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ORGANIZING PUBLIC RELATIONS VISITS IN NORTHERN FINLAND
Ethnographic research on practices of the organizations

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Abstract

Public relations visits are work related activity and include travelling elements, hence can be considered as tourism. Organizing public relations visits is work that is carried out in the organizations. In this context public relations visits are provided by non-tourism organizations. The organizing process is taken care of among other work and organizers are usually not professionals in tourism nor commercial service providers. Characteristic to public relations visits is also that they are not for sale as tourism services or products, instead these visits based on organizations' needs and goals are tailored and offered for each guest and group of guests exclusively.

The aim of this research is to illuminate practices that organizations have in organizing public relations visits and view these practices through the lens of sustainability, responsibility, and overall quality of the visit. In this qualitative ethnographic research, I have shed light on practices arisen in conventional content analysis of data based on field diary, in-depth interview and memory-work. The data that is tapping also into years from 2011 to 2015 through memory-work method has been collected in time period from 2021 to the end of the first quarter of 2023 in authentic everyday environment in Northern Finland for illuminating practices in public and private sector organizations.

Referring to findings of this research organizations have four main groups of practices that are emphasized in organizing public relations visits. These include practices 1) guiding the arrangements, 2) of building connections, 3) of providing and sharing experiences and 4) of internal and external communications. The last mentioned, practice of communications, is cutting across the whole organizing process, hence being intertwined in three other practices.

The research shows practices that have been hindering the implementation of sustainable and responsible practices and lowering the quality of the public relations visit. These practices are connected with lack of internal and external communications, stemming from inadequate sharing of information and ending up causing challenges in the run of whole organizing process. Sustainability, responsibility, and overall quality of the public relations visits shall be improved through respectful communications not only inside the host organizations or between the host and guest organizations, but also through creating solid partnerships with local service providers sharing similar values dedicated to sustainability and responsibility. Moreover, I recommend attaching the upcoming public relations visit programmes activities in local nature in order to illuminate for the guests the crucial connection between northern nature and local life thus, enhancing the overall understanding of the meaning of sustainable and responsible choices in activities located in the North.

Key words: public relations visit, practice theory, ethnography, content analysis

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sustainability and responsibility of public relations visits

> *Some excitement is in the air as the awaited visit is about to begin. The members of the host organization are looking forward to meeting their guests and take them for a dinner. Following an invitation and a visit programme sent beforehand by the host organization, a group of guests is gathering around the dinner table in a local restaurant. A dinner after long travelling hopefully tastes good, and it feels nice to see the group before the official programme with tight schedule starts in the next morning. During the first dinner there is a good chance to get to know each other and say hello to already known partners or peers coming from further locations. The members of the host organization take care that everybody is alright, and after dinner help with the transfer to the hotel or other accommodation where the rooms have been booked beforehand. It's time to say "Good night! See you tomorrow!"*
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> *In the morning the host organization members take the guests to the organization office. A morning coffee is served and at the same time there is a good chance to say hello to other members of the host organization. The visit programme starts running and the first day is filled with meetings at the host organization or in another locations, and a business lunch that is served to a group in a local restaurant. In the evening the group is having a dinner with other members of the host organization, or some other stakeholders, in a nice local restaurant serving traditional dishes and delicacies. A member of the host organization responsible for bookings has made a table reservation in a restaurant beforehand. After a long day and a nice dinner, it is time to go to bed and say "Good night, everybody! See you tomorrow!"*
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> *On the next day, the visit programme continues, either on site at the host organization or in another location. During the day there are other kinds of activities included in the programme. The programme may include a visit, for instance, to a local company, tourism attraction, or just going outdoors together with the group, depending on the visit programme and other aspects such as what kind of services are available on that time of the year, what kind group is visiting and the weather conditions in the area. In the evening the group gathers for a dinner with host organization members, or other stakeholders. This final evening is filled with joy and sharing of highlights of the visit. After dinner it is time to wish "Good night! Have a safe trip back home!"*
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> *The departure takes place in the next morning after breakfast. The host organization members take care that their guests are safely taken to their departure journey.*

This is a typical framework for public relations visits, based on my experience. The diversity of the content of these tailored visits inspired me to study further the organizing of public relations visits on an operational level. My research topic concerns public relations visits organized by a host organization that is not a tourism organization nor providing tourism products or services with logic of commercial tourism. I am interested about the aspect because I consider public relations visits between organizations as tourism, as these visits include travelling, and the organizations are providing their kinds of activities to their partners or other stakeholders during these visits.

Public relations as a concept is used in many different ways, which according to Smith (2014, pp. 4-8), may cause confusion. Referring to Smith (2014, p. 9), Princeton University Professor Harwood Childs, has provided a classic and still insightful definition of public relations three-quarters of a century ago and states the basic problem of public relations being reconciling or adjusting in the public interest those aspects of our personal and organization behaviour which have a social significance. Nowadays, as illustrated by Smith (2014, pp. 9-14), public relations is largely about communications, public relations tools are often related to corporations and politics, and known for their misuse in impropriate way. However, according to Smith (2014, pp. 13-14) public relations and the same tools related can be used for good and helping society at large, as well as the organizations and people within society. Regarding this aspect Smith (2014, pp. 13-14) notifies about environmental issues, social justice, education, minority rights, and many other issues that are important to non-profit organizations and small businesses, for instance.

World Tourism Organization considers movements of people for professional purposes or business to countries or places outside the usual environment being tourism (UNWTO, 2020). Unger et al. (2016) notify that in academic literature tourism and work are often conceived as two distinct, even incoherent domains of life, even though there are recognizable situations where work and touristic activities are combined, pointing out for example business travellers.

Sustainable tourism can be considered as a comprehensive development of tourism that takes into account ecological, sociocultural, and financial aspects and that is fulfilling the needs of tourists, livelihood and local community without taking the possibility of fulfilling the needs of the future generations (Tyrväinen et al., 2013). The aim of responsible tourism, according to Veijola et al. (2013), is to make better places for people to live and better places for people to visit, hence the priority are local people and environment. Sustainable and responsible tourism are conceptually and practically close to each other, however responsible tourism emphasizes the action, hence sustainable tourism is the goal and responsible tourism is the process to reach the goal (Veijola et al., 2013). According to García-Rosell (2017) responsible tourism requires responsibility from stakeholders taking part on tourism.

I have rarely heard discussion about sustainability and responsibility regarding public relations visits and have not only paid attention to these issues when participating to and arranging them, but also have seen that there are many people struggling with ideas about activities that shall be provided for the guests. I recognize the need for unifying the public relations visit practices inside the organizations and raising sustainability and responsibility to be the core in all public relations visit arrangements as the practices at the moment are varied and demand a lot of resources like time and effort from the organizations. I also recognize the will for providing experiences to the guests in local environment and operating in local level with service providers.

Referring to my research I have not only been participatory observing and discussing with people but also been both participating on public relations visits and been responsible for organizing and hosting public relations visits in Northern Finland in public and private sector organizations. In my research the focus is on the organizations that are organizing the public relations visits to their guests. Hence, the point of view is not on a tourist or customer who is buying tourism product or service, rather the topic concerns the basis from where these visits are being built.

1.2 Previous research on public relations visits

Public relations profession is still evolving, referring to which there is no single definition for the phenomenon, and thus organizations are using public relations in diverse ways (Smith, 2014). One way of enhancing public relations are visits between organizations and the stakeholders. In earlier research the topic is focused around concepts of business travel, business visit, corporate site visit and company visits. However, academic literature discussing about organizing public relations visits in the host organizations seems to be rather less available.

Earlier research aspects investigating the topic around concepts of company or onsite visits are focusing on financial point of view, for example, by investigating the impact of site visits on analysts' forecast accuracy (Cheng et al., 2016), the impact of corporate site visits on stock prices (Cheng et al., 2019) and institutional investors’ corporate site visits regarding corporate innovation (Jiang and Yuan, 2018). Li et al. (2016) discuss in their article about another point of view, a specific form of non-market action: receiving government official’s visits (RGOV) and mirroring the effect of the visit on firm performance. Also, an aspect of labour mobility and growth pointing out to productivity impact have been acknowledged (see for example Piva et al., 2018). I have acknowledged these aspects on public relations visits, however these aspects are not relevant regarding my research which is focusing on operational level in organizing the visits.

Earlier research also investigates the topic from onsite learning point of view. For example, Sommarström et al. (2017) illustrate the company visits organisation from the perspective of the teachers. Through case study Sommarström et al. (2017) illuminate the utilisation of a company as a learning environment and outline these methods being useful in entrepreneurship education, however state visit organizing being a laborious task for teachers with multiple contacts and planning required among other work. In addition, Sommarström et al. (2017) notify that companies are difficult to contact, but museums, science-centres, zoos and libraries are better available as they are places designed for public visits.

Ladkin (2006), for instance, talks about conference tourism referring to the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences or Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE), which as an industry largely associated with travel for business purposes. Thus, this research aspect is more related to commercial conference tourism services that are, according to Ladkin (2006, p. 56), overlapping in many sectors such as conferences that are organized in association with a large exhibition, or including as a part on an incentive travel reward. Even being acknowledged here, this aspect is not relevant regarding my research topic at hand.

Regarding business travel, earlier academic articles are discussing about travel as a journey starting from planning and ending back home and reflecting the journey afterwards from the traveller’s point of view. For example Unger et al. (2016) are illuminating business travel experiences among frequent business travellers as a framework of time with four phases which include trip preparations, passenger experiences, destination experiences and homecoming. In their study Unger et al. (2016) add insight to mobility research of tourism, conceptualization of the interconnection of tourism and work, and literature on business travellers.

My interest, however, is focused on phase of destination experience (Unger et al. 2016) mentioned above, where I recognize a research gap and space left for further research from aspect of organizing a visit. So far it has been studied, how business travellers experience their stay in destination (see Unger et al., 2020), however it remains open how the stay, in this research the public relations visit, is organized by the host organization.

This is an interesting aspect on tourism discussion as the earlier research material of this topic has been challenging to find. Nevertheless, illuminating public relations visit purposes or organization specific goals in detail are not the aim in this research either as the needs and goals are distinctive in each organization. Instead, I am seeking to research the topic for increasing understanding about the practices of organizing a public relations visits in the organizations on operational level in order to provide aspects for conducting more sustainable, responsible and qualified visit practices in the future.

1.3 Aim of the research

In order to shed light on the operational level and referring to the phase of destination experience described by Unger et al. (2016) I am seeking to illuminate practices embedded in organizing the public relations visits in host organizations. The purpose of my research is to find answers to the main question: *What kind of practices do host organizations have in organizing public relations visits?* The main research question is elaborated with the sub-questions: *1) What kind of practices have been hindering the implementation of sustainable and responsible practices?* and *2) How practices should be changed in order to improve sustainability, responsibility and overall quality of the public relations visits?*

As I am interested about how the host organizations can relate the North, the northern nature, sustainability and responsibility being a crucial part of the partnership, I seek to illuminate the need for unifying the practices and finally suggest organizations to create a method for providing sustainable and responsible public relations visits. By emphasizing the importance of cooperation with local service providers I also outline sustainable local partnerships and the possibilities stemming from northern nature in the core of providing successful public relations visits in the North.

My research applies qualitative approach that has an interpretative touch. The research is ethnographic by its character as I am using methodology where my participation as a researcher is integrated in the process. I am implementing the practice theory in analysing the routinized conventions and material aspects of practices arising from the data. In this research the conventional content analysis of data rests on field diary, in-depth interview and memory-work. The field diary consists of numerous notices about practices arisen in informal discussions and participatory observing from 2021 until the end of the first quarter of 2023. By conducting an in-depth interview I aim to deepen the data. With a memory-work data I seek to tap into the past referring to organizing of public relations visits dating back to years from 2011 to 2015, hence widening the data. The diverse data serves the research at hand as due to anonymity issues it is not possible to conduct research solely in one organization. In this research the field diary based on the participatory observation, informal discussions and field notes, as well as the in-depth interview and the memory-work material are all used as an equal research data.

The research data is collected by myself by following means of practice theory. Through diverse ethnographic methods I had an opportunity to gather vast information about the topic. After significant observations I wrote notes, hence had an opportunity for pinpointing the relevant practices, not to forget about the sustainability and responsibility aspects. Eventually the highlighted practices formed the scheme for illuminating common way of organizing public relations visits in the organizations.

Ethical issues concerning the participants and stakeholders of the public relations visits are especially matters of confidentiality obligations and handling the data. It shall be notified that not only people but also the information are safely handled and protected in the organizations. Referring to this, all the employees in the organizations are guided and committed to do their share in protecting the organization. Due to my professional confidentiality and the strict confidentiality obligations of the organizations I have consciously chosen to not provide any further details about the organizations. These requirements have been agreed with three organizations that my data covers. I conduct the research anonymously, thus further details about research participants, such as gender, age, the organization they come from, and other topic-related background information, are consciously left untold as the people participating in my research are recognizable through their positions in the organizations. In addition, my field diary notes include anonymous notices about practices of people who are not asked for a personal permission to use the data on their behalf in the research purpose.

It shall be carefully notified that my research aspect is specific as it is directed from inside the organizations. I emphasize that the focus of this research is in illuminating practices, not other people's work nor organization specific details. I will strictly follow all the rules of the organizations referring to the confidentiality obligations during the research and when reporting the findings. Hence, all the data is handled with high respect of anonymity. Moreover, I will not express the dates, not even on year accuracy, of field diary, in-depth interview, or memory-work citations.

The aim is to conduct research with respect of the North, provide insight for scientific community and tools for the organizations in order to serve also broader operator audience in northern tourism. The research data aims to illuminate aspects for making the public relations visits more sustainable and responsible than they have been so far. The research findings can be used in the future for planning and producing further public relations visits in more sustainable and responsible way with respect of the North.

1.4 Structure of the research

This thesis research consists of eight main chapters. In the introduction I have presented the empirical phenomenon and the research setting. After this the thesis builds on seven main chapters that introduce the theoretical framework and methodology of the research, analysis of the data, implications based on findings, and finally conclusions.

In chapter 2 I am representing the theoretical background of my research. I shall begin with providing insights on aspects of practice theory and after continue with illustrating the concept of public relations and practices referring to public relations visits.

In chapter 3 I introduce the research methodology and the data of my research. I start with introducing the inquiry paradigm that is guiding my choices in this research. To illustrate the qualitative approach of my study I shall continue with elaborating on ethnographic data. The empirical materials used in this research consist of field diary based on participatory observation and informal discussions in the organizations, along with in-depth interview and memory-work data. I will then continue with conventional content analysis on my data by introducing the main clusters of practices drawn from it. Finally I discuss the ethical considerations of the research.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 introduce the findings based on conventional content analysis by discussing each cluster of main practices in their own chapters with respective subchapters. In chapter 7 I am presenting implications based on research findings by drawing together the findings of my data analysis process. In the chapter 8 I will conclude my thesis by reflecting on my main research question and limitations regarding my research. I will summarize the findings and make suggestions for further research. In the conclusions I am wrapping up the implications of the study for practice and evaluation of its contribution to the academic discussion.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Practice theory

Bargeman and Richards (2020) state that “practice turn” has recently gained a lot of attention as practice theories have been increasingly utilised in social sciences and tourism studies. Referring to Bargeman and Richards (2020) the practice turn emerged in 1990s with an idea that practice is an organized constellation of human activities and important aspects of human life were seen as practices, not simply the activity of individuals, but rather as organized context-related activities by groups of people. According to Bargeman and Richards (2020) the practice turn is marked by a concern to understand the role of practices as products and recursive producers of social structures

Nicolini (2012) states that a unified theory of practice does not exist - instead, practice theories consist of vast family of theoretical approaches that are connected through conceptual and historical similarities. Nicolini (2012) also points out that practice-oriented approaches have become more influential and have been applied to the analysis of phenomena, for example policy making, science, culture, learning and consumption. Pointing out to this diversity Bargeman and Richards (2020) highlight the main strands of practice theory, their application and relevance to tourism studies, and illuminate how different aspects of practice theory can be adopted in tourism research. Bargeman and Richards (2020) state that the researcher is in a key position in deciding which approach is the most suitable referring to one’s research.

Regarding the practice perspective, Nicolini (2012) states that the knowledge is greatly identified with a form of mastery that is expressed in the capacity to perform a social and material activity. Hence, according to Nicolini (2012) knowledge can be seen as a way of knowing shared with others, through learning acquired set of practical methods, embodied, inscribed in objects, and in discourse only partially articulated. Nicolini (2012) also points out that becoming a part of an existing practice demands learning how to act, what to say and how to speak, and also what to expect, how to feel and what things mean.

According to RØpke (2009) and, Bargeman and Richards (2020) practices are ways of acting that are characterized by a routinized use of certain rules and resources. In addition, they show continuity and regularity over a period of time and in certain space contexts (Bargeman &

Richards, 2020), hence practices are steered more by practical consciousness, rather than discursive one. For example, in the complexity of everyday life travel routines constitute order and coherence, which is why, referring to Bargeman and Richards (2020) the actions, interactions and behaviour in practice are determined by characteristics of the actor and conditions of the context.

Shove et al. (2012) outline that the contours of any practice depend on changing populations of more or less faithful practitioners or carriers. According to this people can be seen as practitioners who actively combine the elements of which practices are made. Referring to Shove et al. (2012) these elements are 1) materials (including for example things, technologies and tangible elements), 2) competences (including skills, know-how and technique), and 3) meanings (covering for example ideas, symbolic meanings and aspirations). When connections between these three elements are made, sustained or broken, practices emerge, persist, shift and disappear thus, this simple formulation of Shove et al. (2012) provides a means of conceptualizing stability and change. According to Shove et al. (2012) the chances of becoming the carrier of any practice are closely related to the symbolic and social significance of participation and different types of capital required for and generated by participation. As individuals are constantly taking up and dropping out different practices as their lives unfold, attention should be paid to issues of access and to how commitments change over time (Shove et al., 2012).

Referring to Wenger and Snyder (2000) in business and in industry the organizations have sought to bring into being “communities of practice” by means of institutional design. Shove et al. (2012) add that as close-knit networks are especially conductive to innovation and when the diffusion of new practices illuminates movements of people within and between social worlds, there is a reason for arranging companies, cities and regions for facilitating these forms of interaction.

In their research stemming from organizational context Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011) state that the term “practice” refers to embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity that are organized centrally around a practical understanding which is shared. Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011) draw on practice theories where a practice consists of particular, hierarchically organized bundles of basic actions or activities which may constitute practices as such at a lower level of abstraction. In addition, referring to Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011) a basic action can be performed simultaneously in many contexts and it can constitute various higher order actions. Thus, Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011) outline that practices are consistent and coherent patterns of purposive activities that are performed through various interconnected bodily and mental behaviours in the organization. These behaviours are guided by and grounded in particular collective structures of knowing, understanding and reasoning that transcend the individual (Järventie-Thesleff et al., 2011). These collectively shared knowledge schemes and codes, according to Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011), constitute a trans-subjective background understanding of what constitutes a desirable, appropriate, intelligible and normal course of action in specific situations, in terms of thinking, feeling and doing.

In my research I apply a form of practice theory referring to Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011) who suggest that the personnel in organization in their daily tasks carry out certain collectively shared understandings and socially instituted practices or trans-subjective knowledges, which on one hand facilitate making sense of the world in particular ways and, on the other hand, in particular contexts sanction particular behaviours as worthwhile, desirable and appropriate. In my thesis research I illuminate materials, competences and meanings, in other words the elements forming practices, and outline the presence of certain practices in diverse forms of thinking, feeling and doing. In doing so, I shed light on connectedness of practices and illuminate bundles of practices as described by Shove et al. (2012, p. 63) and Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011).

2.2 Public relations visit practices

Public relations is part of the work that is carried out within organizations. Both Curtin and Kenn Gaither (2007) and Smith (2014) outline that public relations can be defined in many ways, yet there is no single definition as the profession is evolving. Curtin and Kenn Gaither (2007) point out that rather than providing a definition per se scholars have sought to develop more parsimonious definitions and identifying key words that describe the practice of public relations, which include strategy, managerial, tactical and responsive. According to Smith (2014) concepts like strategic management, organizational goals, mutual understanding, goodwill and public interest are emphasized among various definitions. Verčič and Grunig (2002) state that public relations is about management of trust in conditions of bounded rationality and opportunism.

According to Moss et al. (2002) the public relations profession as we know it in Europe roots back to the post-Second World War period and is nowadays a recognized business function within countries located in Western Europe. Referring to Smith (2014) public relations in Finland and in Scandinavian neighbouring countries began during the middle of the 20th century. The Finnish Association of Public Relations, founded in 1947, is the oldest in the Europe and is known especially as an effort to promote Olympics as well as a success in generating international sympathy for Finland's resistance against Russia during the Winter War of 1939-40 (Smith, 2014, p. 62). Moss et al. (2002) state that majority of the research into public relations within Europe is based on theoretical frameworks and models developed by US scholars, hence in the beginning of 21st century the discipline was still relatively immature in Europe. As the countries in Europe have their own traditions and culture Moss et al. (2002) outline that it is necessary to study how public relations is understood and practiced in order to apply the conceptualizations of the public relations. Thus the introduction of international perspectives of public relations helps to strengthen and broaden understanding and expands the overall knowledge of how public relations is practiced throughout the world (Moss et al., 2002).

Curtin and Kenn Gaither (2007) outline public relations being communicative process which involves some form of communication as a purposeful choice and which is largely about creating and recreating ideas and generating meaning. MacManus (2002, p. 169) adds that central role for public relations is communicating organization values thus, encouraging mutual understanding throughout the organization. Curtin and Kenn Gaither (2007) add that the international public relations must be inclusive in order to accurately reflect the variety of worldwide communication processes, hence a single definition of public relations may be less important than an informed worldview which embeds varied meanings and the recognition that in international public relations the meaning is a generated and iterative process.

According to Smith (2014, p. 16) organizations use public relations in various ways, for example corporate public relations is a way not only to publicize products or gain customers but also to maintain a communication link with investors, regulators and industry colleagues. Smith (2014, pp. 16-28) also adds that government public relations involve a lobbying seeking to impact public policy decisions, while public diplomacy covers formal state-to-state relations and public diplomacy, for example campaigns for or against various issues. According to Smith (2014, pp. 19-28) political public relations refer more on the process of election and staying in the office, whereas non-profit public relations are preferred by many practitioners as they cover many kinds of organizations, for example unions and professional groups, and also involves tourism and travel, and as they can serve the public good and contribute to better society. Public relations are also used for social reform, such as campaigning against human trafficking (see Smith, 2014, p. 25). Smith (2014, p. 8) emphasizes that abbreviation PR referring to public relations is not generally used by professionals due to association with rather negative misinterpretations, hence the full term is used also through this thesis research.

Wakefield (2002, pp. 184-185) talks about excellent practices in international public relations and states that a successful practice includes variables that should be present in the organization, among management and with practitioners. Referring to Wakefield (2002, p. 185) among certain characteristics of excellence are symmetrical communications with influential publics, combining public relations functions into a unit separate from marketing and development of such a conditions in the organization that allow practitioners and other employees to function freely, not to forget about providing equal opportunities for all employees. Schultz and Hatch (2005) take another aspect based on their experience and state that the framework for corporate branding works well as a rationale for combining corporate activities like visioning, image management, culture change and corporate communication, activities that are usually treated independently. However, Schultz and Hatch (2005, p. 339) state that breaking down the old boundaries between different business functions and creating new reasons to collaborate bring much complexity, hence managers need a simple integrated framework that enables them to link internal and external stakeholders and related business functions. Wakefield (2002) adds that organizations should have clear policies and communications in public relations to support the actions, including guidelines for budgets, evaluation and control.

Osborne and Huston (2010, p. 89) on their behalf open up a context of a complex international dialogue in public relations and advice to be open and honest with stakeholders, to meet and talk regularly for developing close personal relationships, to share information and jointly agree and record actions to avoid potential misunderstandings. Referring to communications and meetings required by public relations, for example Curtin and Kenn Gaither (2007) notify that tourism and public relations are inextricably intertwined in international public relations, hence international perceptions of a country are crucial in attracting tourism and may facilitate cultivating economic interest in the area. As the specialisation of tourism from ecotourism to sustainable tourism to extreme tourism is increasing it challenges public relations practitioners to communicate to more heterogeneous, niche-oriented audiences (Curtin & Kenn Gaither, 2007).

According to my experience about searching literature concerning hosting public relations visits in the organizations, I have a vision that relatively little empirical research has been focused in my research topic. In addition, I see contact points in my own research aspect with Järventie-Thesleff et al.'s (2011) research, which is why I am highly interested in applying their methods in my own research. On the following text I will highlight the key points that fit in my research as well.

The research site in Järventie-Thesleff et al.'s (2011) study was an organization carrying out an initiated process of strategic change for creating and establishing a new corporate brand. The aim of the project was to establish a shared culture with a common way of operating (Järventie-Thesleff et al., 2011, pp. 189-199). Thus, the basis of Järventie-Thesleff et al.'s (2011) research goal is very much similar as in my thesis research, as I am aiming to illuminate a common way of organizing a public relations visit in host organizations by shedding light on existing practices in order to provide aspects for developing the visits in more sustainable and responsible direction. According to Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011) the use of ethnographic methods provided a rich data set allowing the researchers to note small and seemingly insignificant goings-on at research site, including the suppressed, the marginalized and the unacknowledged. These are the statements that convinced me about the research methods in my own research.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 The inquiry paradigm

According to Slevitch (2011) scientific paradigms are determined by ontological positions which establish our process of knowing. Slevitch (2011) states that paradigm is a world view or a set of linked assumptions of the world and it can also be described as a cognitive perspective or shared beliefs where particular discipline lies on. Referring to Slevitch (2011) any scientific inquiry is based on a certain paradigm: quantitative paradigm stems from positivism which has realist orientation and is based on an idea about independent existing reality that can be described as it really is, while qualitative paradigm is based on interpretivism and constructivism which both stem from idealist point of view.

The paradigm guiding my methodological choices in my research is social constructivism. As Goodson and Phillimore (2004) state, rather than physical locations, tourism spaces can be recognized as socio-cultural constructions. As tourism spaces are socially constructed, it is important to notice how the meanings referring to these places are constructed, deconstructed or reconstructed during the time. I agree with Goodson and Phillimore (2004) in outlining that the research should also focus upon the individual's role in the active construction and reconstruction of reality through interaction with others and the meanings they include to diverse aspects of tourism. Thus, according to Goodson and Phillimore (2004), there is a need for qualitative methods of data collection, not to forget an awareness of researcher's position and practice within the research process. Regarding my research, I determine that empirical research designed from qualitative perspective is apt.

3.2 Ethnographic data

Ethnography can be defined in many ways. Lappalainen (2007) states that when the researcher is being part of the study group the study can be seen as ethnographic research. Referring to Lappalainen (2007) the aim of ethnography is to diversely analyse cultural processes and the meanings given to them, hence making visible people's everyday stories. The ethnographer familiarizes oneself with the group and learns to act within its cultural and social contexts, hence sorting the experiences on field, locating them analytically and interpreting the outcomes by showing one's own actions (Lappalainen, 2007). Physical and emotional presence are particular characteristics of ethnographic research process, Lappalainen (2007) adds. Bengtsson (2014) outlines that the researcher knows more about the data than is expressed in text referring to a recognition of an overall experience of the research context and the complexity of including every detail of those moments in a text form.

My thesis research is ethnographic by its character and referring to this regard I will next illuminate my research context, which will enhance understanding of my interests in this research. I was born and grew up in Northern Finland, where my parents taught me to understand and respect nature. The Finnish forests and swamps have always been located right on our backyard, which is why I learnt already in my early age how to behave in and respectfully face the northern nature. Going to forest has always been an essential part of my life. I have learnt that nature is not solely for human, instead, human is one part in a big picture – in other words, the nature is not serving human as a backdrop. Arlander (2022) puts it wisely to words when stating that knowing is not only human action: it should be noticed that knowing includes also non-human aspects as knowing is about how a part of the world makes itself knowable to another part of the world.

My love for nature lead me to study geography, botany, zoology, genetics and environmental protection – and eventually Northern Tourism - in the northern universities. I have a long experience on public sector in the field of education, related to geography and biology. In addition, I have experience of working on private sector, including both SMEs and corporation side. International cooperation have been intertwined on my whole work history. Travelling has been my hobby for over two decades. As Bengtsson (2014) emphasizes, in ethnographic study it is not only about the verbal or bodily signals that the researcher is observing and documenting, it should also be notified that feelings about the situation overall are important data as well. In this research I let both my own as well as the research participants' feelings come up.

According to Lappalainen (2007) common characteristics for ethnographic research are field work that has lasted for a reasonable amount of time, diversity of data, methods and analytical aspects, conducting research in circumstances where people participating in the research are living, and the crucial meaning of participation, observing and experiencing in the research process. My research data consists of field diary based on my own participatory observation. In addition, I deepen my data with one person's in-depth interview and one memory-work. Both the interviewee and the memory-work participant are experienced with public relations visits.

Referring to diversity of my ethnographic research data, also for example Rantala (2011) applies versatile data in her ethnographic research about how Lappish commercial forests can be adapted to environments where commercial nature tourism services can be provided. The research of Rantala's (2011) contributes to the conceptual development of nature-based tourism research as the analysis of the social, routinized and material dimensions of practices is based on practice theory. The research of Rantala's (2011) has been highly inspiring me.

During the research period, from 2021 to the end of the first quarter of 2023, that also covers years 2011-2015 through memory-work, I have participated in public relations visits in a role of organizer, host and a guest on private sector, including SMEs and corporations, and on public sector. I have experience of hosting public relations visits in Northern Finland. Moreover, I have experience of organizing visits and representing organizations as a guest on a visit not only in my home country Finland but also in Central, Western and Southern Europe. In this research, I am focusing on practices of organizing public relations visits in Northern Finland. My data covers three organizations. Usually the public relations visit programme covers three to five days including travelling, depending on the content of the visit.

Referring to thesis research at hand, my passion on research topic is perceptible. In this research I am approaching the topic from the organizer and host point of view, hence using ethnographic methodology in which research has been conducted from inside the organizations. I am emphasizing practices regarding organizing public relations visits in Northern Finland. By choosing this point of view the geographical conditions are suitable to my research.

I consider participatory observation and memory-work being good methods for gathering the data because due to limited group of possible research participants, busy schedules, and sensitive topic it is a challenge to have participants to be interviewed. I conducted one in-depth interview with one interviewee, and one memory-work with one participant. I find diverse methods of data collection as an advantage for the research as the observation material supports the situations where the interviewee or memory-work participant has a challenge to put one's thoughts in words. My field diary notes contain anonymous notices about practices of people whose personal permission I don't have for observing. Hence, all the data in this research is handled with high respect of anonymity. In addition, due to my work-related professional confidentiality referring to the organizations and high respect of anonymity I will not express the dates, not even on year accuracy, in any citations of my field diary to avoid insulting the confidentiality obligations of the organizations. Moreover, I will not express the dates or years related to memory-work and in-depth interview citations, as people participating in my research are recognizable through their positions in their organizations.

Observation data

According to Hall (2011) one of the defining approaches of academic research is fieldwork thus, in generating knowledge "the real world" is a crucial component. Huttunen (2010) states that in ethnographic research the core of collecting data is fieldwork that is based on participative observation. McMorran (2011) emphasizes that using work as a form of observation provides a level of ongoing contact with the research group and location, which would be impossible with any other method. I have been discussing informally about public relations visits, and the contents within, preparing schedules and arranging activities during my research period. During and after discussions, and actual planning meetings I have made handwritten notes about practices and collected them in my note books as part of my work from 2021 until the end of the first quarter of 2023.

In the beginning, the observation was spontaneous and the notes contain the most valuable observation at that moment. According to Rantala (2011) it is important to point out the process character of data collecting: as my data is divided for several years, between these periods I had enough time to assimilate with my data, which helped me to identify and sharpen the research topic and become aware of routinized practices that were similar even though the organizations were changing. During the latest years the theoretical framework clarified as the research process proceeded and I learnt to recognize the patterns of routinized practices. Thus, I wrote 58 pages of field diary where I have deconstructed in detail all the public relations visit arrangements that I have been concretely organizing starting from 2021 until the end of the first quarter of 2023. I focused on practices that occurred repeatedly, hence showing characteristics of routinized, purposive doings and collectively shared understandings in thinking, feeling and doing. This enhanced my understanding of practices that are shared in organizing public relations visits. Later in this thesis research I am referring to my observation data with reference *Field diary*.

Memory-work data

Before entering the memory-work and in-depth interview, I started with thanking the participants for taking part in my research and reminded them about the letter of consent (see Appendix 1) that I had sent and that one had signed: the participation was voluntary and one could withdraw from the research when ever felt like. I also reminded about anonymous and confidential handling of research material. In addition, it was emphasized that I would write my research findings in a form that the participants will not be recognized through the texts. The discussions were held in both participants' native languages in order to provide a chance for a definite and deep understanding of the content of discussion.

I used memory-work method described by Small (2004) in studying earlier public relations visits dating back to from 2011 to 2015. According to Small (2004), in this method, the collective construction of memories is important, not the individual history as memory-work attempts to avoid biography. Memory-work doesn't need to be confined in tourists, however can also be employed in studies of hosts, as suggested (Small, 2004). The method of memory-work emanated from feminist social constructionism, hence there are multiple realities which are socially constructed through social processes, like language (Small, 2004). By using this method I, as a researcher, am able to tap into the past through collective examination of memories in the procedure of three different phases: 1) writing the memory, 2) collective meet and 3) further examination and theorisation of collective writing of phases 1 and 2 (Small, 2004).

I conducted the memory-work method in March 2023 with one participant who has a long experience of organizing, hosting and participating as guest in public relations visits. We agreed to write a short piece of text separately, both of us on our own, referring to a topic by recalling the meanings of the public relations visits as well as practices of organizing and participating in these visits from 2011 to 2015. I wrote two pages and my memory-work participant four pages. After three days we had a 57 minutes of discussion together during which we shared our memories and intertwined them. After this common discussion I put together the material for further examination, ending up having six pages of memory-work data. Later in this thesis research I am referring to my memory-work data with reference *Memory-work*.

In-depth interview data

I conducted one in-depth interview with one interviewee, one-to-one, in March 2023. The root of in-depth interviewing, according to Jordan and Gibson (2004), is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. I invited to my research an interviewee who is experienced with public relations visits not only as a host and organizer but also as a visitor, hence I had an opportunity to gain information both on the host's as well as from the visitor's aspect. My aim was to gain a broad understanding about the topic, thus I decided to conduct an unstructured interview, starting with an opening question and then let the interviewee lead the discussion and show the direction of the topic. My starting question in the interview was "Please, describe the most memorable public relations visit that you have had so far and why it was so memorable." As Hsieh and Shannon (2005) suggest, my interview included also open-ended questions like "Can you tell me more about that?" As I had experience-based background knowledge about the public relations visits, this affected on setting the first interview question and also the following extra questions and comments in order to deepen the discussion.

I decided to record the interview as it was broad and very informative. For recording the discussion I asked for and got permission from my interviewee. I used the recorder on my mobile phone, hence the recording was easy to arrange and I knew how to handle the recorded material easily. The interview took 40 minutes and it was conducted as an online interview. During the interview I had to concentrate on listening carefully as the first topics started to rise already in the first minutes. I wrote notes only slightly during the interview, in order to avoid disturbing the discussion. Also Bengtsson (2014) made similar solution in her study.

After transcribing the interview I slept overnight and let my thoughts calm down. I printed the transcribed text on the next day. Then I started to read the text like I was reading a novel. I soon found practices rising from the text. Later in this thesis research I am referring to my straight in-depth interview citations with reference *Interviewee*.

Referring to Jordan and Gibson (2004), when the same topics start to rise, the research saturation is achieved. In my research the saturation was found after one in-depth interview and one memory-work session enclosed to research data as the same practices started to emerge repeatedly. I am convinced that my background knowledge and long-lasting participatory observation enhanced the saturation as I quickly realized the connecting practices from the in-depth interview and memory-work thus, could pinpoint them straight to my earlier observation notices.

3.3 Conventional content analysis

I started the data analysis with my observation data and continued with in-depth interview data. In the end, I added the memory-work data in my research. All the data was interpreted by content analysis in which, referring to Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017), the objective was to systematically transform a large amount of text in to a highly organized and concise summary of key results. All the data were examined with content analysis.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) outline that current applications of content analysis show three different approaches (conventional, directed and summative), rather than being a single method, and they all are used to interpret meaning from the content of text data. In their article Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define qualitative content analysis being a research method for the subjective interpretation of text data that is classified in systematic process of coding and identifying patterns or themes. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), conventional content analysis is often used when the aim is to describe a phenomenon. When following the conventional content analysis the coding categories are allowed to flow directly from the data.

I began with my field diary text which I had written as my research took steps forward. After analysing the field diary I continued with transcribed interview data and in the end I examined the memory-work data. All the data was analysed in the same way. At first I decided to print my texts and made my first notions by hand on the papers as I needed to clarify myself all the aspects that I could recognize in my text. I read my text like I was reading a novel: reading all the data repeatedly to obtain a sense of whole as described in the article of Hsieh and Shannon (2005).

I started my analysis with illuminating to myself what comments in my diary text are my own assumptions and what are actual experiences of other people. I noticed that some of my notices are based on my tacit knowledge by which I mean personal knowledge that I have gained by personal experience. As I went back to the root of my tacit knowledge statements I realized that they include a lot of material: this information is something that I have learned in practice during a long run in my work history.

After illuminating these experience aspects I moved on to a next phase in my analysis. I circled all the words that describe activities and practices as I am investigating my topic through the lens of practice theory. Thus, I read the text again word by word and circled the exact words that point out to clearly emerging key thoughts and concepts, as Hsieh and Shannon (2005) advice in their article.

When I had circled the words I approached the text by listing these words one below other, hence it was easier for me to make notices about my first impressions and thoughts. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), as the process continued labels for codes emerged, hence being reflective of more than one key thought and forming the initial coding scheme. On the next phase I sorted the codes into categories as they were linked and related together. Shove et al. (2012) explain that like the elements of practice (materials, meanings and competences) are linked together forming recognizable practices, also practices link in order to form loose-knit patterns, bundles of practices. I found out that there were connecting similarities in my categories, hence I started to combine them. In the end I used the categories to group and organize codes into meaningful clusters as described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005).

When reading, coding and categorizing this data, four (4) main clusters of practices flew directly from the data (Figure 1). These include practices 1) guiding the arrangements, 2) of providing experiences, 3) of building connections and 4) of internal and external communications.

Next I will open up, what is included in these clusters. In cluster 1 there are practices of setting goals and making plans, inviting, offering and tailoring, organizing events and making bookings, and finally, recognizing limits and following rules (see Figure 1). In cluster 2 there are practices of participation and participating, sharing activities and meaning-making, as well as experiencing and sharing the experience. In cluster 3 there are practices referring to creating and nurturing connections, building networks and maintaining partnerships.

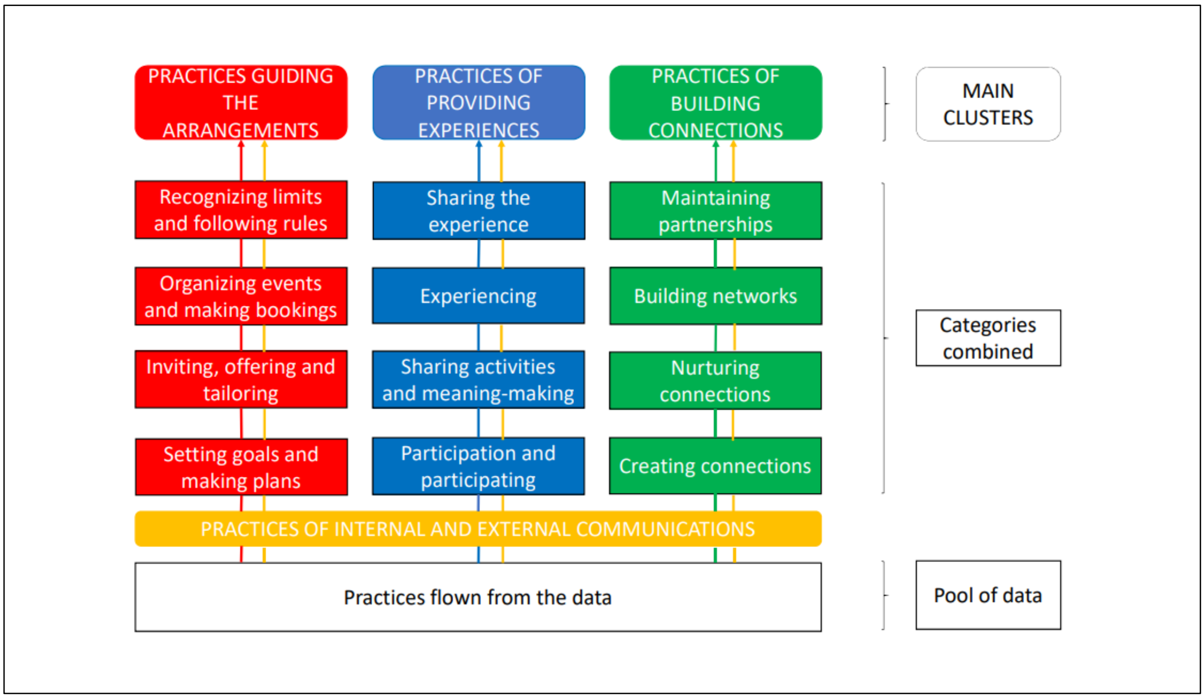

Figure 1. A tree diagram describing the conventional content analysis.

Finally, in cluster 4 there are practices of internal and external communications, which play a crucial role in all phases of organizing public relations visits: these are about communications inside and outside the host organization. This main cluster is embedded to the former three main clusters as the practices of communications are affecting in all phases of organizing, and in doing so, cutting across the whole organizing process of public relations visits.

I used a tree diagram (see figure 1) in order to organize the categories in to a reasonable hierarchical structure as Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe the combination of large number of subcategories into a smaller number of categories. On the next phase I developed the definitions to each subcategory and category, and for reporting the findings I identified exemplars from the data for each code and category (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The following chapters 4, 5 and 6 are organized around these.

3.4 Research ethics

According to The Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2013) research ethics, tutkimusetiikka in Finnish, is a general concept covering the ethical viewpoints and evaluations related to science and research. Knowing research ethics is a crucial part of the professionality of researcher (Mustajoki & Kohonen, 2021).

Mustajoki and Kohonen (2021) notify that research ethics aim to protect the object of the research and, on the other hand, they (2021) outline those effects that the research can cause to the object. They (2021) also talk about research integrity which can be understood as honesty in research. TENK (2013) emphasises the requirement for all researchers to adopt research integrity in their research activities. In my opinion, Mustajoki and Kohonen (2021) say it well when outlining the importance of research ethics and reminding that it shows the professionality of the researcher, when having an ability to apply ethical thinking also in cases where there are no straight instructions available. The point is that research ethics, especially the Finnish word tutkimusetiikka, as a concept contains a vast idea of responsibility, ethics and honesty in research (Mustajoki & Kohonen, 2021).

As Cabric (2015) states, information is essential for security in the organizations. The protection in the organizations focuses, for example, on people, property, process, product and information, which is why people in the organizations are required, on one hand, to protect information in terms of protecting value and, on the other hand, of blocking a tool that could be used for an action against the organization (Cabric, 2015). According to Cabric (2015) nowadays the security aspect is focused on ICT, however information also in traditional sense, such as written, spoken, and visual information needs to be considered. As Cabric (2015) outlines, all employees are guided into doing their part through their everyday actions in the security system of the organization. Referring to my notices, members of the organizations are committed to confidentiality obligations.

In this thesis research at hand, the research sheds light on practices inside the organizations, hence the focus is on internal practices, which makes the fundamental basis of this research topic particular. In doing so, the aspect entails particularly strict research ethics as achieving the internal practices brings also the crucial questions referring to confidentiality obligations of the organizations. I emphasize that the purpose of this thesis research is not to investigate organization activities nor other people’s work, instead the focus is on practices. The intercourse in this kind of a research is especially challenging as the researcher needs to carefully consider every detail through the lens confidentiality. This consideration requires creative solutions by the researcher in order to be able to report research findings without insulting the confidentiality obligations of the organizations. The supervisor of this thesis research at hand has been informed about permission issues and challenges brought by confidentiality obligations. The solutions related to these matters have been agreed with the supervisor. The most challenging and demanding part of this thesis research has been producing information with versatile considerations while respecting the confidentiality obligations of the organizations.

TENK (2013) outlines the fact that for a professionally competent researcher it is crucial to master the knowledge and the methodology associated in with one’s field and comply with the practices that are ethically sustainable. Also Aivelo (2020) points out that the power of scientific publication lies much more often in the method that was used rather than the results. Poor research skills may lead to research misconduct which again refers to misleading not only the research community but also the decision-makers (TENK, 2013). In addition, when conducting research among humans, and in case the study requires information for example about identity, the data collection requires a physical touch, or the study creates a risk for the participants or their relatives regarding mental suffering that crosses over everyday limits, it is crucial to take the research entity through the investigation regarding ethical pre-assessment (TENK, 2019). In my opinion, the previously mentioned is crucially related also to notion of National Advisory Board on Research Ethics (2009) regarding avoiding harm resulting from research that can stem from, for instance, improper collection or storage of data, as well as the consequences regarding the publishing of studies. In this research the ethical pre-assessment investigation is not necessary as the research doesn’t require any identity information or physical touch with participants. Moreover, the research doesn’t create a risk of personal suffering as it is not focusing on personal matters. In addition, also the organizations are kept anonymous in this research.

In this study I conducted research by observing everyday practices inside the organizations. In order to protect the internal information and privacy it was necessary to handle all the professional and personal information carefully. Thus, I had to strictly follow and respect the rules concerning the organization related confidentiality obligations throughout the research.

All the data was handled and stored confidentially. In addition to observing I conducted an in-depth interview and memory-work with participants, both of whom being experienced with public relations visits. The research was conducted anonymously as the both the interviewee as well as the participant of memory-work can be identified through their positions in their organizations.

During the participatory observation and informal discussions on site I got a vision about basic practices, however I recognized especially the in-depth interview and memory-work sessions being intensive learning events as I learned insightful aspects about the topic. For me as a researcher it was important to stay patient and listen carefully in order to provide enough space for the interviewee and memory-work participant to put one's thinking into words. I also realized the fundamental meaning of the confidentiality in these discussions: in order to have deeper discussions and common understanding it is important to show the both-sided trustworthiness. For me trustworthiness in discussions is not a difficult a task, instead the main challenge was how to put in words the confidential material which is crucial in reporting research findings.

When conducting study in the field of tourism research it is also crucial to pay attention to the ethics of tourism. Nykänen and Veijola (2013) discuss about the ethics of tourism and state it being about analysing the questions about good and bad, and right and wrong regarding tourism, and state that it has gained a lot of attention, not only among tourism research but also among tourists. According to Nykänen and Veijola (2013) tourism researchers and developers have studied the topic in mainly three points of view: the philosophical ethics adapted to tourism topics, launching codes of "ethical tourism" and ethics of hospitality. As Nykänen and Veijola (2013) outline the ethical points of view are nowadays also a crucial part of developing tourism, hence in this study I have paid attention in this point of view as well by supporting ethical aspects.

In this point I like to refer to Meijer (1993) who makes an insightful notion on focalisation, which can be understood as a connection between what is seen and the subject of vision. In her article Meijer (1993) states that reality and text should not be considered as two separate parts: through analysing a photo and narrative included by the photographer, Meijer (1993) outlines the focalisation being photographer's worldview where the dominant values of narrator are illuminated and a harsh event in the photo is naturalized. According to Meijer (1993) the event in photo is transmitted to the reader through the lens of narrator, hence may not illuminate the reality as such. By outlining this statement of Meijer (1993) I notify that the same focalisation can influence on ethnography and conventional content analysis as the data is being researched through the lens of a person. Hence, the personal worldview is visible in the research findings. Referring to this thesis research at hand, I am aware that my personal passion and interest on northern nature is visible and acknowledged, however despite my personal opinions, I let the data talk and illuminate aspects flown directly from the research data.

4. PRACTICES GUIDING THE ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Practice of planning and preparing

The data illuminates various practices that are steering the visit arrangements. A will to invite guests for a visit is in common to all organizations in my research. Before the invitation actualizes, there are crucial phases with planning: defining the purpose of and setting the goals for the visit. The purposes and the aims of the organization identify the target group and stakeholders who shall be invited. In addition, the organization nominates the persons in charge related to visit activities.

> *Maybe the building of the visit begins with getting wind of who is coming, for who we are building the visit and… then put the aim into perspective, what is the aim of the visit. (Interviewee)*

> *At first we had a common start up meeting in the coordinating organization, which was followed by the visit to our organization. The preparation (of hosting the visit) was carried out as it was agreed in our earlier common meeting. (Memory-work)*

Organizations are willing to offer services and invest on quality, thus the visits are tailored exclusively for each guest or a group of visitors. Challenges with offering services occur when the host has to arrange activities outside the official site. The ways of using services are varied especially when the visit takes place on a location that is not familiar for the host organization representative. When planning the visit, the practical local knowledge and a solid teamwork in the organization are highlighted, for example in sharing recommendations of suitable dining and outdoor activities. The expertise of local tourism guide is preferred when planning further excursions outdoors.

One steering element in arranging the visits is delineating the budget, which points to a notion that the lower the costs, the higher is the nature-friendliness of the programme. According to my data, visit organizers with small budget prefer low-cost services like visiting natural areas and science centres, going out in near environment, using shared or public transportation, thus more likely supporting the idea of proximity tourism (see Salmela et al., 2021). Visits organized with bigger budget include more exclusive services such as private transfers, or snowmobiling for fun without specific need for transferring by riding snowmobile. In addition, the visit may take place further away from the official site location, hence demanding flights and other extra services that are not responsible solutions by their characteristics.

Practices guiding the arrangements are firmly based on legal aspects. In addition, there are organization specified policies and values, however they are not always acknowledged or being followed, hence there are varied ways in following common policies. Notifying sustainability and responsibility issues in organizing the visit seem to be rather a host's personal preference, referring to small budget or being related to more relaxed part of the visit programme, than being a steering instruction given by the organization.

Organization representatives often have strong tacit knowledge by which I refer to practices of the visit etiquette and going outdoors that are learned through earlier experience, for example based on peer learning and learning by doing or experience. Nonaka (1991, as cited in Nonaka, 2008, pp. 1-14) states that tacit knowledge is highly subjective insights and intuitions, which are hard to capture and formalize, and difficult to communicate. However, the conversion of tacit knowledge into formal and systematic explicit knowledge (Nonaka 1991, as cited in Nonaka, 2008, pp. 13-14) is realized daily in the organizations as, referring to Baumard (1999, pp. 23-24), commonly known "common knowledge" is articulated into explicit knowledge.

As stated above, my data also shows that these practices based on tacit knowledge are not usually written nor visible in the organization, but they are known. Hence, there are rules and suggestions guiding the arrangements of public relations visits, however in following these there are variations based on personal interpretations and preferences. In addition, beginners in public relations visits don't know all the practices guiding the arrangements. Usually more experienced colleagues are sharing knowledge which is a common way to teach and learn the preferred practices, for example through peer learning. Referring to this Nonaka (1991, as cited in Nonaka, 2008, p 16-20), and Baumard (1999) are talking about four basic patterns between tacit and explicit knowledge for creating knowledge in organizations: the transition mechanisms of knowledge include from tacit to tacit (socialization), from explicit to explicit (combination), from tacit to explicit (articulation) and finally from explicit to tacit (internalization), through which the organizational knowledge is converted. According to my data, especially articulation is a way to share the knowledge in the organizations.

All the policies are based on law, meaning post duties. They have to be followed. Post duty means also that one must behave in order not to screw up one's employer. And, yes, it is true that the extra gained by the experience as well as the cooperation with a colleague are all plus signs both regarding organizing the visits and attending on a visit. (Memory-work)

Wilenius (2008) points out that employees understand their organization's goals in varied ways: only minority of the personnel knows the goals of the organization and are motivated about vision and goals of the organization. According to Wilenius (2008) there is a minority who know their position in the organization and what they are expected to do in their position, while there is also a group that plays rather against the own team as they do not support the interests of the organization.

Informing the guests beforehand about the upcoming visits are usually taken care of by providing a written programme, or agenda, with schedule so that the guests are able to prepare for the visit already at home. It is crucial for a guest to know beforehand the programme in order to have a possibility to prepare for a visit for example with suitable clothing, proper equipment and gifts. A well-prepared programme with schedule reflects careful planning also to the guest, hence mirroring and providing information about the characteristics and quality of the upcoming visit.

Preparing for the visits was fixed of course and mainly according to the characteristics of the trip. In our projects we always had been informed beforehand about rough programme framework, so all the preparations were based on that. The pre-program also determined the content of the suitcase clothes, meaning preparing for also party, excursions, and so on. /…/ These visits are known for long days and tight schedules. It is important to have free time for some privacy and rest during these visits. (Memory-work)

Unger et al. (2016) outline that especially encounters with different culture requires extra attention from a guest to diverse practices such as table manners, drinking habits and negotiation styles. Unger et al. (2016) are talking about mental burden in working another cultural environment when referring to a person's need to invest a large amount of energy in attempting to adjust to the local way of life. According to Unger et al. (2016) the need for being in alert all the time describes the will and awareness, as how to behave is high on guest's side. Referring to my data, on one hand, this feeling of being in alert and, on the other hand, an adaptation to different environment is aimed to ease by asking and providing a detailed visit programme well before the visit is due.

A careful planning and setting clear goals for the public relations visit increases the quality of the visit. Instead, when common practices and rules are not made clear inside the host organization, differences regarding not only quality but also choices made differ in sustainability and responsibility between organization members. The budget provided for organizing the visit defines a lot the responsibility and sustainability of the visit. By informing the guests beforehand about the upcoming visit programme, or agenda, it provides a chance for a guest to prepare, which reflects the quality and responsibility from host's side.

4.2 Practice of sharing responsibilities

My data shows that practices of sharing responsibilities make the organizing of the visit more effective. When respectful and privileged communication practices are integrated in the planning and organizing a progressive teamwork brings positive energy on doing and the process turns out to be a team play with common goal: a successful visit.

> *We prepared the presentations, aims and the purpose of the visit together. These were discussed in a group so that everyone had a shared view about the upcoming visit. /.../ An unofficial organization committee was quickly set up for being in charge of the visit programme. The committee was responsible for planning the weekly programme and activities and taking care of transfers between the city centre and our organization office. In addition, little by little more people got involved to the planning process as they interested about the matter. /.../ A lot of preparatory work was done together for the visitors /.../ and together we also felt nervous about success of the visits. (Memory-work)*

Also Wilenius (2008) outlines the importance of effective teamwork and providing the conditions for accumulation of knowledge and know-how. As Wilenius (2008) states, the ability of key personnel to read the information coming from the competitive environment, as well as the ability to transform this information into a renewal capacity, serves the organization. According to Wilenius (2008) communication within the organization about preparation is collective consciousness. Moreover, MacManus (2002, p. 169) emphasizes that through communicating shared values and mutual understanding throughout organization in public relations employees will know what they are expected of and what they can expect from others and that they identify on organization, its structure and mission in a positive way.

My data also shows that when teamwork practices are not integrated in the process, or teamwork lacks respectful communication practices between the organizing members, the planning and organization of the visit turns out to be a set of individual, separate performances. This leads to the whole organizing process getting slower, spalled and complicated when people responsible for organizing don't know what they are expected to do.

> *Me, X and Y are waiting for the final information from you. It is difficult to plan and organize the visit programme when not knowing who is going to attend and when. (Field diary)*

Also Wilenius (2008) notifies that an effective teamwork is increasingly rare in today's business world and in case the organizations are not steered by vision, strategy and values, they are unable to manage and use effectively their potential competence-based resources, hence not making adequate use of their creative knowledge capital. According to Wilenius (2008) creative knowledge capital is organization's competitive capital that stems from the organization's capacity to develop, change and take advantage of its employees' competences and innovative skills.

According to my data, communication practices are varied between and even inside the organizations. Public relations visits are usually organized among other work which is why there is not too much time to be used, thus the necessity and effectiveness of internal communications are highlighted. Information sharing may be inadequate and even neglected because of busy schedules but also due to confidentiality obligations of the organizations. Hence, information provided by the host to the organizer can be very limited, mostly insufficient and lacking crucial details especially when given by second-hand. Referring to my data, this brings major challenges to the organizer, for example in arranging bookings and planning desired activities for the visit.

> *Challenging however was to interpret the reactions when discussing through short messages /…/ Misinterpretations occurred more often when the message was short and contained too little information to me. In these cases my work got slower and even stopped for a while when I was trying to guess how to proceed. (Field diary)*

Referring to data, insufficient information sharing and lack of instructions lead to misunderstandings and further mistakes that occur at latest when the actual visit concretes. Unpleasant surprises stemming from insufficient information sharing include for example failed or totally missing bookings which are lowering the quality of the visit. Also, the data shows that inadequate and limited information sharing cause additional and unnecessary extra work for the organizer as well as to host when mistakes need to be corrected.

Moreover, the data shows that due to limited information sharing the visits may concrete to the organizer in a very small timeframe, which brings challenges in a form of desperate last-minute bookings in desired places, and very often end up having "sold-out" replies, hence causing a lot of pressure for the organizer. Referring to my data, so called last minute requests are often difficult to fulfil satisfyingly especially when the request contains wishes about booking certain restaurants, accommodations or activities.

> *A couple of days before the actual visit I got an information about changed travel plans which eventually meant changing the whole programme. All the bookings had to be changed or cancelled. Maybe the most challenging thing was informing all the service providers and ask them to change their plans and bookings. It was not that easy in such a small timeframe and especially when knowing that people had already once made special arrangements for us due to our failure in too tight a scheduling. (Field diary)*

Regarding the quality of the public relations visit, crucial components include practices of sharing knowledge, especially in form of effective teamwork. A bad communication creates uncertainty and leads to mistakes, and finally reflects on quality of the visit. As public relations visits are often organized among other work, people are too occupied to consider details. When organizing in a hurry and on a last minute, not only quality but also responsibility and sustainability suffer as the organizers end up using remaining, not desired, services.

4.3 Practice of anticipating and notifying limitations

Referring to my data, during public relations visit people are always representing someone or something, not only themselves but also the organization and the region they come from. In international public relations visits people are also representing their countries and cultures.

> *The project taught us a lot about the power of cooperation, common goal, different cultures, travelling, history, created friendships, woke up a spark to internationality. In addition we got experience about acting as a host country and being its' representative as a visit organizer. (Memory-work)*

When organizing activities regarding public relations visit, it should be recognized that activities offered are suitable for the guests by which I refer to anticipating. The organizers often take into account details regarding participants' physical conditions, possible health limitations, and restrictions regarding groceries: cultural limits, allergies and intolerances, respective cultural aspects and material needs, for example proper equipment suitable for outdoor activities in northern nature. My data also illuminates situations where the organizer didn't consider beforehand the possible limitations of the guests. In these situations people make polite excuses to escape the situations they want to avoid.

> *Here worth noticing is scheduling, programme, risk analysis, upfront planning. A successful big picture works when it is well planned and things have been notified beforehand. (Memory-work)*

> *In the end of the visit, the programme included 20 kilometres of bicycling and the whole group was supposed to participate. Many guests, including us, decided to leave the visit earlier as they did not want to attend on this bicycling tour, for one reason or another. (Memory-work)*

Referring to this also Rantala (2011) outlines the importance of planning and cooperation practices in preparing especially when foreign guests are taken outdoors: first of all it is good to inform beforehand about clothing, dining and schedules. Rantala (2011) states that when all the preparations have been taken care of beforehand, a trip can be carried out successfully as planned in schedule, in spite of weather conditions, for instance.

In addition, also Rantala (2011) has notified the practices of estimating the skills of the group. The locals usually already know the routines and master the practices that are needed in order to make a safe trip. However, as Rantala (2011) states, the existing tacit knowledge about safety issues should be estimated more systematically so that the overall safety can be enhanced in practical level as, for example, with foreign guests the safety issues must be considered starting from proper outdoor clothing and what is a proper place to take the group respecting the trip programme, schedule and guests' skills. Here, according to my data, I would also add the practice of estimating the limitations of the group, for example considering activities through cultural and gender-based or sexual limitations as well as special diets so that everybody can attend on programme activities without feeling of being an outsider.

> *Please, consider our activities in a way that also X can participate. No heavy sports. X has challenges due to physical condition. (Field diary)*

The Finnish sauna culture is pretty complicated when considering the public relations visit activities /…/ it is a challenge for other culture representatives… and gender minorities are not notified here. Pretty often in Finland there is a presumption "everybody wants to go to sauna, especially men". I have been in situations where there are not only women who have been left outsiders. (Interviewee)

By considering who and what are the guests representing and finally taking these considerations into account the host shows responsibility. Ignoring of the limitations, for example referring to cultural aspects, insufficient skills and minority issues, has straight effect on quality, responsibility and sustainability of the visit as the guests may not be able to participate in activities provided. This is why practices of anticipating and notifying possible limitations can also be considered as risk management. When tailoring the visit the point is to provide services, thus acknowledging the limits from many aspects can be seen as taking care of the quality.

5. PRACTICES OF BUILDING CONNECTIONS

5.1 Practice of creating partnerships

The data shows the sharpest goal in public relations visits being practices of creating connections and maintaining partnerships. The data sheds light on different layers in partnerships: personal, organizational, regional, national and international. Referring to data, partnerships between people are created through cooperation of the organizations. Public relations are especially about connecting with people.

> *It is tapping outside the ordinary activity of our organization and creating connections even to a lifelong relations. (Memory-work)*

> *Well, it is about building employer image… the whole relation network is built with public relations. (Interviewee)*

The perspective of creating partnerships can be considered also from another point of view than organization employees creating contacts with each other. When organizing public relations visit a host organization is investing on tourism and other services, thus contacts are created between host organization and companies providing commercial services. Public relations guests have deeper contact with hosts, however only slight contact or no contact at all, with commercial service providers. Instead, host organizations contact service providers, and in case having a good experience, they get in to a contact again and form further contacts that later can turn out into partnerships.

Similarly Unger et al. (2016) illustrate in their study that business travellers differentiate from most of tourists by having more complicated interactions and deeper conversations with local people and sharing rather light conversations with people who provide service for tourists. My data contains no situation where a public relations visitor negotiates straight with a tourism service provider. Instead, it is a task of the host organization and visit organizers to negotiate with service providers. Here, sustainability, responsibility and quality matters are linked with service choices made by the host organization.

My data shows that public relations guests are living inside a sort of "bubble" with host organization when participating on the visit: the programme with activities are mostly exclusive, by which I mean that they are shared only among own group for example as private tours. Thus, the guests have a chance to get a deeper insight to local circumstances. Unger et al. (2016) have noticed that business travellers' experience of destination is more authentic as they cross the protective walls of the "environmental bubble" (Cohen, 1972, as cited in Unger et al., 2016) provided by the tourism industry. Referring to my data, I rather see that during a public relations visit the host organization provides their guests "a safe bubble" where the reality is constructed from the host organization's point of view, and the guests are invited to familiarize with the local culture and way of life together with local peers or partners.

In my data, the respect of public relations and the significance of social skills are highlighted. People with social skills seem to create and maintain social connections, thus showing capability of creating durable partnerships, when people with rather poor social skills may endanger the emerging cooperation or even destroy an existing partnership. Data shows that public relations are valued and people in organizations want to take good care of their relations and partnerships. Especially long-term relations and partnerships are highly valued. This respect is also shown in a way that organizations are ready to carry out necessary measures when public relations work is being questioned by an employee.

> *Arriving to the meeting was multiple joy as the (social) boundaries were broken already in Finland. /…/ Our programme included a farewell dinner, going to sauna and getting to know a Finnish home at one employee's house. (Memory-work)*
>
> *As it is at work, people are recruited and educated and trained and being taken care of so that people are feeling good to be at work… well, in the same way we need to take care of this kind of outer environment and the relationship network, all those stakeholders. (Interviewee)*

Also Unger et al. (2016, p. 151) have acknowledged the meaning of social skills in public relations by outlining that business travellers exposure especially to non-touristic people and places in the destination. According to not only current research but also to Unger et al.'s (2016) study, business travellers are sometimes invited to homes of the colleagues and meet their families as in business relationships the personal contact is essential and knowing each other in personal level is important. Verčič and Grunig (2002) outline that public relations is about management of trust in conditions of bounded rationality and opportunism and Smith (2014) adds that mutual understanding and goodwill are describing the characteristics of public relations visits. Both of these notions describe well how people in my research face their public relations work. According to Tyrväinen et al.'s (2013) and Veijola et al.'s (2013) notices about sustainability and responsibility, this reflects both characteristics through an ability to, or at least as a will to, understand and respect another people's culture and manners.

Durable contacts and partnerships illuminate mutual understanding, hence supporting the idea of sustainability and responsibility through continuance. People with social skills are able to create connections, which is crucial referring to public relations visits. Referring to visits, host organization members are in intense contact, on one hand, with their guests and, on the other hand with commercial service providers, hence acting with known partners create trust in carrying out activities.

5.2 Practice of merging partnerships into a network

Public relations work creates new partnerships and further binds existing partnerships to form a partnership network. Well-handled relations and partnerships have led to further co-operation, for example starting new projects even years after the common meetings. The research data contains information about how good public relations were turned eventually out into friendships.

> *In the end, I would say Thank you for allowing projects like these in our organization. These brought together operators from different organizations from different sides of Europe. We managed to create something together and all this I experienced personally and saved into my mind forever. (Memory-work)*

Even though people in organizations change, contacts and partnerships may still remain between organizations. However, it depends on how people in respond manage to take care of the public relations: if a new person in respond manages to find the chemistry and shared values with a partner, the partnership will most likely continue. If the chemistry or values are not shared, the cooperation thins and may come to an end.

Data shows the host organizations' will to support responsible and sustainable tourism as local services and service providers are preferred when organizing public relations visits. Organizations hosting the visits are mainly using local services and create partnerships with service providers whose values and actions meet their values and needs. According to my data, providing and using services during public relations visits are a way to shed light on other partners' work as partners respecting each other raise each other. The interest of networking with local actors in the name of supporting local entrepreneurs and other stakeholders is considered as a desired goal. Each public relations visit is a chance to make local activities, services, companies and products known for wider audience, hence enhancing tourism in the area. Usually every public relations visit programme includes something local, for example food or culture or taking the guests shopping to local shops, hence delivering further the message of local know-how.

> *The ecosystem like thinking is actually pretty interesting in these issues… it is pretty good argument… to why we are staying in some other places than our own property. The point is how we connect to each other in this region… even though the business activities are different, still we together create opportunities to act. You know, the point is to transmit the idea for the visitors about how we are acting in relation with our environment and relating to other actors in the region and that is what I consider as responsibility and long-term activity, that… we have these kinds of connections. (Interviewee)*

Also Shove et al. (2012) point out to a notion about arranging companies and regions for facilitating forms of interaction in order to have networks of innovation and diffusion of practices. In my research, I consider the partnership network as a hub disseminating practices that are enhancing the actions of local companies, which often are SMEs, hence supporting sustainable and responsible tourism within the region. Curtin and Kenn Gaither (2007) state that public relations and travelling are not separate from each other, rather they are crucial components that are tied together.

My research area in Northern Finland is covered with vast rural areas, where tourism is based on nature, and skiing resorts, and where seasonality is causing serious challenges as the availability of services diminishes in the end of high-season. The data shows that in winter there are plenty of choices for arranging a visit, but starting from May the situation changes dramatically as activities based on snow are not available, companies providing activity services are limited and many restaurants are closed. Organizing programme for a public relations visit at this time of the year becomes a struggle. De la Barre et al. (2016) have also pinpointed this issue of seasonality and state that tourism services should be developed in a way that also locals are benefitting and able to use them. Maher et al. (2014) illuminate the flow of tourists in Finnish Lapland: Christmas tourism takes place from November to January and the main tourism season is from February to April. Referring to House of Lapland (2022) Christmas tourism can be largely considered as main season nowadays. This supports my research notices about availability of most of the tourism services near northern skiing resorts. For example, Kulusjärvi (2017) has notified the alternative tourism paths in resort-driven case Ylläs where there are several tourism paths created due to different aspects considering growth-driven tourism development.

Favouring the local entrepreneurs and service providers shows responsible and sustainable activity in organizing public relations visits. When values are shared with host organization and service providers the smoothness of quality is also achieved. Seasonality is however causing harm in organizing visit programme, hence affecting on quality, responsibility and sustainability when host organization has to make choices between scarce options of activities that may not meet the sustainability and responsibility aspects as wished.

6. PRACTICES OF PROVIDING AND SHARING EXPERIENCES

6.1 Practice of participating and participation

Participation and participating of the guests flow from the research data as central practices in organizing public relations visits. On one hand, the aim of the host is to participate the guests in their activities, and, on the other hand, it is hoped that the guests will participate and be active on their side during the visit.

Public relations visits are also for creating and delivering an image of the organization. They serve as “a business card” of the organization. On one hand, an active group of guests spreads an image outside the organization, hence delivering the message based on their experiences and at the same time marketing the organization outside. On the other hand, a well-handled image work comes back in a form of cooperation requests. The data shows the importance of explaining to guests why the group is visiting in each place and location, and what is the story behind each place visited and a gift given.

> *Well, for the organization they (guests) are sort of ambassadors to the world /.../ so that when they get a good experience about the visit so they get enough information and get to know our activities and challenges and opportunities, so they are able continue on their side the external communications. The recognisability increases. /.../ The narrative is always good, the way that we are able to narrate the reasons why we are visiting in each place and what is the relation between us (the host organization and other stakeholders) in the whole history. (Interviewee)*

The interview statement above refers to meaning-making and a script of the visit, about which for example Heimtun (2016), and Wong and Wang (2009) mention about. Heimtun (2016) states that during guided tours the employer’s scripts are enacted through emotional labor and impression management. In the same way, when hosting a public relations visit, the circumstances are translated to a language preferred by the host organization. Referring to Heimtun (2016) especially surprising situations need to be translated into a language of pleasure, satisfaction and experience for fulfilling the commitments to a customer service as planned.

Activity here refers not only to active discussion on but also to interaction on other phases of visit. According to my data, most of the public relations visits include other activities. Usually in case of overnight visits there are at least short visits in near environment included in a visit programme, thus illuminating the characteristics of proximity tourism. By taking the guests outdoors the hosts aim not only to introduce the local village, city or nature but also to search some relaxing aspect to the common programme by kind of a more informal part of the visit. In my data nature shows as a scene for contact creating during public relations visits.

> *The moments spent together were full of excitement and collaboration. /.../ Playful team competitions outdoors with mixed teams eased to get to know each other and helped in creating the contacts. (Memory-work)*

> *It is also natural to have not-so-formal meetings and appointments in the nature and outdoors... and as in public relations visits the aim is to create a contact, so it is easier to get the contact in nature… I mean some nature experience and sharing it, well it sort of eases and speeds up, boosts the finding of the relation. (Interviewee)*

Also Arnould and Price (1993) highlight the meaning of communion with other group members and the feeling of belonging to a group, which is enhanced through relaxed team-building games.

A nature-related activity as a part of a public relations visit programme talks about connection to nature and illuminates how the host organization considers nature in a big picture. Depending on a role that nature is given during a visit, it may talk about sustainability and responsibility aspects but nature can also be considered as stage for creating contacts, thus easing to reach the fundamental goal of a public relations visit.

6.2 Practice of providing opportunities to experience and sharing experiences

Host organizations are willing to provide a successful visit. The data shows practices that refer to an aim of providing experiences. During each visit programme there is usually an attempt to provide a chance to experience something extraordinary. As hosts are usually making a lot of effort in this part of the programme, I call this investing on activities, as these are the moments that will most likely be remembered after the visit. Sharing experiences together make long-lasting memories to the participants. These memories are talked about even many years after the visit. Many times the memory is integrated in a place where the group visited. Practices of providing opportunities to experience refer to Smith’s (2014) notion about goodwill.

Jaakkola et al. (2015) outline that an experience is a personal matter and it is a central phenomenon of interest for service researchers and managers. Even when being in a group, everyone experiences as a unique person. To attain satisfied and loyal customers, referring to Jaakkola et al. (2015), the creation of superior customer experience is the key.

However, providing opportunities for experiencing are not the key in making happy guests. According to my data, it is rather the value and the meaning of value to the guest that counts in the end. Thus, I outline the importance of recognizing values. Unsuitable solutions in providing activities cause unpleasant feelings of being outsiders and lead to skipping the offered activity even though host has a good intention. For example, taking Finnish sauna culture too lightly causes an unpleasant situation not only for a guest but also to a host when a commercial tourism service provider doesn't know or notify the cultural limitations of the group. Showing ignorance in value-related issue leads quickly to a decision on host organization's side to not buy service from the provider again as the hosts respect their guests and are willing to provide respectful services that meet their values.

> *Please, be careful when choosing the service provider in arranging the activities. /…/ Cultural aspects must be taken seriously on our side. (Field diary)*

The data also illuminates the challenges created by changing weather conditions. Visits taking place in Northern Finland include a basic presumption that in winter there is plenty of snow and visit programme contain activities in snowy environment. Insufficient snowfall however can cause trouble also for organizing activities due to too small amount of snow in the middle of the winter. Hence, lack of snow may turn out to be an eye-opening experience for the guests as a concrete evidence of climate change is visible in northern nature.

> *We /…/ had planned our activities including a possibility to try snowshoeing and ice-swimming. December and January turned out to be months with mild temperatures and scarce snowfall, which is why in the beginning of February there was only a few centimetres of snow. Trying snowshoeing with our guests was eventually more like trying snowshoes on, it was nothing to do with an actual activity as people could wear sneakers despite snow. Our guests were polite and they went for trying snowshoes even though they realized the situation was a bit ridiculous on our side. (Memory-work)*

Arnould and Price (1993) remind that satisfaction is embodied in the success of narrative and people forget the unpleasant conditions when a hedonic encounter between guest, host and nature is overall satisfying. Thus, in the end, according to Arnould and Price (1993) the narrative of the experience is central to overall evaluation and the outcomes of the visit usually differ from expectations. McColl-Kennedy and Cheung (2018) on their side emphasize the importance of context as value cocreation takes place within social systems where individuals have possibility to learn, adapt and choose things based on their own perceptions. Edensor (2000) talks about social and spatial regulation and the resonance of others' performances referring to this. In situation with snowshoes and too small amount of snow the guests used their ability to make circumspect decisions in order not to leave the host in an unpleasant situation: instead of skipping the activity they decided to participate the provided activity for carrying the good spirit and common success of the visit on their side.

The piece of memory-work above is also a concrete evidence about challenges related to climate change in northern areas. As an amount of snow is not self-evident, there should always be a plan B in case the weather conditions do not allow outdoor activities. Tervo-Kankare et al. (2017) state that due to climate change the changing weather conditions are already causing challenges to Northern tourism by requiring alternative options or ”Plan Bs” especially in Finland. I consider these moments being an effective way to teach and learn through concrete experience. Kolb (1984) talks about the effectiveness of experiential learning and outlines the importance of concrete doing in learning process: people learn effectively through experiencing by themselves. I have also authenticated this argument not only through my earlier research (see Supperi, 2005) but also in concrete work, for example during my long career as a teacher. What would be better way of learning about effects of climate change than feeling it by yourself on site?

The data illuminates that sometimes the guests make wishes about the upcoming visit and are expecting the host to organize activities that are simply impossible to concrete, for example due to reasons based on physical geography. A host usually realizes this kind of request immediately, however due to will of providing an excellent service the host is still willing to please the guests and aims to do the best to make the wish come true.

I told my opinion immediately: this is a no-go-request. /…/ I contacted the local safari company by email to have black on white about their converging opinion. /…/ It feels terrible to say no when there is a specific wish brought to our attention, however you must do it /…/ physical geography cannot be changed in this matter either. May is the most difficult time of the year for arranging activities. /…/ All snow-related activities are basically impossible to organize: no skiing or snowmobiling as there is too little or no snow at all. No ice-fishing as the ice cover is too weak. No any other fishing either as there is still some ice left. The situation can be seen concretely from commercial service providers' calendars: they are not even taking any bookings for May. (Field diary)

Arnould and Price (1993) state that customers have vague expectations, hence their beliefs and attitudes are often vague, emotion-based and subjective: the customers have pre-trip expectations about experience, host, others, comfort and safety, environment and about feeling (Arnould & Price, 1993). Referring to this Arnould and Price (1993) notify that there is a complex relationship between client expectations and satisfaction. Also Wilenius (2008) points out that the customer can very rarely answer the question about what one exactly wants, hence the customer is not always right. Wilenius (2008) stresses the importance of handing down the tacit knowledge and encourages to put to good use the experience as only relevant knowledge goes forward. These requests are also staged for teaching and learning.

Providing opportunities for experiencing is one central idea in organizing activities for public relations guests, however a host's will of pleasing the guests and their wishes may overtake the responsible and sustainable activity options. As effects of climate change are already visible in northern nature, taking guests to a local nature provides a chance for experiential learning through concrete experience. By showing respect toward nature a host organization delivers their guests a message about acknowledging sustainability and responsibility issues.

6.3 Practice of providing feedback

The goals set beforehand are aimed to reach during the visit and the arrangements made are to support reaching the goals. The data shows that the guests provide feedback about their experiences on site but also afterwards. The feedback is usually addressed to the host. The data also shows that practices of providing and sharing feedback forward regarding the visit arrangements and reaching goals are varied in organizations. On one hand, organizations have comprehensive feedback discussions where the outcomes are thoroughly discussed together with colleagues involved. On the other hand, some organizations do not have shared practices of providing further feedback about how the visit eventually succeeded.

> *After each visit we took a common meeting for discussing about the content and feedback together with travelling group, peers and coordinators. (Memory-work)*

> *Well, usually there is coordinator who sends greetings and tells even during the visit, how does it seem and sound like and… almost every time there is one or two who sort of communicate it with our organizers or with the hostess or host… but maybe it is like in other issues as well that it will be heard afterwards. /…/ Yea, and it should be always remembered by the receiving side… that many times the organizer is not on site attending the visit, so the information should be delivered also to this person. (Interviewee)*

Wilenius (2008) points out the importance of seeing how consumer needs are shifting as forecasting changes is a core element of strategic management in organizations. In addition, Wilenius (2008) outlines that changes in the operating environment should be monitored continuously and react to these needs. Thus, Wilenius (2008) suggests that organizations look for options and opportunities for change before the business is forced to change.

A systematic feedback is recognized to serve the organizations as the organizers get information about what worked out well and what should be done in another way regarding the next visit. In organizations with no shared practices of providing feedback the necessity of sharing feedback is however recognized, especially when the organizer is not participating to the visit. Referring to the data, the feedback provided to the organizer is mostly verbal feedback given briefly by the host.

> *I make efforts in the arrangements however I rarely get feedback, so I decided to ask "How did it go?" /…/ so that I know which solutions were good and which ones need further consideration regarding the next visits. (Field diary)*

> *The greater challenge is how we get the failures known, if something was not pleasing or did not go well /…/ so it is hoped that if we are not succeed in these visits then we would get the feedback and we would react, so we would need a process for that. As in any other service production is a possibility to give feedback. /…/Yea, a sort of process management in that sense for developing the service, so that we would get the feedback to improve. (Interviewee)*

Referring to Wilenius (2008) each organization that reads and perceives the operating environment produces strategic alternatives and gains competitive advantage, hence it is suggested to take time and space for innovation and foresight. As Wilenius (2008) states, any response is a reaction to what has already happened and probably it is something that competition has already known and done much earlier. By this Wilenius (2008) refers to resilience of the organizations and ability to prepare for the future.

Practices of providing feedback are recognized as crucial practices regarding the development of public relations visits. Lack of providing and sharing feedback leads to repeating mistakes and in the end, lowering the quality of the visit.

7. IMPLICATIONS BASED ON FINDINGS

As a result of my conventional content analysis based on field diary, in-depth interview and memory-work I have shed light on practices that organizations implement in organizing public relations visits. In this chapter I will illuminate implications based on the research findings through my research questions and reflect them in earlier studies. My main research question is: *What kind of practices do host organizations have in organizing public relations visits?* The main research question is elaborated with two sub-questions that are: *1) What kind of practices have been hindering the implementation of sustainable and responsible practices?* and *2) How these practices should be changed in order to improve sustainability, responsibility, and overall quality of the public relations visits?* I will start with discussing about the meaning of public relations visits and continue with practices arisen in thesis research at hand and then move on to discuss about practices that have been hindering the implementation of sustainable and responsible practices in organizing the visits. In the end I discuss about how practices should be changed in order to improve the overall quality, sustainability and responsibility of public relations visits.

Public relations visits are especially for creating connections and maintaining partnerships between organizations and their employees but also, in organizing the visits, for cooperation among host organization and service providers. By inviting guests for a visit and organizing activities for them host organizations create "a safe bubble" inside which they provide services for their guests and construct a reality based on host organizations' needs and values in order to reach the further goals. Based on my research findings I see differently the Tourism Environment Bubble (TEB) conceptualized by Cohen (1972, as cited in Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Cohen's basic argument was that tourists travel in a quest of strangeness and novelty, however, most need a degree of familiarity, an "environmental bubble" of their home environment, for enjoying their experience (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). I argue that during public relations visits the guests are surrounded by local people who are willing to create a safe environment to experience local matters, such as culture, food, and nature, hence the "safe bubble" does not separate the guests from an authentic experience of the destination. Instead, I rather state that in this "safe bubble" the guests have a safe opportunity to experience with locals, however with local hosts who are aware and co-experiencing the risks and inconveniences associated with "strangeness". Public relations are highly valued in organizations and hosts are willing to take good care of their guests.

In earlier research travelling related to work has been acknowledged and, for example, business travelling is considered as remarkable tourism by UNTWO (2020). In addition, public relations as a concept is vastly interpreted (see for example Curtin & Kenn Gaither, 2007; Smith, 2014), which is why it has been a challenge to find exact studies regarding this topic. Earlier research is focused a lot around the concepts of business travel, business visit, corporate site visit and company visit. Unger et al. (2016) and Unger et al. (2020) have shed light on destination experiences of business travellers and opened up four phases of business travel: trip preparations, passenger experience, destination experience and home coming. My interest was focusing on phase of destination experience mentioned by Unger et al. (2016), where I recognized a remaining research gap in a form of organizing visit. It has been studied, how business travellers experience their stays in destinations (see Unger et al. 2016; Unger et al. 2020), however the question remains open about how the stay, or the public relations visit in this research context, of the guest is organized by the host organization. Next, I am opening up my vision about creating the content for public relations visit, “a safe bubble”.

According to my data, public relations visits are organized by employees of an organization among other work, hence the logic of doing is different compared to commercial tourism: in this sense, public relations visit organizers in the organizations are non-commercial operators and non-professionals in tourism. Based on my data I am able to pinpoint four main practices that are in common to all the organizations in organizing public relations visits: practices 1) guiding the arrangements, 2) of providing experiences, 3) of building connections and 4) of internal and external communications.

Firstly, practices guiding the arrangements include setting goals and making plans, inviting the guests, offering and tailoring the visit, organizing events and making the bookings, as well as recognizing the limits and following the rules. Secondly, practices of providing experiences include participation and participating of the guests, sharing activities and meaning-making, experiencing and sharing the experience. Thirdly, practices of building connections contain creating and nurturing connections, building networks and maintaining partnerships. There are also practices of internal and external communications that are intertwined earlier three main practices, thus being integrated as an overlapping fourth main practice. Through these organizations accomplish their kinds of public relations visits.

Considering the findings of my research I am able to highlight existing practices that enhance the overall quality, sustainability and responsibility of the visit. These practices include especially respectful teamwork, seamless communications and information sharing inside the organization, as well as careful planning, shared responsibilities and anticipating the possible limitations regarding the visit. When respectful and open communications are shared among the group working around the public relations visit, the efficient information sharing enhances the organizing of the visit: as people involved are openly sharing thoughts it helps to innovate and see the visit from various aspects, thus helps the organizer to find out the core of the visit. It is helpful for not only planning but also for booking the desired services on time.

With these practices the host organization creates optimal circumstances for organizing a successful visit in sufficient time frame, thus on one hand, having a possibility to gain services that are needed and desired, and on the other hand, having enough time to react on possible challenges, hence ending up being able to provide a visit that fits in organization's vision, plans, and goals. In addition, by informing the guests beforehand about the upcoming visit programme, or agenda, it provides a chance for a guest to prepare as well, which reflects taking care of quality and responsibility from the host's side. A favourable existing practice is also estimating the skills and limitations of the guests, based on knowing the guests or by asking extra information, and then providing this information to the organizing team. This helps to achieve the desired outcome of the visit as the organizer is aware of what is possible to achieve within the group.

Durable contacts and partnerships illuminate mutual understanding and support the idea of sustainability and responsibility. Referring to public relations visits, host organization members are in intense contact with service providers. Acting with known partners create trust in carrying out activities. Favouring the local entrepreneurs and service providers shows responsible and sustainable activity in organizing public relations visits. The smoothness of quality is also concrete when values are shared between host organization and service providers. I argue that host organizations are taking a step towards sustainable and responsible public relations visits when aiming to schedule the visits outside the main season, and use local services, as this helps the local entrepreneurs to tackle the challenges caused by seasonality in tourism, which is recognized as a major problem especially in areas close to northern skiing resorts. I argue that by supporting also alternative tourism paths represented by Kulusjärvi (2017), the challenge of seasonality can be tackled.

The analysis on the thesis research at hand, on one hand, illuminates diverse ways of providing public relations visits for the guests and, on the other hand, shows that people responsible for organizing the visits are struggling with similar issues no matter which organization they are working in. What is in common in my data, is that in every organization public relations visits are being organized among other work, hence there is not too much time to be used solely in planning or organizing. Employees in organizations have their own ways of conducting public relations visits, hence there are many variances in carrying out activities. I have recognized the complexity of arranging public relations visits.

As illuminated in the research of Järventie-Thesleff et al. (2011), by shedding light on practices implemented in the organizations it is possible also to highlight the challenges involved, thus practices can be modified when they are acknowledged. In this thesis research at hand, it is clearly shown in the data that practices of communication face the major challenges and the outcomes of the public relations visit depend largely on how these communication challenges and challenging practices of communications have been tackled by the organization. Referring to my research findings, I state that the most dangerous practices in organizing public relations visit include spalled, disrespectful internal communications, lack of respectful teamwork, insufficient and limited information sharing and ignoring the possible limitations. To summarize, carrying out practices that remind more about organization's set of solo players instead of team play are hindering the implementation of sustainable and responsible practices.

When an open information sharing among key persons is not working nor common practices and rules are not made clear inside the host organization, differences emerge in not only quality but also in sustainability and responsibility as preferred matters are varying between employees. In addition, it makes the whole visit organizing process slower and complicated as people don't know what they are expected to do. The probability of mistakes increases due to lack of information and misunderstandings, eventually ending up to extra work when people are trying to fix the mistakes and do the same work again. I also outline the stress that these bad practices cause not only to organizer but also eventually to the host when trying to get suitable, yet in that point questionable and most likely unavailable, services in a last minute. As public relations visits are often organized among other work, people are too occupied to consider details. When organizing in too tight a schedule and on a last minute, not only quality but also responsibility and sustainability suffer as the organizers use remaining, not desired, services.

Ignoring the limitations that are, for example related to culture, inadequate skills of the guests and minority matters, have straight effect on quality, responsibility, and sustainability of the visit as they may turn out to be barriers for participating in activities provided. By considering who and what the guests are representing and finally taking these considerations into account the host shows responsibility in organizing the visit.

The budget provided for organizing the visit defines a lot the responsibility and sustainability of the visit. Usually, a small budget refers to nature-friendly choices as going outdoors is a good but also a low-cost activity. For example, Tyrväinen et al. (2018, pp. 1398-1399) notify that even short visits in nature are beneficial for health: already 15 minutes of stay in the forest reduces stress. I argue that it should not be the point that nature comes after the budget. Instead, it should be an intrinsic value to make a nature trip for the nature itself. I see a nature trip as a magnificent part of a public relations visit and as an excellent chance to represent the northern nature in order to show to the guests in practice what is the meaning of the local nature for people living in the area. In addition, I see a chance to teach and learn in practice about nature friendly options of tourism and concrete effects of climate change. According to Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning the key in learning process is a concrete experience gathered by active action. Based on this point of view, a person is able to understand the object being investigated and create a conceptual image about the phenomenon through thinking and observing (Kolb, 1984). I argue that having the courage to experience in an environment that is not natural to oneself is not only eye-opening but also very didactic regarding responsibility: people often learn by wondering the differences compared to their own natural circumstances. Therefore, I suggest including a nature visit in public relations visit programme.

A nature-related activity as a part of a public relations visit programme illuminates the connection to nature and shows how the host organization values nature. Depending on a role that nature is given during a visit may talk about sustainability and responsibility aspects, but nature can also be considered as a stage for creating contacts, thus easing to reach the fundamental goal of a public relations visit. Providing opportunities for experiencing is one central idea in organizing activities for public relations guests, however a host's will of pleasing the guests and their wishes may overtake the responsible and sustainable activity options. Sometimes the guests make unreal requests and wishes that are not feasible due to basic geography and natural conditions of northern nature. In addition, requests like these are sometimes against sustainable and responsible thinking thus, not supporting the idea of sustainable tourism. By showing respect toward nature with acts and services provided the host organization delivers a message about acknowledging and caring about sustainability and responsibility issues. Therefore, organizations should have unquestionable common policies in organizing the visits and clear information to tell openly to the guests why their possible requests are not meeting the reality nor respecting the idea of sustainable and responsible tourism.

Practices of providing feedback are recognized as crucial practice regarding the development of public relations visits. A lack of providing and sharing feedback leads to repeating mistakes and in the end, lowering the quality of the visit. In order to make improvements in sustainability, responsibility and quality, feedback is necessary both inside and outside the organization. When providing any feedback, the answer should be given to a question “why” the visit was a success or “why” the visit was a failure. By answering these questions, the host organization is able to go to the root of the matter and consider the measures needed.

8. CONCLUSION

Public relations visits are remarkable tourism, however it has been paid notably few attention on operational level of organizing the visits and the practices within organizations. Based on my view, also sustainability and responsibility issues are rarely discussed about referring to these visits. I have recognized a research gap in this matter and by this thesis research at hand I aim to provide tools for organizations to improve sustainability, responsibility, and overall quality of the public relations visits they are organizing. In addition, the aim is to enhance sustainable and responsible tourism practices respecting the North.

The main research question in my thesis at hand was: *What kind of practices do host organizations have in organizing public relations visits?* In my qualitative ethnographic research, I have illuminated public relations visit practices of organizations through conventional content analysis of data that is based on field diary, in-depth interview and memory-work. The data shows that public relations visits are organized among other work in organizations, hence employees preparing the visits are non-professionals in tourism thus, organizing public relations visit is not commercial tourism business in this context.

The ways of organizing the visits are varied, however four main practices can be illuminated. These include practices 1) guiding the arrangements, 2) of providing experiences, 3) of building connections and 4) of internal and external communications. The last-mentioned practices of communications are intertwined in three other practices.

The greatest challenges in organizing public relations visits in the organizations refer to inadequate communications of which many issues lowering sustainability, responsibility, and the overall quality stem from. Regarding organizing the visits, I suggest providing clear policies by the host organizations to be followed by every employee in order to provide their guests services that fit in organization's values, needs and goals. In addition, I suggest maintaining open communications to the direction of the guests for gaining information about their possible limitations related to visit activities and for providing a chance for a guest to prepare for the visit on time, hence offering an opportunity to participate on activities embedded in visit programme.

In addition, in the name of supporting sustainable and responsible tourism I suggest the host organizations to familiarize themselves with local service providers for gaining services that meet these needs. I also recommend the host organizations to concentrate on creating partnerships and networking with service providers who support the development of local tourism in a direction where local services are developed in a way that also local people are able to use the same services around the year. This is crucial especially in northern rural areas where tourism is based on nature and is often also resort-driven, hence suffering from concrete effects of seasonality. By supporting and networking with local stakeholders the host organizations help to engage local people in work but also strengthen the local development through taxation related income. From local nature and its' characteristics point of view I recommend using local tourism guide services as the locals know their environment and have a strong experience-based and tacit knowledge about the meaning of the nature in their everyday lives. With this regard the tourism services provided also respect the local society. I also suggest the host organizations to invest on possibilities of proximity tourism and including nature-related activities in the public relations visit programme. By doing this the host organization illuminates concretely and provides an opportunity for experience-based learning of the characteristics of northern nature, the crucial meaning of the nature for the people living in the North, and finally shed light on effects of climate change. As stated earlier, people learn effectively by wondering the differences between unfamiliar and their home areas.

Participatory observing, writing field notes and turning them in a form of field diary is a rewarding way to collect data as the diary serve the research work not only by illuminating what is done but also how things have been developing in a time. I find my field diary as a highly valuable material as there is a lot of tacit knowledge gained from authentic situations embedded in a text form. The field diary helps to recall meaningful and significant details, as I can enter the situation over and over again with the help of my text. The field diary serves efficiently to illuminate the repeating practices. By focusing on research through the lens of practice theory I realized to have a front seat referring observing and participating on everyday activities in the organizations. It is a challenging task as such to access the internal practices of the organizations. This aspect, a research conducted from inside the organizations, makes my research special and validates the data as the aspect is rather slightly studied earlier.

In this thesis research at hand, I had an original plan to conduct more in-depth interviews for deepening the data, however this turned out to a difficulty with having interviewees in diminishing timeframe. I consider the interviews as a challenging but fruitful way of collecting data as one discussion include a lot of information. In addition, the in-depth interview in this research was conducted online, which partially leaves out the possibility to observe the interviewee, one's facial expressions and bodily signs, for example, that I consider as relevant notions in ethnographic study. I take refusals from interviews as a reaction to sensitivity of the research topic and consider this being one significant reason for why this aspect on public relations visits is only thinly discussed in earlier academic literature as the visits always have a purpose that aims to fulfil the needs and goals of the organizations, which are often protected by confidentiality obligations.

I find the memory-work being an interesting way of gathering research data. This form of data collection was introduced to me in that point when I time after time failed with having an in-depth interview. As memory-work makes it possible to tap into the past I had an opportunity to illustrate on my previous knowledge and experience on this topic and construct the data in visible form in cooperation with another person sharing the same history, hence illustrating the tacit knowledge accumulated during a long time. Moreover, I consider the memory-work as a cosy way of collecting data as you know the participant and share the topic in a history, which helps to get straight to the point of the research and gain deep understanding when participants are familiar with the topic and basically talk the same language in that sense.

The findings provided in this research are illuminated through qualitative conventional analysis, in which the researcher's personal experiences, interests and preferences are affecting on the background. Referring to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) conventional content analysis provides direct information from research participants without imposing preconceived theoretical perspectives or categories, which can be considered as an advantage of the conventional approach to content analysis. However, according to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) failing to develop a complete understanding of the context, hence failing to identify key categories, can be considered as one challenge of this type of analysis as the result can be a finding that do not accurately represent the data. I recognize this challenge through my strict confidentiality obligations in the organizations as I am not able to openly express my research context due to endangering the privilege. However, I consider it being necessary to conceal some elements of the research with the cost of accuracy in order to provide the central findings to be investigated and evaluated by scientific community.

Northern nature-related topics are close to my heart, especially Finnish forests, and swamps. I salute northern nature by providing these thoughts referring to a need to consider the sustainability and responsibility of public relations visits, which I consider being remarkable tourism. I suggest taking this research as an enriching aspect on tourism discussion, however, outline that any generalisations should not be made based on this research due to rather concise data.

Referring to my research topic I suggest further research by wider sampling for deepening the relevance. It would be interesting to study in larger research how the four main practices arisen in this thesis research at hand are illuminated in organizations on public and private sectors. In addition, it would be interesting to study what kind of practices the organizations are using for unifying internally the practices of organizing the public relations visits. Moreover, I find it crucial to create measures for evaluating the sustainability, responsibility, and quality of public relations visit. Overall, I am fascinated about the presence of “a safe bubble” in my research data and find it interesting for further research. It would be worthwhile to study how this kind of a “safe bubble” could be created also in tourism in general.

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This thesis and these studies were a dream of 18-years-old Heli, who thought that University of Lapland was too far away from home and thus, decided to do something else. However, a dream of tourism studies never died and here I am, after a couple of decades later, sending my acknowledgements from all my heart.

First, I thank my talented teacher and supervisor Professor Outi Rantala for inspiring research, all the support and guidance during my studies, not to forget about challenging questions that made me consider valuable aspects referring to my thesis topic. I admire your work and highly appreciate the chance for being a student in your group!

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I am grateful to my parents, Mamma and Enska, for teaching me to read and respect nature and for providing information that cannot be read on books. Thank you Keke, Sys, and Aki for sharing the experiences, help, and support, in various matters. Aleksi, Julius, Nikolas, and Sofia, count on yourself and follow your dreams - Tätsä did it, and you will do it, too! Please, keep Pinkki's paws and nose busy with nature trips. Elli, my beloved Labrador retriever beyond the Rainbow Bridge, thank you for joining me on nature trips for 15 years. I miss you so much!

Henry, thank you for standing by me, sharing your thoughts, your knowledge, and support. A big, huge thank you for maintaining my snowmobile, taking me to exciting trips and providing chances for experiencing the North in a specific way.

Thank you Finnish nature! You keep surprising, delighting and inspiring me every single day!

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APPENDIX 1. Letter of consent

LAPIN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF LAPLAND

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Mr. / Mrs. X,

My name is Heli Rantapelkonen. I am Master student at University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland under the supervision of Professor Outi Rantala (XXXXXXXX@XXXXXXXX, Tel. +XXXXXXXX). You are invited to participate in my master thesis study entitled Developing Public Relations Visit Practices through Ethnographic Research. The purpose of the study is to enhance sustainable and responsible public relations visit practices. 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 Northern Tourism (NoTo).

By signing this letter, you give consent to use the interview / memory-work 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,

Heli Rantapelkonen
NoTo Master student
phone: XXXXXXXX
email: XXXXXXXX@XXXXXXXX

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

________________________ ____________________
Signature Date

____
Print Name