3 who has never been to Lapland during the summer states that, “Well, I wouldn’t want to experience the mosquitos.” Similarly, I:1, someone who has visited Lapland during the summer on more than one occasion, state that, “Unfortunately, I have to admit that the mosquitos come to mind often.” These gives a further understanding of how persuasively the mosquitos are thought of for both visitors, and non-visitors.

The general consensus between all of the respondents was that they know people who've visited Lapland during the summer months, and they've all heard positive things about it. These positives varied a little bit, but in all of them the nature was presents, were it hiking, the midnight sun, or enjoying the peace and quiet with their dog, or significant other.

Once again, the biggest negatives were about mosquitos. Few of the correspondents mentioned their friends, or relatives who had visited, talking of the mosquitos.

“In summer there because there was no one but mosquitos and them.” (I:6)

“They took the train [...] And yes, mosquitos.” (I:7)

While this may seem insignificant, the perceived idea of mosquitos seems to be quite a big factor on southern Finnish people choosing Lapland as a travel destination. It came up with every single interview, in a negative connotation.

Social media was another interesting fact, in how the respondents felt of Lapland during the summer. Most of them told that they had seen social media posts about Lapland, but they were almost entirely of the winter season. This, while making perfect sense with more marketing and visitors in the winter, still points to a lack of summertime marketing, and general unknowing of the services, infra and information of it. For example, I:1 mentions how she's seen only a few, but quite a lot from the Norwegian side of Lapland [Social media during the summer], or I:2 who mentions that while he's seen social media posts, they are entirely of the wintertime, with auroras or snowy landscapes.

Finally, difficulty of operation -theme was created from the four codes that kept on repeating within every interview. Cost, distance, not much to do and rather choosing an international trip.

While, as mentioned before, rather choosing an international trip was a bit of a divider, only two respondents answered with a definite certainty that they could imagine choosing Lapland as a summer holiday destination over an international destination. Cost and distance were very much tied up to it – or to a trip to Lapland altogether.

I:2 explains his thought process as, “I'd have to have something concrete I'd like to go to do there. But for example, if I had a long weekend, I wouldn't even consider it [Lapland as a summer destination] an option.”

I:3 explains it as, “I’d not even consider Lapland over a European destination. No. The price is the same more or less.”

I:7 in turn simply argues that “Definitely overseas.”

Continuing with the perspectives of possible vacation destinations during the summer period, all of the respondents answered that they could imagine choosing Lapland over other domestic destinations. This in itself leaves the researcher with a question of why they haven’t done it previously. The only straight answer to this comes from I:3, “With my previous job I didn’t have any longer vacations that would allow me to do it.” Which gives us a reason but also points to the research question of how the distance affects travelling to Lapland.

The difficulty of operation theme is present throughout the interviews. The distance, and especially the perception that the trip takes days to take is the influencing factor in not even considering Lapland as a summer destination. The other reason seems to be social influence. Even when they had all heard only positive feedback from others about the summer, it was all very specifically of hiking. With no real social media, or marketing, information about the Lapland summer, the respondents seemed to all have a shared perception of a part of Finland with midnight sun, mosquitos, fishing and hiking. While all of these are reasonably true, it does give a rather limiting sense of knowledge of what could be done in Lapland in the summer.

To summarize the results of the analysis – the respondents had a positive perception of Lapland, they had heard positive things about it. The price and distance were alarming factors, but almost all of the respondents didn’t see these as major obstacles. The underlying factor in not choosing Lapland as a summer destination for the respondents seems to just be a lack of not fully knowing what to do there – which leads to how most of them hadn’t truly considered it, even though while interviewing them, all seemed intrigued by the possibility of the trip.

6.4 Findings of the thematic analysis

The general conclusion of this analysis finds that the young adults who participated in this research have a generally positive perception of Lapland during the summer in their minds. This extends to their social circle, with every one of the respondents, who have had someone of their social circle visit there during the summer, has only heard positive things about it.

The negatives lay on a belief of the simple number of mosquitos – these pesky little bloodsuckers are the only topic to carry out throughout everyone of the respondents. Overall, the positives still outperform the negatives, with much more consistency.

The more see-through issues the respondents could be categorised under two umbrellas: firstly, while the respondents think of nature, midnight sun and the general peace of Lapland, the general information on what the Lappish summer could offer is almost non-existence. The whole of Lapland is somehow referred as one big clump, and not a single specific place, town or activity in relation to the summer, was ever mentioned in the interview. This could already be argued to come from a lack of marketing, or with this younger segment, through social media. For example, all of the respondents knew about Santa's Village, which is a tangible service/attraction, as a possible destination to visit, but it was only talked about as a winter destination.

The second category, or umbrella, could be the distance. While all of the respondents were interesting to visit Lapland in the summer over other domestic destinations would the opportunity rise, only two had visited voluntarily while being an adult. The general talking of the distance made the respondents uncertain, and if the discussion was directed to planes, international travel was always brought to the forefront.

The analyse of the data thus revealed interest, conflicting ideas of what a holiday truly is, and a little uncertainty with the distance, pricing and perhaps the subjective norm being that even domestically, Lapland is only worth visiting in the winter, or perhaps if you truly enjoy hiking, fishing or mosquitos.

The limitations of this research lay heavily within the number of correspondents. With more data, the distinctions would surely become clearer. For further research, focusing on subjective norms, and the reach of seasonal marketing would be important for the field to truly understand the difficulties and issues in choosing Lapland as a domestic travel destination.

6.5 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour requires us to first to take a look at the three categories, which we will analyse separately as either positive or negative.

The *Attitude* category will be studied as the theme positive and negative perceptions.

The *Subjective norm* will be studied as the theme positive and negative heard.

The *Behavioural control* will be studied as difficulty of operation.

These categories were planned from the get-go, already in the planning stages of the interview. Some were the results of direct questions, and some were found in the analysing, but nevertheless, the interviews and the whole process of thematic analyse found the research enough data to complete the theorizing through the Theory of planned behaviour. For clarification, the questions were modelled to lead the conversations towards topics, that'd answer the research question, as well as the paradigms set for Theory of planned behaviour. None of the interviews went straightforwardly as a yes-no answers to the question.

For the analysis we will inspect and analyse the results for each of the three categories: *Attitude*, *Subjective norm* and *Behavioural control*. These will lead to finding the *Intentions*. With intentions we will finalize the analyse, bringing in forth the results of the analysis.

6.4.1 *Attitude*

The attitude of the analysis can be wrapped up in two segments: Instrumental: "For me, [behaviour] is good/bad, beneficial/harmful." And Affective: "Doing [behaviour] is enjoyable/unpleasant."

For this analysis, we will focus on the *affective* part, as it fits our viewpoint of perceptions. In this part of the research, the question relies heavily on the emphasis of, is the respondents' perspective of summer in Lapland positive.

The questionnaire included questions:

1. *Have you ever been to Lapland? How about during the summer?*

-What would you like to visit there, if you went? How do you view it as a tourist destination?

Or

-What did you visit there when you went? Highlights? Would you do something differently, if you went again?

-How do you imagine it'll be there?

Or

-How would you summarize your view of Lappish summer?

These were to open up on a conversation about how the respondents' corresponded towards the possibility, or already done, visit to Lapland during the summer. As a result, most of our respondents had positive attitude, for example I:2, who had never visited, answered with *"I'd absolutely love to visit it, take a hiking trip, or something."* Or I:3 who hadn't visited either, responded with *"It would be amazing to visit and see the hills. Or the midnight sun. That'd be cool."* Rest of the respondents answered with similar responses, with everyone being excited about the prospect. The negatives were mostly tied up with mosquitos – but in general, the respondents still had generally positive attitudes towards travelling to Lapland during the summer.

The researcher finds the overall perception of the respondents' attitudes to be quite positive, but with a hint of negative attitudes as well. The interesting find was how prevalent the issue and attitude about mosquitos were.

Another thing to notice, and something, that is defining in all of the categories in this research is the similarity between perception between the respondents: all of them mention hiking and nature, very rarely does anyone have any other perception about the possibilities, or perceptions of what to do in Lapland during the summer.

6.4.2 Subjective Norms

The subjective norms were tested with questions:

2. How about the people you know? Has anyone you know been there?

-How was their experience?

-Do you know how did they get there? Took the train, or flight? How they enjoy it?

Or

-Have you ever even talked to some friends, relatives, about the prospect of a trip? Seen any videos, or social media posts? Any idea what they took to get there?

These were predominantly chosen as interview questions to get the subjective norms of the respondents. The answers here too were quite similar to the ones in attitude themselves. While no-one of the respondents have had any social pressure to visit, they had all heard of others trip, and formed somewhat opinions and perceptions of what it could provide for them. There is one exception to this, where I:1 says “Well, a lot of us well-studied middle-class women travel to Lapland.” Perhaps a little jokingly but raising a fair point on her view of the visitor segmentation.

Other than that, the researcher finds that the subjective norms are very firmly tied around the same themes: nature, hiking and mosquitos for negative. I:6 answers to if friends or family have visited Lapland during the summer, as “*like with their dog for, like, hiking and, like, spend five days in the, in the nature or like, trekking hiking.*” I:7 answers with, “*Yeah, all of them to do some hiking.*” The other respondents’ respond with similar answers, aligning with the general consensus of doing some nature activity. While, for example, midnight sun is mentioned a lot in the respondents’ attitudes, it isn’t mentioned in any of the questions relating to others visiting.

The subjective norm still remains fairly positive, if not a little unknown. Everyone’s heard positives about it, but it all relates to a rather small segmentation of activities and services. For example, none mention culinary cultures, festivals (music, or otherwise), nor non-active holidays. The responses, and answers follow the same suite of, they’d like to visit, if they ever felt like hiking.

The finding of the researcher is, that even while the majority of subjective norm remains positive, it also is very vague. This could be attributed to the respondents not having a lot of their social circle visiting Lapland in the summer in general, but as everyone, of the respondents remembered some of their friends, or family, visiting, the argument remains null.

The big picture here seems to relate to their attitude as well: the respondents don’t know what to expect of Lapland, if it isn’t hiking, mosquitos, or the well-marketed winter season.

6.4.3 Behavioural control

The category of behavioural control was much versed with questions such as

3. So, more on the transport part. Do you think the distance makes it difficult to visit? Does it affect your decision?

-If Lapland was closer, do you think you'd visit? Or, to put it bluntly, do you feel the travel would make the trip now worth it?

-How about the pricing? Do you imagine that affects your decision?

-Do you feel as if the transit is a nuisance, rather than a part of the experience itself?

While the researcher hypothesises themselves were based on cost and distance being the biggest issues, the behavioural control showed the perception *Time* as the biggest issue. While the respondents, in general, felt that the price could be an issue, it could also be bypassed with camping, etc, as I:2 states, *"It would only be the gas money and, yeah, I mean if I'd go hiking I would sleep in a tent."* I:3 on the other hand, brought up the summer prices with, *"It wouldn't be so expensive, would it. It'd be the off-season, so it's not going to be too expensive anyway."* Most of the respondents still admitted to having a small concern of the prices, but don't view it as an obstacle.

The distance was a little concern for most, but most of the respondents felt that even if the train could be long, there was always the option of taking a flight. For example, I:8, who has visited Lapland in the summer twice, talks about the distance, *"Yes, the distance is a little bit of a concern. Like, it is far away – sure. But I don't think it is an obstacle in any way."*

Meanwhile, the time needed for a holiday seemed to be a bigger issue. Most of the respondents felt that they simply had no time to have the holiday, tying it up to the same issue that the other parts of the analysis already highlighted – the issue of having a limited perception of Lapland as a summer destination. As an example, I:3 felt that as they had changed their job recently, he could finally have time to have a holiday like that.

The issue with distance and cost seems to be somewhere along a very neutral line. The research feels as if the perception of the time required, is the biggest issue in behavioural control. While the respondents had a generally lacklustre perception of the distance and price, it did feel quite negative to the interviewee. To put it in a phrase, while all of the respondents answered that they'd like to visit Lapland during the summer, and would prefer it over other domestic destinations, the behavioural control seemed to be mostly negative.

6.6 Findings of Theory of planned behaviour

Theory of planned behaviour is measured with the sum of the three ingredients. This sum, or conclusion, is called the *intention*. This quite straightforward means that does the consumer intend to do the act – which in this case is travelling to Lapland during the summer for a holiday.

Figure 1, shown in chapter 3.3, illustrates how attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control lead to intention. Thus, if we are looking at the results, the attitudes themselves, are positive. The respondents had a positive, excited and eager attitude towards their perception of a holiday in Lapland during the summer.

Their subjective norms, or social pressure, was mostly positive also. But this is where the researcher starts to find more issues than just the mosquitos. The respondents had hardly any subjective norms. While they all had friends or family, that had visited Lapland during the summer, none had any concrete positivity they had heard, neither did anyone actually feel like someone had recommended it to them. This combined with the fact that none had seen anything about Lapland in summer in social media, leads to a gap of knowledge of the region in general as a summer destination. The only thing the respondents had heard in common, were people from their social circle going hiking or fishing.

The researcher would like to argue that social media is one of the most important deciding factors in choosing a holiday destination – for example, American Express (2024) survey found out that 80% of Millennials and Gen Z surveyed like the fast convenience of using travel planning apps or social media to help them plan their travel journey and even more importantly for consumers under the age of 40, 50% of them say they use social media as a source for inspiration, a very close second to family (52%) (Fan, 2023). These are massive percents for travel in general, found out by some of the biggest travel companies in the world.

To further clarify the issue, these are number that are surely growing on a yearly basis, and the lack of social media marketing will surely come more and more important. In the researcher's opinion, this is already showing, with the lack of knowledge of the activities and services that are located in Lapland.

Behavioural control feels more negative than positive to the researcher. While the respondents were mostly positive about the pricing and distance, with few exceptions, most of the respondents felt that the perception of time was the deciding factor in whether they felt as if a holiday in Lapland during the summer was feasible. The distance and mode of transport were quite divisive, even if the respondents in general, felt that travel in itself, was already part of the trip. Many didn't want to fly domestically, but felt that bus wasn't an option, the trains are old, dirty and uninspiring. Overall, the behavioural control was negative with each respondent in one way or another. While the general consensus of subjective norms is more positive than negative, the entirety of it, is rather shallow, leaving the researcher feeling a tad negative about it.

Thus, overall, the attitude comes out as positive, subjective norm as something neutral and finally behavioural control comes out as negative – with one of the three psychological factors deemed as negative, the intention doesn't add up to the consumer wanting to visit Lapland during the summer.

To summarize the findings,

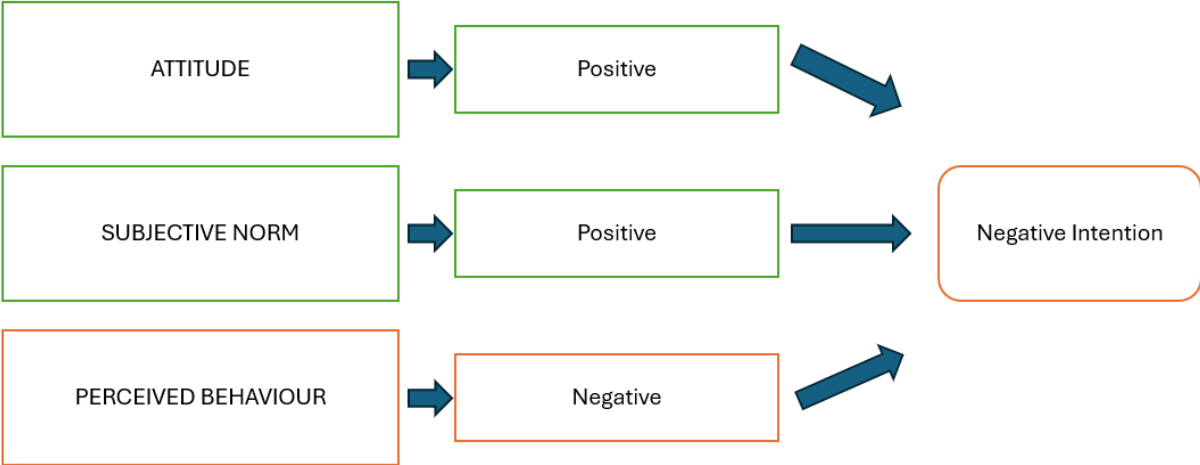


Figure 4. The Findings of Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Figure 4 visualizes the findings, with green outlines for positive results, and red for negative. While the findings of the respondents' perceptions are generally positive, the behavioural control came out as a negative in the researchers' findings. This could, as argued before, be the sum of many factors, but the one that comes out often in the data, looks to be the factor of

time. This could be the sum of both distance and price, or it could be a perceived perception of how far away Lapland is from the southern Finland.

The researcher still feels that the most damning evidence found through this study is how the perception seems to shift in the belief that a certain absence of marketing, or information, is the biggest downfall of the regions summer tourism. A focus on winter travel is important for the whole region, but a shift towards the marketing of a summer destination could make all the difference in the world.

7. Discussion

7.1 The common factors that domestic travellers have in not choosing Lapland

The first research question of this thesis was,

RQ1: What is the common factor that domestic travellers have in not choosing Lapland as their destination?

If applying the Theory of planned behaviour, we will notice that the perceived behaviour comes out as a negative. This points out to the fact that the potential visitor feels as if difficulty of operation comes out as a negative. This was explained as a lack of knowledge in the offering, the distance and generally, not being viewed as value worth it.

The common factors were thus quite clear. The biggest issue was the perceived distance, and time required to take a trip. This felt to many of the respondents as it would require effort to visit Lapland. Most respondents also mentioned mosquitos, which surely has a part in their perceptions.

Finally, the perception of Lapland as a hiking destination was shared among all of the respondents. This generalization comes with the issue that, if the potential visitors does not want to hike, they assume there is nothing else to do – thus lowering the possibility of a visit. On shared issue was that most of the respondents had not heard anything positive about the region, and if they had, it was quite unspecific in what was the positive. This can be shared with the lack of seeing anything in social media, which was shared among all the respondents.

7.2 Could land-based travel options address these difficulties

The second research question of this study was,

RQ2: What common factors deter domestic travellers from choosing Lapland as their destination, and how could land-based travel options address these factors to make Lapland a more appealing choice?

The respondents had in general, interest in going to Lapland, even during the summer, but felt no need to do it. This can be explained as a lack of knowledge or the distance again.

Land-based travel had its own difficulty as well. While most of the respondents did feel as if they wanted to choose a land-based way to travel, and they thought of travel as a part of the journey itself, most of them still felt as if the trains were a nuisance, dirty and old. To answer the question of how to make it more pleasant, the answers were again similar. The trains should be nicer, have some entertainment and in general, the consensus seemed to be that it offers nothing special. This is not a surprising result, as for example in a recent study from American Express (2024), they surveyed that 70% of Millennials and Gen Z like to plan trips that focus on enjoying the journey as much as the destination (e.g. Luxury Rail, Cruise, etc.).

Thus, to answer the research question, the land-based travel options are limited, and thought of as a little dated. With the main focus on train travel, it was viewed as a chore. The belief of the respondents was still almost unanimously that travel is a part of the journey. This leaves a possibility on developing the land-based journey to be more worth-while, or special.

To conclude on the research questions, the research found that while there is interest and want, there are issues surrounding the perceived ease of travel. This mostly comes down to the unattractiveness of a train ride, and the image that there isn't simply anything to do in Finnish Lapland during the summer, if you don't want particularly hike, fish, or spend time outdoors. While the argument stands that there is nothing wrong with any of these activities, quite the opposite – these are strengths – the researcher is still left with the feeling that the region can, and does, offer a quite lot more. Of this the respondents were clearly left with less knowledge.

7.3 Answering the hypotheses

For hypotheses the research listed three at its beginning:

Hypothesis 1: The distance between Lapland and southern Finland is so long that it's imagined as almost international travel.

Hypothesis 2: It is too expensive for Finnish travellers.

Hypothesis 3: The tourists do not know what Lapland's summer offers.

The hypotheses come out as mainly correct, with *hypothesis 1* and *3*. Proven to an extent during the thematic study already. *Hypothesis 2* comes out as somewhere in the mean, with some respondents mentioning the price as an issue and some as a non-issue.

The significance of this research findings is connected to how Lapland is viewed as a summer destination. The research believes that it has succeeded in contributing to the conversation of *how the consumer perceives Lapland*. The research feels that understanding the consumer is one of the most important things in domestic visitation numbers. With this better understanding of the customer base, creating a marketing campaign, or in general, deciding what the region feels as it needs for growth, is made plainer and simpler. It is left up to the region, and the businesses in it, to decide is it necessary to try to change the perception of the potential visitors or lean on to the perceptions more.

7.4 How do the findings resonate with previous research

The research's findings keep in line with previous established studies mentioned beforehand in the chapter 2.1 *previous research on the empirical phenomenon*.

Honkanen, et al. (2021) research done on the development needs of domestic tourism, clarifies many of the results found. For example, they point out that Lapland in particular is one of the only regions in Finland, that has their focus on international travellers, not on domestic. This can be seen already on the lack of marketing, or any sort of material, that the respondents of this research had been exposed to. The study also reveals that of the tourism organisations in Lapland, 20% believe there to be much potential in growing the domestic visitor numbers. This research holds an argument to agree with that 20%. As we found, all of the respondents of this study would choose Lapland over any other domestic destination, with half of the respondents seeing choosing Lapland as a summer destination over an international destination, a potential choice.

Tuovinen's (2023) thesis, which observes that Lapland is the most desired domestic destination, this research findings find themselves aligning completely.

Sustainability is clearly an aspect that concerns Finnish young adults as well, when choosing their destinations. More than half of the respondents confirmed that they consider land-based travel always when choosing their destination. This aligns with the survey results of Expedia's 2022 results.

In general, this research finds many similarities between previous research but goes more specific into the nuances of the customer behaviour. While the results are similar, this research feels as its successfully found the answers as to *why* when there's the desire to visit Lapland during the summer, they haven't.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Summary of research aims & findings

The main goals of this research were to understand the intentions and perceptions of potential domestic visitors in southern Finland, to Lapland during the summer season.

The research displayed clear answers to the research questions. We found that the common deterrents for not visiting Lapland during the summer were that the respondents had not heard many positives of it, were not aware of what the area offers as a whole and finally, that the methods of land-based travel weren't viewed as exciting – rather bland and time-consuming.

The research was done as a qualitative study, with semi-constructed interviews for the purpose of finding results that were not expected. In this, the researcher feels as they have succeeded. The thematic analysis, done with coding and theming, in itself already revealed important information on young adults perceive Lapland, and finally applying Theory of planned behaviour helped the study to show the perceptions clearly.

Thus, the researcher feels as if the findings were satisfactory and successful. The researcher was able to pinpoint specific issues and challenges in customer behaviour. These included the issues with distance, the modes of transport, the one-sidedness of their subjective norms. This includes the lack of coordination in marketing, or the lack of it.

8.2 Limitations & Further study

This research did still leave questions unanswered. Focused on finding the perception, it would have been beneficial to also dwell on what the potential consumers would also want from a domestic summer holiday. Another aspect that was left unanswered was the impact that social media could create towards this potential segment of visitors. These are both limitations of the study, that will hopefully be studied by future research.

The other limitations that this research faced are quite obvious at this moment of time to the researcher. There could have been more interviewees for more data to analyse from, and

research done for different segments. Simply stated, more quantity and more specificity, that the research couldn't offer due to time constraints.

For further research on the subject, there needs to be more studies on the perceptions of domestic travellers towards Lapland. What would be important for the regions tourism industry, would be to find more clearly on what the potential visitor would like to experience, and how to achieve that. Another important aspect would be on the effects of social media – measuring social media campaigns, and seeing whether promotion of certain services, or even just it being more visible throughout social media, could make a difference. Within the demand, there surely will be the supply, especially with all the tourism infrastructure and knowledge already in Lapland. A further push down on understanding, creating and specially co-creating, could make a massive difference.

Further recommendations would be exactly these – there needs to be more clarifications on the details. As in, how to make the land-based travel more appealing, what would the potential visitor want to do, or see advertised. Could they be persuaded by social media, or potentially different types of land-based travel methods?

Nevertheless, the researcher does still feel contempt about the findings of this research. The belief is that this study has filled a research gap, by providing valuable information on perception of the potential visitors. Lapland's official tourism strategy is leaning towards creating a stronger seasonal travel strategy and previous research shows that there is interest in domestic travel towards Lapland and this research has successfully brought up the issues that the domestic traveller still has towards coming for a holiday.

For the researcher personally, this study clarified the necessity between the consumer perceptions and the provider of services. Understanding how the consumer views and perceives the product through taking the time necessary, and going into the research with the mindset, where the research doesn't necessary try to get a premeditated answer, but instead looks for it from the interviews was a refreshing and eye-opening way to conduct and understand the perceptions.

Qualitative studies, and for this research, inductive research was the key to this. To start with interviewing, listening and steering the conversation, to finding keywords and codes.

Formulating themes from codes was a different method of what the researcher is used to. It helped the research find answers that weren't necessarily hypothesized, or pre-mediated. These answers, in the researcher's opinion, provide a lot of value, as they are true perceptions of the consumers behaviour – not just assumptions, hypotheses, or yes-or-no form answers.

For final thoughts this study has left the research feeling positive of domestic travels future in Finnish Lapland. There is significant interest in potential domestic visitors towards a summer season holiday in Lapland, and unlike hypothesized, the price and distance are not as large issues as thought.

Communicating and marketing could provide already a massive step forwards, which in the age of digital marketing, is not too expensive, provides an interesting starting point, if the region has interest in using it to their benefit. As mentioned at the beginning of this research, it was not meant for only increasing domestic visitor numbers for the summer seasons, but rather a starting point where to build up on a stronger seasonal strategy altogether.

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Appendix 1. The Interview Questions

1. Have you ever been to Lapland? How about during the summer?

-What would you like to visit there, if you went? How do you view it as a tourist destination?

Or

-What did you visit there when you went? Highlights? Would you do something differently, if you went again?

-How do you imagine it'll be there?

Or

-How would you summarize your view of Lappish summer?

-How did you get there? Car, flight, train?

Or

-How'd you imagine getting there, if you went? Car, flight, train?

2. How about the people you know? Has anyone you know been there?

-How was their experience?

-Do you know how did they get there? Took the train, or flight? How they enjoy it?

Or

-Have you ever even talked to some friends, relatives, about the prospect of a trip? Seen any videos, or social media posts? Any idea what they took to get there?

3. So, more on the transport part. Do you think the distance makes it difficult to visit? Does it affect your decision?

-If Lapland was closer, do you think you'd visit? Or, to put it bluntly, do you feel the travel would make the trip now worth it?

-How about the pricing? Do you imagine that affects your decision?

-Do you feel as if the transit is a nuisance, rather than a part of the experience itself?

4. What would make you choose land-based travel?

-Anything that would make you choose it? How would you feel for example about package deals, domestic flight tax increase, train services being better? Could it be made a part of the experience?

Or

-If you would already prefer land-based travel option, do you have any ideas on how to make it even more enjoyable? Does it already feel as a part of the experience?

5. I'd like to hear your thoughts about the questions after the discussion. Could you imagine yourself visiting Lap-land in the summer over an overseas trip for example?

-Do you think anything could change your mind in it?

-How about domestically, would you prefer Lapland over any other destination?

The 'or' implies how the recipients answer might effect on which question to follow up with. This derives from the idea that the interviewee answer will, ultimately, answer either 'yes' or 'no', and to keep the interview flowing, there needs to be an answer for each path the interview might take.

As a further note, none of the interviews strictly stuck to this model, as they all varied with each individual. All the questions were still asked, but the structure and amount of time spent differed.

Appendix 2. Letter of Consent

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear XXXXX,

My name is Otso Päätaalo. I am Master student at University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland under the supervision of Kaarina Tervo-Kankare (kaarina.tervo-kankare@ulapland.fi). You are invited to participate in my master thesis study entitled *Developing domestic travel in Lapland through two different themes: Focus on summer travel & Land-based travel*. The purpose of the study is to understand the perceptions of domestic travelers towards Lapland, and the challenges of travel methods. The result of the study will be published as part of my master thesis. The thesis is conducted as part of the Master's Degree Programme in Tourism, Culture and International Management (TourCIM).

By signing this letter, you give consent to use the interview material confidentially and exclusively for research purposes. The research follows the principles for responsible conduct of research dictated by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research. The data will be handled anonymously. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw your permission even after signing this document, by informing the below mentioned contact person.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor, if you would need further information regarding the study and the use of the research data.

Sincerely,

Otso Päätaalo

TourCIM Master student

I give consent to use the interview as data for the purpose mentioned above.

Signature

Date

Print Name