LAPIN AMK

Lapland University of Applied Sciences

DEVELOPING CULTURALLY SENSITIVE SÁMI TOURISM IN FINNISH LAPLAND

Sámi Entrepreneurs' Perspective

ARCTISEN – Culturally Sensitive Tourism in the Arctic

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Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli selvittää saamelaisten matkailuyrittäjien näkökulmaa kulttuurisensitiivisen saamelaismatkailun kehittämiseen, sekä jo toteutettujen kehitystoimien vaikutuksia heidän liiketoimintaansa. Matkailijoiden kiinnostus alkuperäiskansoja kohtaan on kasvanut merkittävästi viime vuosina. Vaikka ilmiö voi luoda erityisesti taloudellisia etuja alkuperäiskansoille, kulttuurisensitiivisyyteen liittyviä ongelmia ilmenee jatkuvasti. Tästä johtuen asiaan on kiinnitettävä entistäkin tarkemmin huomiota kehitystyössä ja aihetta on syytä tutkia lisää. Opinnäytetyön toimeksiantajana toimi ARCTISEN-projekti, joka keskittyy kulttuurisensitiivisen matkailun kehittämiseen pohjoisilla alueilla.

Tutkimus suoritettiin hyödyntämällä kvalitatiivista tutkimusmenetelmää, jotta ongelmaa pystyttiin tarkastelemaan mahdollisimman humanistisesta näkökulmasta. Haastattelumenetelmäksi valikoitui teemahaastattelu, sillä se on menetelmänä sekä strukturoitu että joustava. Neljää saamelaista matkailuyrittäjää haastateltiin tutkimusta varten.

Tutkimustuloksien perusteella yksilöllisen matkailun kehittäminen, saamelaisten matkailuyrittäjien toimiminen esimerkkinä sekä saamelaisten kannustaminen osallistumaan matkailualaan, ja yhteistyö saamelaistahojen välillä nousivat tärkeiksi keinoiksi kulttuurisensitiivisyyden kehittämiselle. Kävi myös ilmi, että jo toteutetut kehitystoimet eivät ole merkittävästi vaikuttaneet saamelaisyrittäjien yritystoimintaan.

Vaikka kulttuurisensitiivisyyden tila saamelaismatkailun suhteen on parantunut viime vuosikymmenien aikana, tilanteessa on vielä parantamisen varaa. Ongelma on moniulotteinen ja vaatii useiden eri näkökulmien puntaroimista, mikä saattaa osoittautua haastavaksi. On kuitenkin selvää, että niin Saamelaiskäräjät kuin saamelaiset matkailuyrittäjätkin työskentelevät eettisen, kestävän ja kulttuurisensitiivisen matkailualan puolesta.

Avainsanat   kulttuurisensitiivisyys, kestävä matkailu, saamelaismatkailu, alkuperäiskansamatkailu, kulttuurimatkailu

The aim of the thesis was to discover Sámi tourism entrepreneurs' perspective on culturally sensitive Sámi tourism development, as well as the effects of previously implemented development actions on their business operations. Tourist interest in indigenous peoples is constantly increasing. Although this phenomenon may bring especially economic benefits for indigenous peoples, issues concerning cultural sensitivity within the industry are not uncommon. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly more important to consider these issues in Sámi tourism development. The commissioner of this thesis is the ARCTISEN project, which focuses on the culturally sensitive development of tourism in the Arctic.

The qualitative research approach was chosen for the research in order to observe the issue from a humanistic perspective. More specifically, the semi-structured interview method was utilised due to its structured yet flexible nature. In total, four Sámi tourism entrepreneurs were interviewed for the purposes of the research.

The results suggest that focusing on individual tourism, encouraging Sámi people to engage in tourism by the example of the existing Sámi entrepreneurs, and collaboration between different Sámi stakeholders were considered important tools to develop culturally sensitive Sámi tourism. Furthermore, the development actions implemented so far have not significantly affected Sámi entrepreneurs' business operations.

Although the state of cultural sensitivity in Sámi tourism in Finnish Lapland has improved during the past decades, there is still room for improvement. Due to the issue's multidimensional nature, it is important to consider several different perspectives in development actions, which may prove to be challenging. However, it is evident that the Sámi parliament and Sámi tourism providers share the same goal of working towards a more ethical, sustainable, and culturally sensitive tourism industry.

Key words   cultural sensitivity, sustainable tourism, Sámi tourism, indigenous tourism, cultural tourism

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors for their valuable input and understanding during the thesis process. Thank you to all of you, especially Isa, Essi and Boris, who helped me during the process and worked as my mental support system even during the desperate times. Most importantly, a huge thank you goes out to ARCTISEN, Petteri Valle, Heikki Paltto, and the two other Sámi entrepreneurs who found the time to share their knowledge and made it possible for me to execute this thesis.

1   INTRODUCTION

Throughout the past decades, cultural tourism has continuously become a more significant part of the tourism field (Richards 2018, 12). Tourists are constantly seeking for more and more authentic experiences (Frochot & Batat 2013, 132), and therefore it is important to acknowledge the value of the local cultures as a part of tourism offerings (Ashworth & Larkham 1994; George 2004; McKercher and du Cros 2002, as cited in George 2009). This change has opened new opportunities for indigenous peoples and their cultures to work as a part of the tourism industry (Saarinen 2013, 220). However, when combining the global phenomenon with these vulnerable cultures, certain issues cannot be ignored.

During the past few years, problems such as cultural appropriation have become a popular topic of discussion, also in the tourism field. Projects such as ARCTISEN, the commissioner of this thesis, exist in order to shed light on these issues and to work towards a culturally sensitive future. ARCTISEN concentrates on developing culturally sensitive tourism in several arctic regions including Finland, Sweden, Norway, Greenland and Canada in order to improve the tourism business environment. (ARCTISEN 2020.)

Due to the author's personal interest in societal issues in their different perspectives, considering these issues in the thesis was a rather evident decision. From the author's perspective, discovering the authentic local cultures of tourism destinations is more rewarding in comparison to visiting mass tourism destinations. Furthermore, tourism studies have provided a deeper insight into the effects of tourism on the local community, which lead to researching and studying the topic further.

The purpose of this study is to find the answers to the following issues from Sámi entrepreneurs' perspective: how Sámi tourism can be developed in a culturally sensitive manner, as well as how the previously implemented development work in order to improve the usage of the Sámi culture in tourism services has affected their business operations.

2 ARCTISEN PROJECT

The commissioner of this thesis, ARCTISEN, is an international project concentrating on developing culturally sensitive tourism in several Arctic regions including Finland, Sweden, Norway, Greenland and Canada (ARCTISEN 2020). The project aims to encourage and provide opportunities for indigenous peoples, as well as other local communities to participate in tourism entrepreneurship in their region, and to take control over how their cultures are utilised in tourism services (Olsen et al. 2019, 8).

The project has three main outputs. The first one considers increasing the understanding of culturally sensitive tourism by gathering data and combining the results into a transnational baseline report, as well as hosting a webinar related to culturally sensitive tourism. The second output of the project focused on creating two self-study online courses related to culturally sensitive tourism. Finally, the third output concentrated on creating guidelines and roadmaps to provide instructions for culturally sensitive tourism. ARCTISEN also has a blog for project partners and associated partners to share posts related to culturally sensitive issues. (ARCTISEN 2021.)

The project was implemented between the years of 2018 and 2021 (ARCTISEN 2021). According to Kugapi, the former ARCTISEN project manager, as tourists are becoming more and more interested in the Arctic, it is important to ensure that tourism is developed in a respectful manner. Therefore, the timing for a project such as ARCTISEN was ideal. (Quinn 2020.)

3   UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Cultural sensitivity is a rather wide concept which is vital to comprehend, especially when developing tourism in the arctic regions where local and indigenous livelihoods are threatened by several environmental and political factors (ARCTISEN 2021). According to Donohoe (2011 as cited in Viken, Höckert & Grimwood 2021, 2), cultural sensitivity can be described as follows:

> The extent to which those who implement, support, and participate in ecotourism: minimize impacts to the natural and cultural environments, foster intercultural awareness and respect, contribute to the protection of built and living cultural heritage, foster the informed participation and empowerment of local and Indigenous Peoples, and respect the socio-cultural value systems of the host community.

The principles of culturally sensitive tourism stated in Figure 1 showcase the width of the concept. It introduces perhaps a more practical approach for developing tourism from a culturally sensitive perspective through interactive discussions, mutual respect and recognition. (ARCTISEN 2021.)

Figure 1. Principles of Culturally Sensitive Tourism (ARCTISEN 2021)

Furthermore, cultural sensitivity can be perceived either as a vulnerability or an ability. Sensitivity can be described as something in jeopardy that needs protection. (Viken, Höckert & Grimwood 2021, 2.) Butler (2018, 1) argues that the phenomenon of sustainable tourism, which may include travelling to more remote and vulnerable destinations under the disguise of sustainability, can cause irreversible environmental impacts on tourism destinations. Therefore, it is important to ponder which tourism activities are genuinely sustainable and how to protect destinations from the effects of the ever-growing industry.

The latter approach considers cultural sensitivity as a form of intelligence, a skill to understand how to behave in a culturally sensitive manner (Viken, Höckert & Grimwood 2021, 3). According to Paramipuspa (2011, as cited in Beerli-Palacio & Martín-Santana 2018, 106), cultural sensitivity can be perceived as the skill to appreciate and adapt to new unfamiliar cultures. He also discovered that the level to which tourists consider culturally sensitive issues affects their final image of

the destination. Travellers with a higher sense of cultural sensitivity formed a more positive image of the destination in comparison to those who were not able to understand and adapt to the cultural differences. (Paramipuspa 2011, as cited in Beerli-Palacio & Martín-Santana 2018, 107.)

Although tourism service providers must consider cultural sensitivity in their services, it is not their sole responsibility. Researchers, marketers, and especially tourists themselves also share the same responsibility to contribute to culturally sensitive behaviours. (Chambers & Buzinde 2015, de Bernardi, Kugapi, & Lüthje 2017, Höckert 2018, Länsman 2004 & Ren et al. 2018 as cited in Viken, Höckert & Grimwood 2021, 3.) Issues regarding insensitive tourist behaviour have also affected indigenous communities, which will be discussed more in detail in the upcoming chapters.

4 INDIGENOUS CULTURES IN TOURISM

4.1 Defining Indigenous Tourism

As the everchanging cultural tourism sector grows, new opportunities are opening also for indigenous tourism. The change of demand from mass tourism products to more individualised services has caused tourists to become more and more interested in indigenous cultures. (Saarinen 2013, 220.) Indigenous peoples must find new ways for their future generations to survive as traditional livelihoods are no longer providing a guaranteed living (Ryan 2005, 70). Therefore, indigenous people have increasingly become more interested in participating in the tourism industry. These changes have led to the development of the indigenous tourism sector. (Saarinen 2013, 220.) Community-based indigenous tourism responds to the needs of the growing number of cultural tourists seeking for unique and authentic experiences (Durkin, Perić & Kljaić Šebrek 2017, 145–146).

Indigenous tourism consists of involving indigenous people in controlling tourism activities (Hinch & Butler 1996, 9) and/or utilising indigenous peoples' traditions, cultures, milieus and heritage as the base for tourism development (Pettersson 2006, 84). Although all tourism activities in which indigenous people and/or their cultures are involved can be considered indigenous tourism, they may possess varying degrees of indigenous control and involvement of the indigenous theme (Hinch & Butler 1996, 9–10). Figure 2 showcases these differences.

|		INDIGENOUS CONTROL	
		Low degree of control	High degree of control
INDIGENOUS THEME	Indigenous theme present	CULTURE DISPOSSESSED	CULTURE CONTROLLED
	Indigenous theme absent	NON-INDIGENOUS TOURISM	DIVERSIFIED INDIGENOUS

Figure 2. Indigenous Control and Theme in Tourism Activities (Hinch & Butler 1996, 10)

Tourism activities in which indigenous features are strongly emphasized but not controlled by the indigenous people themselves are considered culture dispossessed. Culture controlled activities consist of tourism activities which are heavily influenced by the indigenous theme and are also managed and owned by indigenous people. Diversified indigenous activities include tourism activities that are not concentrated on the indigenous theme but are controlled by indigenous people. Non-indigenous tourism involves neither one of these aspects. (Hinch & Butler 1996, 10.)

According to Jamal & Getz (1995, as cited in Li & Hunter 2015, 250), community involvement is one of the prime factors for sustainable development, especially considering heritage tourism. Therefore, when developing tourism, it is important for indigenous peoples to be in control of the use of their own culture in order to provide culturally sensitive and sustainable services (Timothy 2011, 429). Mann (2000, as cited in Li & Hunter 2015, 250) states that engaging locals in the process may also facilitate fair and efficient distribution of benefits and costs among stakeholders, as well as reshape the way of sharing knowledge of the culture.

Furthermore, according to Smith (1996, 287), indigenous tourism consists of four main elements, which form a culture-bound tourism experience. These aspects include the four Hs, as seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The Four Hs of Indigenous Tourism (Smith 1996, 287–295)

The habitat considers the surrounding environment as well as the climate, in which the culture exists and has been developed in. It also includes the accessibility and appeal of the destination. In the case of indigenous peoples, the habitats are often located in more rural areas, such as the Arctic. The second H considers the cultural heritage, such as the language, values, and religion. It also includes the knowledge and skills required for the specific group's survival, such as hunting. The third H refers to the history between indigenous peoples and the dominant culture of today, including conflicts, significant decision-makers and other important events, as well as their effects on the current situation. The last H stands for the indigenous handicrafts and their markets. (Smith 1996, 287–295.)

4.2   Benefits of Indigenous Tourism

The increasing interest in indigenous tourism provides indigenous cultures with numerous new opportunities in the tourism industry. Indigenous tourism possesses a clear competitive advantage in comparison to other forms of tourism due to their unique cultural and physical resources. (Butler & Hinch 1996, 4–5.)

The different economic, socio-cultural, and environmental benefits of indigenous tourism are stated in Figure 4.
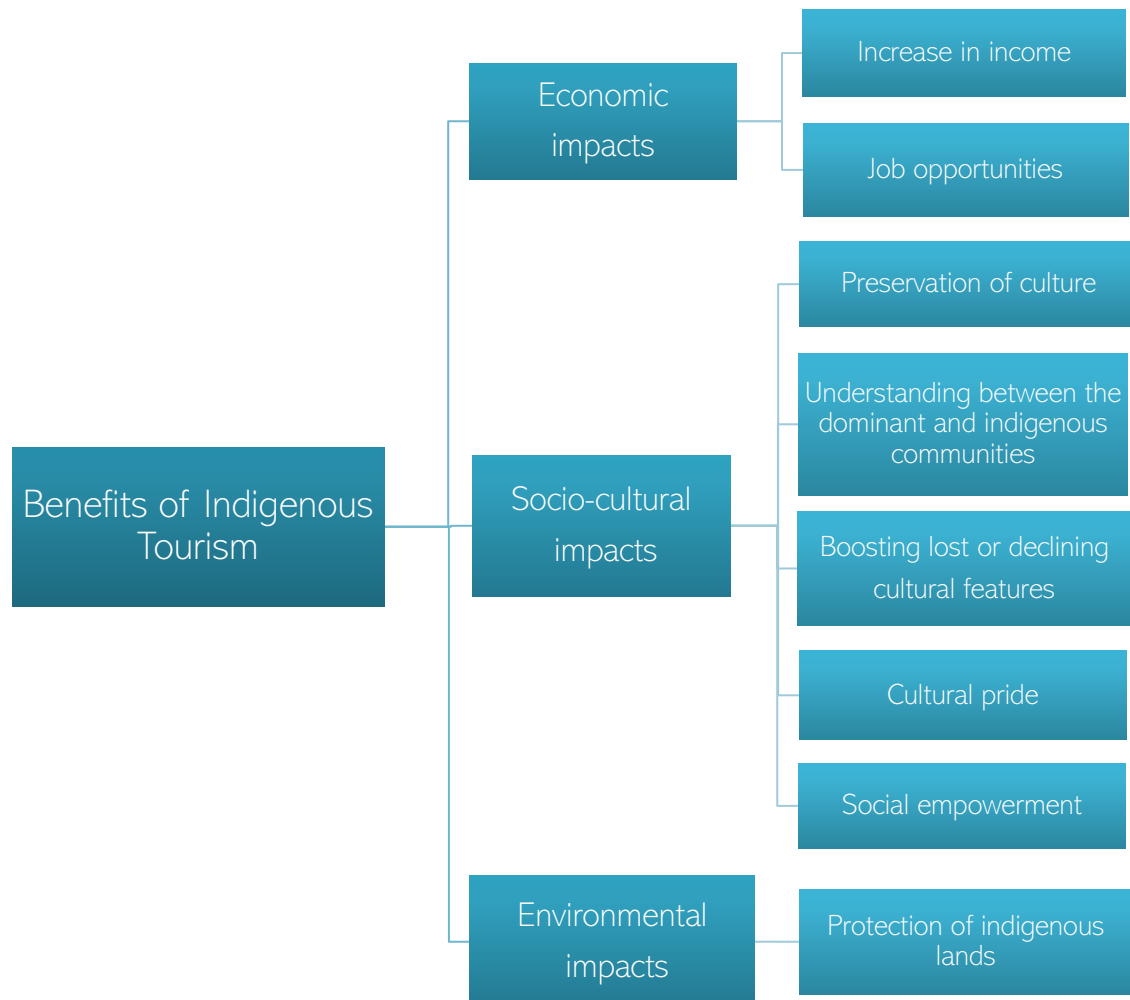
Figure 4. Benefits of Indigenous Tourism (Timothy 2011, 157–158, 163–165, Butler & Hinch 2007, 3, Ryan 2005, 70, D'Amore 1988, as cited in Butler & Hinch 2007, 3)

Perhaps the most evident benefit of indigenous tourism is the economic income created by the industry. As making a living on traditional indigenous livelihoods, such as reindeer herding, is becoming more difficult in the modern world, many indigenous people are becoming more interested in engaging with the tourism industry. (Pettersson 2006, 84.) In addition to receiving income from tourism operations, the increase in tourism also creates more job opportunities for the indigenous peoples (Timothy 2011, 163–165).

Receiving economic benefits may also lead to societal benefits. According to the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (2020), the nature of the traditional Sámi livelihoods puts the practitioners of reindeer herding and other traditions in an inequal position in terms of social security. However, tourism may provide indigenous communities with economic independence, which may lead to a higher sense of cultural pride and an increase in self-determination (Butler & Hinch 2007, 3). Tourism can also work as a tool for change by helping non-indigenous people to understand indigenous cultures better and to form a better relationship between the two (D'Amore 1988, as cited in Butler & Hinch 2007, 3). It offers indigenous cultures an opportunity to be recognized and appreciated by the mainstream culture, thus improving their social position in the community (Ryan 2005, 70). Additionally, the income generated by tourism can help with the conservation efforts to preserve and protect culturally significant attractions (Timothy 2011, 163).

Indigenous people protect their region's ecological legacy (Johnston 2006, 11). Although there are certain environmental issues regarding tourism, when executed sustainably it can work as a tool for protecting indigenous lands. Tourism can raise awareness of environmental issues and destinations under the risk of being destroyed, which may lead to the protection of indigenous lands and the establishment of new protected areas due to increasing tourism interest. (Timothy 2011, 163.)

4.3   Issues and Challenges of Indigenous Tourism

When developing indigenous tourism, it is important to consider that it is developed from the viewpoint and for the benefit of the indigenous people in question, especially considering that the history between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples has included outrageous exploitation of native cultures. Often the actions of non-indigenous people that end up exploiting indigenous cultures may be unintentional and are derived from pure ignorance. (Butler & Hinch 1996, 4,5.) According to Rajotte (1987, as cited in Butler & Hinch 1996, 4), many indigenous people may even view tourism as a new way of exploiting indigenous cultures for non-indigenous peoples' benefit. The concerns around tourism that

utilises the cultural heritage as the main attraction include several different cultural, social and environmental issues, as portrayed in Figure 5.
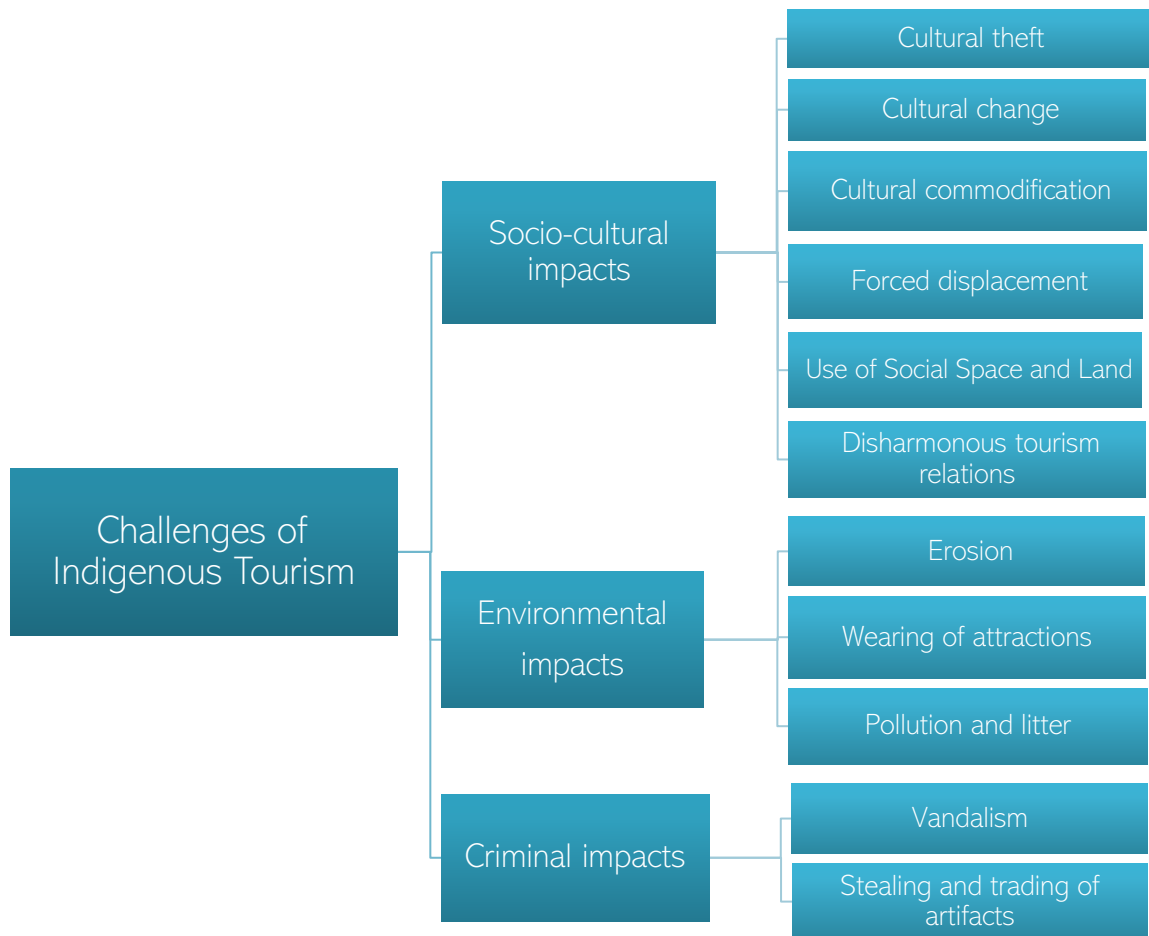
Figure 5. Challenges of Indigenous Tourism (Timothy 2011, 151–163, Grekin & Milne 1996, 89–94)

Tourism may impact indigenous cultures in various different ways. The local culture may be modified by the effects of tourists from around the world. The cultural features may also be misused and lose their original meaning once they are marketed for the masses. Locals may not approve of the use of their social space for tourism purposes, as it may promote overcrowding leading to negative social and environmental impacts. In some cases, tourism may even force local villages and neighbourhoods to be moved from the way of the developing industry. Each of the forementioned impacts may invoke negative relationships between the indigenous and dominant communities. (Timothy 2011, 151–163.) Additionally, negative relations may occur between tourists and the local

community, as tourists may perceive local traditions in a different light than the locals. For instance, hunting may not be approved by tourists and therefore it can be hidden from them. However, residents might prefer to showcase even the more shocking features of the culture to allow deeper understanding between the indigenous and non-indigenous people to form, instead of hiding certain aspects that may arise mixed opinions. (Grekin & Milne 1996, 89–94.)

Indigenous tourism is also often associated with ecotourism. Although the image of ecotourism may be positive, the reality may not be as eco-friendly as expected. It is difficult to discover which companies offering ecotourism products are truly following ecological practices, and which are simply utilising ecotourism as a marketing hoax. Therefore, the false image of eco-friendly tourism may in fact create more threats to indigenous people and their lands than benefits (Johnston 2006, 6–15). Erosion, pollution, litter and the wear and tear of attractions caused by tourism are issues to be considered in tourism development. Masses of tourists visiting vulnerable destinations are prone to cause irreversible damage to attractions and their surroundings. This combined with littering and the pollution caused by travelling create challenges for the preservation of tourism destinations. Furthermore, tourism destinations may also face criminal impacts, such as stealing and trading of culturally significant artifacts. Vandalism has also become an issue in several heritage destinations around the world, as tourists have carved, or spray painted on the walls of cultural attractions. (Timothy 2011, 158–163.)

5 SÁMI PEOPLES AND TOURISM

5.1 Sámi Peoples and Cultures

Sámi peoples are the only indigenous peoples in Europe. They are originated in Sápmi, which is a region consisting of the northern parts of Finland, Sweden, and Norway, as well as the Kola Peninsula in Russia. (Pettersson & Viken 2007, 177.) The population of the Sámi is estimated to be between 50 000 and 100 000 (IWGIA 2021), out of which approximately 10 000 are currently living in Finland (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare 2021). The Sámi are not only one people and culture. There are three different kinds of Sámi cultures in only Finnish Lapland, which include North, Inari and Skolt Sámi. Each of these groups also has their own language and Sámi dress. Thus, when speaking of the Sámi peoples, the plural form is used. (Kugapi, Höckert, Lüthje, Mazzullo & Saari 2020, 12.)

Traditional Sámi livelihoods contribute to preserving the vitality of Sápmi and the Sámi culture. Traditionally, reindeer herding, handicrafts, fishing, farming and harvesting natural resources have been important Sámi livelihoods, reindeer herding remaining the most significant due to the employment opportunities it offers. The culture is bound to nature, and the people as well as the language are considered to be connected to it. (Sámi Parliament 2018, 4.) However, although nature remains a significant part of the culture, it is important to note that nowadays most Sámi people are living modern lives with modern professions and are no longer living in the region of Sápmi (Sanila-Aikio & Arttijeff 2016).

The forementioned Sámi dress has worked as a tool to reinforce the Sámi identity and to stand out from the dominant Finnish culture throughout history. Nowadays the dress is predominantly worn in important occasions and events in order to show appreciation, as well as to represent the wearer's cultural origins. (Sámi Duodji 2010.) Unfortunately, the Sámi dress has also often been misused in the tourism industry (Sámi Parliament 2018, 3).

5.2   Sámi Peoples in Tourism

5.2.1 History and Challenges of Sámi Tourism

The Sámi peoples and their cultures are continuously attracting more and more attention from tourists. Western tourists are attracted by the authentic traditions as well as their lifestyle and are interested to learn about the culture. (Pettersson 2006, 83 & 92–93.) Due to the increasing tourism demand and the decrease in reindeer herding, more and more Sámi people are deciding to engage in tourism (Pettersson & Viken 2007, 179).

Two different types of Sámi tourism exist in Finnish Lapland; Sáminess based tourism and tourism utilising Sáminess. Tourism based on Sáminess is run by Sámi people, who are part of the community themselves, whereas tourism utilising Sáminess is managed by stakeholders with no connection to the indigenous culture. (Sámi Parliament 2021.) Especially tourism utilising Sáminess has arisen certain issues in the Sámi tourism field.

The Sámi have faced several difficulties regarding cultural insensitivity. To this day harmful and misleading stereotypes still exist in the minds of many people, overshadowing the modern culture and way of living. (Kitti 2020, as cited in Quinn 2020). For decades, features of the Sámi culture have been exploited in the tourism industry, contributing to the objectification of the Sámi peoples (Sámi Parliament 2021). Made-up traditions, such as the "Lappish baptism", which is a ceremony to welcome customers to Lapland utilising fake Sámi mythology presented by a "shaman", have been used to gain profits unconcerned by the effects they may have on the image of the Sámi peoples (Suomi 2018, as cited in Rasmus & Paltto 2018). Especially the Sámi dress, one of the most visible cultural features of the Sámi, has often been the object of misuse in tourism activities, thus cheapening its cultural value (Sámi Parliament 2018, 3). The increase in dog sled rides and glass igloos, which are not by any means related to the Sámi-, nor the local culture, has on its own part contributed to creating a false image of the Sámi culture (Quinn 2020).

Insensitive tourist behaviour has also caused problems in Finnish Lapland. One recent example of such behaviour has been visitors carving on the walls of a 250-year-old church, which is an important part of Sámi peoples' cultural heritage. (Lappalainen & Seipiharju 2021.) According to Seurujärvi, tourists have also contributed to objectifying the Sámi by taking pictures of them without their permission (Quinn 2020).

Although there have been negative experiences with Sámi tourism, the situation seems to be improving. The number of Sámi entrepreneurs has increased, whereas the usage of Sámi symbols among non-Sámi entrepreneurs has significantly decreased (Kugapi et al. 2020, 8–9). The increase in Sámi entrepreneurs may be explained by the economic benefits and employment opportunities provided by tourism. Already 15 years ago it was noted that there is a growing interest in entrepreneurship among young Sámi people. (Pettersson 2006, 88 & 94.) The Sámi Parliament has also created guidelines for the usage of the Sámi culture in tourism, which will be discussed in detail in the upcoming chapter (Kugapi et al. 2020, 9).

5.2.2 Developing Responsible and Ethically Sustainable Sámi Tourism

Ethical Sámi tourism does not only consider the social, cultural, economic, and ecological aspect of sustainability in general. It also takes these issues into account on a local level, considering their carrying capacity. Each of these different aspects must be carefully considered to produce truly ethical and sustainable Sámi tourism services. (Sámi Parliament 2018, 5.)

In order to develop ethical and sustainable Sámi tourism in Finnish Lapland, ethical guidelines for responsible and ethically sustainable use of Sámi cultural features in tourism were created by the Sámi parliament in 2018. The Sámi parliament is the official governmental body representing the Sámi in Finland. (Sámi Parliament 2018, 4). The main principles considered in creating the guidelines as stated by the Sámi parliament (2018) are seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Principles of Ethical and Sustainable Development of Sámi Tourism (Sámi Parliament 2018)

The principles consider several different issues, such as recognition of the Sámi culture and issues of Sámi tourism, preservation of the cultural heritage and co-operation and communication between different stakeholders. Acknowledging these issues is one of the tools aiming to end the exploitation of the Sámi culture, as well as to stop the spread of incorrect information of the culture in the tourism industry. (Sámi Parliament 2018.)

In addition to creating the ethical guidelines, the Sámi parliament is continuously working on improving the Sámi people's position in the society and tourism industry. One of the most recent projects is creating a collaboration- and marketing network within the Sámi community for aiding tourists in choosing ethical and sustainable Sámi tourism services (Kuivas 2021).

Although the development attempts for more sustainable use of the Sámi culture have created its own benefits, the discussion around cultural appropriation has also caused negative impacts for the Sámi tourism field. The discussion around which souvenirs are considered appropriate to purchase has made tourists more careful of buying Sámi handcrafts. The number of Sámi handicraft providers has also considerably decreased. (Aikio 2021.) Therefore, considering the Sámi entrepreneurs' perspective in the development attempts is crucial.

6   RESEARH PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

6.1   Qualitative Approach

The usage of the qualitative research method has increased significantly during the past two decades (Thelwall & Nevill 2021, 12). It concentrates on understanding the research subject rather than measuring non-numerical data (Rasmussen, Ostergaard & Beckmann 2006, 93). Qualitative research offers an opportunity to gain understanding of the social reality from a humanistic perspective (Gonzáles Macías & Cuevas Contreras 2019, 60). Furthermore, it allows the researcher to discover and understand the participants' individual experiences (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011, 9).

Qualitative research methods include observation, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews. These methods can be utilised in a variety of different situations, such as when considering sensitive and/or complex issues, when aiming to understand human behaviour, values, views and the reasons behind them or when wanting to give a voice to a specific study group. (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2011, 10, 16.) Therefore, as the research aimed to give a voice to Sámi entrepreneurs and to observe issues concerning cultural sensitivity from a humanistic perspective, choosing the qualitative research approach was a rather evident decision.

6.2   Semi-structured Interview

The vast majority of qualitative research executed is based on interviews (Thelwall & Nevill 2021, 3). The chosen interview method for this research, the semi-structured interview, implies that the interview includes specific themes and questions to be discussed, and that each participant is asked the same questions. Semi-structured interviews can be considered the most valuable way of interviewing due to the high quality of answers it can provide through its structured yet flexible nature. (Gillham 2005, 70.) For semi-structured interviews the participants are not chosen randomly, but instead specifically selected considering the topic of the study (Smith 2017, 128). For this study, Sámi tourism

entrepreneurs located in Finnish Lapland were chosen as the focus group to be interviewed.

In order to implement successful semi-structured interviews and to achieve the desired outcome, careful preparation is necessary. Implementing the research requires practise and skill from the researcher in order to gain useful data. Additionally, the process of interviewing and transcribing requires plenty of time. (Gillham 2005, 71, 79.)

Semi-structured interviews are specifically useful for gathering information gained through lived experience, as they provide an open environment for the interviewees to share their experiences through questions based on theory (Galletta 2013, 2). Furthermore, it offers the opportunity to compare the similarities and differences between the responses in the analysis (Gillham 2005, 72).

Although semi-structured interviews may be time-consuming, it is an ideal method for this research due to the chance it provides for the interviewees to openly discuss the issues of the research. It also allows the interviewee to compare the data and to draw conclusions based on the answers. Although the process of finding interviewees was challenging, finally four Sámi tourism entrepreneurs agreed to be interviewed for the purposes of this research. The interviews were implemented online via Microsoft Teams due to long distances and safety reasons regarding the COVID-19 situation. The length of the interviews varied from approximately 20 to 50 minutes. Excluding certain minor technical dysfunctions, the interviews were implemented successfully and provided the researcher with valuable data to be analysed.

6.3   Reliability, Validity and Limitations

In terms of reliability and validity, there are certain issues to be considered when executing qualitative research. Reliability considers the consistency of the results: if the same research was repeated, would the results be similar? Validity refers to the accuracy of the research in considering the phenomenon in question. (Veal 2006, 41.)

When considering this research, it is rather difficult to evaluate its reliability. Social sciences consider real human beings with their differing backgrounds and changing environments (Veil 2006, 41). Therefore, it is challenging to draw general conclusions on the issue, as the results may vary between participants in future research. It must also be considered that due to the small number of Sámi entrepreneurs in Finnish Lapland, as well as their rather busy schedules, finding interviewees proved to be a challenge. Therefore, only four entrepreneurs were interviewed for the research, which may provide an initial idea of the topic, but may not allow more general conclusions to be drawn.

Although the reliability of the research is uncertain, its validity was considered carefully. As the aim of the research was to discover the Sámi tourism entrepreneurs' perspective on the culturally sensitive development of Sámi tourism, it was crucial to find interviewees with Sámi origins. However, each interviewee bases their responses according to their own subjective views and experiences, which may limit the validity of the research.

Cultural sensitivity is a rather new concept in terms of tourism research, which complicated the process of compiling the theoretical background and may have limited the definition of the concept. Furthermore, when possible, primary sources were utilised for the theoretical background of the thesis. Therefore, as various recent sources cited the work of authors from several years or even decades ago, the usage of recent sources is limited. However, as researchers still cite these sources, they can be considered relevant to this day.

7 SÁMI ENTREPRENEURS' PERCEPTIONS ON DEVELOPING SÁMI TOURISM

7.1 Background of Participants

As mentioned before, four different Sámi entrepreneurs were interviewed for the purposes of this research. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, which gave the participants the chance to discuss the topics freely without the possible challenges caused by a language barrier. Therefore, the answers have been translated by the author, excluding filler words irrelevant to the responses. Two of the interviewees wanted to remain anonymous, whereas the other two preferred to be identified. The two interviewees who wished to be identified were Petteri Valle and Heikki Paltto. The anonymous entrepreneurs will be referred to as P1 and P2.

The first topic considered in the interviews was the participants' background in the tourism field. Each interviewee had a long family history in tourism entrepreneurship, and some were even running a business inherited from their parents.

> I am Heikki Paltto, a reindeer herder and a tourism entrepreneur in Lemmenjoki. We have a family company concentrated on nature tourism. (Paltto)

> I am a […] reindeer herder and then of course a tourism entrepreneur. Our family has been involved with tourism for quite a long time, already in my childhood dad was joiking all around and there was some small-scale tourism activity. (P1)

> I am Petteri Valle and the owner-host of Holiday Village Valle, and this company has worked for a long time. My dad established it in -89 and it was transferred to me in 2000, so it has already been over 20 years since then. (Valle)

I am an entrepreneur in the second generation, together with my brother […] we run our family company which is this hotel […] and restaurant. (P2)

The companies' offerings varied between restaurant and accommodation services, as well as different activities and exhibitions concentrating on reindeer herding, nature, joiking and the Sámi culture in its entirety.

It is pretty much Sámi tourism, programmes related to that, and the food comes from my culture, and these kind of hiking trips are done to our historic regions. Then there are these kota evenings and reindeer rides, the culture side is quite strongly involved. (Valle)

The future business visions differed between the participants. The answers varied between achieving financial success, gaining preferred clientele, and maintaining the Sámi traditions. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry were also noted.

Of course, there is this kind of vision for so called better clientele, so quality over quantity. In the end we live in extreme conditions, so it does not make sense to start doing mass tourism, but for smaller groups for better profit. (Valle)

Of course, that we maintain travel traditions, and we think that tourism is one of the Sámi's traditional livelihoods. It is true in many aspects actually, and in many families tourism entrepreneurship has been transferred from father to son. (P2)

Of course, it would be amazing to become rich and have no financial concerns. […] But then corona came and ended everything and 90% of the customers disappeared. Finnish people do not use services and they do not have the ability to pay. […] They do not compare to foreign tourists. (P1)

It was clear that many Sámi tourism companies are family-run, and the business is often transferred from the older generation to the young within the family. Although the product and service offerings are rather different between the companies, the Sámi culture plays a significant role in each entrepreneur's business operations. As stated by Butler and Hinch (1996, 4–5), utilising these unique cultural features in the tourism services provides the businesses with a significant competitive advantage. It is clear that there is a market for services concentrating specifically on the Sámi culture, supporting Durkin, Perić and Kljaić Šebrek's (2017, 145–146) findings of the growing interest in unique and authentic experiences among cultural tourists.

7.2 Sámi Culture in Tourism

The next topic considered the usage of the Sámi culture in tourism. When asking about which features of the culture the interviewees would like to emphasize in tourism services, the responses varied. However, nature, authenticity, and portraying the Sámi culture in the right light played an important role in many of the responses.

> It would destroy stereotypes […] and tourists would get the kind of perception of our region and culture that our traditions and history are dear and important. After all, the fact that we live a modern life here, does not mean that the traditions are not respected and appreciated. (P2)

> I am a joik artist, so for me it of course is the joik [..] that has been the dearest and of course then […] reindeer herder so that is another one as well. (P1)

> I very strongly see, that in this kind of region where we are in now, we must emphasize the culture and the sensitive side of nature more and more, this is our strength, it comes naturally, none of us have to fake it. (Valle)

Of course, the authenticity is the most important. That there is nothing fake, and we do not have that here. That we do not have to pretend to be anyone but ourselves and tell about our own life and work. (Paltto)

To this day, traditions and nature are vital parts of the Sámi culture (Sámi Parliament 2018, 4), which was also evident in the responses. It was clear that for many interviewees, it was important to emphasize authentic Sámi traditions in tourism offerings, as problems concerning promoting fake Sámi traditions have occurred in the field (Suomi 2018, as cited in Rasmus & Paltto 2018).

When asking about features of the Sámi culture to avoid using in tourism products and services, the opinions were also rather different. P1 did not mention any specific features to be off-limits, but instead agreed with Aikio's (2021) findings of the discussion around cultural appropriation having negatively affected the Sámi handicraft markets.

Mum made all kinds of Sámi handicrafts, and also Finnish customers bought them […] but it has become a crime to use them, so they are not getting sold anymore. (P1)

Others mentioned the Sámi mythology and politics to be issues that should be avoided utilising in tourism services, especially among non-Sámi entrepreneurs. Paltto once again emphasized the importance of not utilising any fake features of the Sámi culture in the services.

I would be very careful with other than Sámi people using the Sámi mythology. […] These shamanism things […] and these different kind of witch things, they do not belong in the Sámi culture. I have refused to do them. I have been asked many times, but I have not done these kinds of baptisms. (Valle)

Politics of course is kind of the same as religion, I don't know if it's worth discussing [laughing] it with anyone, really. (P2)

The responses highlight the importance of utilising only authentic features of the Sámi culture in the tourism services. It is clear that Sámi entrepreneurs have noted the misuse on the Sámi culture in the industry in the form of made-up traditions, such as the forementioned "Lappish baptism". Thus, Suomi's (2018, as cited in Rasmus & Paltto 2018) statement of businesses profiting off of services based on fake Sámi traditions remains relevant to this day. The responses suggest that the Sámi mythology, as well as politics are rather personal and sensitive issues, which should not be discussed with tourists. P2 also mentioned the objectification of the Sámi in the form of taking pictures of them without their permission, which was also stated by Seurujärvi (as cited in Quinn 2020). The participant mentioned that instead of just scratching the surface and taking pictures without permission, it would be appreciated if tourists came to discuss with Sámi people to learn more about the culture.

It is evident that the entrepreneurs have faced several issues with culturally insensitive behaviour in the field. It is important for Sámi entrepreneurs that the culture is presented in a correct way, and that actions are taken to stop the spread of misinformation. Therefore, utilising only authentic features of the Sámi culture in tourism services is crucial for forming an accurate image of the culture. It is also vital to educate tourists of the appropriate use of Sámi handicrafts in order to encourage tourists to purchase these products, and to ensure a successful future for the market.

7.3   Current State of Cultural Sensitivity

The next topic considered the definition of cultural sensitivity and its current state in Sámi tourism in Finnish Lapland. P2 would define cultural sensitivity as utilising mainly the cultural features from the local region, instead of borrowing from other cultures, as well as considering what the cultural features exist for before utilising them in tourism services. The interviewees agreed that tourism operators must set an example and lead the way towards more culturally sensitive tourism services. The responsibility of tourists themselves was also mentioned.

Those issues that are between the Sámi culture and tourism come from the lack of cultural sensitivity, in my opinion. People lack understanding, so it is kind of our operators' responsibility in my opinion, that when a person has wrong kinds of perceptions, they should be corrected. […] It is the Sámi parliament and our responsibility, and of course other Lappish travel organisations' responsibility, Visit Finland's responsibility, to pave the way. (P2)

It begins with the tourist already understanding themselves that you have to value and respect instead of behaving poorly. It is unfortunately seen also here that people have the wrong kind of attitude, which offends a little. But it comes from many things, it can just be ignorance, which for the most part it is. (Valle)

The responses support the findings of several researchers in considering the shared responsibility of each participant in the tourism field to participate in culturally sensitive behaviours, not only tourism service providers, although their role is significant (Chambers & Buzinde 2015, de Bernardi, Kugapi, & Lüthje 2017, Höckert 2018, Länsman 2004 & Ren et al. 2018 as cited in Viken, Höckert & Grimwood 2021, 3). Authenticity and locality were also deemed as important parts of cultural sensitivity.

Two interviewees were not quite sure of how to define the term. However, P1 stated that even though non-Sámi people might misuse the culture, it is not likely that they will gain significant financial profits from doing so. Instead, issues such as land use should be deemed more important.

Matters such as deforestation and mining […] the Arctic railway […] Those are big questions that I deem important. (P1)

Although all interviewees were not certain of how to define the concept and had varying opinions of the main matters in the discussion around cultural sensitivity, each one considered cultural sensitivity an important concept in Sámi tourism development efforts. P1 mentioned that it is specifically important for tourism

entrepreneurs to consider cultural sensitivity, if their companies are located near reindeer herders' premises, to ensure that the animals will not be disturbed. The importance of cultural sensitivity for the younger generation of the Sámi was also emphasized.

> It is very important for the Sámi culture, it also creates opportunities. When it is done right, it also creates jobs and young people start to appreciate their own culture, and can get employed in their own homeland, also by traditional livelihoods. (Valle)

When discussing the state of cultural sensitivity in Finnish Lapland, most interviewees agreed that the state of cultural sensitivity has improved noticeably during the past decades, which was also stated by Kugapi et al. (2020, 8–9). P1 specified, that nowadays companies must pay more attention to these issues, as tourists are seeking for authentic experiences, and if their needs are not met, they may spread negative reviews on social media. Valle expressed that people are starting to recognize the value of the Sámi culture, and that the awareness of the Sámi has increased among Finnish people due to more and more Sámi people moving to bigger cities. However, he also stated that nowadays there are still very few Sámi entrepreneurs concentrating specifically on providing Sámi tourism services. Paltto mentioned that there is still room for improvement and agreed with Quinn's (2020) statement about dog sled rides contributing to creating a false image of the culture.

> It has improved in a way, that nowadays people are starting to understand the significance of the Sámi to this region, and also Finnishness. […] More and more Sámi people live in Helsinki, Oulu and these cities, which have the most Sámi people. The information has gone through. (Valle)

> Not everyone considers these issues […] Especially the big hotels productize, and they have their own program services, and the Sámi culture is not presented in the right way in them. […] Nowadays especially these husky things have been brought up quite a lot, huskies have never belonged

to Lapland or Finland in general. That has been brought up as an element that belongs here creating a false image. (Paltto)

The state of cultural sensitivity has seemingly improved, and other than Sámi people utilising the culture in tourism services is heavily criticized. However, P1 stated that even entrepreneurs who are not a part of the culture themselves may contribute to raising awareness of the Sámi peoples by providing Sámi tourism services, which may surprisingly be beneficial for the Sámi.

If someone tries to use the sáminess for their own benefit, it may offend someone, but I have noticed that it also raises awareness of us. There are so few of us that when we really need help in something, such as protesting the Arctic railway, we also get it. […] even if the image is modified, at least we are probably more well-known than many other peoples our size. (P1)

Although there are certainly issues with cultural sensitivity in Sámi tourism, it is clear that the situation is improving, and these issues are considered more carefully than ever before. The dominant culture is starting to recognize the importance of the Sámi culture, which may partly be due to the possible effects of tourism creating better understanding between the two (D'Amore 1988, as cited in Butler & Hinch 2007, 3). Tourists are also becoming more aware of these issues and as stated by Durkin, Perić and Kljaić Šebrek's (2017, 145–146), are seeking for authentic services which pushes tourism operators to consider cultural sensitivity more carefully in order to continue to attract customers. However, it is also important to note that even insensitive use of the Sámi culture in tourism services can be used as an advantage to raise more awareness of the Sámi peoples.

7.4   Development Actions and their Effects

The next topic considered the guidelines for responsible and ethically sustainable Sámi tourism created by the Sámi parliament. Most interviewees were familiar with the guidelines, and some were even involved in the creation process.

However, only one mentioned them having slightly affected their business operations.

> We have also participated in the composing phase ourselves and… Perhaps it has emphasized that the contents of the program services should be considered more carefully. (P2)

The rest of the interviewees agreed that the guidelines have not affected their business operations in any way, some stating they have already considered these issues carefully in their services before the guidelines were created. P1 also mentioned, that the Sámi parliament and the guidelines could only affect business operations if they offered financial support to the entrepreneurs.

> Actually, they have not affected me in any way, I have affected the Sámi parliament more. (Valle)

> Not even a little bit [laughing] and they will not affect. […] They cannot have a say without offering financial aid, an entrepreneur must make their own decisions. (P1)

The interviewees agreed that at least most of the issues considered in the guidelines were useful. However, when asked about possible unnecessary issues and disagreements with the guidelines, the answers varied. P1 disagreed with the issue of marketing, stating that Sámi entrepreneurs must market in the way most profitable for them.

> Meaning that Sámi entrepreneurs should all market in the same way, it does not go like that, not at all, everyone can market the way they see fit if they are Sámi. (P1)

P2 mentioned that they personally may have taken a more accepting approach, whereas Valle criticized the length of the guidelines, stating the instructions should have been summarized for the entrepreneurs to read, and more focused on the main points.

Only the main points should have been considered, where the Sámi dress can be worn, in what kind of situations, what does it mean, does it offend a family, a community or a village. In my opinion, these kinds of issues would have been more important […] That is the root of the problem. It is not the job of the Sámi parliament, the town, nor the country to define specifically what an entrepreneur can do and how they should carry on with their business. (Valle)

Most interviewees were not aware of any other projects concentrating on improving cultural sensitivity in Finnish Lapland, but Valle mentioned a project for improving sustainable and responsible tourism in Utsjoki. P2 also mentioned having their own development project for sustainable development.

In our company, we also have our own programme for sustainable development […] we are aiming to affect tour operators, that their offerings would be consistent with sustainable development, and one part of it is these programme services based on the local culture. (P2)

The responses verified that it is crucial to consider Sámi entrepreneurs' perceptions in development actions, as they can provide valuable input and make the development efforts easier to understand and implement in practice. Although the interviewees mostly agreed with the guidelines, it was clear that they have raised some differing opinions among Sámi entrepreneurs. Therefore, although the Sámi parliament represents the official view of the Sámi peoples, the ethical guidelines should not be considered as an absolute truth, as opinions on Sámi tourism vary also within the community.

7.5   Improvement Ideas

The next topic considered improvement ideas for the state of cultural sensitivity among tourism companies, concentrating specifically on non-Sámi entrepreneurs providing Sámi tourism services, as well as improvement suggestions for the state of cultural sensitivity in general. When asked about the participants' opinions on non-Sámi entrepreneurs offering Sámi products, the answers were

somewhat unanimous. The importance of involving Sámi people in the process of tourism product development to ensure the culture is represented in a correct way was emphasized, supporting Timothy's (2011, 429) claim of the importance of indigenous control in providing culturally sensitive services. It was also suggested that, if possible, entrepreneurs should concentrate on creating services based on their own background rather than the Sámi culture.

> Why should you offer Sámi related products if you are something else, but of course, it is different if you have collaborating partners who are Sámi. (P1)

> Well of course, if the entrepreneur has their own local culture, I warmly recommend them to concentrate and ideate based on that. (P2)

Paltto mentioned that it is difficult for non-Sámi entrepreneurs to provide culturally sensitive Sámi tourism services, as they are not born into the culture. However, one way to make the services more culturally sensitive would be by hiring Sámi people to implement Sámi activities.

> It does not matter who owns the company. It is acceptable if there are Sámi guides who are creating the programmes. But if there are Finnish entrepreneurs and Finnish guides who do not know the culture and use the Sámi culture in their own company, marketing and everything like this, I think that is a problem and it is wrong. (Valle)

Several participants had also collaborated with non-Sámi entrepreneurs themselves, many as subcontractors providing the Sámi element of the services for program service providers. Paltto also mentioned collaborating with the reindeer farm travel organization, which has partners from both Sámi and non-Sámi background. The collaboration experiences were deemed rather positive.

When asked whether the interviewees themselves actively participate in improving the state of cultural sensitivity, some mentioned they participate in culturally sensitive development by communicating with customers, whereas

others were more involved with governmental work. P1 also mentioned that actively contributing to improving cultural sensitivity would not be possible without getting paid for it due to the lack of time.

> Here in Utsjoki I have sat in the Vitality committee […] I am in the steering groups of different development projects and was involved in founding the Sámi music academy in Utsjoki. I have represented in different matters when discussing Sámi tourism […] In fishing tourism I have been involved with the Teno fishing regulation negotiations for two decades. (Valle)

> We communicate with the clients a lot, often we may have very long conversations […] I very gladly tell about the modern Sámi culture and our culture's language revival efforts, and I have been involved with it myself as well. (P2)

> I participate by constantly bringing it up. […] We showcase it in a way that the word spreads around Finland, around Europe, around the world. (Paltto)

When discussing suggestions for culturally sensitive Sámi tourism development, each interviewee agreed that spreading information in one way or another plays a significant role. There were suggestions for a more compact fact sheet for ethically sustainable tourism development and creating a wider product repertoire. P1 also mentioned a more direct approach.

> In my opinion, a direct fact sheet could be a much better approach in comparison to writing long books, it does not improve the situation, instead the writing or speech should be more concrete and understandable. (Valle)

> Maybe if the Sámi parliament notices some flaw made by other than Sámi entrepreneurs, they could go there to negotiate with them […] but I would exclude them from starting to bully Sámi entrepreneurs. That will only cause conflicts in this small population. (P1)

Maybe it could be improved by getting more tourism products based on the Sámi culture and more operators […] That we would include elements of our culture in the products as much as possible and widen the product repertoire, which would automatically give a broader image of the Sámi culture. Also, I can imagine that collaboration between different regions could be very enlightening from the tourist's perspective. (P2)

Based on the responses, spreading information seems to be the most important way to improve the state of cultural sensitivity, which is in line with the Sámi parliaments aim to stop the spread of misinformation of the culture. Collaboration between non-Sámi and Sámi entrepreneurs can also work as a useful tool for improving the state of cultural sensitivity by raising awareness also among people from the dominant Finnish culture.

7.6   Challenges and Opportunities

The last topic considered the challenges and opportunities of culturally sensitive Sámi tourism development. When asking about possible challenges, the answers varied greatly between the interviewees, from concerns around the youth and mass tourism to possible conflicts within the Sámi community.

The challenge is that we have small circles, so you have to be quite careful with what is allowed to say and where to avoid causing unnecessary conflicts. (P1)

The biggest problem is if our youth becomes more and more interested in the modern livelihoods, and they are no longer interested in our Sámiland. We have to make our youngsters stay here. (Valle)

When we are involved with mass tourism, easy, simple products are wanted that are easy to provide for a big number of people […] often you have to be very cost efficient. […] Then you might cut corners because there are not many […] Sámi tourism providers. (P2)

Mass tourism was mentioned several times during the interviews as having negative impacts on the Sámi tourism industry. The authenticity of the Sámi culture may easily be lost in mass tourism products which are more focused on cost efficient practises. Therefore, it may be considered one of the biggest challenges for the development of culturally sensitive tourism in the region. The continuity of traditional Sámi livelihoods is also at risk, as the younger generation may become more interested in modern livelihoods.

Although there are certain challenges to be faced, the participants also saw several different opportunities and benefits for culturally sensitive Sámi tourism development. Two interviewees mentioned developing tourism concentrating on individual tourists instead of mass tourism. There were also suggestions for a collaboration network between different Sámi stakeholders. The importance of existing Sámi entrepreneurs working as role models was also emphasized.

> This small-scale tourism and small groups, small individual travellers […] and that tourism would not concentrate only on one specific region, but also remote villages would have opportunities around the Sámiland […] and that the connections and collaboration would work […] some kind of Sámi tourism symbol would be nice, as we could expand the circle also to Norway and Sweden, that we would have a common Nordic Sámi tourism symbol. (P2)

> Our kind of entrepreneurs try to work as role models. There are a few of us still left, setting an example of how you can manage and be successful, increasing interest also among the younger generation. (Valle)

As stated before, there have been signs of growing interest in entrepreneurship among young Sámi people already 15 years ago (Pettersson 2006, 94). The responses suggest that the example of former, more experienced entrepreneurs may encourage the young to become involved with the tourism industry. Tourism could also work as the solution to concerns around the younger generation becoming more interested in modern livelihoods. Engaging in the modern tourism industry and utilising their own cultural heritage in the business operations may

seem more attractive than practising traditional livelihoods alone. Furthermore, the discussion around cultural sensitivity and the increased awareness of utilising Sámi culture in tourism services may also increase interest among young Sámi people to become involved with the field. Concentrating on individual travellers may decrease the threat of mass tourism, which seems to concern many entrepreneurs. Collaboration between different stakeholders in the field is also considered important in developing Sámi tourism, which the Sámi parliament is currently working on through creating a collaboration network between Sámi stakeholders (Kuivas 2021).

7.7   Additional Considerations

A few interesting additional considerations were mentioned during the interviews. Especially the COVID-19 pandemic had clearly affected the Sámi entrepreneurs' business operations. The number of domestic tourists had significantly increased during the pandemic, and Finnish customers' interest in the Sámi culture seems to be increasing. Paltto mentioned, that the current customers are only Finnish people, whereas before foreign customers amounted for 80% of the customers. P2 stated that the especially the restaurant business bloomed due to the increase in domestic customers.

> The past two years during this corona time, I have noticed that Finns have travelled here in the summer. The past two summers have been record breaking for us. The willingness of people to discover what can be found here in Finland, and then having found a people like the Sámi, has been nice to see. (Valle)

> Especially during corona times […] we are more well known for our restaurant rather than the hotel among Finns. (P2)

Unfortunately, this change has also caused certain issues in the region, as Finnish tourists have disrespected the natural surroundings by littering and going to privately owned lands. This provides a local example of Timothy's (2011, 151–163) findings on the negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts of tourism.

> If we end up in a situation where all fjelds are free for everyone and riversides are free for everyone, there is one problem […] which is the Everyman's rights. […] I have had to drive people away from my own lands and own spots and told them to pick up their trash. (Valle)

Although there have been challenges with the behaviour of domestic tourists, the increase in Finnish customers may have positive effects on the Sámi community. It may help Finnish people to understand the Sámi culture and the challenges they may struggle with better, creating a better relationship between the two.

Other important considerations included the importance of tourism as a livelihood and as a tool to preserve the Sámi culture.

> Imagine if we did not have Sámi tourism, Sámi tourism entrepreneurs. How many jobs would we have lost here in the Utsjoki-Inari region for example? (Valle)

> Tourism has helped to maintain dying traditions, for instance training the reindeer […] now that there is demand for it caused by tourism, there is also a motive to transfer the skill from father to son. (P1)

Sámi tourism businesses do not only support the entrepreneurs themselves, but also for instance those providing Sámi handicrafts. Thus, it can also be considered an important tool to preserve the culture through passing the skills to the next generation, and not only through monetary support as stated by Timothy (2011, 163).

8   DISCUSSION

Culturally sensitive Sámi tourism development is a multidimensional issue, which requires the consideration of several different viewpoints. Although there are various benefits in indigenous tourism, especially from the economic point of view, there are also certain risks that must be considered carefully when developing tourism services. It is clear, that having Sámi people in control of the usage of their own culture in tourism is the key solution to these issues. Culture controlled Sámi tourism can provide a culturally sensitive approach to tourism development, making the services authentic and possibly more attractive to customers.

The different kinds of responses from Sámi entrepreneurs interviewed for the research emphasized that the Sámi are not only one unanimous group. Opinions around the usage of the culture in tourism and the development of cultural sensitivity differ greatly, also within the community. Some may be very active in developing cultural sensitivity by participating in projects and governmental acts, whereas others prefer a more practical approach, concentrating on working as a role model and spreading information through their own business activities.

Although it is evident that the state of cultural sensitivity in Finnish Lapland is constantly improving, there is still work to be done. There are certainly challenges for the culturally sensitive development of Sámi tourism, such as mass tourism and the decreasing number of the young generation of the Sàmi staying in their homeland. However, the situation can be improved with the right tools. Focusing on individual tourism, setting an example and encouraging more Sámi people to become involved with the field, as well as collaborating and networking with Sámi entrepreneurs are some of the ways to lead the industry towards a brighter future. Sámi businesses are often family-run, proving that the example of the older generation may encourage the young to engage with the field. However, the current number of Sámi entrepreneurs providing specifically Sámi tourism products is limited, and the increasing number of young Sámi people moving to bigger cities may pose a threat to Sámi entrepreneurship.

It was evident that the development actions implemented so far have not significantly affected the Sámi entrepreneurs' business actions. However, it is important to consider their perspective in future projects for culturally sensitive tourism development. After all, tourism operators are the ones providing these services and possess valuable knowledge of issues other stakeholders who are not involved with the field might not have.

Based on the results of the research, development actions concerning Sámi tourism are not common, and it seems that the development work is only in the beginning. Therefore, development projects, such as the upcoming network between Sámi tourism companies for helping tourists to choose culturally sensitive services, and their effects on the Sámi tourism industry require further research. The true impacts of development actions on all Sámi stakeholders must be discovered in order to improve the state of cultural sensitivity while also maintaining harmonious relationships within the community.

This research aimed to give a voice to Sámi tourism entrepreneurs working in the field in their daily lives. Although there are differing opinions on the development of Sámi tourism among entrepreneurs, the main goal seems to be the same: to develop ethical, sustainable and culturally sensitive tourism services that highlight the authentic features of the unique Sámi cultures.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 1(2)   Interview Themes and Questions

<u>Basic information</u>

- Background of the company and the interviewee

- Business form

- Products and services

- Vision

<u>Sámi culture in tourism</u>

- What kind of features of the Sámi culture do you consider important to highlight in tourism services?

- What do you consider the most important cultural features to avoid using when developing Sámi tourism?

<u>Current state of cultural sensitivity</u>

- How would you describe the term cultural sensitivity? What does cultural sensitivity mean to you? Do you consider it an important concept in terms of Sámi tourism activities and development?

- How would you evaluate the current situation of cultural sensitivity in Sámi tourism products and services in Finnish Lapland? Do companies consider culturally sensitive issues or ignore them?

- Has the situation changed from previous years, for better or for worse? How?

Appendix 1 2(2)

<u>Development actions and their effects</u>

- Have the ethical and sustainable guidelines written by the Sámi Parliament affected your business operations? How?

- Do you agree with the guidelines? Are there issues you do not deem important or relevant?

- Have there been other actions in order to improve cultural sensitivity that you are aware of? Have they affected your business operations?

<u>Improvement ideas</u>

- What do you think about businesses that do not have Sámi background providing or aiming to provide Sámi tourism products? What could they do to make their services more culturally sensitive?

    o Have you collaborated with non-Sámi entrepreneurs? If yes, how did you find the experience?

- Do you actively contribute to improving the state of cultural sensitivity in your region? How?

- How would you improve the current situation regarding cultural sensitivity in the tourism industry in Finnish Lapland? Suggestions?

<u>Challenges and Opportunities for Sámi Tourism Development</u>

- What do you consider the biggest challenges for culturally sensitive development of Sámi tourism?

- What kind of opportunities and benefits exist for developing Sámi tourism?

<u>Additional comments on the issue.</u>