Creating Authentic Cultural Experiences in Finland

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Abstract

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The aim of this thesis was to explore the importance of authenticity in experiences that involve cultural aspects. The thesis focused on Finland and the indigenous cultural groups that are present in the area, including Sami people and Karelians. The author conducted a qualitative research on the topic to collect more relevant and real information directly from the people who represent these cultural groups.

The goal was to gain a deeper understanding of these cultures and the effects of hospitality and experience industry on them. Through this study, the author wanted to shed more light to the indigenous groups in Finland. The author explored the effects of hospitality and experience industry and how to provide authentic experiences that include cultural aspects, while remaining respectful and considerate. The outcome of this research thesis provided useful information and advice for the industry.

The approach of the study was to start of with a desk study, which included literature research. From there, the author built their own framework and collected the needed sources. The research helped her to build a base of the important issues and questions for the research, which will later be crucial during the qualitative research interviews. Interviews were conducted as semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. There were 8 respondents.

The literature research showed, that there are three identified cultural groups in Finland, those list Sami people, Karelians and Finns. Finns being the majority group, therfore not main focus of the research. All of these groups have different and unique aspects to them.

There were also some issues found, since opinions can vary especially about Karelia. Source criticism needed to be practised. The author has asked opinions of individuals who are from these cultural groups in question, to suggest the most reliable sources for reading materials to get the best and deepest understanding of the topic. So that she could avoid hearing the stories and history from someone elses perspective.

The author researched the importance of authenticity in the industry, how to provide cultural experiences, maintaining the culture and experience industry as a whole. The outcome of the research supported the literature study. In this industry, we need to involve, hear and really listen to the indigenous communities, because our actions in the experience and hospitality field can really affect the preservation of these cultures.

Harvard referencing was used in this thesis.

Keywords
Authenticity, Culture, Finland, Experience, Creating Experiences

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1 Introduction

Through the whole history, humans have enjoyed a good experience. People seem to be more aware of real authenticity, and it effects the expectations of consumers. It is important to note, that people's views of what is authentic, will depend on their experiences and pre-built views. We constantly examine the world through our own lens of what is authentic and what is not. It is important to note these differences when creating a good authentic experience (Gilmore & Pine, 2007).

Based on the information available, we know, that stereotypes do affect the customer experience in our industry, since people have their own views based on prior knowledge. What often goes unnoticed, is the effects of these views and stereotypes on the indigenous people, whose culture, or aspects of their culture we are using in marketing or the experience itself. Sometimes, even what people view as" authentic" or what is known as the "real culture" might in fact, be the commercialized or colonialized version. That is why it is extremely crucial to understand the dimensions that go into building a cultural experience and the effects it has on the people.

Some merger policies are still in use to this day. The policies used in Nordic states were in strongest use between the 19th century and second world war. They were based on assimilation. These policies were mainly based on merging the indigenous cultures into the majority culture. People were encouraged to replace their original cultural heritage and language (Josefsen, 2010). Making it hard for indigenous groups to practise and maintain their culture (Ranta & Kanninen, 2019). Since the beginning of 1800's Finnish people were discriminated as a group. This has caused the history of the Sami and Karelians get lost during the years, since people were focused more on the repression of the Finns. Now, it is not as rare to find people speaking of Finns as colonialists in relation to the matter of Sami people or Karelians (Ranta & Kanninen, 2019). There were many national differences in the policies from the beginning of 20th century. Sweden was using a segregation policy in relation to the Reindeer Saami and an assimilation policy by the other Saami. In the meantime, Norway stuck to the assimilation policy for all Saami. In Finland, the assimilation policy was not as harsh and was not practised as strictly as in Norway. The level, to which these Nordic countries tried to deprive the Saami of their language and culture varied in intensity (Josefsen, 2010).

Area, language, and culture of Karelia were used to prove that Finland has a culture, what many do not know, that it is a separate culture group with a language that is related to Finnish language, and not just a dialect as is often thought. Oldest texts in Karelian lan-

guage were found in the beginning 1800s, but Karelian and Finnish have been separate languages for far longer (Sarhimaa, 2017).

These days, it is common to see experience providers offer" Karelian experience" as a Finnish thing, since the cultures got mixed through time. Not many people can identify the line between Karelian culture and Finnish culture, so they are often marketed as a same thing. This is a result of ethnicization. Ethnicization means that cultural features of a certain group will start to be seen as a part of another group and they will be adapted as a part of that other group, which will cause the original group to lose their cultural parts as their features are now used by another group (Sarhimaa, 2017). In this case, Finland took some parts of Karelian culture and joined them as a part of their own.

A good example of cultural unification or merging in this case is Kalevala. The now known Finnish national epic was collected in Karelia from the people, who believed that these poems will only live through singing it to the next generation. It is seen as the national epic of Finland and there are some mentions of "old Finnish words", which were Karelian words. Kalevala is one of the most significant works for Finnish identity. It defines a lot of things today, from art, culture, science and more. It is mentioned that the Finnish identity was on a weak base before Kalevala, it was described as fragile. The poems were collected and edited by Elias Lönnrot. The editing changed some meanings and other aspects, to make it into more readable form (Kalevalaseura). Elias Lönnrot was the writer and collector of Kalevala and Kanteletar, he has been called the father of Finnish written language. In 1828 he decided to take a trip towards Karelia to collect some poems. He headed towards Savo and Häme first. From there, he proceeded further to North-Karelia. He sang the Karelians and collected important poems, which were later edited and added to Kalevala. The first edition of the epic was released in 1835-1836 since it was released in two parts (Majamaa, 1997).

Considering the information above, the topic of culture, authenticity and their connections to experience needs to be examined from all different viewpoints. There are so many aspects we need to consider. Opinions, historical facts, cultural background and much more affect the topic. The aspects we should consider consist of history, culture, heritage, cultural integration, policies, the hospitality, and experience industry and much more. Sami people and their experiences, Karelians and Finns. The topic is very diverse and there are a lot of aspects that we need to consider during the research. We need to identify the origins of these cultures, how they are today, how they affect the hospitality and experience industry today and how can we best respect the cultures while providing experiences that benefit the consumer, the people whose culture is in question and more.

To start off, we should go through the cultures in question to know and identify which parts belong to which culture to avoid mixing, commercializing, and merging. Especially the line between Finnish and Karelian cultures and heritage has become harder to identify, since Finnish identity was built on Karelian poems and culture. According to common stand of Karelians and some researchers, some aspects were originally taken from Karelians (Mikkonen, 2019). In an YLE article "Grandfather's story made Tuomo Kondie an activist who abandoned his Finnish surname: "The Kalevala has been stolen from the Karelians" (2019), (headline is translated from Finnish). Kondie, a Karelian activist, who has re-connected with his culture was involved in the article. In the article, he expressed, how many Karelians are taught that they are Finnish, and Karelian is not a language, but a dialect and many do not even think to question what they are told (Mikkonen, 2019). The article also mentioned that researchers are interested in the topic. Eila Stepanova, a re-searcher who has worked on Karelian topics now and in the past says that Kalevala is called the Karelian-Finnish national epic, thus not a national epic, and not just a Finnish work. Professor Outi Fingerroos also says in the article, that we have robbed Karelia of certain things.

Therefore, we can say that usage of "Karelian" aspects in Hospitality and Experience in-dustry need to be researched. The line between these two cultures is hard to identify due to the challenging history and current misinformation. It is important to know the back-grounds of cultures and heritages before utilizing them as a part of an experience. We see a lot of experiences in the market related to Kalevala, which are then advertised as "Kare-lian". Experience providers need to gain more knowledge and use correct terms in the future when creating and providing services and products related to culture. So that we can avoid spreading misinformation and misunderstandings about culture.

The main reason behind choosing this specific topic is, that author wishes to shed light to the issues in cultural experiences and how they can affect the indigenous groups and the preservation of their culture. Cultures often play a big part in hospitality and experience related services. That is why we, in the industry are also responsible for the preservation of the cultures that are part of the provided experiences. It is crucial to hear the people who represent the culture, to make sure that the culture that is part of experience is being portrayed in the correct manner. The author thinks that it is important, that people under-stand the base, history and causes of the actions done in the industry. How our field can help the indigenous groups while still utilizing some parts of the cultures as a part of expe-rience, but in an ethical and correct manner? The target of this thesis is to achieve results during the research and writing process that help the industry better understand the ef-fects we have on these people and how to continue successfully and ethically offering the cultural experiences.

1.1 Overview of the structure

In this first chapter, the author will explain the overview of the topic and introduce the topic of the thesis. We shall also briefly go through the aims, objectives, justifications, key definitions, and structure. Next, we will go through the connection of the topic for our industry, as this thesis is done as the final stage of the authors studies in Hospitality and Experience management. Cultures and authenticity interest the author greatly in their personal life as well. Based on a long literature research the author learned that the topic is important when we are creating good culture related experiences. For the experience to be good, it needs to follow certain quality level of authenticity.

The author wants to try and achieve a career in the experience industry in the future after graduation. This thesis is written based on what the author found important after the literature research and what they are passionate about, therefore, this thesis is written with a professional motivation.

This bachelor thesis will research subjects about culture, experiences, and authenticity. Thesis will explore the connections of these topics, their relevance in the industry and importance to the indigenous people of Finland. This study will provide advice for service providers on how to create authentic cultural experiences. The advice will contain information about how to keep the experiences authentic and how to respect these ethnicities while creating commercial products. Commercialization will happen to some extend anyway because experiences are a commercial product. We need to find the tools to identify when it is okay to happen and how.

Thesis will explain, how to raise visibility of the actual local cultures, how to avoid stereotypes in the industry and how to help the cultures maintain their authentic parts, thrive, and show the real side of the culture for the consumers. It will also help to increase the experience value. In many cases, the industry uses some small parts of cultures in a commercialized way when providing experiences. This can lead to misunderstandings, changed views and growing stereotypes. For example, when purchasing hospitality or experience related services in Northern Finland, many people consider the husky rides to be something traditional to the area (Hurtigruten.com, s.a.). It is made to pull customers there and have an experience, but it has nothing to do with the local culture. Dog sledding was invented by the Inuit people and natives, in modern day Northern Canada. It was the colonists who recognized the potential of this transportation method. The European settlers quickly adapted this technique and it spread to other countries as well (Hurtrigruten.com, s.a.). We need to think how we can provide the services customers want without creating the stereotype or wrong view. In this case of husky rides, we can

notice how it has affected the whole travel industry in the Northern parts of Finland. It has totally paid their part on creating this expectations and distorted image of the culture of the area.

During this thesis we will go through different cultures that are present in Finland, these are Sami people and Karelians. These two cultural groups are locally present in Finland, and they are minority cultures. They are not to be mixed up with the majority culture of Finns. They are both unique cultural groups of their own. We will research how they are affected by the hospitality and experience industry. In the end, the thesis will provide recommendations and advice for the industry on how to create real and authentic experiences for the customers while also considering the cultures they use in the experiences.

The base of this thesis was done as literature research. Advice on choosing correct sources that portray the culture from the viewpoint of people who represent the culture has been asked from the indigenous individuals. The interviews will be conducted with people who are connected to the cultures of Sami, Karelia, and Finland.

In the end, this thesis will provide useful advice for the industry and its future operations. It will give insight to the cultures that are involved in hospitality and experience industry. The author will conduct research via interviews, to that she can ensure that the results are real, and the voices of those people whose culture is involved in experiences will have a chance to say their opinion and voice their feelings on the topic. The results will provide the reader with information on creating authentic experiences, while remaining respectful and ethical.

1.2 Aims of the study

The aim of this thesis is to give insight of the cultures and give a better and deeper understanding of how actions of the industry affect different cultural groups. It will provide useful recommendations and tips on what they should consider when creating cultural experiences and services that are claimed to be authentic or include some cultural aspects. The author plans to achieve this aim by doing research on the topic directly with people who represent the culture. She believes that will lead to the most reliable and relevant information and results. The author has requested some Karelians and Sami people to suggest good literature sources, so she can gain the most authentic knowledge on the topic without opinions of people outside the culture. On the literature research she went through books that were written by people who represent the communities and are well informed on the topics and cultures in question.

One of the aims is also to let the Sami people and Karelians tell their opinions on this topic and what they think and feel personally. This will allow them to express how they feel about the topic and what are the problems with certain aspects towards their culture and people. That way we can have knowledge on how the industry should work and what they should think of, so that they do not make mistakes that can be harmful for the culture and heritage. The goal outcome is to provide useful advice that the industry can use in their future operations.

The author plans to reach this aim by doing interviews with the indigenous people, researching literature, and studying different theories on authenticity, experiences, and culture, before conducting the research with the interviewees. She wanted to use literature that is reliable and real according to the people who belong to those cultures, so before literature research she asked few opinions on what literature shall be used for the most accurate results. She read through the sources that were suggested by the people and chose to use the most relevant books considering the topic of the thesis.

1.3 Justifications

Researching authenticity in experiences is relevant in many ways. Providing experiences is becoming more important in the current state of the industry (Gilmore & Pine, 2011). Therefore, we are examining the subject, not only through hotels, resorts, and restaurants, but as the whole industry. It is important to be aware of all the issues in creating an authentic experience. The industry is under constant change, and we need to find solutions how to meet the expectations under these changes.

The topic is relevant to the industry because the topic is important if we want to avoid over commercializing or creating stereotypes of these cultures which are involved. Consumers want authenticity, and it is crucial to meet that need in a correct way (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). There has been research done on providing authentic cultural experiences, but not many were found, that were done in Finland. During the literature research, the author tried to find studies and previous research on the topic from Finland, but the search was not bringing results. Previous research from viewpoint of indigenous people was limited.

During the reading phase, the author also noticed the lack of indigenous voices involved. This can mean, that past research was focusing more on authenticity through another lens, not necessarily the ethical and cultural authenticity perspective. In addition, the research was done mostly on indigenous groups of other countries, on other continents, so it is not as relevant to Finland, because the status of those groups and their history is different. Therefore, the author believes, that the topic is very important to discuss. The re-

search that has been done before, tend to focus on other countries or the view of Finnish people, so author believes that it is important to conduct one, where the minority groups are heard as well. It is important to promote the indigenous cultures of Finland, so that international culture trends will not overpower them and make them disappear by merging or commercialization.

There has also been growing demand for authenticity in hospitality and experience field, as people lean towards authentic experiences nowadays (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). People expect something extraordinary and life changing. The customers might not always know the culture that is included to the experience; therefore, it also works as a learning tool for the customers. Taking this information into consideration, we know how important it is to provide the authentic information to the customer. Providing the commercialized version only will result in unwanted results towards the indigenous groups. When providing experiences, many people forget to consider the impact they might have on other cultures. It is important to meet this demand and understand how to do it correctly, without creating harmful impacts on the cultures, like stereotypes or changed views.

The author chose this topic due to her personal interest in the issue. Through discussions with individuals from different groups, she also discovered that the topic is quite unknown, and often the voices of these people go unheard. She wants to give platform for these groups to tell their parts via the interviews and give visibility to the issues that might occur in, or due to the industry. It is important to the author that the hospitality and experience industry works ethically in cooperation with the cultures so we can avoid harmful or unpleasant outcomes. With the results of the thesis, she hopes to benefit both sides, the industry, and the indigenous people.

1.4 Definitions

The topic of the thesis revolves around three main themes: culture, authenticity, and experience. It is important to understand these topics before we move on to the methodology and interviews. It will provide us a deeper understanding of some theories, meanings of these terms and their importance in Hospitality and Experience industry.

Consumers demand authenticity, and it is very important today (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Culture refers to characteristics a certain group has (Zimmermann, 2017), therefore it is spotted everywhere in different culture related experiences. Culture also has different dimensions (Hofstede Insight), which will be discussed later in this chapter. Experience is something, a human will gain through seeing, hearing, or touching. These are all a large

part of the industry, as experience is something we provide through offering services and products to customers. These often contain aspects of culture and authenticity.

1.4.1 Authenticity

When talking about authenticity as a subject, people often tend to speak of what is real and what is not. This topic can often spark disagreements between people, whether it is concerning places, people, or anything. People have different views of what is authentic, and often their experiences and backgrounds can affect that perspective. However, we can all come to agree, that what is real is valued (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). As people, we have built our own perception of authenticity and what we expect from an experience, we need to think how to cater to all consumer expectations and create a certain picture among them. For someone the husky rides might be an authentic feeling experience, but for someone who knows the local culture of Finland, it is not authentic at all (Hurtigruten.com, s.a.). The experience of authenticity always depends on pre-built views on the topic or experience.

To this day, authenticity is still being defined and located frequently. Some contemporary examples from anthropological studies suggest, that even something truly inauthentic can be redirected or reprocessed into something authentic (Geurds & Broekhoven, 2013).

People are participating more in experience economy, which leads us to question the necessity, authenticity, and importance of these experiences. People are more willing to invest their money on experiences, not only in travel and entertainment but also much more, like celebrations or even death related experiences. Expertise increases the value of experience, but consumers expect cost related efficiency, excellent quality, and sincere authenticity. The expertise will raise the quality and value notably. Consumers are willing to invest in something that they have not experiences before (Gilmore & Pine, 2007).

A character, Robert Doniger said in Michaels Crichton's novel, Timeline: Authenticity will be the new buzzword of 21st century. And what is authentic? Anything that is not devised and structured to make a profit. Anything that is not controlled by corporations. Anything that exists for its own sake, that assumes its own shape. The modern world is the corporate equivalent of a formal garden, where everything is planted and arranged for effect. Where nothing is untouched, where nothing is authentic (Crichton, 1999).

Based on information above, we know that authenticity is important today. Authenticity exists for its own purpose; it is desired by the consumers, and it is what makes the experiences interesting. It improves, changes its shape, and adapts to change, but what does

not change, is the want and need for it. The author agrees with the definitions above, and they are used as a base to understand authenticity on this thesis.

1.4.2 Culture

Culture is characteristics of a certain group of people. Culture consists of languages, religions, cuisine, music, art, social habits, and some values. Some research goes even further to define culture as behavioural patterns and interactions instead of the more known characteristics. This means, that culture can be seen from the groups shared behavioural and social interactions (Zimmermann, 2017).

Hofstede developed the cultural dimensions; they are often used when we speak of cultures or study the communications between cultures. Some controversy exists when using these dimensions, as it means putting entire countries into categories. When we do that, we expect same behavioural patterns and values from everyone in the same category. The cultural dimensions consist of: Indulgence vs. restraint, long term vs. short term, masculinity vs. femininity, tolerance of uncertainty, individuality, and power distance. The theory describes effects of culture to the group who belongs to it. It tells us how culture influences the values and behaviours. Hofstede defined culture: "the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others" (Rheenen, 2020).

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are the most used and known framework of cultural differences. Due to globalization, we come across a variety of people from different backgrounds and cultures in work and personal life. People tend to be in their own culture so deep, that they sometimes might fail to see the effects of it to their behaviour. A tool, to understand these differences can help to understand the patterns of different cultures so we can see the differences and similarities more easily (Business to You, 2017).

Definitions of the cultural dimensions:

> -Power distance is a dimension in which tells how the power is distributed among the society and how the members of that society react to the distribution of power. The main point being, how the society handles inequality. For example, Saudi Arabia has a high-power distance and Finland has low power distance (Hofstede Insight, s.a.).

> -Individualism dimension is about the importance of individual choice compared to group interest. High individualism means that in that culture the

person needs to take care of themselves and immediate family. If the country is more collectivist, it means that the people are more invested in looking after everyone near to them, in exchange they are more loyal. In short, this is the difference of "me" or "we" in thinking. USA is one of the most individualistic and Chile is very collectivist (Corna, s.a.).

-Masculinity is about the values of society. Masculine refers to a culture that is focused on heroism, materialism, achievements, and assertiveness. Masculine cultures are often highly competitive. Feminine cultures focus more on caring for the weak, cooperation, modesty, and quality of life. Japan is one of the most masculine countries, while Sweden in one of the most feminine (Laigo, 2020)

-Uncertainty avoidance expresses how the members of society react to ambiguity. Basically, this tells how the group reacts to the fact that future is unknown. Countries which support lower uncertainty avoidance are more relaxed and have more tolerance towards uncertainty. Some examples of those countries are India and UK. Countries with high uncertainty avoidance are for example Italy and Belgium (Smit, 2016).

-Time orientation (long term vs. short term) relates to the east while dealing with present and future. Countries that scored low on this part, are part of more time-honouring tradition and they react suspiciously to change in the society. Cultures with high time orientation focus on future and education to prepare for the incoming changes. China is known for long term orientation and Morocco and Algeria for the short-term orientation (Ehsanfar, 2019).

-Indulgence is defined as the extent which people control their impulses and desires, based on their background and upbringing. This means, that cultures can be defined as indulgent or restraint (MacLachlan, 2013).

1.4.3 Finland as a cultural area

Finland is a diverse cultural area in Northern Europe. The culture has influences from Sweden and Russia, as they have both been present in Finland's history. Territory of Finland was under the Swedish rule from 1323 until the Russian invasion in 1808 (BBC, 2019). The presence of other cultures affected the Finnish culture, architecture, religion and much more. Finland has had their own folk culture and religion that existed in the country along with Karelian and Sámi. But due to the invasions and outside influences the

Finnish folk culture changed and adapted to the changes in some areas more and in other a little less.

Finnish culture is very diverse. When speaking of Finns as a cultural group, we must note that there are different cultural features depending on the area we are considering. Finns from the capital might have a very different experience of the culture than people living in the North or East for example. However, there are some connecting aspects in the culture that connect the Finns, these list for example the love and appreciation towards nature, appreciating silence and certain type of relaxation. One distinguishing factor about the culture of Finns is perception of time (Folklore Suomi, 2017).

The ancient religion of Finland involved beliefs and religious customs practised in Finland before the reign of Christianity. Finland had many influences from East and West, which caused the popularity and knowledge of the religion to decrease. The reign of ancient religion lasted until about 12th century (when Swedish crusades arrived and converted Finns to Christianity). However, the effects of the ancient beliefs were, and are still visible hundreds of years later. Typical beliefs of the religion contained elves, gnomes, sprites, and multiple gods. Perhaps the most known of the gods was Ahti, the god of water. Witches were believed to be seers and sages (Folklore Suomi).

1.4.4 Sámi

Sami people are a cultural group who mostly live in Northern Europe in Sámi land, Saamenmaa (Northern Sámi Sápmi or Sámeeana (n), Inari Sámi Säämi or Sämieennâm and Skolt Sámi Sää´mjânnam). The name Saamenmaa was adapted in the early 1900s. This area has been habited by the Sámi, and the land consists of areas in Northern Finland and Fennoscandia (Institute for the Languages of Finland).

According to the definition of Sámi, a person should identify themselves as Sámi (self-identification). Defining yourself as part of the culture also has 3 objective grounds. These list that at least one of their parents or grandparents or the person themselves has learned the Sámi language as a first language. Or that they are direct descendant of someone who has been entered in the taxation, land or population register as one of the following: forest Lapp, fishing Lapp, mountain Lapp. In addition, also one of the persons parents has or could have been registered as a valid elector of the Sámi elections. The elections concluding the Sámi Parliament and Sámi Delegation (Näkkäläjärvi, 2018).

The Sámi definitions are different in Norway and Sweden. In these countries the definitions are based on language. The Lapp criterion has been opposed by the Sámi Parlia-

ment in Finland since the beginning. This criterion was added to the law against their will. Finland acknowledges the Sámi area as a language, cultural minority, and indigenous group. Lapp is not compound to Sámi. The term "Lapp" was used to define to people whose livelihoods consisted of fishing, hunting, or reindeer-herding. Both Finns and the Sámi were listed as "Lapps" due to the livelihood they practised in the North. The term has nothing to do with the indigenous group. The old records which mention the word "Lapp" are from the time of Swedish rule in Finland, which ended in 1809. The people have called themselves *sápmelaš,* Sámi for over 2000 years. The Lapp criterion is a loophole, which allows culturally Finnish people to enter the elections as voting members or even run the elections. Sáminess is not measured, it cannot be found in the old documents. Being Sámi means being part of today's Sámi culture (Näkkäläjärvi, 2018).

Sámi culture is highly present in experience and hospitality industry in Finland. It is being applied in many products and experiences, that is why it is important to understand the culture so that we can continue to have it present in the industry as a part of our products. But, to do that we must understand the main definition and history of the people and how to keep it as a part of a commercial product in an ethical way.

1.4.5 Karelia

The author wants to note, that the lack of international material has made it so, that the sources regarding this topic are mostly read in Finnish language.

The concept of Karelian culture is usually limited to traditional Karelian folk culture. Broadly understood, it covers folk cultures geographically and culturally in all Karelia: South Karelia, Ladoga Karelia, Raja Karelia, North Karelia, East Karelia (Viena Karelia and Aunus) and Karelian regions of Inner Russia (Tver) and sometimes even Ingrian (Ingrian villages), (Karjalan Sivistysseura).

The best-known poetic and musical forms of Karelian culture are poetry and crying hymns. The material forms consist of handicrafts, buildings, and food. Institutional forms are family traditions, like weddings, funerals, cemeteries and praasniekka. Praasniekkas are memorial days of local patron saints of the area. Traditionally, Karelian culture was passed down orally from one generation to the next. The essence of the oral culture includes not only remembering, but also the change and constant adaption of influences from various sources (Karjalan Sivistysseura).

1.4.6 Creating Experiences

When creating an experience, it is important to note, that you have a sustainable and profitable business, rather than just focusing on the revenue. When a company cares about the whole customer experience from décor, the service and thoughtful details, customers are more likely to become loyal and share the positive experience. With these, the company does not even necessarily need to do much advertising, since the customers are willing to do it for them. The experiences should be focused on the customers experience more, since in the long run it is the key to success in this field. When customers feel like they are taken into consideration and they are getting the best service, they are more willing to reward your business with loyalty and even do the marketing for you (Watkinson, 2012).

Creating and providing creative experiences to the customers has never been more important than it is now. Due to the latest development with modern gadgets and digital devices, consumers have now access to wide range of choices, which has created a new type of demand. (Villani, 2018). Based on that information, we know that consumers have a limitless range of choices, so we, as experience and hospitality providers must answer to the current demand of authenticity in experiences, or it is possible that the consumers will find it somewhere else. Or the other option is, that we end up creating harmful stereotypes, if we do not pay attention into what we are providing. This means, that in addition to the customer experience during the experience, we must also pay attention to the pre- and post-experiences. Customers are quick to drop some companies from consideration if it does not align with their values, beliefs or just does not seem good enough to invest money in (Villani, 2018).

In the next chapter, we will delve deeper into the three main topics of this thesis. Authenticity, experience, and culture will be explained and defined further.

2 Authenticity, culture, and experience

In this chapter the author will discuss topics containing authenticity, culture, and experiences. These are all related to the topic, and it is crucial to understand them, so we can view this topic from all necessary perspectives.

Authenticity is the quality of being real and genuine. Authenticity stands for things that are true and legitimate (Vocabulary.com). The term authentic has been used for a long time and has been used to describe real and reliable things that exists for their own sake. In old Greek this word has meant original and genuine (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2021). The word "Authentic" implies that the contents of the thing that is being considered is trustworthy and reliable. There has been much research done in the topic of Authenticity, but not in the connections of cultural experiences and authenticity in Finland. So, the previous research in this topic is limited. Authenticity as a tourism and business factor has been researched before (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). The phenomenon of authenticity will be explained more in this chapter. The author will examine this topic and its connection to cultures and experiences.

Culture stands for the way of life of a certain group, their customs, and beliefs (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Culture contains the unique characteristics of a certain group of people. There are some major symbols to culture, these list language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, art, norms, values, symbols, and artifacts (Davis, 2020).

Experience is a diverse topic, that consists of many factors, which makes it a complex subject. A clear definition and characteristics of an experience do not exist, so it is not easy to describe what defines experience (Fox, 2008). Experience is the process of gaining skills or knowledge from feeling, seeing, or doing things. The best way to gain experiences is by doing and trying new things (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Experience tourism has grown by popularity among consumers and has now become the norm, because consumers are more willing to invest in experiences over material goods. Consumers constantly seek more activities and experiences that meet their "niche" personal interests. Seeking this kind of personal experience is now more important to the consumers than doing what everyone else is doing as well (Tsvetkov, 2018). Customers want something unique, transformative and something that meets their personal preferences.

2.1 Authenticity

The origin of the word comes from old Greek and was described in Online Etymology Dictionary. The word originates from "autentikos" and derived from "authentes". In ancient Greek it meant "one acting on its own authority", this word was formed by combining two words, "hentes" meaning doer or being and "autos" meaning self. The last part related to "sene", which is linked to accomplishing and achieving something (Claeys, 2019).

There are three elements that are related to authenticity, these are:
- Genuine and real
- Trustworthy and reliable
- Conform to the original or representing a true nature or belief

There are many levels to authenticity. First, we will talk about authenticity and inauthenticity, their effects and demand. We must understand that inauthentic experiences do not exist, because they are reactions that happen inside of us. Our reaction depends on who we are, out previous experiences and prior knowledge. This makes all experiences personal, as two persons cannot have the same experience, it is always unique to everyone. The thing, that changes is the environment and stimulus, these can be real or artificial (Gilmore & Pine, 2007).

Genuine culture creates genuine product. Modern society allows for the possibility of individual and group authenticity. Production has caused widely spread alienation from the original form of products and experiences. Authenticity seems to be threatened by the mass market (Fillitz & Saris, 2012). This has caused many new levels of cultural products to develop, making it harder to spot the authentic ones. But as mentioned, it is still hard to tell apart the authentic products, as experiences come from individual feeling, so the experience of authenticity depends on each person (Gilmore & Pine, 2007).

Some studies treat authenticity as "trait-level individual difference". That means, that the extent which people believe to be authentic or inauthentic has many dimensions and it can be defined. McAdams (2008) mentioned in the text that narrative identity perspective may complement the trait of approach towards authenticity, by offering a framework which can be used to explore the lived experience of authenticity and inauthenticity. According to this approach, we can create a construction of life which provides unity and purpose. This construct includes connections between aspects of self and experiences.

Authenticity is now more important than ever. *Social Media Today* did made a survey on the topic and found that as much as 86% of respondents felt that authenticity is a key fac-

tor when choosing brands that they want to support. Authenticity is now vital in all stages of customer experience. Unfortunately, many brands lack the authenticity consumers want (Cassidy, 2017).

Being authentic and meeting the demand means being accountable and keeping your promises. It also means you must be transparent. If a brand or product is authentic, consumers will know, they will appreciate it more and prioritize their spending according to the value they feel. It is also easy to search information on the topic, so consumers have options, therefore, they will prioritize the products, experiences or brands that meet up with their expectations and values (Fertik, 2019). The demand of authenticity has made businesses need to hear consumers and meet their expectations to meet up with the current demand.

Authenticity is constantly increasing in value. More consumers want to immerse themselves in local culture and environment via experiencing them. However, what makes for an authentic experience will differ between people (Song & Dennett, 2016) For some, eating at a local restaurant might be authentic enough, but some seek for more, maybe seeing the local life or having a transformative experience by experiencing the culture up close.

Individuals' experience and feeling of authenticity has shown connections to their satisfaction (Rathi & Lee, 2020). If the customer is satisfied with the experience they purchase, they are more likely to stay longer, spend more money, promote the experience, and bring in possible new customers (Ehlaus, 2020).

Consumers expect authentic experiences, we need to think how we can meet their expectation and needs. The consumers are more likely to invest in experiences and products that support their value system and demand (Fertik, 2019). If we can meet those expectations while providing authenticity, it will lead to good results in customer satisfaction and level and the feeling of authenticity.

Authenticity and cultures link very closely together. When providing authenticity, culture is always involved somehow. Culture develops and changes through time, and as consumers demand authenticity, it is important to acknowledge the role of authenticity today and the state and history of culture that is involved in the experiences.

2.2 Cultures in Finland

The country's historic struggles against overpowering east and west have helped to form a specific culture. For a long time, Finland lived under Swedish rule, which made it possible to embrace some features from their culture. Finland was a part of Sweden from 1100 until 1809. The preferred administrative language was Swedish, long time even in the time of autonomy, which started in 1902 (Harmanen & Oker-Blom, 2021). After 1809 Russia conquered the area of Finland, making it part of Russia, but also an autonomous state. In 1917 Finland declared independency. But the country's position was quite fragile (Info Finland, 2021).

We know that Finnish culture has specific parts that were adapted to the culture and formed a new, unique culture in the country. It is important to note that Finnish culture differs from the indigenous groups. Sami people and Karelians do not share the same cultural features or history. The Sami are the only indigenous people that have been granted status in the European Union. The status is enshrined also in the Finnish Constitution. Indigenous criteria are based on convention no.169 of the International Labour Organization (Sámi Parliament, 2021).

The neighbouring countries of Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway share a common language, history, and culture base. They are based on Northern European traditions with links to England and Germany. However, against the very common belief, Finland is not part of this group. Instead, Finland shares roots and language characteristics with Estonians and Hungarians. In the modern day, we share many traits with our neighbouring countries, even though we have different backgrounds in history (Going Global, 2019).

There are about 10 000 Sámi people in Finland. Over 60% of that population lives outside of their land, which causes new demands for education, services and communication when is comes to the Sámi language. The status of Sámi people was listed in the Finnish Constitution in 1995. They have their own autonomy, and the right to practise their language, culture and traditional source of livelihood (Sámi Parliament, 2021).

The Sami people have inhabited the northern parts of Scandinavia and Finland for thousands of years. Finns entered the territory in about AD 100. In that time, Sami settlements were most likely spreaded on a larger area than they are today. In modern day, the area of Sami (Saamenmaa) is known to be in the northern Finland, not spreaded like it probably was in history. We can notice same signs of Sami people being pushed more North in Sweden and Norway as well (Britannica , 2021).

Unlike Sami people, Karelians do not have this indigenous group status. The Karelian language has been granted the status of an official minority language in Finland. Against common belief, it is not a dialect of Finnish but its own language. It was confirmed by the finnish president, Tarja Halonen in 2009. In the recent years, there has been efforts to revive the language. In 2009, University of Eastern Finland in Joensuu received a professorship in Karelian language (Karjalan liitto, 2021). Courses are available, but services or education are not accessible and very rare to find.

It is very interesting, how Karelian culture is researched as their own group, but also as a part of development of Finnish national report. From this point of view, especially the status of orthodox christian karelians in Russian and Finnish culture is interesting. How an orthodox christian group, usually associated with Russia, end up as a part of an image of Finland? (Parppei, 2013).

Finns had spoken about Karelia for over one hundred years, sometimes more actively. In the end of 1800s, Karelianism gave the Karelian cultural heritage a political label. After the wars, Finland lost parts of Karelia to Russia. An as a result, 420 000 people had to leave their homes and relocate across the new western border, some even twice. After moving, many suffered from discrimination, as their backgrounds were different. Karelians were adviced to adapt to the new culture and embrace the aspects of Finnish culture. The purpose of it was to even out the differences (Raninen-Siiskonen, 2013). Because of these politics, some descendants of Karelian migrants have almost lost touch to their roots and the culture has been mixed. Many people also support the idea that Karelia is part of Finnish culture and not an indigenous group.

All four countries, which have populations of Sami people have also practised assimilation and merger policies against the Sami. This happened through converting people into christianity, language politics and settling policies. The settling proceeded at different at different speeds depending on the region. That is why many Sami settlement areas ended up losing touch of the Sami language (Ranta & Kanninen, 2019). This has caused many descendants of indigenous people to loose their language, culture and roots. The policies have also allowed for stereotypes to form.

Cultures are constantly utilized as a part of experiences. As experience providers we need to understand the culture that is a part of what we are providing. We must understand the basis of these cultures, their history and heritage, so we can create experiences that showcase the culture in question in a positive manner that benefits all sides.

2.3 Experience

Experiences are feelings and knowledge that are gained by doing something. Experiences are now more important than ever. Experience is a process, in which the customer gains something through seeing, feeling, smelling, or hearing. It is a natural process, which can be gained through products or services in our industry (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Experiences are relevant to the research of the author, since the topic is related to all kinds of cultural experiences that are being provided in Finland right now. It is important to know, how experiences are formed and what makes them successful.

Below we will explore the experience realms by Gilmore and Pine, originally released in 1999 and updated in 2011. They researched the realms and developed the idea that there are four realms to experience. The author thinks that in our industry, it is important to understand the realms, as creating experiences can be challenging and we want to offer the best experience, the sweet spot (Gilmore & Pine, 2011).

2.3.1 Experience realms

To explain the concept of experiences, Pine & Gilmore (1999) released their book 'The Experience Economy'. The updated version was released in 2011. The 2011 edition was used in this thesis. Pine & Gilmore covered many things and theories in their book, but in this thesis, we are focusing on the four different realms of experience. In this subchapter, we will go through those realms and what they really mean. Even though they released their book with new ideas and information, there had been previous research done before, for example, Schmitt (1999) researched the topic as well.

According to Gilmore & Pine, all experiences will activate at least one, if not many of these senses. They also separated the types of participation towards the experience. If the customer is a passive participator, they are most likely just observing. If they are active participators, it is likely that the customer influences the experience. In the research of Gilmore & Pine (2011) absorption means, that the customer puts all the focus on the experience, but it is brought to the customers consideration from a distance. Immersive experience in this study means, that the customer is physically a part of the experience by participating in it (Pine & Gilmore, 2011).

As mentioned before, Gilmore and Pine (2011) mention four realms in their research, these consist of:
- Entertainment
- Education
- Escapist
- Esthetic

If all these are involved in an experience, according to Gilmore and Pine (2011), it results in a sweet spot. The sweet spot is the experience that touches upon all these realms, making it very enjoyable and ideal as an experience. These realms can be used to create new experiences or to improve already existing ones, by making them better.

Both researches, conducted by Schmitt (1999) and Pine and Gilmore (1999) contained similar results, but in a different form. We can still notice some similarities between the outcomes. For example, Entertainment realm from Pine and Gilmore (2011) would match up best with Schmitt's (1999) realms 'feel' and 'sense'. Educational realm fits with 'think' and 'act', escapist realm goes with 'act' and esthetic realm is related to the same, 'feel' and 'sense' as in the entertainment realm.

Learning about these realms is relevant since the author wants to focus on improving and bettering the experience industry in cultural experiences in Finland. To understand the importance of experiences and how they are formed, it is crucial to know, what goes into creating one. Authenticity links to experiences, so in this thesis, we will go through creation of experiences, authenticity and how to keep it, how to make a commercial product while maintaining the experience value and ethical action.

2.3.2 Storytelling

Storytelling can add magic and authenticity to experiences. Storytelling is an ancient tradition, it brought people together, connected today to yesterday, shared knowledge and even created myths. In the future, we will experience a new demand of storytelling, as customers want a story, they can experience themselves (EHL Insights, 2020). Customers want to know the story behind their purchase, food has a story, buildings have a story. A story adds to the authentic experience.

We are drawn to stories. They help us to understand things, connect with the world where we live, they help us to understand people around us and provides sense of what life is like for other people. Storytelling is in our nature; it was in fact one of the first ways to communicate. It helps you to connect with other and make them interested. Somehow, many brands and companies fail to connect with their audience and make the interaction interesting (DeRome, 2019). Storytelling brings spice to the experience; it engages and raises the interest. It is important in an experience, as it is one of the oldest, yet most functional when it comes to customer engagement.

2.3.3 Staging authenticity for experience

The nature of trust and authenticity is changing. They are connected, but can one exist without the other? Is there trust without authenticity and vice versa? In this sub chapter, we will discuss the effects of faking authenticity to develop an experience.

Trust is a by-product of authenticity. Trust can be broken easily, as it is fragile. Especially now, in time of digital platforms, everyone has the access to tools of transparency and trust. Everything is out there, so we must be more careful about building trust and staying authentic (Oakley, 2018).

Authenticity is subjective, it always depends on the individual's interpretation. The idea, that something is authentic always depends on the individual's previous experiences and knowledge. So, something can feel authentic to others while it seems completely fake to another person (Hopper, 2020). For example, someone who has experienced a real African safari, the Kilimanjaro of Disney might seem completely fake. But someone who has only seen animals in a zoo, the Animal Kingdom might seem like an authentic experience (Gilmore & Pine, 2007).

Based on this knowledge, yes, we can in fact fake authenticity because the feeling of authenticity always depends on the person who is experiencing it. However, this does not mean that it will be viewed as authentic by everyone, because people base their opinions on previous experience, beliefs, and knowledge. There are also the ethical considerations to be thought of when doing that, because it can cause more stereotypes on certain topics when authenticity is used as a tool to lure customers, while creating an artificial version of authenticity.

Staged authenticity is often seen in activities, cultural practises and events that are targeted for tourists. Some experiences can be modified to please tourists, but it might be a little outdated as a practise (Stainton, 2020). We can see this staging through so many different experiences that are provided to us. For example, Chinese restaurants often offer fortune cookies and prawn crackers, which are a West Malaysian invention from the 16th Century (Williams, 2020).

Another example comes from traveling to Spain or other Latin cultured countries, where many hotels and resorts will hire a Flamenco dancer, this practise is inexplicably inauthentic (Stainton, 2020). The origin of Flamenco comes from gypsies, which made many Spanish people despise the connection foreigners made with Spain and Flamenco performances. Especially in the 19th and 20th centuries flamenco had a bad reputation among

the Spanish. Historically the performances were associated with the Gypsy population and carried out in the urban areas. Flamenco has undergone extreme commercialization and is now widely associated with the Spanish culture (Holguín, 2019). Many people do not know the origin of this art form, that is very often provided as an experience. This is a good example of how the products and services we purchase, might not be as authentic as we might think. It does not make is necessarily bad, but it certainly makes it more inauthentic.

Overall, authenticity is a very important topic when considering creating an experience, it always involved aspects from culture and these three main themes are very closely related together. Different consumers might have varying ideas of authenticity, but as experience providers, we need to identify what is the right way. We have the responsibility to learn and educate ourselves as much as we can, so that we do not create any harmful stereotypes or misapprehension.

2.4 Framework of authentic cultural experiences

In this chapter, we will go through the authors framework on authentic cultural experiences. Many literature sources were used, since they were researched for this thesis. The author chose to use multiple sources for the framework, as she believes it will add to the reliability and validity of the thesis. Most relevant sources related to the topic were chosen, and the ones that aligned with the authors viewpoint.

The framework will act as a base for the qualitative research and later will help to compare the outcomes and results. The results will be recommendations for the industry.
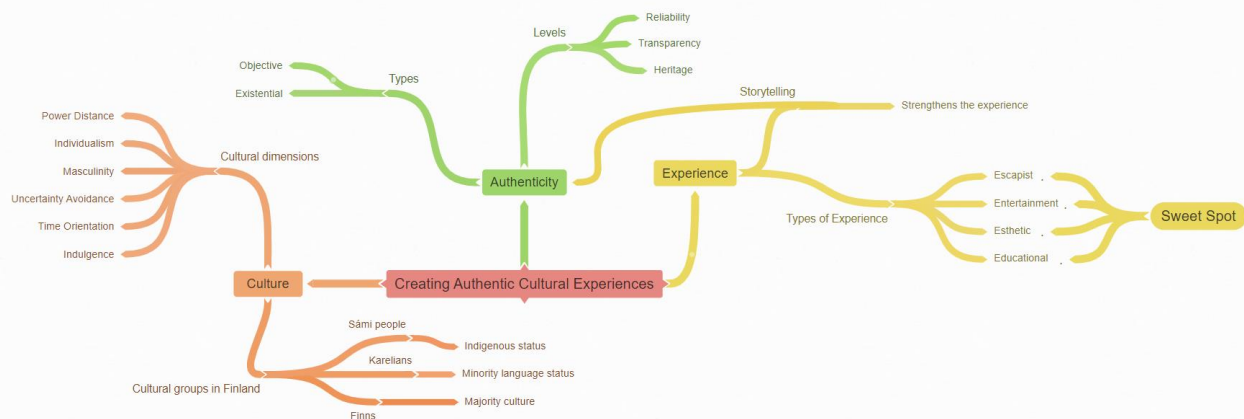

Figure 1: Authors framework of authentic experiences (Pulliainen, 2021).

The main point of creating authentic experiences is of course, authenticity. The author chose to focus on different types and levels of authenticity, as it is relevant to the topic of the thesis. Objective authenticity is seen all over experiences that are provided. Objective authenticity consists of objects, communication, language, interaction, people, food and beverages, location, design, and furniture/décor. The objective authenticity refers to genuineness, truth, and accuracy of the objects around us during the experience (Chhabra, 2012). The things we see, feel and experience affect the view we have on the authenticity of the experience. The existential authenticity refers to objective quality, the state of being. It focuses more on emotions, sensations, relationships, and sense of self (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). Both types of authenticity affect what we experience and how we perceive it. So, as experience providers we must pay attention to these aspects within objective and existential authenticity, so that we can create and offer authentic experiences to the consumers.

In authenticity, there are different levels. Trust and sincerity are important factors when offering authentic experiences, as authenticity is built on trust and transparency. Consumers want to experience quality, so the communication is important. When offering these experiences, customers want to know what they are purchasing and is it truly what the marketer says.

On the left, the topic of culture is discussed. The author mentions cultural dimensions, as they might vary between the three cultural groups of Finland. The majority culture, Finns do not share same heritage and cultural background with the Sami and Karelians, even thought there might be some similarities. It is important to spot these differences and work in a way, that all cultures and their customs are taken into consideration.

In the right, author discusses experience as a topic. There are different types of experience, more specifically experience realms, which were discussed earlier in this thesis. The author thinks that it is important to understand the different realms to understand how to create a successful experience for all the senses. Through understanding the cultural aspects and the fundamentals of creating experiences, we should be able to create an experience, that hits the sweet spot and benefits the cultures, experience providers and the consumers. Storytelling can also add to the experience in a positive way. It can help to strengthen the experience itself, the authenticity, and the brand itself. Regarding the connection and participation, there are different types. Experiences can be active, passive, immerse or absorbing. These were also mentioned earlier in chapter 2.3. If all of these, culture, experience, and authenticity, are understood and internalized, everyone taken into consideration, it should grant positive result for all.

From this framework, there are three main points to this thesis, authenticity, experience, and cultures. In our field, they are all connected. This framework will be used in the author's research. Questions for the interviews will be based on this framework and connections between these topics will be researched. Through the research, author wants to gain a deeper understanding between the topics, how to connect them in our field in a successful and ethical way and in the end, provide advice for experience providers in Finland.

Now, that we have focused on the theory of these topics, using literature and prior research from scholars, we have gained a deeper understanding of the theoretical part of these topics in question. We have built an understanding of authenticity, culture and experiences and the basic connections between these three. In the next part, author will conduct her own research with people who, and whose culture are affected by the experience industry. We will hear their opinions and collect answers that will work as advice for more ethical future operations. next chapter will discuss the methods and tools for the research.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, the author will explain and justify why she chose this specific method of research. She will also go through the definitions of this method. We will go through the target group of the research and justification of how the participants were chosen. This chapter will be a deeper explanation of the fundamentals of the tool that is being used and the data collection. In the end of this chapter, we will go through the validity, reliability, and limitations of this study. The author will also be doing the data analysis in this chapter.

The specific research method will be explored below. The author chose qualitative research, which was done as one-on-one interviews.

3.1 Research method

The method of choice for this thesis was qualitative research, more specifically one-on-one interviews. This method was chosen, because the author believes, the answers will be most reliable if they are gained from directly the answerer. Focus group interviews might affect each other's answers. Compared to individual interviews, groups are not as efficient if we want to cover maximum depth of the topic. There is also a high possibility, that the members of the group might not express their honest and personal feelings and opinions, as they might consider what the other participants of the group might think (Writing, 2019). Of course, there is an opportunity to save time if the author chose focus groups, but in this case, she prioritized the quality and reliability of individual answers.

The author believes that the one-on-one interviews are most beneficial to this research, as all the candidates will have a better opportunity to speak for themselves, share more information and the responses will not be affected by the other candidates (Prevue HR, 2015).

The aim here, is to give an opportunity for the indigenous groups to tell their opinions and feelings towards certain topics related to the industry of Hospitality and Experience. The answers will provide useful knowledge or future operations and what we should change to be more considerate towards these cultures. The participants were chosen from Karelian and Sami communities, the participation was completely voluntary, and participants had the opportunity and choice to stay fully anonymous. This will ensure the reliability of the answers.

The participants were found and recruited from different places, since the author did not want to include participants from the same place. It might have affected the results and

the answers might be biased if all participants are from same place. By this, the author means, that all participants were found from different sources. Participants were found from Facebook groups for Karelians and Sami people, Instagram search, Discord groups (group for people who identify with these cultures) and two contacts were gained through common acquaintances. The author wanted to make sure, that she can avoid unnecessary bias towards certain topics. For example, if she chose to include participants only from one Facebook group, the answers might be highly biased. One of the aims of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of these culture and their views, so the author wanted the interviews to be as accurate as possible. Therefore, the participants were purposefully found from different places.

The interviews were conducted as face-to-face interviews if possible, and they could also be done as an online call. The data of the interviews was used to test if the authors framework is valid. She hoped to gain knowledge of the researched topics and give information for the hospitality and experience field. In addition, the research will provide information for future research on similar topics.

More detailed information on the data collection is discussed in chapter 3.3.1 (data collection). The interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 1 hour. Most participants wished to remain anonymous, and the author wanted to respect their wished, therefore the respondents will be referred to as their cultural group and number only. The author was able to conduct eight interviews in total. The author wanted to have equal number of both cultural group representatives as research interviewees, as it offered validity and equality to the research. The author had same number of participants from both groups, all representing different group within these cultures. Specific groups of participants will not be declared in this research for anonymity reasons.

The last interview was done on Wednesday, week 46, November 2021. After this, the author used few days to analyse the results of the research. In the next chapter, author will explain further the method that was used in the research and how the analysis of the results works.

3.2 Qualitative research

Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger (2020) wrote an article on "How to use and assess qualitative research methods". They defined qualitative research as "the study of the nature phenomena". This included "their quality, different manifestations, the context in which they appear or the perspectives from which they can be perceived", but excluding the range, frequency, and place in an objectively determined chain of cause and effect (Busetto,

Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). This definition can be simplified: qualitative research includes data in a form of words, not numbers.

As mentioned, qualitative research is based on collecting data, that is non-numerical. It is used as a tool to understand concepts, experiences, and opinions. This research method can provide deeper understanding into the topic and give new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2019).

Qualitative research is often used for humanities and social sciences. Commonly it is being used for subjects like:
- Education
- Anthropology
- Sociology
- Health sciences
- History

Quantitative research would be appropriate, when 'factual' or numerical data would answer the research questions. When the problem or questions are clear and known, quantitative research would be the best option, as it would provide clear and statistical data. Qualitative methods answer questions about experience, perspective, meaning and the standpoint of the participant. Qualitative methods have been used for revealing potential problems and individual or group feelings (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2015).

For the research part of this thesis, author chose qualitative research, because it is more suitable for the aims and topics in the thesis. Qualitative research method was chosen because the collected data will be based on experiences, feelings, and opinions. These are some of the main points which the author wants to bring up on the results, to make sure that the results reflect these things and can give reliable advice for the hospitality and experience industry's future operations. This will ensure, that we hear what the participants have to say, and the author can gain a deeper understanding of the topic.

More specifically, the author chose semi structured interview method. Interviews are used as a tool to gain insight into experiences, opinions, and motivations of an individual. The characteristics of semi-structured interviews is open-ended questions. Sometimes topics or areas of interest, including sub-questions are defined. These pre-defined topics or interests that guide the interview can be organized from previous research, preliminary data collection method (for example, observations, document studies) or literature (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2015). In the case of this research, the author conducted literature research beforehand, moved on from there to create her own framework and then formed research questions.

The interviews are conducted in speech format, as it is more interactive and allows the interviewer to ask further questions and have a conversation with the interviewee. Written format would compromise the interactivity of the method. Qualitative interviews allow unexpected topics to emerge and be taken up by the researcher. Making it sure, that the researcher gains the deepest understanding possible on the topic. It can help with overcoming possible bias, that is often seen in written surveys (Hammarberg, Kirkman & Lacey, 2015). Interactive research measures something that is not known or possibly not expected to be of relevance. It can help to provide new and innovative information.

In qualitative research, the interviews may be audio or video recorded. In this case, the author took audio recordings the interviews for research purposes, so she can go back to the collected information and analyse it further. One participant did not agree to the recording, so their answers were collected manually on paper.

The author chose to do one-on-one interviews, as in this format it is easier to ask additional questions and gain a better insight to accuracy and responses of the individual (interviewee). The results do not depend on other respondents, and the interviewee can understand the topic more deeply. This is an advantage when doing research, since it provides more flexibility, and the conversation can be guided by the interviewer. The respondents usually feel more comfortable sharing their real opinions and answers with fewer people present and it gives more introverted candidates a better chance to express their feelings and opinions on the topic (Prevue HR, 2015).

3.3 Analysis and data collection process

The method that was chosen for the interviews was semi structured interview. There were two main groups to interview, Sami people and Karelians. Few people from both groups were selected as a part of research and asked to take part in it. Before the interviews, the researcher must contact the participants with a letter, message or otherwise contacting them (Adams, 2015). The recruitment of participants has steps. Prior to the enrolment, the participants are presented information of the study and asked of their willingness and interest to act as a research subject (Iowa State University, 2016). Involvement is always voluntary.

There are some ethical considerations to be made when recruiting participants for research. You must respect privacy of the participants, participation must always be voluntary, no pressure to participate which means that the participants have time to consider if they want to be research subjects. The information of the study should also be clear, accurate and un-biased (Iowa State University, 2016). In this research, author sent the pos-

sible participants an email or a message, explaining the research and the topic and asking the interest of the participants. Participants were aware, that they can ask further questions, their answers may remain anonymous if they wish and what is the base and purpose of the research.

The interviews can be conducted in many ways. Interviews are a vocal way to gather information, so they should be done in phone, online or fact to face (Adams, 2015). The order and format of the questions may change during the interview, as semi-structured interviews are free in format. However, it is crucial to use a guide during the interviews to ensure that the objective stays the same in all interviews (Adams, 2015).

Interview situation should have a positive atmosphere. The interviewer should promise confidentiality and ask the permission to record. In case the participant does not agree to the recording, the interviewer needs to take written notes during the interview. In the beginning the interviewer should break the ice with personal or easy questions (Adams, 2015). Participants may be quoted with their name, only if they agree to it.

The interviews were based on authors own framework, authentic experiences, from chapter 2.4. The author wanted to open the conversation and ask some more personal level questions participants and their culture, as it is a big part of this research. The author also thought that speaking of culture first before other topics was important, as it will bring the personal level to interviews from the beginning. She formed three main groups for the questions, based on the main topics of the thesis, including culture, authenticity, and experience. Sub questions related to these main questions may be asked during the interview, if necessary or it will add to the data. The main questions are the following:

Culture:

- What culture do you identify with?
- How do you feel your culture is being represented in hospitality and tourism industry?
- how do you think the hospitality and tourism industry is doing in hearing and educating the people about your culture?
- Who and how the cultural parts can be displayed and what should they consider?
- Do you know of any examples in which the culture is displayed well?

Authenticity:

- What does authenticity mean to you, how would you define authenticity?
- Can you mention few examples of authenticity?

-Can you say why authenticity is matters in cultural experiences?

-Objective authenticity refers to the material objects and activities. Could you mention physical parts that are usually part of experiences and hospitality and are they authentic?

-Do you think there are authentic services and products available, that display your culture? Mention examples or points of improvement in this matter.

-How would you display your culture in an authentic way?

-How do you think we can improve authentic services that your culture is part of?

Experience:

-What kind of experiences are there, are they authentic in your opinion?

-If someone is creating an experience, that involves your culture, what would you like them to take into consideration?

-Do you view the current experiences in the market real and genuine? What could be improved?

-What parts or stories could we utilize in storytelling parts of the experience?

As mentioned before, the format and order of these questions can change during the interviews and sub questions may be asked if necessary. The main questions will work as a guide for the interviews (Adams, 2015).

3.3.1 Data collection

The data was collected as interviews. These interviews were held during November 2021. Specifically, week 45 and beginning of week 46, depending on the schedules of the respondents. The author conducted 8 interviews in total, with 4 Sami participants and 4 Karelian participants. Most of the interviews were conducted via Zoom or regular phone call, but 2 respondents were interviewed face to face. This arrangement was due to the location of respondents. Some of the respondents lived 400-700 kilometres away, so face to face interviews were not possible because of the distance.

The interviews were voice recorded and respondents had the choice to remain anonymous. Voice recording enabled the author to go through the interviews again and do a deeper dive into the answers and analyse them better. One respondent refused to be voice recorded and their wishes were respected. The interview was recorded manually recorded on paper. Anonymity also gave the respondents the freedom to answer however they would like, which ensured more genuine answers. Some respondents also did not want the author to mention their specific group inside their culture, as the interview would

not be anonymous in that case. The author listened to their wishes. Therefore, respondents are only referred to as Karelian respondent 1, Sami respondent 2 and so on.

The respondents of the research were selected by the author. She had some connections in both cultures, so she contacted them and asked if they knew any possible volunteers. The author also found few respondents from social media and culture related Facebook groups. After the author had collected enough volunteers, she emailed or messaged the possible participants and asked them if they were willing to take part in the interviews. She informed them about the research topic, the reason to do it and the terms of the interview.

The chosen form of interview was semi structured interview. Each interview lasted about 30-60 minutes. Three of the interviews were done in Zoom, three interviews as a regular phone call and two as face-to-face interviews. All the interviews, except for one, were recorded, using a smart phone software. Each interviewee gave the author permission to record and use the collected data if it was only used for research purposes. One of the participants did not agree to the audio recording, so results were recorded in written format, using pen and paper during the interview.

3.3.2 Data analysis

In total, 8 interviews were completed from November 10th to 17th, 2021. Interview plan and schedule was compiled in Appendix 1. Four of these were conducted with Sami people and four with Karelians. All interviews were done individually with the culture representative. They could choose the most convenient type of interview from three options, face to face interview, phone interview or interview via Zoom. Therefore, the interviews were divided as following:

- 2 interviews face-to-face
- 3 interviews as a phone call
- 3 interviews as online calls

The gathered data from the interviews was formed into three main groups, authenticity, culture, and experience. After the interviews the data was transformed into written form, which allowed the author to see and analyse the results more clearly. The questions were shared into three main categories, so naturally, the results were divided into these groups as well. This provided clarity and made the results into more understandable format.

As mentioned, the data was formed into three groups. During the data arranging, the author noticed connections in multiple occasions. First, the author opened the interviews with cultural questions. Cultural questions consisted of cultural representation currently in the industry and correct manner of displaying the indigenous culture. In a way, we could

say there were two main codes. Authenticity consisted of four main points objective authenticity, existential authenticity, importance of it and to what extent does authenticity exist in the field currently. Experiences contained two main points, staging authenticity and storytelling.

Recordings of the interviews were transferred into written form first. Then the author entered the answers to a table. Then the information was arranged according to the subgroups mentioned in the chapter before this one. The subject was quite wide and due to the nature of semi-structured interviews the data needed to be narrowed down slightly. The most relevant quotes and data were sorted out and coded. The focus was authenticity, so the author examined the connections and effects of it to experiences and culture. The data that was collected was supposed to answer the thesis questions and provide useful advice for the future operations.

During the process author noticed important links between these topics. Authenticity affects all aspects of an experience and culture itself too. If the provided level of authenticity is correct, the genuineness of the service or product will benefit every aspect of an experience. In the long run, genuine authenticity can help the preservation of cultures and work as an educational factor. Staging is therefore mostly harmful, in this case as it creates wrong views and stereotypes of these cultures and can cause merging, exoticizing and over commercialization (Authors own research). Storytelling was found strongly meaningful, but we must note that we do not over script and stage the experience. It would cause the level of authenticity to decrease.

3.4 Reliability of the research

In this chapter, we will go through the reliability and validity of the research. This chapter will identify whether the research is reliable or not. It is crucial to consider these things and facts when doing research.

Reliability as a term in research refers to consistency of a research study. If findings are replicated consistently, they are considered reliable. If a research or test is reliable, it should show high positive correlation (McLeod, 2013).

The data was collected from people who identify with the cultures of Sami and Karelia. All the respondents were found from different sources on purpose. The author aimed for the research to be as reliable as possible, so she chose to find participants from different places. If all respondents were found from the same place, there would be high possibility for biased results.

There are two types of bias we should consider if we want our research to be reliable. These two types of bias are personal bias and technical bias. A personal bias, which often originates from previous experiences and information, can affect many aspects of the research. Decisions can be driven by bias and therefore influence the results (Keller, 2010). It is important to acknowledge that biases can be present and avoid them as much as possible if we are aiming for reliable results. The author tried to avoid biases by using multiple literature sources and educating herself further into the topics before proceeding with the research. The participants were also found from different groups and locations to avoid bias among the respondents. Research and consumers of research often understand the usage of structural methods. For example, random sampling. This will ensure that we can avoid judgements and decisions based on biases (Keller, 2010).

It is rare to see biases discussed in research results or reliability chapters, because it does not have a legitimate place in research (Keller, 2010). However, the author felt it was important to discuss it in this chapter, as personal bias can possibly affect the respondents and the researcher. To avoid biases from being present in the authors work, she made sure to find participants from plethora of locations and educated herself on different viewpoints. The author acknowledged her personal and professional biases and made sure to maintain a fresh perspective in this research. This contributed to the validity, as the author was aware and was able to avoid displaying her own bias. The material was found through literature research and source suggestions.

Reliability of the source materials can also be assessed. A reliable source is based on strong evidence, well-reasoned theory, argument, and discussion. Peer reviewed, scholarly articles and books, professional articles and books, articles from well-established newspapers and websites can be considered reliable source of information (Georgia, 2020). You should always practise source critique and evaluate the reliability of materials you are using. The author read through all sources before using them. Some sources were viewed and evaluated as unreliable, so they were replaced with others. When the source material for theory is reliable, the research is more likely to be reliable as well. The literature research worked as a base for the research.

The research itself was aimed to be as reliable as possible, therefore as mentioned earlier, respondents were found from different sources and locations and were interviewed individually. This ensured the most reliable results.

In the next chapter we will go through the ethical considerations of this thesis and research.

3.5 Ethical consideration

Ethical consideration, or ethical research is a practise, in which the aspects of research involving humans is evaluated and addressed. It explains what should be done under certain circumstances. Each component of a study has ethical aspects (DeRenzo & Moss, 2005).

To put more simply, in research ethical considerations are a set of rules or principles that guide the research and its practises. When collecting data from human subjects, certain code must always be conducted by researchers. Human research often aims in understanding a real-life problem or phenomena (Bhandari, 2021). In this research, ethical consideration was necessary, as the author interviewed multiple persons. The considerations help to protect rights of the participants, raises validity of research and to maintain scientific integrity (Bhandari, 2021).

The author made efforts towards ethical consideration by informing the participants on the purpose, benefits, and information behind the research. Participation was completely voluntary, and the participants identities were kept completely anonymous. The author also made efforts to avoid any psychological harm from happening, by informing the respondents that they may refuse to answer some questions during research, if they felt negative or triggering emotions. Some questions could be re-phrased or skipped if they were found too hard or sensitive to answer.

The information and identity about the participants were only known by the author. The information was kept confidential. The participants did not know information about other respondents of the research. Only the author knew the information and identities of participants. The data was kept completely anonymous, so no one of the respondents could be identified through it. The results were kept and transferred to written form as accurately as possible. The author spent great amount of time analysing and writing down the answers to make sure they are accurate and there are no research misconducts.

Author informed all respondents that audio recordings will be discarded once they are transformed into written form. Audio recordings were also not heard or shared to anyone else than the author herself, this was told to the respondents as well. Only the respondents who agreed to be audio recorded, were recorded. If a respondent refused, the author did not question their choice and let the respondent choose what is comfortable for them.

4 Results

In this chapter, the author will discuss and present the results that were gained from the research. The author will evaluate whether the results align with theory and authors own framework. The topics of the research will be divided into subgroups below. We will also be going through the useful advice the results provided for the industry.

The results showed congruent thought patterns among respondents. When the collected data was arranged and transformed into written format, the author noticed that the ideas, opinions, and feelings towards the topics were very similar. This made it possible for the author to gather the most mentioned points from the interviews and arrange them into a list of things that should be considered in the future. By minding these points, the industry can help the preservation of indigenous cultures and raise the level of authenticity. The points are explained in chapter 4.3. Some differences raised up in defining authenticity, but overall, the answers mostly agreed on all other parts.

In the next chapter, the author will explain results by each topic. The importance of authenticity was an aspect that was brought up multiple times during the data collection process. Therefore, the author found it very important to discuss.

4.1 Importance of authenticity

The author used her own framework to form the questions for interviews. The questions were divided into three groups, one of them being authenticity. During the interviews, the author asked questions about authenticity and its importance towards indigenous groups. In the interviews, the participants gave great views from their perspective. The author thinks that these results can be used to understand the significance of our actions in the hospitality and experience industry. Authenticity does not only affect the consumers experience, but also how the consumer views the experience and the culture that is viewed as a part of it. Therefore, we are responsible for how the culture is viewed and what the customers learn from the experience. In worst case scenario, we might spread exoticized and mis-informed version of the culture, that can spread stereotypes and wrong views as we contribute to ethnicization (Sarhimaa, 2017). We need to pay more attention to authenticity, as it affects everyone from the indigenous groups, consumers, and the service providers.

Authenticity contains objective (Chhabra, 2012) and existential (Rickly-Boyd, 2013), non-material aspects. Both types of authenticity affect what we experience and how we perceive it. As mentioned in the Framework (Chapter 2.4), objective authenticity refers to

accuracy and genuineness of objects, that can be seen around us during an experience (Chhabra, 2012). What is seen and felt, directly affects the feeling of authenticity during an experience. The collected data showed that the objective authenticity is very important, when considering the status and situation of indigenous communities and maintaining the cultures in an authentic way. Most respondents mentioned their concern on the usage of inauthentic props, mass produced souvenirs and exoticized versions of authentic objects. According to the collected data, there are some things that should not be used as a part of objective "authenticity" in experience, unless the person displaying it is part of the culture themselves. For example, some folk costumes should not be worn by anyone else, than people who represent these cultures. Karelian and Sami costumes are personalized, and they have a huge significance and importance in the culture. Creating mass produced versions of these costumes makes them lose their meaning, so we must be very mindful on what objective things we should use in the experiences. Always consult people within the culture about appropriate approach.

If the objective "authenticity" seen by customers is not real and genuine, we risk the educational side and people will gain stereotypical or wrong perspectives on these cultures. This point was mentioned by all participants of the research in differently worded ways. All of the participants found it important that the objective authenticity meets the genuine cultural aspects. It is important to consult people who represent these cultures and conduct background research before including cultural aspects, so that we can avoid merging and disappearance of indigenous cultures.

Existential authenticity refers to the objective quality. Existential authenticity is more focused on emotions, sensations, relationships, and sense of self (Rickly-Boyd, 2013). According to the data, using indigenous languages as a part of experience could help to raise the level of existential and objective authenticity and therefore, raise the quality. In addition, it would help customers get a touch of the language and would make the indigenous people feel more included and welcome. Many indigenous languages are classified as disappearing (Kotimaisten Kielten Keskus, s.a.). Including the languages would help them to get visibility and possibly help to prevent them from disappearing.

Sami languages are autochthonous languages to Europe. About 10,000 Sami people live in Finland. Three different Sami languages are spoken in Finland, Inari Saami, Skolt Saami, and Northern Saami (Institute for Languages in Finland, s.a.). Through the interviews the author also found out that these languages are not very well presented in the travel, hospitality, or experience industry. Four out of four Sami respondents expressed that the language is not present in experiences currently, and the visibility could be improved notably. Each language has its own form of writing and orthography (spelling).

Saami languages have had official status in Finland since 1992 (Institute for Languages in Finland, s.a.).

Karelian language is spoken in Finland and Russia, they have the status of a minority language. However, "Karelians do not have services or education available to Karelians in our own language" – Karelian respondent 1. Karelian is not to be mixed with Karelian dialects of Finnish. Karelian is its own language which has many forms, spoken by less than 100,000. In Finland, the estimated number of Karelian speakers is 5,000 (Institute for Languages in Finland, s.a.). "Language resuscitation is absolutely necessary. To avoid them from disappearing, people should pay more attention to the visibility of the minority languages" – Karelian respondent 3

"Indigenous cultures should be appreciated, respected and maintained, there is no problem in utilizing our culture in experiences, but then we should be included in the process and the provider should be educated enough on the matter" -Sami respondent 3
So, why do we need authenticity? We need it to maintain cultures, and to preserve the indigenous cultures that are wealth for the world. We also need authenticity to meet with the consumer demand (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). "We need authenticity to raise visibility and value, not only in the experiences but also among the indigenous communities. Authenticity can help everyone, the service providers, consumers and us indigenous people." – Sami respondent 2

Below, the author summarized the results and arranged them by topics and each respondent into a chart. The points are collected from comments made during the interviews.

Table 1: Summary of results

Respondent	Authenticity	Culture	Experience
Sami 1	"Real and reliable, should be present always in cultural services and products."	"Currently culture is visible but in commercialized matter."	"There are experiences with authentic aspects, but not fully authentic experiences or products. People of the culture should be consulted."
Sami 2	"Genuine things and goods. The level of it needs to be raised."	"It is positive that the culture is displayed, but the way that it is displayed, not so much."	"The difference between real authenticity and inauthenticity is very hard to tell for consumers. People treat the experience as an educational oppor-

			tunity."
Sami 3	"Something trust-worthy. It needs to be visible and con-sidered in all cultur-al experiences."	"Visibility helps to maintain and pre-serve the cultures. The way just needs to be reconsidered."	"Experiences are generally inauthentic right now. Details are taken out of context and exoticized for commercial val-ue."
Sami 4	"Genuine things that are not distorted and they exist for themselves."	"Culture is presented but not very authenti-cally. The culture is often exploited."	"There are authentic experi-ences, but also inauthentic. Individuals need to learn to distinguish the differences between them."
Karelian 1	"Real things that exist just for them-selves."	"Fennicized version of the culture is dis-played."	"The visible parts are usually partially authentic, but not completely, improvements could be made."
Karelian 2	"Authenticity is im-portant because it affect how the cul-ture is viewed."	"Culture is viewed form majority culture perspective."	"Majority culture view is often dominant in experiences and the real cultural aspects are just smaller details."
Karelian 3	"Real and reliable. It is there just for itself and has not been changed."	"Cultural appropria-tion and Fennicized version are visible often times."	"Experiences are just partly authentic, and cultures are treated as a commercial prod-uct."
Karelian 4	"Something that has not been influenced by outside influ-ences or changed."	"Culture is visible but is presented in an exoticizing tone. People of the culture are not part of the experiences."	"Experiences are often com-mercialized versions. Visibility, including the language, edu-cating people on the culture, and giving back something to the culture would directly help to improve the experiences."

4.2 Effects of the industry on the cultures

Based on the research results, there are many effects the industry has on the cultures. Some of them negative, some positive and some even both. Six out of eight of the inter-viewees expressed that it is positive that the experience and hospitality industry wants to display their culture as a part of experiences. Two respondents were more neutral or neg-ative about displaying the culture, as they were concerned and not sure if it could be done

correctly now or in the future. The people who plan and provide the experiences should do extensive research and self-education before even considering having culture as a part of experience.

Displaying indigenous cultures can give positive visibility and help the preservation of the cultures. However, all participants (eight out of eight) felt that the way their cultures are being utilized and viewed through experiences currently can be negative. This is due to the distorted, commercialized and exoticized image that has been spread through some experiences. Respondents did not think that there are any completely authentic experiences available currently.

Often, the culture related experiences originate from mass tourism. The interviews showed that all respondents were worried of the effects of mass tourism and current state which their cultures are displayed as part of services and products. Resorts and other facilities are owned by bigger companies and agencies. Transportation companies bring customers to the location (Pi-Sunyer, 1982). In these circumstances almost all the profit goes towards these companies and only a tiny portion to the indigenous people. Seven of the eight participants raised their concerns on the issue. Often the revenue and benefits go directly to bigger companies or other people who are not within the culture. According to the seven participants, the culture is being exploited and used just for commercial value.

During the experiences, activities and services are targeted towards people who are the customers (Pi-Sunyer, 1982). This can cause the experience to be designed to fit the narrative of the majority culture. Six participants mentioned that the current experiences are catered towards majority culture, which makes the experiences focused on these people. The six participants felt that their culture is not included enough. It is just displayed for the "aesthetic" and exotic feel. This makes it so, that some aspects, like the indigenous languages are not getting much attention and are not considered as a part of experience at all. Five respondents mentioned that including the languages would directly help to raise the level of authenticity, but also make the indigenous people feel more included and welcomed. Cultural experiences might also place some other challenges for the indigenous communities. Consumers have desire to experience the 'authentic' and real (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). There is a possibility that this can create competition with local people over some services and resources. This may require preservation and management measures (Richards, 2010).

All the respondents expressed concern on how the experience and hospitality industry is exhibiting their culture. Seven out of eight respondents used the word "exoticized" on mul-

tiple occasions. One participant mentioned this term once. During the interviews the respondents mentioned how the industry is picking some seemingly more "exotic" parts they think will sell well, and then commercializing and overexaggerating these aspects. Respondents were worried that this will lead to more wrong views and stereotypes. Globalization has changed the nature of cultural traveling. It has created opportunities in strengthening the local indigenous cultures, as the consumption is more focused on intangible options (Richards, 2010). In the industry, we should make efforts to take advantage of this change and provide true authenticity and help the preservation of indigenous cultures.

On multiple occasions respondents also mentioned that it was positive that their cultures have a platform, just that the platform is not working completely correctly at this moment. There are many improvement points to be made. "We need the experiences and services to be authentic, not staged or faked. It is good that our culture has gained visibility through experience, traveling and hospitality industry, but some things should be executed better. People should be encouraged to learn more." -Sami respondent 1.

To gain positive results for everyone, we should start researching the bases of aspects that are a part of our cultural experience. Instead of just assuming something is a certain way, really do the research and learn how to do it correctly. That way we can bring positive outcomes for the cultures, service providers and consumers. Cultures that are involved, will benefit gaining a positive platform that showcases their culture in authentic way, which will help preservation of indigenous cultures and languages. Consumers will get a real authentic experience and the service providers will have more transparency and reliability which will lead to more possible customers.

Below in figure 2, the author collected the most mentioned words and formed them into a word cloud for visualization. The figure can be seen down.

Figure 2: Words that were mentioned the most during interviews (Pulliainen, 2021).

4.3 Recommendations for the industry

The results of each interview align together, respondents agreed on topics mostly, but some definitions were different (see Table 1: Summary of results in the previous chapter). All had differences on their answers on defining authenticity. However, they all seemed to think and agree, that there are many people who have gained a distorted image of their culture during an experience provided by the hospitality and experience industry. The base of information has not been correct and has contributed to creating stereotypes and wrong image. Many of the respondents mentioned that participating in experiences works as an educational tool to learn and gain knowledge of the cultures. In many cases, the information that is shared is not correct or fact based, but more of an exotic and commercial version of the culture.

The author collected the development points from all interviews. The following points were mentioned by all the participants during their interviews. Therefore, we can make the conclusion, that these are the important points that should be highly considered in the future when planning an experience, product, or service.

1. **Visibility of indigenous languages**

   Perhaps the most mentioned aspect was the visibility, or rather the lack of indigenous languages. Participants mentioned that when they look at the travel, hospitality, and experience products and services, they often mention their culture. They

forget to include their language, which can act as a contributor to the fading of indigenous languages.

The common suggestion was to include indigenous language as a part of advertisement, maps, menus of restaurants, flyers, posters etc. This would help the otherwise disappearing languages to gain more visibility. It would also allow the indigenous people to feel more welcomed as they would be able to get some of the services in their own language. In addition, it could inspire people outside of the indigenous groups to research and learn more about the language, which would help the languages to be more visible and accessible.

2. **Educational courses on Sami & Karelian culture**

During the interviews, the author noticed similar opinions and suggestions towards educational courses on indigenous culture, heritage, and history. The participants found it important, that the people who are involved in these experiences or provide them, are educated enough on the cultures. "If they lack education on aspects of our culture, it is not possible to promote the cultural experience as authentic.", was said by one participant.

People in the experience and hospitality field should know the true origins and history of the cultures that are part of their product. To avoid spreading wrong views, the personnel in our field should know the bases, facts and absorb as much real information from the indigenous point of view.

"If we utilize a culture as a part of experience, without having the correct information, we risk the preservation and create stereotyped versions of these cultures' communities. For someone who does not possess the knowledge and facts, the staged version might seem completely authentic, and for consumers it might be hard to tell the difference between staged and real culture. For these people, the experience works as an educational occasion." -Karelian respondent 3. It is important to educate ourselves, so we can participate in preserving and helping these cultures and communities.

3. **Consulting the indigenous people about correct ways of displaying the culture.**

In many cases, the experiences are authentic to only those who are not familiar with the culture. Karelians, Sami people and culturally educated individuals can spot the difference between the authentic cultural experience and a non-authentic one. As mentioned in chapter 2.3.3. authenticity is subjective and always depends on the interpretation of an individual. The interview results agreed with this fact. Previous knowledge and information influence the feeling of authenticity (Hopper,

2020). Gilmore & Pine (2007) also mentioned a few examples on the topic. For someone, who has experienced the true authentic experience, directly from the people who represent the culture, will see the difference between authentic and inauthentic experience. However, "this is not the case in all situations, since people can lack information of these cultures or their views can depend on opinions and unreliable sources", as one interviewee said.

It is crucial that we ask the indigenous people how we should present these cultures and what parts are okay to display.

4. **Involve more artists, singers, artisans, and food sellers from these communities**

One aspect also mentioned during the interviews by all participants was the involvement of indigenous entrepreneurs, artists, artisans, bakers, cooks, food sellers, craftsman's, poets, and singers. This should be highly increased. The interviewees expressed their concern on the lack of indigenous people working on planning and making these experiences.

Too often the people do not have the necessary knowledge. For example, five of the participants mentioned the same point: the culture related souvenirs sold to consumers are not authentic and are mostly mass produced, and the revenue does not go to the indigenous people at all. The experience and hospitality industry could hire more people from these communities and give something back to them through that. It would also raise the level of authenticity in these experiences, as the sold products and services would better match with the actual culture instead of a commercial version.

5. **Give something back to the indigenous people and contribute to the preservation of the cultures**

Both indigenous groups, based on interviews, wished that something was given back to these communities. If we are to utilize their cultures as part of experience, we should give something back in return. Seven out of eight respondents mentioned the status and situation of indigenous groups. They made points on the lack of funding, lack of language visibility, lack of education in their own language and more. If we want to concretely give something back, we should start hearing their voices, opinions, feelings and educate ourselves on the real aspects of the culture. Make the indigenous people feel included and heard.

"The industry should make more efforts to give something back to the communities. We are not in a good position right now. It would only be fair, that if our cultures are used as a part of experience, we would get something back. Funding or

involving us directly in these experiences and the process of creating them" – Ka-relian respondent 2

5 Discussion and conclusion

In this part, the author discusses the findings of the whole research. The author wanted to provide some suggestions for future research on similar topics, because she felt that there were some things future researchers should consider. Authors own learning during the thesis process is discussed as well in this chapter. This chapter 5 is the conclusion of the whole thesis. The discussion of the whole topic and its importance to the industry will be discussed in the next chapter.

5.1 Discussion of the topic

The thesis process was started off by a comprehensive literature research. Many sources were found, and the author took time to study them. Extensive literature research was necessary to understand the topic completely. Wide range of sources were available, including dissenting opinions by many researchers and authors. Because of the differing opinions on the source material, especially on cultural aspects, the author needed to study each subject from all possible viewpoints to choose the correct source material. This was done, so that the source material would be reliable and would meet up with the aims of the thesis. The author then chose the most relevant sources and proceeded with the literature study. The theory based on literature was then formed into a framework (Chapter 2.4). Authenticity was placed in the middle, as it was the focus. Authenticity in cultural experiences and how to create these experiences authentically.

Based on the framework, author built her questions for the research. This research was done with people who represent the cultures in questions, so that the author could collect information on their perspectives and feelings. She conducted eight semi-structured one-on-one interviews with indigenous representatives. The collected data provided insight to the indigenous people's opinions, feelings, and perception of authenticity. The respondents described their understanding and experience of authenticity. When it was necessary, the author gave examples on objective authenticity.

The aim of the research was to gain understanding of the current state of authenticity and position of indigenous groups in hospitality and experience industry. The aim was reached by the extensive literature study, framework, and the research. The author gained a lot of new information and knowledge through the whole thesis process. Connections between authenticity, culture and experience were found and the research advocated the theory.

The interviews showed that the industry should pay more attention to the level of authenticity and replace the staged parts with actual authenticity. To do this, the industry should

make efforts in educating their workers and staff. More indigenous voices should be heard, and the community should be included. Remaining authentic will positively affect the people and the industry as well. Overall, the framework and theory behind the research can be proven valid, and the results (chapter 4.3) agreed with the literature study.

Table 2: Comparison between literature research and research results

	Literature study	Outcomes of the research	Was it consistent with the authors framework/theory?
Authenticity: -Objective authenticity -Existential authenticity -Importance of authenticity -Current state and level of authenticity	Objective authenticity: Objective authenticity refers to genuineness, truth, and accuracy of the objects around us during the experience (Chhabra, 2012).	Objective authenticity: Traditional food, handicrafts and other products, architecture, all material products, activities, décor.	Objective: Yes
	Existential authenticity: Existential authenticity is more focused on emotions, sensations, relationships, and sense of self (Rickly-Boyd, 2013)	Existential authenticity: Sincerity, sense of self, knowledge, information, feelings towards own culture, sense of cultural knowledge	Existential: Yes
	Importance of authenticity: People are participating more in experience economy, which leads us to question the necessity, authenticity, and importance. Customers demand	Importance of authenticity: Helps to identify real from fake, consumer demand, preservation of cultures, avoiding stereotypes and wrong views from forming	Importance: Yes

	authenticity (Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Current level of authenticity: Production has caused widely spread alienation from the original form of products and experiences. Authenticity seems to be threatened by the mass market (Fillitz & Saris, 2012).	Current level of authenticity: Authenticity has been compromised for the sake of sales and marketing. Many experiences are staged, and the culture viewed as a part of it is the commercialized and mispresented version.	Current level of authenticity: Yes
Culture: -Cultural representation -Correct manner of displaying indige-nous cultures	Cultural representation: It is important to note that Finnish culture differs from the indigenous groups. Sami people and Karelians do not share the same cul-ture or history (Chapter 2.2.).	Cultural representation: Many cultural as-pects have been picked out, edited, exoticized and used as a part of com-mercial products and services. This has caused people to not know where the line of real and not real culture is.	Cultural representation: Yes
	Correct manner: Culture stands for the way of life of a certain group, their customs, and beliefs (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Culture must be	Correct manner: Hospitality and ex-perience industry should make efforts in educating people about these cul-tures, so that they could be displayed	Correct manner: Yes

	presented in authentic way so that we do not contribute to creating stereotypes.	correctly. If the basic knowledge is not the base, we should not speak of that culture or represent them.	
Experiences: -Staging authenticity -Storytelling	Staging: "(…) experiences can be modified to please customers, it might be a little outdated as a practise (Stainton, 2020). We can see staging through so many different experiences. Everyone has their own view of what is real and what is not.	Staging: Staging exists strongly in cultural experiences currently. It risks the feeling of authenticity. Staging should be done with strong consideration. It is okay to practise it if we make sure to display the culture correctly and authentically.	Staging: Yes
	Storytelling: "(…) we will experience a new demand of storytelling, as customers want a story, they can experience themselves (EHL Insights, 2020).	Storytelling: Storytelling is an effective way to educate people. It adds interesting touch to the experience. History and stories of indigenous people should be included.	Storytelling: Yes

5.2 Conclusion of the study

To conclude the study, the author decided to capsulize the results in a shorter form.

There are no completely authentic cultural experiences on the Finnish market now, but there is a lot of space for improvement. People might be missing some necessary information related to the topic. Some authentic cultural experiences do exist, but they still

contain commercialized or exoticized versions and aspects of the cultures. The other challenge is that it is hard for consumers to identify the authentic experiences from inauthentic experiences because it would require background work and self-education. Many consumers purchase a culture related service with means to learn, which means it is extremely important to display the culture in authentic way. The consumer will leave the experience having learned something new. We need to pay attention to the quality of information and knowledge shared during these experiences.

To better the experiences regarding authenticity, the people working in the field should be more educated on the culture, heritage, history, and practises. We should include and do cooperation with the indigenous people. cooperation should be done in multiple things including planning and preparations and possibly even hiring some of them in the field, so we can provide truly authentic experiences.

We should avoid exoticizing and over commercializing these cultures, because it will lead to stereotypes and distorted image of these cultures. Instead of creating the experience for the sole purpose of sales, we should focus more on giving something back. This means that we should give something back to the communities and meet the customer demand of real authenticity. This would benefit everyone in the long run. The respondents seemed to think that the common problem in the industry is branding with these cultures, Sami, and Karelia, but not including any cultural representatives or their languages.

Respondents communicated that very often the visible parts of cultural experiences are Fennicized and viewed from a tribal perspective. The products and services are mass produced and their correctness is questionable. Gákti, ruutat and other folk costumes should not be sold to people who do not represent the culture themselves, therefore, selling them or certain parts of them to people as a souvenir is not respectful. Especially if they are mass produced and none of the profit is going to people who are part of these cultures. Many respondents described this with words "cultural appropriation". However, it was also mentioned, that selling traditional handicrafts and art is okay, if they are produced and sold by people who identify with these cultures.

5.3 Limitations of the research

All research has some limitations. These limitations can range from issues with sample and selection, statistical measurement, lack of previous studies on the topic, limited data access, time constraints, cultural biases, or personal issues (Davis, 2021). In this research, sample size matched with the time schedule and nature of research. If there was more time, the sample size could have been bigger, resulting in more accurate results.

The importance of right number of samples in qualitative studies needs to be considered. Compared to quantitative studies, qualitative research requires significantly less participants, but still does not delete the need for correct sample size (Dudovskiy, s.a.).

Literature research is a very important part of all research. It guides and helps in identifying the scope of previous works done in the research area. The literature research findings are used as the base for the researchers work to achieve the objectives of research (Dudovskiy, s.a.). In this research, there was very limited research and literature available on the topic. Author needed to expand her horizons and make the best of what was available at the time. For the literature research, the author needed to review books outside of the direct topic, to understand certain points and issues. Source material was searched based on the three main topics, which had more information available individually. From there, the author built her own framework.

The chosen research method, qualitative research and semi structured interviews had their own limitations. First, it was a very time-consuming process, and the interpretations are limited since previous knowledge and experiences affect the responses. Since the data is collected through personal interaction, discussion can diverge from the main topic or question (Radu, 2019). However, in this research the personal experiences and knowledge were also an important part. When the discussion did not always follow the planned path, the author gained a deeper understanding through those discussions. So, in this case it could be technically interpreted as a limitation but practically it was an extension to the answers.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

In this chapter, the author will present her improvement points and suggestions for future research. These points were based on the observations done during the thesis process and limitations of the research.

Next research on this topic could be done on a bigger scale. If the schedule allows, the author advises to find as many participants as possible. If there are two or more groups under scrutiny, the author would recommend equal sampling between the participants. Which means, that there would be same number of respondents from each group, as done in this research as well. This research could be done in other territories, even internationally and on professional fields as well, to understand the impact of the field on the indigenous and cultural groups. In the next studies, the viewpoints of majority cultures could be compared to the indigenous viewpoint. This would provide information on how well people are informed on the topic.

Author found all participants from different locations, which ensured that there would not be group influenced bias in the results. The data should be collected from people who represent the culture that is under examination, but people should be selected with random sampling. Individual one-on-one interviews are also a good addition, as groups opinions will not affect the answers of individual respondents. One-on-one interview gives a chance for everyone to express their opinions more honestly.

In next studies, a deeper literature study could be done. History of cultures and heritages could be examined from indigenous and dominant culture perspective and then compared. It would provide deeper insight into how certain things are viewed, displayed, and taught as information. The issue of experience could be examined through experience pyramid instead of the experience realms.

The author recommends companies to use the results of this thesis as a guide to bettering their cultural experience related operations. To benefit all three groups, people representing the cultures, consumers and the experience and hospitality providers. Authenticity benefits all parties in this case, because consumers want authenticity (Gilmore & Pine, 2007) and companies want to meet the demand to make revenue (Davenport, Mule & Lucker, 2011). In addition, the indigenous groups will benefit from authenticity, as it will help their cultures to gain visibility and help them to maintain the culture.

5.5 Evaluation of learning through the thesis process

The thesis process was an interesting and educational process for the author. The chosen topic was quite challenging to execute, as there were many aspects to consider. Combining the topic with the field author studied was sometimes rather challenging. The topic was a combination of humanitarian studies and hospitality and experience field. Both interested and motivated the author.

The topic required a lot of literature research, and it was very time consuming, but crucial for the reliability and information level. Even some unexpected things needed to be read and studied about. But it is not a negative thing, rather a positive thing as it helped the author to broaden her perspectives and look more outside the box. The author was very passionate about learning about these cultures and there was a personal motivation behind it as well. The challenge in this matter was keeping the research impartial, unbiased, and neutral. It was important to keep the research unbiased, as it would affect the reliability of the thesis. Author was able to keep fresh perspective regarding the writing and research.

Research method was a challenge at first. The author had not conducted semi structured interviews before. She needed to do a lot of studying before starting the process. Therefore, she can say she learned new techniques and ways to conduct research. Conducting the research was new and fun. However, as the author chose to do the interviews as one-on-one interviews, the pandemic situation and distance between the author and respondents did not allow to do many of them face to face. Luckily, these days we have the option to conduct research interviews through phone calls and online. The participants were very enthusiastic and willing to help. The author appreciated their participation greatly. Their insight helped the author to understand their experiences and feelings better and deeper.

During the interviews, author noticed that participants seemed to agree in many topics. However, everyone had their own description of authenticity. It was very interesting to notice and hear these differences (Table 1). Everyone was pretty much one the same page on the base of authenticity, but the details changed a lot between respondents. On cultural and other authenticity related questions and topics the respondents seemed to give similar answers. Author was very interested to have these discussions and hear the respondents input on the topics.

Overall, the author would describe the whole process challenging in a positive way. It helped her to widen her own perspectives and she learned a lot of new things. It was an enjoyable and educational experience. She also felt that it was a good opportunity for herself and was inspiring for future career.

During the thesis journey the author ran into some more minor problems and needed guidance. Sometimes it was hard to keep the tone of writing in the correct form and consider the readers perspective. The author received the needed help and comments from the thesis supervisors, which helped her to stay in the right path and see her improvement points. When necessary, there were also thesis meetings, which helped the author to build new ideas and helped her to gain insight on how the thesis looks to the reader. Overall, the author feels that she received the needed help and the supervisors helped her to achieve the desired outcome.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview plan

Respondent	Date of interview	Method	Permission to audio record	Location / source
Karelian respondent 1	10th November	Phone interview	Yes	Facebook cultural group 1
Karelian respondent 2	11th November	Phone interview	No	Articles (email connection)
Karelian respondent 3	12th November	Face-to-face	Yes	Instagram
Karelian respondent 4	14th November	Zoom	Yes	Mutual acquaintances
Sami respondent 1	11th November	Zoom	Yes	Facebook cultural group 2
Sami respondent 2	12th November	Face-to-face	Yes	Instagram
Sami respondent 3	15th November	Phone interview	Yes	Email connection
Sami respondent 4	17th November	Zoom	Yes	Mutual acquaintances