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**Tourism's Role in Cultural Revitalisation in Setomaa,  
Southeastern Estonia**

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Abstract:

The thesis delves into the question of how tourism impacts cultural revitalisation of a minority community through community empowerment. The case of tourism in Setomaa, located in southeastern Estonia is utilized as a case study for this thesis.

It has a special focus on the community perspective; in other words how does the community perceive tourism impacts in the context of cultural revitalisation and preservation. Research question drawn from it is therefore "How does tourism help in revitalizing a culture through community empowerment?". The main research question is accompanied by sub questions: "How does tourism contribute to community empowerment through social, economic, political and psychological dimensions?" and "How does Seto culture presented in tourism impact community connection to the culture?". The guiding theoretical framework is Regina Scheyvens empowerment framework.

The thesis utilizes qualitative research approach, in where the underlying research paradigm is constructivism. Nine semi-structured interviews with Seto community members and people with connection to Setomaa is conducted. Interviews are conducted to collect information about interviewee beliefs, experiences and attitudes related to the research topic. Conclusion is drawn using theoretical framework with empirical data to gather in depth understanding of the phenomenon.

Following the thematic analysis, results of the study indicate a general positive role of tourism in community empowerment and through that cultural revitalisation. The key findings demonstrate that tourism in Setomaa empowers the community predominately through social and political dimensions. Tourism done with the influence and needs of the community, showed positive indications regarding cultural revitalisation. Economic and psychological dimensions, although also positively present, have a few downsides to them regarding empowerment. Seasonal tourism, while providing employment in the region, does not produce stable source of income. Cultural identity through tourism is reinforced by community-central tourism and social aspect to it but also undermined by simplification of culture.

Tourism and culture remain a personal and nuanced topic. Although tourism provides direct benefits to the region, attention should remain on its impacts on host the community. Results of the thesis could provide nuanced understanding and advanced insight into the phenomenon, which in turn benefits tourism companies who operate in sustainable cultural tourism.

Key words: Cultural tourism, cultural revitalisation, identity, authenticity, intangible cultural heritage (ICH), Seto culture

## **Content**

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1	Background of the study	4
1.2	Literature review	5
1.3	Setomaa as empirical context	7
1.4	Theoretical framework	8
1.5	Methodology	11
1.6	Structure of the study	13
<b>2</b>	<b>Theoretical framework</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1	Cultural revitalisation and tourism	14
2.2	Empowerment framework	16
2.3	Authenticity in tourism	20
2.4	Identity	22
2.5	Summary	23
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodology of the study</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1	Qualitative research	25
3.2	Research paradigm	26
3.3	Research method and data collection	26
3.4	Thematic analysis as analysis method	29
3.5	Research ethics	33
<b>4</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>35</b>
4.1	Social empowerment	35
4.2	Political empowerment	38
4.3	Economic empowerment	39
4.4	Psychological empowerment	41
<b>5</b>	<b>Discussion and conclusion</b>	<b>48</b>
5.1	Tourisms economic impact on culture	48
5.2	Tourisms positive impact on community identity	50
5.3	Community political influence on cultural tourism planning	52
5.4	Tourisms impact to individual perceptions on culture	53
5.5	Conclusion	57
<b>6</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>Appendix 1. Interview questions and letter of consent (in Estonian)</b>	<b>74</b>

## **Appendix 2. Interview questions in English**

77

### **List of figures**

1. Cross-theme synthesis. 24
2. Analysis illustration 33

### **List of tables**

1. Participant background information 28

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Background of the study**

Tourism is commonly described as a field that has both positive, as well as negative impacts present with regards to its impacts on culture, as interface between culture and tourism is vast (Alamineh et al., 2023). Additionally, globalisation adds nuance to the issue as individual cultures are impacted by it. Cultural diversity erosion is named as one of the negative aspects of globalisation, however, aspects deemed as positive, such as cultural fusion, in where different cultural elements are exchanged are also present (Tai, 2024).

Tourism brings economic benefits to a region, advances tourists' knowledge about the area and recognition and pride to host communities. On the contrary, however, tourism can dilute the cultural elements, which tourists came to see to begin with (Alamineh et al., 2023; Cathy, 2024). For smaller minority groups, with more fragile cultural elements, tourism can serve as an important factor in preserving and revitalising heritage and culture (Bui, 2024, p. 355).

This thesis draws attention to the case of Seto culture in southeast Estonia and what role does tourism play in the community. The Setos are a fundamental part of Estonian cultural landscape, known to the bigger public for their religious rituals, Seto leelo-singing, festivals and distinctive traditional clothing (Visit Setomaa, n.d.).

The thesis generally focuses on what types of tourism activities are practiced in Setomaa and whether tourism has a role and/or effect on the cultural revitalisation. In addition, the thesis delves into community members perception of tourism and analyses the positive and negative effects of tourism. By examining the case of Setomaa, the thesis aims to shed light on the broader issues of how smaller community groups can contend with the challenges and possibilities posed by tourism, in a cultural revitalisation context.

Community members and locals of Setomaa are an integral part of the study. How they engage with tourism practices are analysed. Whether they are active members of it, utilising tourism as an approach to empower, or whether they are mostly external observers, who respond to expectations set by policymakers and tourists.

## 1.2 Literature review

This section introduces relevant literature and previous research relating to this topic. General research and literature on tourism and its connections to cultural change have been reoccurring topic, especially in tourism anthropology studies (Grünewald, 2002, p. 1004). This section introduces the topic of tourism's impacts on minority and indigenous communities and introduces cultural tourism as an empirical phenomenon. It introduces previous research and literature conducted on how tourism influences local community identity and empowerment. This section also discusses how previous work has approached this issue and identifies areas in where current study on Setomaa tourism could take part in.

There has always existed a nexus between travel and culture, as events, sights and other attractions have been a motivator for travel. Travel in itself creates culture (Richards, 2018, p. 12). Cultural tourism as a specific form of tourism consumption started being studied as a social phenomenon only in the recent decades. Major shift happened after the second world war, in where leisure travel saw a positive spike (Richards, 2018, p. 12). As economies grew, so did travel, and by 1980, cultural tourism was labelled as its own market. Cultural tourism was viewed in the 1990s as the beneficial reason for travel, as people travelled both internationally and domestically to help local economies and conserve culture, referred to as the “heritage boom” (Hewison, 1987).

Growing number of research papers about cultural tourism linked to various theoretical and methodological approaches, began to emerge after cultural tourism was marketed to the masses (Edwards et al., 2010). Over-crowding in World Heritage Sites led to concerns over conservation of tangible sites. Intangible heritage, such as practices and traditions have therefore received growing interest (Richards, 2018, p. 12).

Tourism often brings cultural change, when a local site is becoming a tourist destination. This, however, does not always imply that the local culture itself is becoming “weaker” (acculturation process), instead they adapt (Grünewald, 2002, p. 1004). Many scholars have argued that tourism's growth in certain areas provides benefits, especially in the socio-economic context. This means that the culture, which is being presented to tourists is being shaped and adapted to meet the practical needs in tourism (Grünewald, 2002, p. 1004).

Tourism products which involve cultural heritage, often enhance tourism offerings and their careful management revitalises heritage (Fernandes, 2023). Mason (2015) provides an

example of handicrafts, in how their popularity among tourists is an important factor in local handicraft survival, as well as job creation, contribution to local economy and overall social wellbeing.

Studies conducted around the topic of tourism and cultural revitalisation showcase how tourism can have positive impacts on the cultures. Ukaegbu et al. (2018) found in their study, conducted in Benin, Nigeria, that local people generally viewed tourism as a way of evoking interest in their culture and therefore create opportunities, such as workplaces in areas where they live. A few participants of the study were however cautious about losing control over how their culture is showed to tourists (Ukaegbu et al., 2018). Studies regarding minority groups in Europe discuss similar results. Saari et al. (2020) highlighted in their literature review, in the context of cultural tourism in Sami culture, that tourism can either empower or exploit local cultures, depending on how it is carried out. Keywords such as respect and sensitivity are highlighted in their literature review. Elements of sustainable cultural tourism according to these papers are therefore local voices, ethics and cultural comprehension.

Previous research focusing specifically on Setos and tourism is somewhat limited. Laur (2022), in the master's thesis *Identity and Heritage on a Changing Border*, touches the subject of how community members see public representation from their point of view. Theoretical concepts such as “staged authenticity”, are reflected in the community itself, as some members according to Laur (2022, p. 45), report that certain elements of their culture such as clothing have become excessively performative, worn in TV performances and so on.

As cultural preservation often requires funding, other studies highlight the importance of European Union -funded cultural initiatives (and other bodies who decide what areas are worth funding and which not) and festivals, while ensuring that they benefit the community (Annist, 2009). Annist (2009), further criticizes the decision-making process of those bodies, as they can dismiss the evolving Seto culture, focusing excessively on areas that are attractive for tourists (for example, not funding making of new jewellery but instead restoration of old ones, as it attracts monetary benefits). Cultural preservation is therefore a complex phenomenon, in where both positive and negative effects are present.

Sustainable cultural tourism principles are explained by the World Tourism Organization (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], n.d). The World Tourism Organization is defying sustainability in tourism as an approach which takes into account

current and future environmental, economic and social impacts, considering the needs of tourists, environment, industry and the host community (UNWTO, n.d). Sustainable tourism therefore consists of three pillars, environmental, economic and social. The socio-cultural aspects of sustainable tourism directly relate to the core principles of the thesis, as it emphasises respecting cultural authenticity, as well as conservation and building of cultural heritage.

Based on the literature review, two major areas were identified, in where the current study could contribute in. There is lacking significant amount of recent data on Setomaa tourism, as various papers focus on the culture, leaving out how does tourism specifically impact it. Lastly, there appears to be a lack of research on how Seto people conceptualize revitalization and authenticity of their culture, which indicates the need for community directed perspective approach to be utilized. The case of Setomaa tourism offers therefore an interesting and less studied case study, through which tourism's impact on cultural revitalization can be studied and observed.

### **1.3 Setomaa as empirical context**

Setos (in seto: setoq or setokõsõq) are officially perceived as group of Estonians, who's historical territories are in the southeastern parts of Estonia, called Setomaa (Fenno-Ugria, n.d.) The area is split into two sides, Setomaa (Estonian side) and Petserimaa (Russian side, today's Pechora District of Russia's Pskov Oblast) (Fenno-Ugria, n.d.).

Today, majority of Setos live in Tallinn and Tartu, with only around 200 Setos residing in Russia (Fenno-Ugria, n.d.). Number of Setos in Estonia is difficult to estimate, as the official census does not ask for in which culture do people belong to, but rather, which languages and dialects they speak. The year 2021 census counted a little over 20 000 Seto speakers in Estonia (Harrik, 2025). Pajusalu notes that despite around 20 000 Seto speakers, there are estimated roughly thousand people who are active in Seto cultural life and speak Seto fluently (Harrik, 2025). Especially the older generation tends to be fluent in Seto language, meanwhile younger generation tends to shift towards standard Estonian (Harrik, 2025).

As a cultural tourism destination, Setomaa attracts tourists for its cultural festivals and events, such as the Seto Kingdom Day and Seto leelo singing events, as well as gastronomy and handicrafts. As it is located away from major cities, it is marketed as a "remote getaway",

offering slow tourism, with opportunities to be experience nature and culture (Visit Estonia, d.n). Seto Külavüü (Seto Village Belt), is a travel road project that connects all major touristic and cultural sites, such as churches and museums (Visit Estonia, d.n).

#### **1.4 Theoretical framework**

This section introduces theoretical concepts used to analyse tourism's role in cultural revitalisation in Setomaa case. It outlines three areas of literature, authenticity, identity, and community empowerment, to examine tourism's role in cultural revitalisation. These three concepts help to showcase both the tensions as well as opportunities that arise when cultural elements and practices are presented to tourists.

Tourism has been long perceived as a positive tool for cultural preservation, as well as a potential threat to authenticity of cultures. Revitalization is often positioned in cultural heritage in tourism literature. Revitalization as a concept itself was popularized in 1956, by Wallace (1956, as cited in Ukaegbu et al., 2018), who argued that to construct a more satisfying culture, revitalisation needs to be deliberate, organized and conscious effort by members of society. Similarly to, Phelan (2005, p. 47), who discusses revitalisation as efforts by organization or society to change their culture, which is threatened by forces with which cultural norms struggle. Because Wallace wrote about revitalisation, from a cultural change perspective, it could be interpreted that he believed that cultures are not static, which can be to the contrary with the concept of cultural preservation, which seeks the freezing of culture at a specific timeline (Ukaegbu et al., 2018).

In a minority group context, tourism can boost community visibility, enhance cultural revitalization and generate income, but as a downside, tourism has been criticized as it can additionally commercialize heritage and even alter social and cultural practices (Shepherd, 2002). According to scholars in tourism and heritage studies, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) such as rituals, dances and performing arts require careful management, while they are presented to others, with the aim of maintaining its cultural significance (Shakya & Vagnarelli, 2024). ICH are especially relevant to the case of Setomaa, since distinctive Seto leelo singing is an important part of culture, which is also presented to tourists.

As one of the principal ideas of cultural tourism is to experience traditions, arts, customs and consume cultural attractions, sustainability plays a crucial role (Richards, 2018). It is therefore

important to understand and incorporate sustainable practices into tourism, not only for the local community, but also for the tourists, in order to provide an authentic and sustainable experience.

### Authenticity

Various discussions and research have been undertaken regarding ICH and tourism, often giving prominence to the tension between commodification and authenticity.

Commodification of culture refers to a process, in where certain cultural elements are packaged to sell, in order to benefit the tourism industry economically (Marbun, 2025, p. 1). This often involves according to MacCannell (1976, as cited in Lau, 2010, p. 482) simplifying complex elements, for the product to be more digestible for a tourist. The concept of “staged authenticity” was initially introduced by MacCannell (1976, as cited in Lau, 2010, p. 482), in where the host community packages their cultural practices for sale, to the extent where the practice itself is altered to cater better for the tourists. In the context of Setomaa, traditional clothing pieces, Seto leelo performances and cultural festivals are present in structured settings, such as in Seto Kingdom Day, which attracts both local and international tourists. Cohen (1988, as cited by Zhou, 2023, p. 1471), however, talks about the “emergent authenticity”. A concept, in where he argues that cultural product, which is initially received as inauthentic can, with the passage of time, become generally recognized as authentic (Zhou, 2023, p. 1471). Applied to Setomaa, these two frameworks could showcase how tourism could both restrict, but as well as enrich cultural liveliness.

### Identity

To shift away from the commodification and authenticity discourse, it is important to note that, internal effects also take place within the host communities themselves, as scholars within the field note that tourism shapes identity within the host communities. Events can serve as stages for identity, which enables communities to communicate and enhance a shared sense of self (Richard & Palmer, 2010, p. 21). Identity, according to Giddens (1991), is not static and given, but rather fluid and in constant change. Identities are viewed as narratives, which are changed, maintained, reshaped and created through “doing” and reflection with the interaction with others (Duits, 2008, p. 34; Giddens 1991). Community members, therefore, engage in continuous construction of their identities, through, for example, doing or performing cultural practices. Changing and revival of cultural elements is not a new

phenomenon in Setomaa case, as Kuutma (2005), discusses in her paper how Estonian and other minority cultures within it encountered a revival period during the Soviet years as an approach to differentiate themselves from rest of the Soviet Union. These cultural movements served as essentials for building communities' sense of self again, closely related to Giddens (1991) argument that identity is constructed.

### Community empowerment

To consider sustainability in cultural tourism, it is important to consider what is regarded as socio-culturally sustainable in Setomaa case. Scheyvens (1999) argues that in order to be culturally sensitive and sustainable, the management needs to have a low threshold approach, meaning that the initiatives are community led. Tourism should not only help to preserve the culture but also empower the community to lead, control and benefit from tourism practices concerning their cultural heritage. Scheyvens (1999), has presented an empowerment framework, which consists of four pillars:

- Economic empowerment (who profits from the practice, centralized or decentralized profit gains, stable incomes)
- Psychological empowerment (does “staged and/or emergent authenticity” bring pride to the community and external recognition or whether it has negative effects)
- Political empowerment (is the local community in control of what is being presented to tourists or a bigger external body)
- Social empowerment (tourisms effects on the social fabric)

Community-led decision making is notably important for smaller communities (Scheyvens, 1999). Empowerment frameworks therefore highlight that to be socio-economically sustainable, protecting heritage is vital, but also ensuring that relevant communities stay in control over what is presented and how in tourism context.

### Synthesis

Tourism therefore can offer both challenges as well as possibilities for minority groups and these concepts reveal a complex relationship between tourism and minority cultural heritage. Revitalization fits into this discussion, because tourism can act as a catalyst for cultural

revival. The discussed authenticity frameworks showcased that while tourism can have an impact on cultures revitalisation, it also poses a risk of commodification of culture and altering meanings of practices and traditions. Concepts such as staged and emergent authenticity explain how cultures change and evolve through external influences, such as tourism. Identity theories showed how sense of belonging and cultural pride can strengthen and revive through cultural performances within tourism, strengthening cultural identity. Lastly, empowerment theory highlighted the importance of local agency, ensuring that community members have a strong say in how their culture is performed and what is shown to tourists and that it benefits the community members, not solely big tourism boards and companies. The research question drawn from this is therefore: “How does tourism help in revitalizing a culture through community empowerment?”. The main research question is accompanied by sub questions: “How does tourism contribute to community empowerment through social, economic, political and psychological dimensions?” and “How does Seto culture presented in tourism impact community connection to the culture?”

## **1.5 Methodology**

This section introduces the methodological perspective that the study implemented. Research paradigm, research design, data collection and data analysis that the study implemented will be explained. Since the research concerns a minority community, interpretation of personal experiences and identity, constructivist paradigm and qualitative methodology approach are chosen to be appropriate. The aim of the chosen methodology is to illuminate how do smaller cultural groups, like the Setos, navigate the dual role of tourism, as it can pose both negative and positive impacts to the culture.

The foundation of this study is laid upon constructivist research paradigm, which argues that social reality is created through cultural interactions, lived human experiences and collective understandings (Fodouop Kouam, 2023, p. 3). This paradigm was chosen as concepts such as revitalization, cultural identity and authenticity and empowerment are difficult to measure objectively as they can be understood and approached differently by different groups and individuals.

The study implemented a qualitative research approach and Setomaa tourism being taken as a case study. A case study enables to develop a deep understating into a social phenomenon with a real-life example (Gerring, 2004, p. 341). The topic of cultural revitalisation is a

nuanced subject, that has influences from history, economy, community strategies and more, making it difficult to research using quantitative methodological approach. Qualitative research was chosen for this thesis study because, it allows for research that aims to get a good understanding of local practices and interpretations, which can be harder to decode with solely numerical data (Nassaji, 2020. p. 421).

#### Data collection

The data consisted of qualitative empirical material, since no numerical measurements were conducted. The data were collected through interviews, and no observations were conducted due to limited time and availability.

The approach to collecting data were the interviews. Since the interviews were semi-structured, which had questions proposed by the researcher to the interview participants, the interviewees were additionally free to add additional comments and thoughts to the interview (Ruslin et al., 2022, p. 27). Interviews were chosen as data collection method, since it allows to gather information on people's personal experiences and thoughts relating to tourism, and not limit them. Since the thesis also emphasises different understandings of authenticity and culture, interviews can help to gain understating and insights into what interviewees refer to as for example, authentic Seto culture. It also helps to study attitudes regarding tourism and the concept of empowerment in Setomaa case.

The aim of the interviews was to gather information from a broad range of stakeholders. Interviewees included Seto and non-Seto people from wide range of age groups, backgrounds such as tourism entrepreneurs, people with cultural involvement background and people impacted by tourism directly. The interviews were conducted in Estonian language, audio recorded (with participant knowledge and approval), transcribed and translated.

To follow the principles of constructivist research paradigm and enhance transparency and integrity of the research, reflexive research notes were taken by the researcher throughout the research process (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). The notes included researchers' positionality and biases, interpretations, personal assumptions, interactions with the participants, as well as analytical notes.

#### Data analysis

The empirical data gathered through interviews were analysed through thematical analysis. The data analysis followed Braun and Clarkes (2006) framework for thematic analysis. It is a six-step process designed for qualitative research purposes used across different disciplines (Campbell et al., 2021). Identifying patterns in interviewees' answers helps to capture the meaning behind the answers.

The steps of thematic analysis included familiarization with the data, initial coding (identifying important parts of a text) naming codes, reviewing sub-themes and finally, defying and naming sub-themes and connecting sub-themes to research questions and theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## **1.6 Structure of the study**

The following chapters will delve into the areas introduced above. The second chapter discusses theoretical framework of the study, elaborating further the concepts of authenticity, identity and community empowerment. In the methodology chapter, I will introduce data collection method, how were the interviews conducted and additional processes relating to data collection. Further, I will discuss how the data were analysed.

The findings of the interviews are presented as themes and sub-themes in the result chapter of the thesis. Results are further analysed in the discussion chapter. To conclude the thesis, I provided conclusions of the results, identified limitations as well as possible areas for further research.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

The study looks at what role does tourism play in cultural revitalisation in Setomaa case. The study was led by empowerment framework created by Scheyvens (1999), as introduced in introduction chapter. The framework was chosen, because Setomaa tourism is closely connected to living minority culture, community participation and minority identity.

The empowerment framework emphasises community led initiatives with direct benefits back to the community. The thesis therefore aimed to examine, whether principles of the framework correspond to Setomaa tourism, and therefore impact cultural revitalisation positively. Identity and authenticity were chosen to be the supporting concepts of the analysis, as they can help in understanding how revitalisation is experienced within tourism practices. The three concepts provided a more holistic overview of the issue. The theoretical framework chapter delves into theoretical concepts chosen for this study, for analytical purposes.

### **2.1 Cultural revitalisation and tourism**

Defining cultural revitalisation

Today's cultural landscapes are in interplay between tradition and modernity, and cultural identities are being both challenged as well as enriched in interconnected world. Cultural identity refers to a person's sense of belonging to a group or culture, encompassing cultural codes such as historical experiences, values, traditions, and social norms (Hall, 1990, p. 223). These aspects collectively formulate how the individual views themselves and how there are viewed by others (Hall, 1990, p. 223). Through changes in cultural landscape (such as globalisation), cultural identities are being influenced by global forces. Cultural identity in a global world therefore navigates between modernity and tradition (Mohyeddin, 2024).

Globalisation is referring to the interconnectedness and interdependence of countries through economic, cultural and political exchanges (Held & McGrew, 2007; Robertson, 1992).

Through rapid globalisation, the impact on culture is often manifested through homogenization, a process in where local cultures increasingly resemble each other, due to dominance of global, predominantly Western norms (Mohyeddin, 2024). This has created some resistance against homogenisation of cultures amidst rapid globalisation, mainly utilizing cultural preservation (Smith, 2020). Indigenous movements, sites and languages are

begin protected and education system and media play a pivotal role in maintaining and persevering cultural values and identity (Smith, 2020). This illustrates a complex navigation between preserving old and adopting new cultural elements.

Cultural revitalisation in academic literature by Wallace (1956, as cited in Ukaegbu et al., 2018), has been conceptualised as organised and deliberate action by members of a society to change and/or reshape cultural practices as a response to perceived threats or discontent. Although Wallace's work primarily focused on religious movements, with no attention to other changes in societies like globalisation or modernisation, his understanding of culture as adaptable and dynamic, has influenced how later researchers perceive culture (Ukaegbu et al., 2018).

Since the concept of revitalisation became popular after Wallace, how people have used it since has changed, although similarities persist. Language revitalisation, religion revitalisation and many more examples showcase how the concept of "revitalisation" is used in different settings. The specific definition of cultural revitalisation in relation to tourism is lacking, although there exist views on how culture is revitalised in tourism context (Ukaegbu et al., 2018).

The concept of cultural preservation (preserving elements of culture in specific moment in time) is somewhat opposite to cultural revitalisation (Herbert, 1995a; Herbert 1995b; Hewison, 1987). Moreover, cultural revitalisation and development are often discussed together in literature, however, the latter is often described in a negative light, as it is viewed as threat to culture and harm traditions (Herbert, 1995a). Negative perception to the subject of development may not reflect opinions of local communities, as tourism is not only viewed as a form to preserve culture, but as a development opportunity, supporting economic and social development (Brunt & Courtney, 1999).

#### Tourism as a stimulus for cultural revitalisation

Culture is becoming an asset to many communities around the world, and many travellers seek culture as an object for travel. Culture was recognised not solely as art and tradition but also an economic asset, especially in peripheral regions (Richards, 2021, pp. 3–4). Ever since the 1990s when cultural tourism began to be mass consumed form of travel, many places saw the economic opportunity and began to open monuments and museums (Richards, 2021, p. 4).

The new cultural attractions exceeded the cultural tourism demand in the 1990s, which resulted in highly competitive marketplace (Richards, 2021, p. 4).

Cultural institutions and their operations also began to be highly influenced by political landscape in the 80s and 90s, in where free market and less public spending was favoured (Debeş, 2011, p. 236). Cultural institutions, such as museums and other heritage projects began to act more like ordinary businesses, as they needed to attract more customers to make profit, which resulted in businesses to be encouraged towards entrepreneurship (McDonald, 1998).

Moreover, culture itself became a valuable commodity in a globalised world and because of surplus of cultural attractions, businesses began to compete with one another (Richards, 2010). Eventification and fragmentation of cultural tourism into specific niches (such as art tourism, gastronomy tourism, music tourism etc.) became popular ways in how to attract more customers and spread demand (Richards, 2010). Through changes in political landscape, tourism has created an approach to revitalise cultures through mainly its economic impacts on the local economy. It is because of that reason why fair and stable distribution of economic benefits is pivotal.

In the context of indigenous cultures, discourse surrounding tourism as stimulus for cultural revitalisation, has been mainly around tourism-induced cultural deterioration, although positive examples additionally exist. Through tourism initiatives, Nguyen et al. (2025), discussed how traditional cuisine, architecture, practises and performances were revitalised by an indigenous community in Vietnam. However, appropriateness and sensitivity, especially regarding sacred cultural elements remain (Nguyen et al., 2025).

## **2.2 Empowerment framework**

Origins around the notion of empowerment

The history around the notion of empowerment can be traced back to many origins. The origins include but are not limited to, varied domains of feminism, Gandhism and Freudian psychology (Simon 1994; Cornwall & Brock 2005). It developed from social movements, that emphasized giving marginalised groups the capacity to act in a way that ensures their own well-being and decision-making.

Empowerment theory has been a topic in western countries for decades and has been discussed in number of disciplines including women's studies, education, political science, psychology, community development as well as in tourism (Aghazamani & Hunt, 2017; Friedmann, 1992; Pigg, 2002; Rowlands, 1997; Scheyvens, 1999; Sofield, 2003; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, et al., 1992). It is therefore a diverse notion used in various cases.

Influenced by thinkers such as Paulo Freire, the notion of empowerment shifted the rule of power from top-down to bottom-up, in where majority of the people are active participants in decision-making rather than recipients (Calvès, 2009, p. 738). According to Freire (1974, as cited in Calvès, 2009, p. 738), in every society, a minority number of people are exerting dominance over the masses, which leads to "dominated consciousness". From the dominated consciousness, "critical consciousness" can be reached (Calvès, 2009, p. 739). Through becoming self-aware, the individual can develop instruments through which they can make choices and become politically aware. By cultivating "critical consciousness", the individual can move from understanding to doing (Calvès, 2009, p. 739).

#### Scheyvens' Empowerment Framework

The thesis utilised empowerment framework developed by Scheyvens in 1999 to analyse impacts of cultural tourism in the context of Setomaa. It was chosen, as it specifically addresses tourism's impacts in relation to empowerment. The principle behind the framework is that tourism should promote development as well as conservation, and tourism in an area is only successful when the people in it benefit from it and benefits are distributed equally (Scheyvens 1999). This framework helps to analyse who is in control of tourism development, impacts of tourism on Seto voice and agency and whether local decision making is weakened or strengthened in tourism. The framework was developed around ecotourism, but as Scheyvens (1999) additionally stated, ecotourism can involve both cultural and environmental tourism and should therefore have considerations regarding the social aspects of tourism benefits as well as environmental.

This research recognised that empowerment could take place in many forms, not solely on an economic or political level. This specific framework was chosen as it covers wide range of areas in where empowerment can take place, additionally the social and psychological impacts of tourism in host community. The dimensions of the framework include economic

empowerment, social empowerment, political empowerment and psychological empowerment.

### Dimensions of empowerment

As mentioned above, four levels of empowerment are used in this framework. They include (Scheyvens 1999):

#### 1. Economic empowerment.

When determining whether the local community has benefited from tourism in their area, it is beneficial to analyse whether business and work opportunities have been created from tourism, both in formal and informal ways. Other areas important to consider include: are the employment opportunities seasonal (leading to improper income) and whether monetary benefits generated through tourism are shared fairly. Because no community is a single homogeneous, egalitarian group, consisted with similar values, it is important to analyse, whether local elites are monopolising economic benefits created through tourism (Wilkinson & Pratiwi, 1995).

#### 2. Psychological empowerment

A community who is psychologically empowered feels hopeful about the future inside the community, has trust in their own capabilities, has a sense of proudness of their culture and in where individuals can take care of themselves. In many communities, keeping traditions and culture alive signifies a strong sense of well-being and self-respect (Mansperger, 1995).

If tourism practices intervene with locals' connection to the land or traditions, it can lead to depression and apathy. For example, if a community is moved to another location, in where they lose their connection to land and cannot for example cultivate land similarly how it is done in tradition, it can cause psychological disempowerment. Moreover, making the community depend on tourism industry with no other methods of income, can also lead to disempowerment. An example is the Yagua, who were moved to another location, in order to be closer to tourists reach. It led to over dependence on tourism and loss of connection to their historical lands (Mansperger, 1995).

#### 3. Social empowerment

A strong social unity that is strengthened by tourism is often a sign of a good social empowerment. Various community groups, such as church, youth and women's clubs could indicate a strong social cohesion (Scheyvens 1999). Community projects, that are funded or receive benefits from tourism and that aim to better life in the area (such as schools and health care centres) could further be a sign of a community with stronger social empowerment.

Tourism can lead to damage to social empowerment, if it brings in crime, loss of cultural authenticity, prostitution, overcrowding and begging (Scheyvens 1999). It is highlighted that although tourism is meant to be beneficial to the community, it can attract unwanted side effects. Unfair distribution of money can additionally lead to distrust within the community (Scheyvens 1999).

#### 4. Political Empowerment

A community is likely to be politically empowered when it has an influence and decision-making right in tourism related projects from their ideation to implementation (Scheyvens 1999). Diverse opinions and ideas (including children and women) should be heard and have an influence in bigger decision-making bodies.

Decentralisation of power matter in local community context matters, as it prevents centralisation of power on a distant authority, shifting the power from national level to community level (Akama, 1996). This means including low threshold stakeholders and organisations (such as churches groups and indigenous institutions) in representative and decision-making bodies, such as regional tourism associations.

#### Empowerment and cultural revitalisation

Empowerment provides communities with internal strength to make revitalisation efforts from within. Tourism can therefore pose either a negative or positive stimulus to drive the internal strength. Revitalization, in this context, is not an effort to only preserve cultures but also strengthen peoples individual and communal capacity to look over and govern their own futures. The idea of empowerment places people as central actors of development, rather than begin passive recipients of different programs (Scheyvens 1999).

The empowerment framework emphasizes the importance of pride, understanding and valuing the culture by the community itself, as it can be sustained when it these matters are in place. Empowerment in cultural revitalisation could be apparent in several dimensions. Social

empowerment is reflected in stronger community cohesion, often seen in cultural activities that enhances unification of the community. Psychological empowerment is seen when community feels a sense of pride of their community and in their heritage. Therefore, reviving older, ancestral and spiritual traditions could impact cultural identity positively (Banda et al., 2024; Scheyvens, 1999). Inclusive participation is vital in political empowerment, as political empowerment is enhanced when decisions are made within. To ensure that decisions made reflect the local values and opinions, engaging with grassroots institutions in decision making is important (Scheyvens, 1999).

### **2.3 Authenticity in tourism**

Authenticity is a highly debated concept within tourism. Its background contains a mix of philosophical and psychological concepts, which reflect its multifaceted origin (Belhassen et al., 2008; Steiner & Reisinger, 2006). Within tourism, the complexity is compounded, as authenticity tends to be used in two different approaches: authenticity as legitimacy referring to an event or an artifact and authenticity referring to human attribute, which signals being one's true self (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006).

Objective, constructive and existential authenticity dominate the authenticity discourses within tourism research. Constructive authenticity refers to a socially constructed authenticity, in other words something is authentic, because it is socially agreed to be according to Cohen, (1988, as cited by Zhou, 2023, p. 1469). It is experience-related and subjective. It highlights that for example; traditions can be adapted or revived. Moreover, it emphasizes that what is considered authentic changes over time.

According to Cohen (1988 as cited by Zhou, 2023, p. 1417) objective authenticity refers to the authenticity of tourism destinations and attractions, such as an original objects/artifacts and/or events. It argues that when tourism provides objectively authentic experiences, tourists feel more genuine emotions, and it therefore creates authentic experiences (Bryce et al., 2015).

Existential authenticity is another experience-based approach to authenticity, focusing on a personal experience and an alternative to objective authenticity. Contrary to constructive authenticity, which is shaped by socially accepted and shared meanings, existential authenticity focuses on the individual, his/her self-expression and inner fulfilment (Wang,

1999). It still, however, is formed through social connections, but the core idea of it is whether or not the experience feels meaningful to an individual. The focus is shifted off from a discourse whether something is objectively authentic (Steiner & Reisinger, 2006; Cook, 2011).

#### Staged and emergent authenticity

MacCannell (1973, as cited in Lau, 2010, p. 482), uses the metaphor of front stage and backstage to explain how societies create a separation between private and public life.

MacCannell (1973, 1976, as cited in Lau, 2010, p. 482) also applies the same thinking to tourism, in where he argues that tourists are seeking authentic “back-stage” experiences and are attracted to destinations that offer those experiences.

In MacCannell’s (1973 as cited in Lau, 2010, p. 482) theory, two subdivisions of authenticity become apparent: object authenticity and relationship authenticity. In an object authenticity, authenticity is searched in objects (such as food, clothing etc.) and rituals. In a relationship authenticity, authenticity is searched for in human interactions (Lau, 2010, p. 483). Tourists determine how authentic the experience is by questioning themselves of whether what they see and experience is authentic, which is linked to object authenticity, which exists in different degrees, depending on how objectively authentic the experience is (Lau, 2010, p. 483). Many tourists experiences according to MacCannell (1973 as cited in Lau, 2010, p. 482) are staged, meaning they show the “front stage” without the “backstage” side. Many tourists naturally would like to access the non-staged experience, which leads majority of the experiences to fall somewhere in the “seeing” and “experiencing” local life continuum (Lau, 2010, p. 483).

Cohen (1988, as cited by Pöbl 2020, p. 13), critiqued the concept of staged authenticity.

Cohen (1998, as cited by Zhou, 2023, p. 1417), argues that staged authenticity implies that the experience is experienced the same way for everyone, as like a label which can be put onto objects, however, authenticity is not particular to an event or product, nor it is something that can be measured. He argues that the authenticity is negotiable and depends on the perception of the tourist (Heitmann, 2011; Zhou, 2023, p. 1417). Emergent authenticity, discussed by Cohen (1998, as cited by Zhou, 2023, p. 1417), is a concept in where initially “inauthentic” cultural product becomes generally recognised as authentic (Heitmann, 2011; Zhou, 2023, p. 1417). Because two different tourists might reach to a different conclusion regarding

authenticity of a cultural product, depending on tourists' personal history, Cohen's model of emergent authenticity helps to illustrate that authenticity in tourism is mainly open to interpretation (Heitmann, 2011).

#### Authenticity and empowerment

Discourse on authenticity leads back to the topic of empowerment. Authenticity plays a vital role in community well-being and empowerment in the context of cultural tourism. According to the empowerment framework by Scheyvens (1999), the practice of cultural activities, in order to be psychologically and socially empowering, should feel meaningful to the community itself, not solely feel authentic and meaningful to the tourist audience. For the authentic experiences to be empowering to the host community, the experiences should feel authentic and meaningful to the host community as well. For the political empowerment, according to the empowerment framework, the host community itself, should oversee what is being presented to the tourists. When communities lose control over what is being presented and the performances are staged and designed solely for tourists, communities may experience disempowerment.

## **2.4 Identity**

Many scholars agree that an identity is not congenital but rather constructed individually and socially throughout life experiences, which are conveyed through narratives (Ahn, 2011; Giddens, 1991; Guerrero 2011). For Ahn (2011), identity means a continuous process. The formation and changes in identity can be intentional, influenced by personal choices (Ala-Kortesmaa et al., 2022), or unintentional shaped by culture, ideology, social economic status (Gandana & Nissa, 2021; Trzebiński, 1998) or/and diverse life experiences (Bamberg, 2011). The aforementioned narrative is defied differently by scholars. Labov (1972), describes it as a storytelling through spoken and written stories which concern personal stories. Bruner (1991) adds to this idea of narrative by arguing that narratives do not solely tell stories, but also influence how people approach reality, how they think and understand it.

The rapid growth of tourism into becoming an influential economic sector, means that it also has impacts on the host communities (Jørgensen et al., 2021). Especially in rural areas tourism is seen as an approach to revive economies, in an area that already has a non-diverse job market (Chen et al., 2018; Farsani et al., 2011). Although it can solve the employment

problem, it can additionally come with significant downsides when a community is made to be depended on external revenue and damage the cultural heritage (Creaney & Niewiadomski, 2016).

When discussing empowerment in a sense of identity, researchers have developed various ways to determine how strong a community identity is (Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016). Different methods exist, but most focus on three key areas, which include: functional identity, referring to how does the community meet personal needs. Community participation, meaning the level of involvement of people in communal practices. As well as emotional identity, how connected individuals feel to their community (Hains et al., 2013; Xin & Ling, 2015).

In order to have a sustainable cultural tourism practice, it is therefore vital to think beyond authenticity and involve the concept of identity into the mix, as for example, a practice that might feel authentic to the tourists point of view, might not give anything back to the community in a sense of strengthened identities.

## **2.5 Summary**

In the context of this thesis, the empowerment framework serves as the overarching theoretical concept of the study to understand tourism's existing role in cultural revitalisation in the context of Setomaa. Empowerment framework in conclusion, emphasises the central role of the community itself, in areas such as representation, decision-making and cultural resources. Authenticity and identity serve as supportive concepts. Authenticity facilitates understanding of meaning regarding cultural performances and practices that are being presented to tourists. Identity represents the overall cultural values and understanding. Since, it is generally concluded that identity involves and changes through experiences, and based on the constructive authenticity theory, what is now considered "not traditional" Seto cultural element, can become socially accepted over time. That is important to consider, since in cultural tourism, not all performances or objects sold to tourists are objectively authentic. Based on the empowerment theory, if Setomaa tourism is externally controlled, it risks limiting Seto culture to excessive staged performance, commodification and insensitivity towards cultural elements perceived as sacred. This could lead to no meaning and weakened cultural identity to the people who present the culture.

Figure 1. Cross-theme synthesis.

## Synthesis

Authenticity ↔ Empowerment

Identity ↔ Empowerment

Identity ↔ Authenticity

Figure 1 depicts the practical synthesis between the different concepts of the theoretical framework. Authenticity and empowerment are interrelated, as losing control over representation (political empowerment) impacts also the authenticity. Feeling empowered to do events and festivals also impacts the collective identity. A good sense of identity reinforces authenticity.

### **3 Methodology of the study**

#### **3.1 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research method was chosen for this thesis. Contrary to quantitative research, where data is numerical and analysis statistical, qualitative research investigates complex human experiences, capturing nuances in them that could otherwise be lost in numerical data (Lim, 2025, p. 199). In qualitative research, the general aim is a systematic inquiry into a social phenomenon in its natural setting (Teherani et al., 2015, p. 669). Examples of those social phenomena can include people's experiences regarding certain aspects of their lives, lived experiences, in group and individual behaviour and more (Teherani et al., 2015, p. 669). The data is collected by the researcher, who is also the main research instrument. The researcher aims to seek understanding of why events occur and what the events mean to the research participants (Teherani et al., 2015, p. 669). As the aim of this research was to understand a social phenomenon and community perceptions, qualitative method was considered to be the most suitable option.

Lim (2025, p. 200) further discusses that in the exploration of subjective experiences and meanings, qualitative research method emphasises flexibility and adaptability, which are paramount to understand a wide spectrum of human experiences. Unlike in quantitative research, robustness does that originate from validation from numerical data, but from systematic methodology, which includes reflexivity (the continuous process of researcher's reflection over their own influence of the research) (Lim, 2025, p. 200).

For a comprehensive understanding of qualitative research method, being aware of both of its advantages and shortcomings is important, to consider and navigate them carefully in research (Lim, 2025, p. 199). One of the challenges include limited sample sizes, making generalization of research results limited. Including multiple data sources (triangulation), meaning involving various types of data, such as observations and documents can enhance the research depth and credibility of a subjective interpretation (Denzin, 1978).

As a researcher her/himself plays a crucial role in qualitative research process, their own knowledge/ skillset, as well as biases influence the quality of research (Lim, 2025, p. 201). Researcher can invest in gaining knowledge around the research subject and practising ongoing reflexivity, in where a researcher questions their own beliefs, as well as staying true

to the participants interpretation and to the theories which inform researchers interpretation (Lim, 2025, p. 201).

### **3.2 Research paradigm**

Qualitative research emphasizes reflexivity and subjectivity (Ahmed et al., 2025). Therefore, from ontological standpoint, the research paradigm this research is laid upon is constructivist paradigm. As Schwandt (1994, p. 237), puts it “We invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience and, further, we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of a new experience”. Constructivist perspective assumes that realities differ from person to person, therefore this study is open to different participant perceptions (Fodouop Kouam, 2023, p. 3). Constructivism further highlights that knowledge is co-created with the researcher and the participants. Therefore, the research data emerges through interactions between the researcher and the participants, not in objective information extraction. The paradigm acknowledges that the researcher's positionality and participants own constructed concepts and multiple realities (young/old/entrepreneurs/ etc.) around the concepts that shape the research process (Fodouop Kouam, 2023, p. 3).

### **3.3 Research method and data collection**

The case of Setomaa region was utilised to study how tourism influences the local culture revitalisation processes through empowerment. While the aim of the research was to provide descriptive insights into community’s own perspectives, the primary aim of the research is, however, to ask how tourism creates possible advantages and disadvantages for cultural revitalisation through empowerment.

Choosing the right sample for research is crucial and a pillar for it, as the sampling needs to be relevant to the research question, conceptual frame and research design, to produce the answers, the research seeks (Lohr, 2019). As Miles and Huberman (1994) describe it: “you cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything”.

The participants for the interviews were selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research, across disciplines. It refers to a deliberate process, in where research participants are chosen based on their shared qualities (such as knowledge in Setomaa tourism), which have a probability in

answering the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A snowball sampling is defined as interviewing a participant's members of close social environment (Coleman, 1959). I initially contacted local cultural institutions, for them to refer me to people who have knowledge and experience in Setomaa tourism and local life. Criteria was that the participants had to identify as a Seto or have extensive knowledge of and some connection to the culture. I received contacts from different institutions, and subsequently, I started the snowball sampling. I asked the interview participants contacts, who they think could be suitable or have interesting insights for the interview topic. Most of the participants were, however, through purposive sampling.

To gather research data, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with predominately Seto community members and with one participant who has a close relationship and strong knowledge about tourism in Setomaa and the culture. It was considered a sufficient number of interviewees, when similar answers started to appear. All interviews were conducted in Estonian. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a data collection method, because they allow the participant to express their own personal opinions better with open-ended questions, without much constrain (Belina, 2023).

For the interviews, people were not chosen by a specific age group nor needed to have extensive knowledge about tourism in Setomaa. The reason for this sample was to get an idea of general perceptions of tourism in Setomaa, instead from a specific demographic. Most participants who took part in the research were, however of tourism and/or cultural activism background. This was positive for the research however, since people with expertise of tourism in Setomaa region provided valuable insightful knowledge, while people with little to no knowledge about tourism in Setomaa, provided valuable insights into the everyday life and how tourism impacts it. It is important to clarify, in this research who is a member of the community, to accurately depict voices of the Seto community. A participant who is a community member is marked as "Seto community member" or S1-S8 in abbreviation (Table 1). A participant who is not a Seto themselves (but have a strong connection and knowledge) is marked as "Non-Seto" or NS1. In addition to the cultural background of the participants, their role is also indicated, as it can provide an important insights and reasons for their answers.

Table 1. Participant background information.

Participant	Background	Role
S1	Seto community member	Active member of the community and cultural initiatives
NS1	Non-Seto	Connection to Seto community
S2	Seto community member	Active in cultural initiatives and tourism
S3	Seto community member	Active in cultural initiatives and tourism
S4	Seto community member	Engagement in heritage preservation
S5	Seto community member	Resident of Setomaa and experience in tourism
S6	Seto community member	Active member of the community and tourism
S7	Seto community member	Resident of Setomaa and experience in tourism
S8	Seto community member	Engagement in heritage preservation and tourism

To hide the participant identity, recognisable characteristics such as names, residence and workplaces or professions are not mentioned. The interviews took place from the 17<sup>th</sup> of February until 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2026. The interviews lasted anywhere from roughly around 30 minutes to 1.5 hours, depending on the participant answers. All interview participants were given letter of consent in Estonian, that described what are they being interviewed for, information regarding the possibility to take back their approval to partake in the interview and information regarding anonymity. All interviews were held on Zoom video recording platform and were recorded. The recordings were recorded and saved with a knowledge and permission of the participant.

Participants were told that the recordings are going to be deleted after interview transcription. The interviews were transcribed mostly on Microsoft Word until its monthly limit and as well as on Tekstiks.ee website, as it allowed for more accurate transcription in Estonian. The interview audios placed on the latter transcription service did not contain personal information and audios were edited to remove the beginning part of interview if they contained interviewees name or other recognisable information. Transcriptions were also deleted from the service once transcripts were downloaded. Files are otherwise stored in servers, which are managed by Tallinn University of Technology in Tallinn, Estonia. According to the service provider, once the user deletes files, they are removed permanently (Tekstiks, 2022).

The interview consisted of three themes: identity, authenticity and empowerment (involving four dimensions based on the empowerment framework). Altogether, there were 16 questions, and had a specific order, but due to the nature of the interviews (semi structured with open-ended questions), the participants often gave extensive answers, which resulted in questions being answered before they were formally asked, and additional questions were asked by the

researcher, in where it was applicable. Most interviews, therefore, did not follow a set structure. Following the interviews and transcription of them, the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

### **3.4 Thematic analysis as analysis method**

Thematic analysis (TA) is used as a common method for data analysis in qualitative research. The method seeks themes and patterns in a qualitative data (Lowhorn, 2007). The method is flexible and can be used in various research paradigms, diverse range of data and theoretical frameworks (Joffe, 2011). It is a systematic approach, in where the aim is to characterize, explain and find connections across topics. There are also different approaches to conduct a thematic analysis. In this research, however, the deductive analysis was used. In a deductive analysis, the research is guided by theories and concepts. Research doing deductive analysis compare existing theory with the empirical data, to identify whether the data matches the existing theory or not (Braun & Clarke, 2023).

Coding is a step before identifying themes from codes. In this systematic process, data is coded, in order to arrange them into specific themes. Through coding, the data can be easier to compare, identify similarities between different interviews and to generally organize the data (Braun, & Clarke, 2023). There exist various approaches to coding, which include open coding, closed coding, hybrid coding, axial coding and in vivo coding (Sandhiya & Bhuvanewari, 2024). The most suitable coding approach for this thesis was the hybrid coding, which is a combination of open and closed coding. In a deductive approach, themes emerge from already existing theory (Braun & Clarke 2012; Thompson, 2022). As the thesis has a theoretical foundation, themes were predefined, sourced from the theory, but new emerging ideas were also open to analysis. Based on Scheyvens (1999) empowerment framework, I pre-determined four themes.

Themes help to answer the research question/s (Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to Braun & Clarke (2006) and Nowell et al. (2017) a theme does not have to appear multiple times in data, in order for it to be significant, as long as it touches the research question. Themes are defined as semantic or latent themes. Semantic themes focus directly on what the participants are saying without seeking the underlying assumptions or ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research, the (sub) themes are semantic themes, therefore, the (sub) themes were

identified based on participants expressed experiences, rather than aiming to interpret latent and underlying ideologies.

One of the first steps in a thematic data analysis is familiarizing yourself with the data and immersing yourself with it to get a good understanding of it (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process requires a deep understanding of the data, necessarily reading through the transcripts multiple times, and if needed listening to the recordings. In the case of this thesis, interviews were used to gather the data, and therefore it means that acquainting myself with each interview separately to get a good understanding of each participant ideas, knowledge and perceptions was important. When the researcher immerses themselves with the data, it is more likely that a good foundation is laid for the subsequent steps in the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Immersion does not mean to dive into the coding process but rather reading through the transcripts of the interviews. Getting familiar with the raw data is crucial for orientation in future steps and it makes it more likely that stage for analysis is comprehensive (Kiger, & Varpio, 2020). The interviews were therefore transcribed into text, where each interview was read through multiple times. Cross referencing was also done, to assure that the Microsoft Word and Tekstiks transcription services transcribed the correct words, as in many examples it did not transcribe the interviews correctly.

After the familiarization with the data, the second step was the coding process. The first analytical step is to start generating initial codes from the raw data to organized it into a specific and detailed level (Sandhiya & Bhuvaneswari, 2024). The aim of the coding process is to generate codes that appear from raw data. In the coding process, the researcher reads through the data in order to find information relevant and important to the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The pieces of information are then given labels or “codes”, which makes the data more organized. Coding is therefore a process in where pieces of information is labelled, which facilitates easier and organized analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Codes were derived from transcriptions, in where after reading them one by one, I started to highlight quotes that I deemed relevant and important for the research. To create, manage and structure the codes more efficiently I created an Excel sheet, in where I added quotes from the interviews, one interview at a time. Once I had the relevant quotes in the Excel sheet, I gave them descriptive codes. I aimed reusing the codes, whenever suitable, to avoid having many

different codes that refer to the same idea. The codes were additionally colour coded using four colours (based on the empowerment framework) in the Excel sheet for easier navigation, as well as to observe early which codes could fall under which empowerment dimension. Following the coding process, patterns in the data became more apparent, which led to the process of connecting the codes to pre-determined themes.

After the coding process as the third step, the researcher develops themes from the analysed codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this step, instead of creating the main themes, I created subthemes. The subthemes are created by grouping similar codes together and in some cases, researchers may develop a graphical map; to illustrate how do different codes relate to each other (Sandhiya & Bhuvanewari, 2024). An analogy by Braun & Clarke (2006) is describing the process as building a house. In the analogy, the individual codes are the building blocks, and the themes are the foundations. Getting an understanding how different codes relate to build a (sub) theme is therefore important. In a deductive analysis, existing theories and concepts influenced the development of subthemes, as the themes focused on a specific aspect of a data. This results in themes which are built around a certain question of interest (Braun & Clarke 2006). As mentioned earlier, however, the analysis also considered areas outside the theory, meaning that if ideas outside the theory appeared, they were considered in the analysis.

Because of the colour coded codes, it was easier to see which code belongs to which theme (empowerment dimension). In the subsequent step I isolated codes based on colour code, to view clearly what possible subthemes can be created. Lastly, I emerged same or similar codes within a theme, to create subthemes. The colours of a few codes were changed, if during the process I discovered that they are better suited for another empowerment dimension.

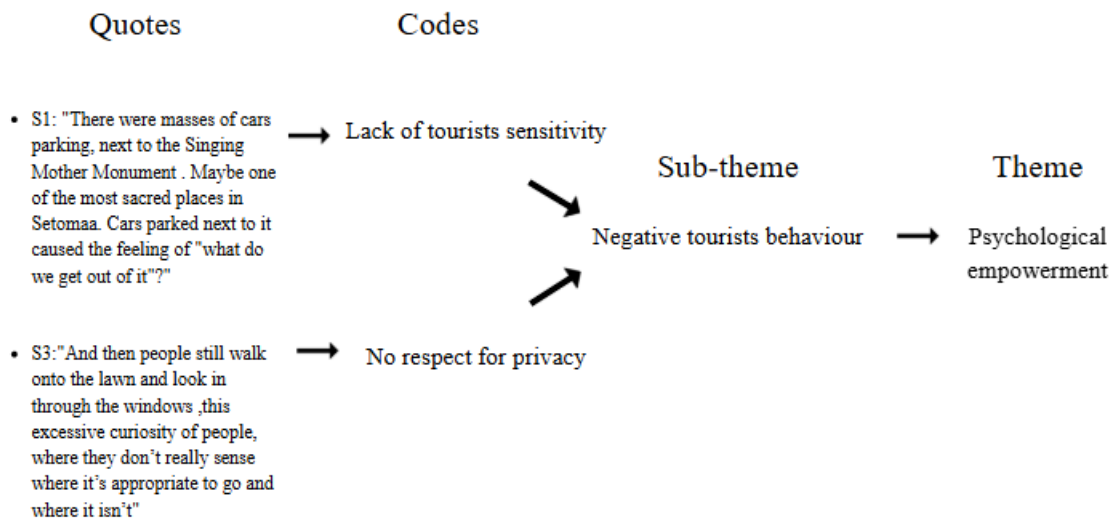
Braun and Clarke (2006) also point out the importance of not weakening the concertation of data through many miscellaneous themes. It can occur when large volume of themes is being considered in the analysis process. Determining which themes play the key role in answering the research question/s is therefore crucial part of analysis. To avoid this, I read through quotes and codes, to determine whether a code does represent its insights. It helped me to avoid creating many subthemes that do not directly answer the research question. The codes were then added to an already existing sub theme, in where they are suitable for.

The fourth step of thematic analysis is reviewing the themes. The aim of this process is to review the themes and determine whether they fit the data you are after. In this step the themes are refined and improved to fit into the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process also assures that the codes inside the theme make sense and are connected to each other, without them having possible different meanings. If it occurs that a code inside a theme is not related to the topic of a theme, it can be moved to another theme.

A thematic map (Excel sheet) was being created and updated throughout the analysis process. The second area that was being audited in this process was seeing whether the subthemes integrate into the research and whether some subthemes are too similar to each other. This process therefore mainly involved removing, splitting or merging subthemes. A researcher can keep notes on why themes were modified to improve transparency and to establish an audit trail to better credibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Sandhiya & Bhuvanewari, 2024). In order to do it, I created a Word document, in where I listed changes I made to the subthemes and codes.

The step five of the thematic analysis involves defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this process, the researcher should be able to explain the themes and give them correct names that reflect their data insights. The names should be short and clear, while also clearly representing the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During the analysis process, some names of the subthemes were corrected to represent better what they entail. In addition to being able to explain the theme, being able to connect it to the research questions and explain what the theme entails is important (Sekar, & Bhuvanewari, 2024). To illustrate the themes and subthemes, quotes from the interviews are taken to show what exactly was said during the interview. Quotes are additionally explained to showcase the narrative around the theme (Kiger, & Varpio, 2020; Sekar, & Bhuvanewari, 2024). Below (figure 2) illustrates the thematic analysis process, taking one of the sub-themes “Negative tourist behaviour” under psychological empowerment theme as an example. In the analysis there were more than two quotes supporting this sub theme. From a theme, narrative is created, in order to explain the theme and its many nuances.

Figure 2. Analysis illustration.



The final stage of a thematic analysis is the reports producing. This is a conclusive part of the analysis, in where a researcher presents the themes, and supporting quotes from the interviews (Sandhiya & Bhuvaneshwari, 2024). In this stage the results are also being connected to the previously introduced theory and concepts. The thesis uses an illustrative approach to present the results, taking quotes from the interviews and explaining their relation to the theme and therefore to the theory.

### 3.5 Research ethics

Conducting ethical research was a central consideration of this study. It followed the ethical guidelines as well as took into consideration the principles to follow when conducting research on a minority group and cultural heritage research.

Participants only took part in the interviews when I had their written and informed consent. The letter of consent was written in clear Estonian language. The participants had knowledge about purpose of the study, ensured confidentiality, had the right to withdraw from the process any time, and were informed on how their answers will be stored and used. All written in the letter of consent (appendix 1). Participant anonymity is central in research (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity [TENK], 2019, pp. 9-15).

In addition to general ethical research guidelines, the research also followed principles of cultural sensitivity. The principles include ensuring non-exoticisation and romanticism, fair representation, and respecting secret and closed knowledge (Williams & Shipley, 2023).

Being an Estonian myself, positionality shaped how I interpreted and approached the study. Having cultural proximity, but not a Seto myself, positions me as a both an insider and an outsider, as I do have general knowledge about the culture, but lack personal, in depth understanding and knowledge on community and culture specific areas. I remained aware of my own position and dynamics. I aimed to minimize my own assumptions and interpretations, ensuring that interpretations are grounded on interviewees' answers rather than my own background. In addition, I aimed to practice reflexivity throughout the research process.

To avoid harmful misinterpretations, the research aimed to ground emerging concepts and interpretations in participants' answers, rather than my own assumptions. In addition, receiving multiple answers and viewpoints on the same subject helped to eliminate misunderstandings and simplifications.

## 4 Findings

This chapter delves into the results of the interviews, based on deductive thematic analysis. I present the patterns that appeared based on my interpretation of the data. Since I used a deductive approach, the four main themes, based on the empowerment framework, were already determined prior to the analysis and each subtheme is connected to each theme. Altogether, nine subthemes were detected, two in social empowerment dimension, one each in political and economic dimension and five subthemes in psychological empowerment dimension.

### 4.1 Social empowerment

As previously discussed, social empowerment in this case refers to a social unity, which is enhanced by tourism (Scheyvens, 1999). Tourism can improve social cohesion by directly benefitting the community's social aspects, such as community projects, that aim to improve life in the region. Tourism leads to disempowerment, if it brings in crime, damage to cultural authenticity, distrust among the community and more. In the analysis, two patterns were interpreted, local acceptance to tourism and community involvement in tourism.

#### *Local acceptance to tourism*

During the interviews, many (if not all) participants expressed a general positive outlook to tourism and tourists in the area. One similar pattern was noted, as the participants across interviews described tourism and other events/festivals as an incentive for liveliness in the region. One participant expressed that tourism, and different events often motivate people living outside Setomaa to come and visit, as a participant (S2) voiced it: "Overall, I like this (tourism), to some extent, these things are beneficial for people, because relatives and children who live outside Setomaa also come home then". (S2).

Another participant (S8) voiced that having festivals in Setomaa brings in new encounters and cultural exchange. Festivals therefore allow the locals to have an experience right at their doorstep, according to the participant:

I like festivals that take place here, because they bring some kind of experience to us. We don't only want to live within traditional Seto culture, we also want to experience something more modern. (S8)

There is also, according to the interviews, a general acceptance of tourists. As one of the participants noted: “When tourists come here, people are very ok with that” (NS1).

A couple of participants even expressed no observed negative impacts of tourism. One interviewee (S5) expressed the acceptance of tourists in the following words:

People come from all over from Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and elsewhere to see this “wonderful thing,” to find out what it is, who the Setos are, or what kind of “strange creatures” they are. It’s quite nice. (S5)

The patterns indicate that, through social empowerment lens, no significant negative impact of tourism is currently present in Setomaa tourism. Participants generally perceive tourism as a positive phenomenon, that involves liveliness and cultural exchange in the region. Tourism is therefore one of the ways how vitality is brought in and people both Setos/locals and tourists are considered part of the experience. According to the interviews, although some events are considered more culturally personal to Setos, such as Seto Kingdom Days, tourists are still welcomed and accepted in the events, as they are also marketed to them. This subtheme leads to the next one, which is community involvement in tourism.

#### *Community involvement in tourism*

According to the interviews, tourism in Setomaa generally involves local people and businesses, and they are the central actors in it. Many of the participants described how festivals and events taking place in Setomaa are fundamentally created for Setos and/or if the target market is a tourist, then majority of tourism businesses are run by locals or Setos. As one of the participants (S1) voiced:

That’s why it (Seto Kingdom Day) works, we never make it to outsiders. That has always been the goal, that it is made for Seto people. If a Seto feels good there, then the guest also will find it good. (S1)

Locals are also part of the cultural tourism product. As one of the participants noted, the locals are part of storytelling:” Like storytelling , and through that. I think the locals themselves are really the pearls, or how should I put it” (S3).

Several other participants gave Seto Kingdom Day as an example of how tourism involves local people and how it is not thought of as “touristic event” but considered an important part of Seto identity. One of the participants (S4) noted how tourists are also considered in Seto Kingdom Day, expressing how it is aimed at tourists, but also considerate regarding Seto and local community. It provides a positive example of how events can be made for both parties involved:

Well, the kingdom is also like that in a sense. It’s quite commercial, aimed at tourists, but it’s also directed at the local community, so it serves both. (S4)

According to many of the participants, Seto Kingdom Day is considered not only an event, and not a festival, but as a significant part of Seto culture. One participant (S6) noted how they consider Seto Kingdom Day as an important part of Seto tradition for themselves. It could therefore provide an important context as to why Setos are an integral part from its planning to execution:” One of the important traditions is the Seto Kingdom Day, which I try to visit as often as possible” (S6).

Setomaa tourism, according to the interviews, also incorporates local businesses into it. According to some of the interviews, the locals also receive discounted entry tickets to events and festivals. One of the participants (S4) noted that cooperation with different service providers is common:

There is actually quite a lot of cooperation with other service providers. As for funds, I’m not really sure, but I can say that quite a lot is done through projects and similar initiatives to develop tourism. (S4)

Külavüü (Village Belt) is one of the most known such projects according to one of the participants. It involves local businesses in Setomaa region, or as the participant (S6) describes it:

Külavüü is one project that has already become fairly well known. It helps market different businesses, small producers, and galleries. (S6)

It could therefore be assumed that tourism in Setomaa mainly impacts the local community positively. Events and festivals are also part of local lives, as they are also part-takers of them, whether as visitors or producers.

## **4.2 Political empowerment**

Political empowerment, according to the framework, refers to the idea of how much in charge the local community is in tourism decision making processes (Scheyvens 1999). The following subtheme is somewhat related to the previous subtheme, as they both discuss the pattern regarding community involvement in tourism. This subchapter, however, has a focus on community involvement in tourism planning and decision making.

### *Local involvement in tourism planning and decision making*

Multiple interviewees noted that majority of tourism businesses in Setomaa were owned by Setos or locals themselves. It was also mentioned in multiple interviews of how people who sustain the culture are usually part of tourism activities as well. One of the participants (S7) described it as: “The locals themselves are generally the main activists who are involved in this work (tourism)” (S7). Additionally, another participant (S5), reinforced the same idea: “Rather, it’s the locals themselves who are the ones selling and marketing it” (S5).

The patterns in the interviews also indicated that locals, who do not necessarily have background in cultural activism or tourism, also are free to express negative opinions of how the culture is presented. Because the representation in tourism is not controlled by a certain unity, different businesses/people can express it differently. Quotes from three different participants are taken as an example to explain the phenomenon, participant (S3), described it as follows: “People who are involved in culture in one way or another, different kinds of people from the municipality, event organizers and others, are all sitting at the same table” (S3).

Participant (S2) emphasized in the following quote how the community has a voice, in regard to voicing an opinion on what is happening in tourism in Setomaa region:” Well, there is still something like a community voice; the voice of the community does exist” (S2).

Another participant (S8) noted the openness of expressing opinions: “The Setos are pretty temperamental and outspoken on social media, it gets said and often it’s taken into account for the future” (S8).

Tourism businesses not owned by Setos or locals, can sometimes neglect cultural sensitivity. As for example, one of the participants (S1) noted that cars were parked next to a sacred area, to visit a popular nonlocal/ Seto owned tourism business: "We then regulated the parking with signs" (S1). The parking was regulated with signs, which indicate good control over decision making and direction.

Although not every opinion can be taken into consideration, because people have different approaches in expressing a culture, it is a positive indicator that people feel comfortable in expressing their negative opinions and create a discussion around it.

### **4.3 Economic empowerment**

Economic empowerment, as defined by the empowerment framework, refers to a state where the community has access to economic benefits generated by tourism, job opportunities, fair distribution of monetary benefits, and more (Sheyvens, 1999). Based on the interview patterns, one specific subtheme was interpreted.

As it was voiced by the participants that tourism in Setomaa is quite small in comparison to other tourist regions, the economic benefits generated from it are not significant, although money that is generated by people involved in tourism does “help out”. According to my interpretations, tourism benefits to the economy can be generalized as mild economic fluctuation, taken into account that tourism is also seasonal in Setomaa.

#### *Mild economic fluctuations*

Multiple participants described how tourism brings economic benefits into a region where people go to find job opportunities in bigger towns/cities. As Setomaa is a small region, many participants described how people usually use tourism as a way to earn extra on top of their income that comes from non-tourism related full-time jobs. Tourism is therefore not a full-time source of income for many but serves as an important source of extra income, as one of the participants (S1) expressed:

But I just see how many people, especially in the summer, are busy not as their main job but simply with extra earnings. So, tourism is important, and it will certainly remain very important. (S1)

Another participant (S4) also highlighted the mild economic benefits of tourism in the region: “As the full-time job salaries are low, you won’t get rich (from tourism), but it still helps” (S4).

Tourism therefore is not regarded as a full-time job opportunity by many, and people generally earn income to live off from somewhere else. Full-time employment in tourism is additionally challenged by the issue of seasonality.

Tourism in Setomaa is also season dependent, and the high tourism season is summer. Tourism seasonality is described as a problem in many of the interviews, and efforts are being made to extend the tourism season. Full-time cultural/tourism businesses aim to get enough revenue from the summer season, in order to cover the annual cost of operations (fixed and variable costs). One of the participants (NS1), described the issue of seasonality as such: “It is somewhat of a problem that the main events take place in summer” (NS1). Participant (S8), talked about the economic struggles related to seasonality: “Sometimes it’s just that we have to work a lot during the summer season to cover the costs for the whole year” (S8).

Although tourism in Setomaa is seasonal, the drop in revenue is not described as significant, as tourism generally does not bring in big amounts of revenue. Therefore, the difference is not dramatic, as is described:

You can see this trend, there’s no people, no revenue. But it’s not like it suddenly changes dramatically. (S8)

Participants also described how the bigger source of income from tourism comes from non-locals and community members, not from locals who purchase tourism products. The majority of non-local tourists come from other parts of Estonia as well as neighboring countries, as one of the participants (S3) mentioned: “Well, through tourism the main economic benefit comes from the outside tourists” (S3).

Setomaa tourism, similar to other regions in Estonia struggles with the issue of tourism seasonality. Many participants noted that there are good opportunities in extending tourism in Setomaa, through for example, utilizing nature-based activities. Although the opportunities are there, many noted that people's vacation times usually do not align with the plans, as many people choose to have a vacation in summer period.

#### **4.4 Psychological empowerment**

Psychological empowerment refers to the psychological impacts of tourism. A strong psychological empowerment is reached when a community feels hopeful about the future, has a sense of cultural pride, and can take good care of themselves (Sheyvens, 1999). Negative impacts of tourism to psychological empowerment generally mean disruptions to the connection to culture and land, that have negative impacts on the people. Psychological empowerment themes consist of five subthemes, as it also includes concepts of identity and authenticity. Through the interviews, both negative and positive impacts of tourism were interpreted.

##### *External cultural recognition through tourism*

Many interviewees noted that tourism generally brings positive light and knowledge to the world about Seto culture. Participants did not express any direct negative examples regarding how Seto culture is depicted in tourism (apart from mythologization, discussed in following chapters) As one of the participants (S3) voiced, tourism generally markets Seto culture in a favorable light, and it aims to more “teach” tourists about the culture:

From a tourism perspective, I think there is still a lot of work to be done, but people know quite well about Seto leelo, Seto culture, and Seto traditional clothing. In that sense, it’s nice.  
(S3)

Some participants noted that tourism has grown their own interests in their culture, emphasizing that when others are interested, you also start to become interested .As expressed by one of the participants (S5) :

This also helps to keep the culture alive, so to speak. When others are interested in it, you also want to preserve that heritage yourself. (S5)

Some participants, therefore, stated that tourism has made them reflect on their culture, and appreciate it more, but interestingly only a few participants admitted to feeling proud of their culture due to tourism. Participant (S8) described it as such: “I think it (tourism) has made me reflect and appreciate the uniqueness of my own culture” (S8).

As multiple participants reflected that tourism has made them appreciate their culture, but proudness of culture was interpreted to be multifaceted, combining many aspects such as history and difficulties that minority communities face:

"Seto" was an insult in the 1960 and 70s... Setos who went to the city would not make a single peep about being from Setomaa. Maybe this straightening of the back, is what indirectly motivates Setos today to be active. (S1)

To the participants, tourism generally has a positive effect regarding how people feel about their culture but according to the participants, feeling proud of their culture had little to nothing to do with tourism. As it still enhances their own interests in their culture, it could be described as a positive enhancer of cultural pride. But as cultural pride is not only gained through tourism in the region, it also cannot be assumed that positive Seto identity is depended on tourism. Tourism, therefore, is interpreted as a way to introduce and make people aware of Seto culture, but single identities are not dependent on it.

### *Cultural reinterpretation and mythologisation*

Various participants expressed that tourism tends to romanticise or mythologise Seto culture and select parts of it for tourism purposes. Examples of such instances include religious and historical stories being reinterpreted, which results in an inaccurate storyline.

Such examples were brought up multiple times, and possible explanations for that given by the participants were that the history is long and complicated, which takes time to immerse yourself in, therefore parts of it are presented, which can result in misinterpretations.

Participant (S7), described their opinion on it as so:

Well, tourists are usually shown things rather superficially. The main traditions are explained. But that's good. It simply takes years to really go deeply into it. (S7)

One of the participants, (S4), additionally touched the subject regarding the tendency to present Seto culture as matriarchal, which according to the participant, is more complicated than that:

The story starts to take on a life of its own, and a romanticised version emerges. And of course, based on that, people form this image of the Setos who worshipped Peko, as if they were somehow especially righteous or noble. Things are simplified, and there's an attempt to paint a picture of the past as some kind of golden age, which in my opinion is not true, especially when we talk about women's lives. (S4)

Other areas of culture such as Handsa (alcoholic drink) are being mythologized and presented as an integral part of Seto culture. Participant (S2) emphasized that historically Setomaa region has been conservative, therefore the drink has not played a significant role. Competitions around Handsa, could indicate that tourism has taken a part of culture, created a story around it and sold it to customers for entertainment purposes:

And now it (Handsa) has been turned into a kind of myth. Competitions are organized around it and it is sold, and somehow it has risen to the forefront of Seto customs more than it probably should have in reality. (S2)

Music and dances were another aspect of culture that appears to be purposively selected for tourism. One of the participants (S5) noted the representation of music: "For the most part, this culture is introduced through tourism mainly with music things like leelo and similar stuff" (S5).

As Seto leelo, is an important and integral part of tradition, dancing appears to be a newer adaptation (discussed further in the following chapter) A participant (S1) noted:

Maybe a Seto dance day or dance festival is, well, in my personal opinion, a little questionable. Because the Setos haven't traditionally danced in that German style or Estonian style way. (S1)

Participant (S8) expressed thoughts on meaning when singing Seto leelo. They expressed how in tourism the meaning of a song can sometimes be lost, and it is done for the sake of doing it.

The topic is also discussed further in the following chapters. The thoughts regarding it were expressed as follows:

I thought "Oh God, we are just singing for them" but it does not really have a meaning, the song does not match the situation at all. It started to bother me. I mean, just singing for the sake of singing, just to entertain people?. (S8)

Setomaa tourism therefore faces a similar issue that many other cultural tourism regions face. Participants commonly explained this phenomenon by stating that it occurs because history cannot be explained simply in a short amount of time, which results in people creating simplified ideas.

### *Changing culture*

As Seto culture is a living and changing culture, it is also depicted in tourism, according to the participants. Many participants voiced that tourism in Setomaa also incorporates not only historical and traditional elements of culture, but also modern. This fusion of modernity and tradition is showcased especially in events and festivals as one of the participants (NS1) expressed: "Old and new are tied very nicely together (in events)" (NS1).

Preservation of tradition is visible in the events. Participant (S3), described the balance between modernity and traditions in events as so:

Then it's nice that there are more modern events as well, like ....., but on site the Seto culture and that Seto atmosphere has still been preserved, just in a more modern key. (S3)

Not all changes are interpreted as changes due to tourism (such as dancing as mentioned previously), but as a natural evolvement of culture by some participants. One of the participants (S1) reflected on it as follows:

We are not a museum of a dead culture, but a living culture. So, well, maybe that's why today some things are a bit different. (S1)

Participants additionally noted that they view adding modern elements to tourism offerings as a positive aspect. In addition, one participant (S2), viewed adding modernity to tourism

offering as a vital element:” We do not only keep the old tradition, but we also produce new creations” (S2).

It, therefore, is a positive indicator that not only old is appreciated in tourism but also new elements of culture. Modernity is also appreciated, as according to one of the participants (S7):

I think I like a mix of the two (modern and tradition), because we can’t stay in the old times.  
We still have to move forward with the times. (S7)

Some parts of a culture, however, are being adapted in order to provide a tourism service. For example, Seto leelo choirs perform, when there is demand for it. According to one participant (S2), traditionally Seto leelo or singing in general was not allowed during a religious fasting period. Nowadays, however, for tourism purposes, performing Seto leelo is perceived also as work, which somewhat contradicts the belief. Based on one of the participants (S2), however, perceiving performing Seto leelo in front of an audience as work, rather changes the perspective, since it is not sung for pleasure:

Actually, during the fasting period it was not allowed to sing either. But nowadays it’s like this: when visitors come, the choir still performs, because it is more like work than just singing for pleasure. (S2)

Based on the pattern found in the interviews, Seto culture naturally changes and evolves, and not all changes caused by tourism. Participants described it as a positive characteristic and did not specifically mention that those changes are caused by tourism, apart from adapting some cultural elements in order to sell them for tourism purposes.

### *Upholding traditions*

A common pattern that emerged from the interviews was that Setomaa tourism heavily promotes cultural traditions. Many participants mentioned that the authentic and traditional Seto culture is what sells in Setomaa, therefore people involved in producing traditional handicrafts, Seto leelo, food and other elements are motivated to keep or increase producing it. In many of the interviews such as participant (S1), highlighted that tourists come there to experience authentic Seto culture:

There also have to be Seto foods there (local food festival). Well, maybe not entirely, but they should definitely be there. We're not serving pizza here. (S1)

A few participants also noted that they have observed the rise of popularity in Seto handicrafts. In addition, the products sold in a tourism event are likely to generally sell better: "What has made me happy in the past year, in recent years, is that there have been more events related to Seto handicrafts" (NS1).

For the participants who were somehow connected to tourism in Setomaa, meaning in doing was brought up an important element in tourism, as one of the participants (S6) described: "The meaningfulness, for me as someone from there, as a guide, and for people living in the area, is precisely that it is talked about authentically and right there on the spot" (S6).

As participants noted that tourists often seek an authentic experience. Creating a meaningful experience is therefore beneficial for both parties involved, as also the experience provider wants to provide a meaningful experience also for their own personal reasons, participant (S8) voiced:

Would I prepare something for them, like some kind of lyrics, or figure out what kind of song would suit them in general, so that it would help them in some real way, rather than not being interesting or useful to them? So that it wouldn't be something done just for the sake of doing it, but would have more meaning. (S8)

The pattern emanated the idea that meaning making in tourism is also in connection with how participants feel about their culture. If something lacks meaning, not only will the tourists sense it, but it also creates negative emotions for the ones who present it in tourism and live inside the culture.

### *Negative tourist behaviour*

The participants additionally brought up the issue of tourists' behaviour. As Setomaa region is unfamiliar to many visitors, some tourists were said to behave in a non-respectful manner. Tourists tend to not know or understand what places are perceived as sacred, of what is

acceptable to take pictures of, or keeping a general respectful behaviour: “People’s upbringing and cultural level are not always quite the same as in this conservative village” (S2).

As many events are considered an important part of culture for Setos, it was brought up that some tourists tend to forget that, as one of the participants (NS1) noted:” Well, let’s say drunk Finns or something similar or drunk Estonians then some people might get the feeling of why are there so many of them here?” (NS1).

In addition to the negative tourist behavior, also tourism companies not owned by locals or Setos, can forget the cultural sensitivity. One of the participants (S1) gave the following example:

There were masses of cars parking, next to the Singing Mother Monument. Maybe one of the most sacred places in Setomaa. Cars parked next to it caused the feeling of "what do we get out of it?. (S1)

According to the participants, negative tourists' behavior does occur in Setomaa tourism. In addition, businesses owned by non-locals/Setos, can forget cultural sensitivity in the region. All of these components impact how a community member views their culture and whether they feel good when visiting a touristic location in the region or culturally significant event.

## **5 Discussion and conclusion**

This chapter discusses the findings from the interviews, connects them to previously discussed theories and concepts, interprets them case specifically using theory and through that process, answer the research question on what is Setomaa tourism's role in cultural revitalisation. The results indicated that tourism, has generally a positive contribution to cultural revitalisation, as for example, events and festivals that take place in Setomaa also hold a cultural importance. The results indicated that although, economic contribution to it is rather small and there has been a noticeable staged authenticity, tourism is still directed towards the community as well as tourists, which fosters the cultural revitalisation.

### **5.1 Tourisms economic impact on culture**

Empowerment through economic lens in Setomaa is present based in the study, but quite limited in its impact to the community. This is mainly due to the issue that tourism is season dependent, with the highest profits generated during the summer months. Many regions in the world face similar problems with seasonality in tourism, as tourism is highly reactive to external shocks, such as in social, economic and political changes as well as climate (Baum & Lundtrop, 2001).

According to Scheyvens (1999) empowerment framework, a community cannot solely depend on income from tourism, in order to be considered economically empowered. In Setomaa case, the community involved in tourism generates income during the peak months in summer, as a secondary source of income. This is common in rural areas in many parts of the world, in where tourism is treated as an extra source of income in an already scarce job-market (Chen et al., 2018; Farsani et al., 2011). It indicates that while tourism plays an important role in economic empowerment, it does not necessarily reconstruct local economy, and people are not dependent on tourism to earn income as they have found different ways to earn an income (predominantly outside Setomaa).

Tourism should provide a sustainable and fair economic benefits to the host community (Scheyvens, 1999). Long term economic security from tourism in Setomaa area is also challenged by dependence on tourists coming from outside Setomaa, meaning that the additional income for the people who are involved in tourism is generated by a non-local tourist. While a positive boost for the local economy, it also makes economic gains more

reactive to external shocks. Dependence and seasonality issues are contradictory to the fundamental idea behind a sustainable economic empowerment. Issue of seasonality, is however, a known problem, and willingness to tackle it already exist.

Dependence on a non-domestic tourists could also lead to advanced selective cultural representation, in where parts of culture are being selected to market to the tourist. This economic dependence could further lead to creating staged authentic experiences. What a tourist interprets as authentic is subjective and depends on tourists' individual interpretation (Heitmann, 2011). Therefore, concerns can arise regarding, what meaning does it have for the host community and how it will impact their cultural identities.

As tourism in Setomaa is not economically strong enough to strongly influence residents' and community lives, it is still important to consider cases in where tourism grows to become a major part of people's income. Jørgensen et al. (2021), have mentioned that rapid economic growth in tourism can impacts people's lives dramatically. As Setomaa tourism is economically depended on non-local tourists and summer season, drastic tourism growth in the area can have negative impacts on the community and therefore the local culture. If people start treating tourism as their main source of income and solely work during summer months, it could lead to higher amount of unemployment in the area, as well as be even more highly reactive to any changes to the political, social and climate arena.

In cultural revitalisation aspect, economic benefits generated through tourism do help in preserving cultural elements and promote evolving culture, as many participants noted that intangible cultural heritage is popular and authentic Seto leelo, for example, is appreciated and people are willing to pay money to listen to it. It however could lead to situations, in where certain cultural elements are maintained and promoted, meanwhile elements that are not popular among tourists are neglected in tourism. Moreover, excessive commodification of culture, while beneficial for the economy, leads to concerns over ethics, authenticity and sustainability (Marbun, 2025).

Considering that Setomaa tourism is still developing and does not suffer from over-tourism, the bigger problems could not be visible yet. It is, however, vital to consider how could areas such as commodification (because of dependency on "outside" tourists), rapid tourism growth and seasonality be handled in the future, as excessive commodification in addition to

economic growth, could lead to cultural erosion depending on how it is managed, assuming that the aim is to develop Setomaa tourism further (George, 2021).

For the reasons discussed above, I interpreted tourism's economic benefits for the region rather as mild economic fluctuations, rather than solely economic empowerment. In the current time, tourism provides little, but important source of income for the people involved, especially during summer periods. It does have an impact on revitalisation of culture, since local artisans are able to sell their creations in tourism events and festivals. But as discussed, economic benefits are conditional and still not high-revenue producing.

## **5.2 Tourism's positive impact on community identity**

Social empowerment through tourism is present in the study in two different ways. Through community involvement in tourism and community acceptance of tourism. According to the interviews, the community not only tolerates tourism in the region, but also takes part in it and there is a collective agreement regarding tourism. As tourism does not bring in significant economic value to the community, it still appears to be somewhat important and socially empowering to the community. According to Scheyvens (1999) a strong unity strengthened by tourism is a positive sign of a socially empowerment community.

Community involvement in this case refers to the community central tourism initiatives, cooperation between businesses and events and/or festivals being considered culturally significant for the community. Tourism therefore appears to be fostering collaborations and creating a feeling of shared purpose. The findings therefore reinforce the theory behind Scheyvens (1999) empowerment framework, that if tourism is locally rooted, it reinforces collective well-being.

Many respondents stated that they feel a sense of togetherness in the events, as well as perceive different events and/or festivals part of cultural expression, which is related to the strength of community identity (Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016), particularly concepts of emotional identity and community participation as discussed by Hains et al. (2013) and Xin & Ling (2015). Emotional identity refers to the idea of how connected an individual feels to the community and tourism activities, in this case, appear to be enforcing it. Tourism, therefore, according to the participants is a way to enhance the feeling of cultural identity, which is pivotal in cultural revitalisation context as this rootedness provides individuals a

foundation from which to act and think and belonging helps individuals to succeed (Hearst, 2012).

As there appears to be general collective acceptance of tourism in the region, it can therefore be assumed that tourism does not have disruptive impacts on the community but rather fits the culture well. Locals tend to support tourism growth depending on the motivational factors behind it (feelings of being needed, hosting guests, community collaboration etc.) and whether there is a balance in the relationship with tourists (Garau-Vadell et al., 2013; Kayat, 2002). This finding somewhat differs compared to studies done in other rural areas around the world, as tourism in rural areas is perceived to be also a somewhat disruptive force. The conflicts arise over tourism resources (over-crowding, congestion) and general disruptive behaviours to locals' lives (Nulty, 2004, p. 15). On the other hand, regions with small-scale tourism could imply that locals are more motivated to develop life around tourism (Sari et al., 2016). It can however be also explained by the fact that Setomaa region does not suffer from over-tourism, and bigger tourism season stays in summer and therefore, bigger problems are not observed year-round.

Since according to the patterns interpreted in the interviews, tourism does play an important and generally positive role in social empowerment. Participants described positive feelings related to tourism activities, such as cultural exchange, stimuli for community liveliness, cooperation between local businesses, community central activities and more. Because of this, it can be concluded that tourism has positive impact on cultural revitalisation from the social empowerment perspective.

The findings however do not imply that the sense of positive community participation, tourism approval and enhanced cultural identity is experienced the same for everyone. The study lacked for example, study of how people from different demographics, as well as people with disabilities are included in tourism activities. As participation in tourism activities can be restricted for many (due to accessibility issues, paywall etc.), it indicates that that tourism's impact on social empowerment could not be experienced similarly among diverse groups of people.

### **5.3 Community political influence on cultural tourism planning**

Social empowerment also somewhat supports the political empowerment as the community is involved in tourism, it also reflects community's political strength in it. Political empowerment according to Scheyvens (1999) empowerment framework, refers to community own decision making and leading role in tourism.

The interview participants noted that majority of tourism in Setomaa is done by locals and/or Setos themselves and it is predominantly an extra work on top of full-time work for many. Setomaa tourism, therefore, has similarities to community-based tourism, in where the aim of for the community members is to engage in tourism (planning, management, sharing monetary benefits), and therefore benefit the community directly through it (Jackson, 2025; Scheyvens, 1999). It is researched to be an effective tool to alleviate poverty in rural areas, because it can diversify sources of income and not be limited to one source of income (Dodds et al., 2016).

Community-based tourism is contrary to mass-tourism, in where economic leakage occurs, as the community themselves are not primarily engaged in tourism in the area, and therefore it lacks providing direct benefits to the region (Dodds et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016).

Community-based tourism has additionally direct nexus to cultural preservation (community in charge of what is presented), community empowerment and sustainability (Dangi & Jamal, 2016). Furthermore, a study by Croes (2014) supports the concept of community-based tourism as a method for poverty reduction, as it found that tourism has high potential in bolstering entrepreneurship and employment opportunities.

As the community has a higher level of control over culture representation, it could therefore indicate that constructive authenticity as explained by Cohen (1988, as cited by Zhou, 2023, p. 1469) (socially agreed to be authentic it changes and adapts) as well as existential authenticity (experience as meaningful to an individual) (Wang, 1999), is also practiced in Setomaa tourism. Because participants who are involved in tourism did not state any political restraints over how Seto culture should be presented. It can therefore be assumed that people involved are somewhat free to express critical points publicly, as expressed by the interview participants.

Participants also described how community members and other locals generally feel free to criticize aspects of how cultural or general tourism is conducted in the region. As the control of representation of culture in Setomaa tourism appears to be de-centralised, disagreements regarding tourism naturally arise, as people have the freedom to express and do tourism in how they perceive is correct, which can be contradictory to someone else's perception. Self-expression comes with a risk to express their authentic opinions (Al-Khouja, 2022).

Therefore, it is a positive sign that people who are somehow related to Setomaa tourism, despite the risk, generally feel free to express negative opinions about it. In cultural revitalisation perspective, this is vital, because it indicates that tourism in Setomaa is driven by the locals and community members, who are doing tourism in diverse and personal approaches.

However, since rural communities tend to be tight knitted (Wilson et al., 2015), the perception of feeling heard can be influenced by the idea that in smaller communities, involvement could be impacted by close social relationships and informal communication, which could create the feeling of being involved. Smaller communities operate with low managerial resources and are often dependent on initiatives, value frameworks of active citizens and leaders, motivations and so on, in order to have development (Chromý et al., 2011; Bernard et al., 2011). Although opinions can be heard, they could perhaps not indicate equality in opinions, as the final decision-making power could be shaped by those social hierarchies/dynamics.

#### **5.4 Tourisms impact to individual perceptions on culture**

From the interviews, altogether five subthemes emerged for psychological empowerment, because the supportive concept's identity and authenticity often fell under psychological empowerment dimension of the empowerment framework. Psychological empowerment refers to, according to Scheyvens (1999), psychological impacts of tourism to the local community. It discusses whether tourism creates positive feelings to an individual, sense of pride about their culture or whether there are some negative aspects present, such as discontent, unrest and so on and therefore negatively impact tourism role in revitalising culture.

For many of the participants, tourism is a positive way to introduce their culture. When other people show interest in, some participants described it as pride but emphasised that the pride

does not come from tourism alone. Tourism also was said to motivate people to reflect on their culture. According to the framework, when people feel generally positively about how tourism represents their culture, it is a good sign that it feels “authentic” or right to the community (Scheyvens 1999). Similar results also have appeared in other studies around the similar topic. Ukaegbu et al. (2018), in their study also found that locals tend to think that tourism is good for the community and evokes interest about their culture.

According to the participants, cultural tourism in Setomaa generally regards as upholding traditions and authenticity vital for tourism, not solely for tourists who want to experience something authentic but also for the people who provide these tourism activities and for community members taking part in them. Tailoring events and festivals, in order for them to feel authentic not solely for visitors, but also for community members, grows community participation and fosters emotional (how connected people feel to the community) and functional (how community fits the needs) identities (Hains et al., 2013; Mahmoudi Farahani, 2016 ; Xin & Ling, 2015).

Participants who worked in tourism also stated that meaning providing in cultural tourism is important for them, and knowingly doing unmeaningful tourism practices creates negative emotions for them. This relates to the concept of identity and meaningful work, in where part of the definition is that meaningful work is significant and purpose-oriented (Steger et al., 2012).

The participants noted, however, that not all events that take place are objectively authentic, but rather they have become considered authentic by the community members. This phenomenon is related to the constructive authenticity, in where practices are constructed to be or are authentic because they are socially agreed to be so Cohen (1988, as cited by Zhou, 2023, p. 1469). This could indicate that tourism has somehow changed or enriched culture not in a negative light, as it was not stated to impact cultural identity unfavourably.

Showcasing only objectively authentic and traditional culture, however, does not fulfil sense of self, according to the interviewees. Tourism also was reported to be serving as a way for identities to change, modify and reinterpret through doing for the participants (Duits, 2008; Giddens, 1991). As Seto culture evolves, the interviewees also stated that modern and tradition blend is additionally important for them in Setomaa tourism, especially in a personal perspective, because participants stated that it often involves cultural exchange, experiences,

togetherness and more. Using modern and tradition in tourism therefore can benefit functional identity, in a sense that it enhances the level on how much community fulfils personal needs, as well as adds richness and liveliness to cultural life (Hains et al., 2013; Xin & Ling, 2015).

Authenticity, however, can be difficult to provide to tourists as it is a rather social construct (Rickly & Canavan, 2024). Moreover, as previously mentioned, Setomaa tourism is economically depended on the non-local tourists. If the region receives growing attention from outside forces, it is an area to discuss of how well tourism in Setomaa will fulfil community's personal needs in the future regarding how the culture is presented, if economic benefits are attracted from external tourist. In other words, how well tourism generally involves community members and locals to part-take in tourism activities in the future, providing that tourists generally have different perceptions of authenticity and favour some cultural element over another. A study by Brida et al. (2012, p. 95), concluded that tourists and locals have substantially different views on authenticity, culture perception and motivations to take part in an event.

Because tourists and community members/locals have different motivations to take part in an event and perceptions to authenticity, it can create incompatibility, caused by different needs. Tourism in the region, therefore, does not solely facilitate tourism events and festivals catered to the locals. Upholding traditions and adding modernity to tourism can therefore be difficult due to romanticisation and mythologisation of cultural elements that are deemed as interesting and marketable in tourism to an “outside” tourists. Myths, especially in the intangible cultural heritage realm, captivates a person who wants to delve into emotional depth, which is in competitive cultural tourism market growing importance as the tourists demands change and grow (Titoryakova, 2024, p. 115). This could explain why it is popular and why false mythologisation and romanticisation happen.

Romanticisation and mythologisation are also connected to staged authenticity, in where cultural elements are packaged for easier marketability. As well as to cultural sensitivity, in where information about cultures is not only learned and judged, but also reflected, in ways that do not marginalise others, with the aim of becoming less ethnocentric (Bennett, 1986; Lüthje et al., 2025). In this context, complexity of a culture is often overlooked, and certain cultural elements are marketed over the others. As this mainly attracts tourists outside Setomaa and non-community members, it can be assumed that some pressure to change and alter culture for tourism exists.

Impacts of romanticisation and mythologisation on the host community and therefore on cultural revitalisation are evident. As tourism grows there exists a fine line between promoting authentic, local culture and turning them into staged inauthentic performances which serve the tourists (Graziano & Privitera, 2020). Moreover, the pressure to meet tourism demands can lead to dilution of local customs (Zhang et al., 2018).

Examples of local customs and traditions being altered for tourism, according to the interviews include mythologisation and romanticisation of Handsa, historical and religious facts, as well as some Seto leelo performances. Selling an image of a culture through excessive commodification also could lead to stereotyping, exotifying and creating one-dimensional portrayals of a community, which lacks the reflection on cultures history, identity and diversity (Tileagă, 2025, p. 286). This misinterpretation can lead to cultural pride erosion among community members, as the cultural identity is being shrunk for cultural consumption for tourists (Tileagă, 2025, p. 286). Although participants did not specifically state that the culture is being stereotyped, they did however express negative feelings in relation to cultures mythologisation and romanticisation.

In addition, negative tourist behaviour can impact negatively how people feel and see their culture through tourism, leading to culturally significant events not being visited by the community. This includes non-local owned businesses. As mentioned in 5.2-chapter, tourism growth is supported by the locals usually when there is a balance in locals' relationship with tourists (Garau-Vadell et al., 2013). It is, therefore, an important area to consider as not only does it negatively impact how one perceives their culture, but it also starts having negative pushbacks in regard to tourism in the region.

The issue of negative tourist behaviour was brought up during the interviews, generally described as lack of sensitivity and privacy toward local culture. Similar area was discussed in a literature review by Saari et al., (2020), in where respect and sensitivity were the key words that received emphasis regarding cultural tourism in Sami communities. Since Seto culture is still generally unknown to the bigger public, tourists tend to not acknowledge cultural sensitivity in the region, considering that many events and festivals are important to the locals in a cultural perspective. A culturally sensitive person acknowledges differences between cultures and respects socio-cultural values of a community (Bobel et al., 2022). Respect also involves willingness to learn and having interest in local culture in a region the tourist visits.

Cultural sensitivity also emphasises minimizing harmful impacts of tourism to the local community (Donohoe 2011, p. 37).

In cultural tourism context, to avoid negative impacts to the host community and therefore erosion of cultural practices various aspects could be considered. Such as, tourists themselves have to be responsible to stay respectful and ensure privacy in an area they visit. In addition, as discussed in one of the interviews, tour operators and guides play a crucial role in how they introduce the region. Moreover, the approach that is used for tourism marketing should indicate nature of the event, and in general carry an educative message.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The findings as interpreted with the empowerment framework indicate that tourism does play an important part in cultural revitalisation in Setomaa and that meaningful empowerment is visible in the data, predominantly in the social empowerment dimension. To answer the main research question “How does tourism help in revitalizing a culture through community empowerment?”, based on the results, tourism contributes to cultural revitalisation through bringing general liveliness and economic advantages to a region, which in turn creates a more diverse options to preserve and practise evolving culture. Tourism in Setomaa follows somewhat of a community-based tourism approach, in where majority of the tourism businesses are owned by locals or Setos and local businesses are cooperating with each other to create a tourism product. Events and festivals are also organized, keeping the local community in mind, moreover, many events are considered culturally significant, in where cultural identity is enhanced, and cultural elements receive a platform. Events and festivals also serve as a place for locals to experience new cultural creations, as well as something completely new, outside cultural realm.

Incorporating local community and culture as part of tourism offering is an important note in the context of cultural revitalisation. The first sub-question of “How does tourism contribute to community empowerment through social, economic, political and psychological dimensions?” is answered by the findings that tourism serves as generally positive empowerment. It indicates that a balance between needs of a tourists and locals have been found to some level, although some compromises between them exists.

To answer the second sub-question “How does Seto culture presented in tourism impact community connection to the culture?”, based on the findings, tourism mainly reinforces connection to culture through meeting personal needs of individuals (such as showing modern and changing Seto culture, cultural exchanges and sense of togetherness) , however negative sides to it also exist. According to the patterns found in the interviews, not full empowerment has occurred through tourism, as many reported false interpretations and selective representation of their culture in tourism, which according to psychological empowerment is disempowering. That implies that although community is mainly in control of representation of culture in tourism and free to express discontent, it can still lead to commodification of culture in tourism. It has both eroded the culture, but also changed it in non-negative way, as participants stated that some changes are already accepted generally by the community. According to my interpretation, many reasons for that exist. One of the reasons being that the control of cultural representation is de-centralised and everybody involved has the right to express culture how they wish. Second possible reason for that is, since authenticity is a social construct and perceived differently by different people, people inside the community have diverse approaches to culture and what they perceive as authentic. Additionally, because biggest economic benefit stems from a tourist, certain cultural elements are being altered to gain better economic gains, indicating some level of pressure from outside forces.

Implications based on the results can be beneficial in understanding what does a sustainable cultural tourism entail and how it could be used to revitalise cultures. Deriving from an example of Setomaa tourism, tourism is done with the locality in mind and shaping events and festivals to give something back to the community is one of the fundamental ideas. When making and selling a cultural tourism product, designing it so that local culture, history and needs of local people are at the core of it, reciprocal to both the community and tourist is vital. Moreover, selling cultural elements with a meaning behind them, makes the product not only more personal for the seller, but also more authentic for the tourist. In the case of Setomaa tourism, it implies to people involved in tourism selling items or experiences in a way that is perceived meaningful for them. It can indicate that in a cultural sensitivity lens, reflexivity should also be practiced by the community members who are involved in tourism as well a tourist taking part in tourism.

Since the thesis topic is broad and subjective, there were also many limitations to it. The thesis did not focus on a single demographic; therefore, the results do not indicate opinions

based on a certain group of people. Instead, the results are broadened and not narrowed, which can give broad results, which cannot be generalised. In addition, for better sampling, more participants could have taken part of the thesis, which could have added diversity of opinions into the study.

Since the interpretation of the data was done solely by me, there could be some unacknowledged bias in the interpretation. I did however practice reflexivity when interpreting and analysing the results and asking whether there could be alternative ways to interpret the data. Finally, the deductive approach used in the thematic analysis could have limited interpretation of other themes outside the framework, since the questions were formed with the help of existing theory.

Since the results indicated imbalance between empowerment dimensions, future research could be linked to comparing and determining based on the empowerment framework, which dimension/s is the most influential is revitalising and preserving a culture, according to perceptions. In addition, since the main negative aspect of tourism in cultural revitalisation perspective was commodification and tourists having different needs and perceptions regarding authenticity than members of a host community, it could therefore be researched how to tackle the issue between tourists wanting authenticity but are attracted by staged performances.

Tourism serves as an important contributor in a sense of liveliness to Setomaa region. Not solely does it serve as a stage for culture to be presented for both tourists and community members, but it also provides extra economic income for those who are selling cultural elements in tourism. The forementioned areas do play a significant role in revitalising Seto culture in Setomaa, especially through social and political empowerment, as the local community is the central part of tourism as well as culture creation.

Cultural tourism, however, should be carefully managed, to ensure that negative outcome of tourism (such as commodification) is limited. Finding a balance in-between tourist and community needs in tourism is important in order for tourism to be sustainable in the region. For a culture to thrive in tourism, this thesis highlights the importance of community-led and central tourism activities. Cultural tourism should therefore be built around community needs for it to be successful in cultural revitalisation. Tourism companies and employees in the region therefore have an important role in ensuring that both the community, as well as

tourists who are the main contributors in economic empowerment in tourism, have their different expectations met.

## 6 References

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## **Appendix 1. Interview questions and letter of consent (in Estonian)**

## Sissejuhatus

1. Palun räägi natuke endast. Milline on sinu suhe seto kultuuri ja kogukonnaga?

1a. Kui sa ei ole seto: Palun räägi endast natuke, kuidas sa kirjeldaksid oma kokkupuudet või sidet seto kultuuri ja kogukonnaga?

## **Teema 1: Identiteet**

1. Kuidas sa näed või tunnend seto traditsioone? Millised neist on sulle olulised ja miks (mitte ainult turismi mõttes)?

1a. Kui sa ei ole seto: Kuidas sa näed või tunnend seto traditsioone? Mida olete tähele pannud, millised on kogukonnale endale olulised ja miks (mitte ainult turismi mõttes)?

2. Kuidas sa suhtud turismi Setomaal? Nii isiklikult kui ka setode vaatenurgast üldiselt?

2a. Kui sa ei ole seto: Kuidas sina näed turismi Setomaal? Mida oled märganud, kuidas setod ise turismi kirjeldavad?

3. Kas sa saaksid rääkida Setomaal toimuvatest erinevatest festivalidest? Kas oled neist osa võtnud? Kuidas sa neisse suhtud?

3a. Kui sa ei ole seto: Kuidas Seto traditsioone festivalides esitletakse? Kuidas setod ja kohalikud ise festivalidesse suhtuvad?

## **Teema 2: Autentsus**

5. Mida tähendab sinu jaoks olla seto?

5a. Kui sa ei ole seto: Milline on kohalike roll selles, mida turistidele näidatakse?

6. Kuidas sinu meelest seto kultuuri turistidele tutvustatakse? Kas see, kuidas kultuuri näidatakse, on sinu jaoks tähenduslik?

6a. Kui sa ei ole seto: Kas olete märganud et viis kuidas kultuuri näidatakse turismis on ka setodele tähenduslik?

7. Kuidas kohalikud või setod ise mõjutavad seda, mida turistidele näidatakse?

8. Kas oskad tuua mõne hea näite, kuidas seto kultuuri turismis tutvustatakse?

9. Kas oskad tuua mõne halva näite, kuidas seto kultuuri turismis näidatakse?

### **Teema 3: Võimendamine**

10. Kas oled turismi tõttu majanduslikku kasu või midagi positiivset märganud (näiteks kogukonnale, kultuurile)?

10a. Kui sa ei ole seto: Kuidas turism mõjutab kogukonda majanduslikult, sotsiaalselt ja kultuuriliselt?

11. Kas on mingi turismihooaeg, mis toob kõige rohkem tulu? Milline on elu enne või pärast tippaega?

12. Kas oled märganud veel positiivseid muutusi tänu turismile? Mida kohalikud või setod ise arvavad turismis osalemisest? (Festivalidest osa võtmine, jne)

13. Kuidas sa tunned, et turismist saadud raha kogukonnas jagatakse? Kuhu sinu meelest tulud võiksid minna?

13a. Kui sa ei ole seto: Mida oled märganud turismitulu jagamise kohta? Kas see sinu arvates jaotub õiglaselt?

14. Kas turism on muutnud seda, kuidas sa oma kultuuri tunned või väärtustad? Miks? Kuidas sa seda muutust kirjeldaksid? (Näiteks lisandunud uhkuse tunnet jne)

14a. Kui sa ei ole seto: Kas oled märganud muutusi selles, kuidas inimesed oma kultuuri suhtuvad tänu turismile? Kui jah, siis miks see nii on? Kuidas sa seda muutust kirjeldaksid?

15. Kuidas kohalike inimeste hääled ja arvamused turismi puudutavates otsustes arvesse võetakse?

16. Kas on veel midagi, mida tahaksid räägitud teemadest lisada?

Lugupeetud ---,

Minu nimi on Maris Altermann. Olen magistriõppe üliõpilane Lapimaa Ülikoolis (University of Lapland), Rovaniemes, Soomes, ning töötan oma magistritöö kallal vanemlektori Minni Haanpää juhendamisel (email ---, tel ----). Teid kutsutakse osalema minu magistritöö uuringus pealkirjaga Tourism's Role in Cultural Revitalisation in Setomaa, Southeastern Estonia (eesti keeles: Turismi roll kultuuri elavdamisel Setomaal). Uuringu eesmärk on uurida turismi mõju kultuurilise elavdamise kontekstis. Uuringu tulemused avaldatakse osana minu magistritööst. Magistritöö viiakse läbi magistriõppekava „Turism, kultuur ja rahvusvaheline juhtimine“ (TourCIM) raames.

Allkirjastades käesoleva nõusolekukirja, annate loa intervjuumaterjali konfidentsiaalseks ja eranditult teadusuuringu eesmärgil kasutamiseks. Uuring viiakse läbi vastavalt Soome Teadusuuringute Nõuandva Kogu (Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity) kehtestatud vastutustundliku teadustöö põhimõtetele. Andmeid töödeldakse anonüümselt. Teie osalemine uuringus on vabatahtlik ning Teil on õigus oma nõusolek igal ajal tagasi võtta ka pärast dokumendi allkirjastamist, teavitades allpool nimetatud kontaktisikut.

Kui Teil on küsimusi uuringu või uurimisandmete kasutamise kohta, võtke julgelt ühendust minuga või minu juhendajaga.

Lugupidamisega,  
Maris Altermann  
TourCIM magistriõppe üliõpilane  
telefon---  
e-post: ---

Annan nõusoleku intervjuu kasutamiseks andmetena eespool nimetatud eesmärgil

\_\_\_\_\_  
Allkiri

\_\_\_\_\_  
Päev

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nimi (trükitähtedega)

## Appendix 2. Interview questions in English

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## Introduction

1. Please tell me a little about yourself. What is your relationship with Seto culture and the community?

1a. If you are not Seto: Please tell me a little about yourself. How would you describe your contact or connection with Seto culture and the community?

### Theme 1: Identity

1. How do you see or feel about Seto traditions? Which of them are important to you and why (not only in terms of tourism)?

1a. If you are not Seto: How do you see or feel about Seto traditions? What have you noticed – which traditions are important to the community itself and why (not only in terms of tourism)?

2. How do you feel about tourism in Setomaa, both personally and from the perspective of Setos in general?

2a. If you are not Seto: How do you see tourism in Setomaa? What have you noticed – how do Setos themselves describe tourism?

3. Could you talk about the different festivals taking place in Setomaa? Have you taken part in them? How do you feel about them?

3a. If you are not Seto: How are Seto traditions presented at festivals? How do Setos and locals themselves feel about the festivals?

### Theme 2: Authenticity

5. What does being Seto mean to you?

5a. If you are not Seto: What is the role of locals in shaping what is presented to tourists?

6. In your opinion, how is Seto culture presented to tourists? Is the way the culture is presented meaningful to you personally?

6a. If you are not Seto: Have you noticed whether the way Seto culture is presented in tourism is also meaningful to Setos themselves?

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7. How do locals or Setos themselves influence what is presented to tourists?
8. Can you give a positive example of how Seto culture is presented in tourism?
9. Can you give a negative example of how Seto culture is presented in tourism?

#### Theme 3: Empowerment

10. Have you noticed any economic benefits or other positive effects from tourism (for example for the community or culture)?
- 10a. If you are not Seto: How does tourism affect the community economically, socially, and culturally?
11. Is there a particular tourism season that generates the most income? What is life like before or after the peak season?
12. Have you noticed any other positive changes due to tourism? What do locals or Setos themselves think about participating in tourism (for example taking part in festivals, etc.)?
13. How do you feel tourism income is distributed within the community? In your opinion, does it go to the right places?
- 13a. If you are not Seto: What have you noticed about the distribution of tourism income? Do you think it is distributed fairly?
14. Has tourism changed how you feel about or value your culture? Why? How would you describe this change (for example, increased pride, etc.)?
- 14a. If you are not Seto: Have you noticed changes in how people relate to their culture due to tourism? If yes, why do you think that is? How would you describe this change?
15. How are local people's voices and opinions taken into account in tourism-related decision-making?
16. Is there anything else you would like to add regarding the topics discussed?