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**PERCEPTION OF THE ARCTIC AS
TOURISM DESTINATION AND
PERSPECTIVES OF ITS UTILIZATION BY
TOURISM INDUSTRY IN FINNISH LAPLAND**

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Thesis

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Commissioned by Arctic Power Research Center

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The aim of this thesis project was to analyse how the notion and brand image of the Arctic is perceived and understood, and how it could be exploited by tourism industry stakeholders in case of Finnish Lapland. The main focus was put on determining what associations people have about the Arctic, what images and attributes are most popular and how the Arctic is perceived as a tourism destination. The study also evaluated what tourism products and services are most expected and how high the level of preparedness to travel to the Arctic is.

In order to find answers to the research question a quantitative survey was conducted with the help of structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was given to foreign visitors in Rovaniemi, Finland and to other people who do not live in the Arctic. The questions in the questionnaire inquired about the different aspects of perception of the Arctic as tourism destination: images associated with it, level of awareness of the existing tourism network, most expected tourism services, general level of preparedness to travel and possible factors which could hinder the travel. A qualitative interview was conducted with Ilona Mettiäinen, a researcher, who works at the Arctic Research center in Rovaniemi, and whose expertise is related to this topic.

The findings indicate that this image is dominated by classic images of the high Arctic: icebergs, snow and ice. At the same time, there is a growing awareness about the local peoples, interest in their culture, handicrafts and food. However, the image of the Arctic is not very diversified. Most expected tourism products and services are mainly nature-related, but also those related to handicrafts, local cuisine, saunas and spa services are prominent, which implies that the possible service range which can impact the general image of the Arctic is quite wide. The most popular reason, seen as capable to hinder the travel is the high transportation costs, which can also serve as a future benefit for non-high Arctic areas.

Key words <Arctic, positioning, perception, tourism, destination, image, awareness >

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1 INTRODUCTION

Interest in the Arctic has recently been growing at a rapid pace. It is known that the talks of the Arctic are currently dominated by the energy resources extraction opportunities, given the vast volumes of carbohydrates found in the region (Yenikeyeff 2007, 2–3). Due to the uncertainty of the international law as regards determination of what belongs to whom in the Arctic (Yenikeyeff 2007, 4), this topic draws extra attention due to conflicts of interests of different stakeholders.

However, the interests of different stakeholders are not limited only to oil or gas extraction, but also include the issues of the strategic transport links (Northern Sea Route). It is suggested that in the forthcoming decades the Russian-controlled Northern Sea Route might become a key strategic tool, as with respect to climate change it offers the shortest possible ship route from Europe to Asia, up to 40% shorter than the traditional routes from Europe to the Pacific via the Suez Canal, not to mention that the Northern Sea Route is much safer given the constant piracy threats in the Aden Bay, political instability in the Middle East and congestion in the Panama and Suez canals (Yenikeyeff 2007, 9–10). Additionally, military interests are at stake, with much attention paid to strategic military interests in the Arctic of Russia and the United States (Zynsk 2008, 81–82; Käpylä 2013, 4; Conley 2010, 7–8), as well as the development of tourism. The latter has shown quite steady growth in recent years, and is seen by many as having a great potential for the future. At times the previously-mentioned interests overlap, intersect or contradict each other.

Tourism in the Arctic, not to be confused with Polar tourism, which Arctic tourism is a part of, but which it does not equal, since the broader term is inclusive of travelling to the Antarctic as well, has received special attention by researchers and scholars. It is acknowledged that in many cases tourism

is the only source of human presence in the Arctic, hence in some cases incoming tourists outnumber the amount of local population, which at times may hinder the interests of locals (United Nations Environmental Programme 2007, 2; Hakkarainen 2008, 5, 12; Tuulentie 2007, 216). It is comprised of a variety of services and markets ranging from mass tourism, sport, adventure tourism to ecotourism as well as culture and heritage tourism. Tourism in the Arctic has been steadily growing for the past few years, even despite the global financial crisis (United Nations Environmental Programme 2007, 2; Hall – Saarinen 2010 in Mettiäinen 2014a, 24). Also earlier articles emphasise the importance of tourism in the Arctic areas, such as that of Svalbard (Kaltenborn 1993, 45), predicting specific development in tourism industry of the region, such as evolving from exclusively ‘expedition type’ tourism to travelling opportunities also given to less-prepared customers (Kaltenborn 1993, 46). However, remoteness and high transportation costs ensuing from it, harsh environmental conditions, seasonality factor, infrastructure and legal issues are often cited as impediments for the development of tourism in the Arctic (Snyder 2007, 8–13).

Northern municipalities of Finland, which are referred to as Arctic, or Subarctic territories, when employing the tree line template for defining the border line between the Arctic and subarctic areas (Mettiäinen 2014a, 7; Bone 1992 in Mason 1997, 153), crucially rely on tourism industry (Luiro 2013, 7–10), which proves to be of high social and economic importance for the region. A number of issues rise from the overlapping identities of Finland, Lapland, the Arctic and the way they are utilized in tourism industry. It therefore became interesting to research the topic of perception of the Arctic, with respect to its tourism aspect, the way people see the region, their eagerness to travel to it, expectations in regards to tourism services available in the area.

This research topic has relevance to the travelling industry development in Finnish Lapland. It will allow to see how people actually anticipate a destination and assess how adequate this anticipation is with regard to what is really present at the destination.

The outcome of this research could benefit the tourism industry entities of Finnish Lapland, in terms of marketing and customer relationship. It might also suggest perspectives for further research which could even more benefit the strategic development of hospitality industry in Finland and Lapland. The topic becomes even more important given the significance of pre-visit associations, narratives and images which customers have with regard to a destination in the tourism field.

The research was commissioned by the Arctic Power research centre, which works under the umbrella of the Lapland University of Applied Sciences. The said research centre works on various types of interdisciplinary projects, serving as a bridge between the real business working life and the student researches. The project from which this research ensues is called 'Matkailun arktiset hyvinvointipalvelut ja teknologia' ('Arctic Tourism Wellness Services and Technology'), commissioned, in return, by a number of tourism, wellness, trade and services companies: Kemin Matkailu Oy, Santamus restaurant, JettiTek, PST and Arctic Day Spa. The companies which take part in this project are interested in the findings of the research, as it will help them enhance their positioning and strategy management. The research centre offers its facilities and premises for the work, while the author performs the information retrieval, data acquisition, its interpretation and other tasks on his own.

The author's personal interest over involvement in this project stems from the interest in and dedication to tourism development in the Arctic, which he elaborated on in various ways also during the previous university studies.

The desired outcome of this study is to determine what associations, images, perceptions people hold about the Arctic, what their expectations about tourism services in the Arctic are, how those views could be interpreted and how they could be exploited in order to benefit the tourism industry entities of Finnish Lapland, as well as to see how compatible they are with tourism in the Arctic. The participants of this project are real companies, which implies that the outcome should be good for practical use. Hence, a focus is put on the empirical part of the research, as a source of empiric data acquisition. However, it is not the purpose of this study to try to give an entire picture of the state of affairs in this field, but rather a grasp that could give preliminary conclusions, and also invite further research on this issue.

The results would apply to the perception of the respondents surveyed, but nevertheless they would still be a small part of the puzzle, given the relative scarcity of the researches related to perception of the Arctic, not allowing to elaborate extensively enough on their consistency. Regardless of the results obtained, the research process itself likewise gives its contribution to studying the views of the potential and actual customers of the Arctic, as a tourism destination. The outcome of the study is supposed to give an insight into what people know and think about the Arctic as a place for travelling.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Defining Arctic

Definitions of the Arctic vary to a certain degree. In general, it is regarded to be regions of the northern areas of Norway, Finland, Sweden, Russia and Canada, Alaska, Greenland and Iceland (ArcticStat 2007 in Hübner 2008, 156).

One pattern of defining the Arctic is with the help of the tree-line, which distinguishes the Arctic per se from the subarctic areas (Bone 1992 in Mason 1997, 153). Another possible criterion for defining the Arctic is the presence of permafrost, which is now subject to climatic impacts. This criterion is more used to define the Arctic in Canada and Siberia (Sage 1986 in Mason 1997, 153). Mason (1997, 153–154) further explains that in Europe and Alaska the Arctic Circle line is exploited as a boundary for the Arctic, as well as mentions different attempts to classify territories based on a combination of climatic and bio-geographical data. Johnston (1995, 27–30) further notes that the definitions of the Arctic are also culturally and historically based constructs. Likewise, temperature levels and various political agreements have been employed to determine what the Arctic territories are (Mettiäinen 2014a, 7).

Various political organizations likewise unite the Arctic countries. The most prominent of them arguably is the Arctic Council, uniting the Arctic states, as well as other countries as observers, together with representatives of the indigenous ethnic groups (Arctic Council 2014). Other groups and associations also operate in the Arctic, such as the Nordic Council, Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (Russian Geographical Society 2014).

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea has a crucial role for the possible future territorial partition of the Arctic, as it provides legal framework for the Arctic states which are signatories to this convention to apply for the extension of their continental shelf (United Nations 2014). The future fate of claims for the continental shelf extension made by the said treaty signatories remains unclear. So far all the Arctic Countries but the United States have signed and ratified the said treaty (United Nations 2013).

2.2 Development of Tourism in the Arctic

As previously mentioned, tourism in the Arctic is already important for many local Arctic communities, and seems to be a key industry in the long run, which could remedy the problem of modest economic development in some parts of the Arctic (Mason 1997, 151). Before the late nineteenth century the Arctic was generally unknown to and poorly understood by the public (Snyder 2007, 3). The development of tourism in the Arctic has been occurring for the last two centuries, resulting in many cases in the number of incoming tourists exceeding the amount of local population at some destinations (United Nations Environmental Programme 2007, 3). The same source further claims that tourism is seen by local native peoples of the Arctic potentially as a more sustainable source of income rather than extraction of natural resources (3). The earliest articles describing recreation-pursuing appeared in the growing genre of recreation, mountaineering, hunting, and fishing periodicals emerged in the mid-1800's (Conway 1897, Williams 1859, Suydam 1899 in United Nations Environmental Programme 2007, 12). Likewise several pioneering travelers to the Arctic published journals that became popular guide books for future Arctic tourists (Lainige 1807, Scidmore 1885, 1896 in United Nations Environmental Programme 2007, 12). It is further observed that transport and accessibility enhancement contributed greatly to the

development of mass-driven tourism in the Arctic, which brought this business to what it faces today, when Arctic tourism has become a relatively mature industry, which is diversified and expanding its market reach (United Nations Environmental Programme 2007, 13). Even though it is a relatively new and unexplored segment, it has already developed its own patterns of procedure (Snyder 2007, 13).

It is worth mentioning that Arctic tourism is not a homogeneous industry, but rather a diverse spectrum of services, offered to a diverse sales market. The United Nations Environmental Program outlet assessing the characteristics of polar tourism (2007, 13), which Arctic tourism is a constituent part of, offers five main market categories:

- Mass market, comprised of tourists primarily attracted to sightseeing within the pleasurable surroundings of comfortable transport and accommodations.
- Sport fishing and hunting market, with participants who pursue unique fish and game species within a wilderness setting.
- Ecotourism market, consisting of tourists who seek to observe wildlife species in their natural habitats, and experience the beauty and solitude of natural areas. These tourists are also concerned with conserving the environment and improving the wellbeing of local people.
- The adventure tourism market, providing a sense of personal achievement and exhilaration from meeting challenges and potential perils of outdoor sport activities.
- Culture and heritage tourism market, a very distinct market comprised of tourists who either want to experience personal interaction with the lives and traditions of native people, learn more about a historical topic that interests them, or personally experience historic places and artifacts.

It is important to take into account the fact that these categories or segments are quite generalized. Certainly, all of them may intersect and overlap each other to a great extent.

Snyder in his foreword (2007, 13–14) likewise emphasizes that the growing accessibility makes it impossible to stop the increase of tourists coming to the Arctic areas, which could have both a negative impact on the fragile Arctic environment, but which could also serve as a good and more sustainable alternative to heavy extraction industries. Svalbard could be a good example of a tourism development process in an Arctic territory. It is one of the most accessible areas of the high Arctic, which made a path from a destination of rare rich adventurers to early mass luxury tourism (Kaltenborn 1993, 43, 45). At the same time, it is special because it does not have any indigenous population (41).

Mettiäinen (2014a, 21–23) explains that historically tourism in the Northern areas developed under the influence of different factors, the most important ones were religious ministry, taxation trips, gold rushes, expansion of empires and world powers. More recently the development of tourism in the Arctic has been expanding thanks to the increased level of accessibility, awareness, and wealth and leisure time, changes in patterns of consumption.

Mettiäinen also specifies (2014a, 23) that an additional incentive for tourist flows into the Arctic is the 'see-it-before-it-is-gone' factor, thanks to the predicted effects of the global climate change. Summer tourism products also have a role, with the midnight sun, fishing and other attractions. Mass tourism also has a niche, e.g. in form of skiing centres.

The Arctic enjoys the presence of indigenous peoples, which contributes to the regions' strong tourist appeal (Mason 1997, 154). It is emphasized that

despite cover extend of tourism in comparison to other places of the world, still, thousands of people visit the Arctic, and the figures are believed to grow in future. While the region relies strongly on nature-based tourism, skiing resorts also play a significant role in the tourism sector, as well as culturally based activities devoted to learning more about local lifestyles, crafts, artefacts, places of histories events, etc. Mettiäinen (2014a, 28–29) also mentions the phenomena of the Northern lights, midnight sun, food culture, spas, scientific interests and narratives about Santa Claus.

Reasons for growth of interest in tourism in the Arctic are the relatively unknown and untouched state of the Arctic, relatively unexplored nature of the Arctic in terms of tourism, compared to many other regions of the world, synergy of culture and nature tourism and an incentive for people to test their human capabilities and limits (e.g. expeditions) (Mettiäinen 2014a, 21–23). All these contribute to the development of tourism industry in the Arctic.

Mason further elaborates on the various aspects of impacts ensuing from tourism in the Arctic (1997, 155–157), citing that polar ecosystems are susceptible to change and / or degradation from excessive or inappropriate tourism. It is high lightened that due to the fragile nature of the Arctic ecosystems, it might take very long time for them to recover. Examples about problems with litter removal, vehicle tracks damaging the surface are raised. At the same time, tourism can substitute other declining industries, which have a much more significant negative impact on nature, for instance with the case of declining mining industry in Svalbard. At the same time, among other issues raised is the problem that money coming from tourism arguable goes in its most to tourism operators, carriers and other mediator chain members, which are placed outside the Arctic areas themselves.

Among impediments which the development of tourism in the Arctic faces, Mettiäinen (2014a, 26) mentions lack of unity of different stakeholders in

decision-making processes, given the lack of political control, geographical remoteness, lack of innovation, poor information flows, poor infrastructure and scarcity of human resources. All these issues should be addressed by various stakeholders in the Arctic, where applicable.

Commercial exploitation of the presence of the indigenous populations also remains a sensitive issue. There are around 40 indigenous ethnic peoples in the Arctic, all with different cultures and languages, each having different political standing in each country (Mettiäinen 2014a, 14–15). Smith M.K. (2009, 102) notes that the image of the 'indigenous' peoples can nowadays be heavily commercialized and exploited in marketing in tourism, even if tourists technically do not have a face-to-face contact with any particularly indigenous group. The level of involvement of the local peoples remains an important issue. In ideal form this should be determined by the indigenous groups themselves (Zeppel 2006, 284 in Smith 2009, 109).

However, in practice, it is underlined by some authors that travel companies nowadays are mostly unaware of how to exploit this niche in a correct and ethically acceptable manner. Most tourists, in return, are often unaware about how true and 'authentic' the offered experience is, if he or she really is on the territory of an indigenous people and whether it is exactly what their life and culture really was or is. Purchasing of this sort of packages sometimes tends to turn into a matter of prestige for customers, rather than any form of pure altruism or a quest for educational enrichment. Subsequently, the quality of such tourism services is often quite questionable (Johnston 2003, 117–118). All this puts the 'authenticity' of the experience into question. However, at the same time Smith (2003, 20–21) specifies that authenticity is an utterly subjective concept, as well as a very relative one, given that the whole tourism industry as such almost entirely relies on constructed and staged activities. It is unarguable that different perceptions and subcategories of

'authenticity' can never be absolute, which in a way makes it very hard to provide panacea guidelines of how not to go into extremes in this regard.

Scholars likewise often elaborate on the annoyance experiences by the Sami community, when non-Sami guides were used to interpret Sami lifestyles to tourists in Finland (Johnston – Hall 1995, 297–300). This example is used to indicate the need for local control of tourism in the Arctic. At the same time Johnston (1995, 30–42) claims that cultural conflicts between tourists and hosts are less likely in the Arctic than some other locations. Despite this it is indicated that there is a potential problem in the differing ways tourists and local people view wildlife.

2.3 Aspect of Sustainability of Tourism in the Arctic

It might be hard at first glance to retrieve the link between the customer perceptions of such a destination as the Arctic and the aspect of sustainability. However, it is pointed out that the conservation of the environment and of local society and its culture implies linking of brand marketing of a destination with the process of its sustainable development. Images, views and perceptions need to be addressed when striving for an efficient destination management and a sustainable development of tourism. (Chen 2011, 261.)

Generally the notion of sustainability in tourism is understood in the environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions (Gelter 2008, 2). A common aspect of any tourism activity is the impact it causes to the nature and environment. This especially applies to the Arctic areas, given the fragile condition of its environment, as well as with regards to its socio-economic and cultural impacts. As a response to these concerns the Arctic Environment Protection Strategy (AEPS) was established in 1991. Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and

the USA have subsequently cooperated on environmental matters. The Arctic Council also has a role in overseeing and coordinating the AEPS, and in the Council's Declaration there is reference to the need for environmental management and sustainable development, with specific comment on the health of ecosystems, management of biodiversity and conservation of natural resources (Cimenhaga 1996 in Mason 1997, 151). The environmental organization World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) was influential in the creation of the AEPS and actively supported the establishment of the Arctic Council. One issue identified by WWF as having significant environmental impacts on the Arctic region and requiring international cooperation has been tourism (Mason 1996, 464-465). In response to concerns about the impact of tourism in the Arctic, WWF initiated a project to encourage responsible tourism and this was launched in Svalbard in January 1996 with the specific intention of creating guidelines for tourism development (Johnston – Mason 1997 in Mason 2010, 152).

In 1995 the United Nations Environmental Program addressed the following codes of conduct that should be addressed in the tourism industry, with respect to its environmental impacts:

- To serve as a catalyst for dialogue between government and other bodies involved in tourism;
- To create an awareness in government and the industry of the need for sound environmental management;
- To heighten awareness amongst tourists of the need for appropriate behavior;
- To make host populations aware of the need for environmental protection;
- To encourage cooperation between governments agencies, host communities, industry and NGOs (UNEP 1995.)

These codes, however, are not limited simply to environmental issues, but also relate to socio-cultural matters, such as respect for local religious beliefs (Mason 1997, 153). In Finland, for instance, the following guidelines for the tourism sector have been worked out:

- need to build environmental viewpoints into planning for new tourism development;
- need to recognize the importance of local culture and traditions;
- need to make use of local products and services where possible;
- need to reduce traffic noise and related problems;
- need to give attention to landscape management;
- need to provide staff with appropriate training;
- encouragement for the use of public transport where possible;
- encouragement of human power rather than mechanical power where possible;
- advice and instructions on following paths and avoiding sensitive environments;
- need for honest marketing of tourist products (UNEP 1995 in Mason 1997, 159.)

Similar guidelines are also provided by the Sustainable Arctic Tourism portal. This portal provides a general overview of sustainability patterns and guidelines in the Arctic (Sustainable Arctic Tourism 2014).

Early articles likewise emphasize the fragile nature of the Arctic vegetation, stressing that it can be degraded very quickly, and might take much longer time to recover (Colin 1994, 21–23; Macklin 1991 in Mason 1997, 153). Many concerns are raised with regards to problems with litter removal, which is specifically dangerous for the Arctic due to its low temperatures (see cited

previously in 'Development of Tourism in the Arctic' section: Mason 1997, 155–157).

Similarly in 1993, WWF Sweden, in collaboration with the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, established a working group within the Swedish Tourist Industry to investigate ecotourism and sustainability and this group produced Ten Principles on Ecotourism (Sharp, 1995 in Mason 1997, 159), which apply not only to the Arctic but include recommendations on the need for tour operators to employ an environmental officer, the need to educate visitors, statements on the need to ensure that tourism benefits the local economy and the need to promote socially and ecologically sustainable tourism. Widstrand (1995, 8–9) claims that these ten principles should be applicable not just to the Swedish Arctic but to the Arctic and sub-Arctic region as a whole.

At the same time, despite all the guidelines produced, it is still argued that tourism in the Arctic suffers on sustainability as such, due to long distances and ensuing carbon emissions from air travel on long distances (see, for instance, Gelter 2013, 35 – on volumes of carbon emissions on Svalbard). The said emissions in returned are claimed to be a major source for the melting of the ice in polar territories (Gelter 2013, 5; Chapman 2009, 6–9).

United Nations Environmental Programme (2007, 5) outlet adds that the process is also mutual, since tourism impacts the environmental conditions, social norms, cultural integrity, and economic structure of the polar areas, as well as these factors themselves do impact tourism. The said outlet (2007, 15–18) further elaborates on impacts of tourism in the polar areas. It specifies such effects as negative impacts on the Arctic vegetation, increased noise harmful for the local fauna, conflicts between local and tourist hunters and fishermen, waste and pollution, utterly harmful in permafrost areas, etc. Among economic effects, such impacts are cited as higher economic

stability, benefits for the Arctic communities in extra cash flows and recruitment, preservation of local languages, customs. At the same time, such negative economic aspects as high costs of infrastructure maintenance and upholding emergency and rescue services, precaution measures against possible environmental hazards, and big portion of money flowing to chains and operators outside of the Arctic regions are likewise mentioned. Social and cultural effects are also described as somewhat contradictory, on one hand supporting the local languages, cultures and education, but on the other hand turning the local indigenous communities into a 'living museum', as well as causing negative cultural impacts due to intrusive behavior of incoming tourists (see also 'Development of Tourism in the Arctic' section).

Judgments are raised on whether tourism itself is causing good or bad impacts. Another controversial topic is how costs and benefits are distributed among the stakeholders (Snyder 2007, 49).

2.4 Perception of Destinations

Perception of a particular tourism destination held by potential tourists plays a crucial role in decision making and further consequence of events, when driven by this perception a tourist encounters the reality on the ground (EU 2000 and UNWTO 2007 in Tekoniemi-Selkälä 2013, 5). The former is often driven by the sense of identity of a particular destination and its attractions, ensuing in the capacity to attract the visitors. Perception is based on images held by people, which can be under internal or external. Scholars sometimes raise the issue that the perceptions held by potential customers result in them searching for authenticity, but focusing rather on stereotypical things. (Edelheim 2013, 2–5.)

It is an essential part of powerful tourism destination brands to build a competitive brand image for their products and services. In this regard it is

crucial to seek for understanding the images people have of destinations is generally recognized, since it affects the individual's subjective perception and subsequent behavior and destination choice. (Prebensen 2007, 747–748.)

Individuals' views or images of a particular place or a specific product are unique, constructed from their own memories, associations and imagination of that place or product. Techniques of assessment of those images are quite abundant, but most focusing on the components of those images, their structure and sources (Prebensen 2007, 748). Gunn (1972, in Prebensen 2007, 748) offers a stage theory of destination image with ranging organized with respect to the information source. The three phases or stages are distinguished: (1) organic image, (2) induced image and (3) modified-induced image. The phases distinguish between organic or naive non-tourist information about a destination (from television, books, school, hearsays), induced or promoted information (e.g. travel brochures, publicity and advertisements), and modified induced images, which are the result of personal experience of the destination. In other words, there is a difference in image perception according to the type of information source. Rønningen (1998 in Prebensen 2007, 749) suggests 5 image dimensions: (1) cultural, (2) urban-modern, (3) nature, (4) economic development, and (5) service (tourist specific).

The importance of these perceptions and images can hardly be overestimated, as some scholars even point out that travel decisions by potential customers are built more on their perception, rather than the reality (Chew 2013, 382). Evidently, perceptions are crucial factors impacting a potential customer's travel decision making and behavior (Chew 2014, 383). Tourism images as such cannot be considered in an isolated fashion, since they are social phenomena intertwined with prevailing societal structures and arrangements (Kanemasu 2013, 456). The formation stages of the said

images are also classified as follows: cognitive, the affective and the conative. The cognitive stage comprises attitudes of an individual towards an object that are based on perceptual fact rather than reality. The affective stage expresses the feelings and emotions towards an object: the neutral set results in a balanced image, the inept in a rather negative image and the evoked set in a rather positive image. The conative stage is action related and refers to the overall outcome (Hübner 2009, 154).

Eventually, researches also note that perception of the customer in the post-visit stage is an effective tool to assess the efficiency of brand-marketing of a destination. It is also possible to retrieve the perception of a destination and analyse how consistent the existing images are with those promoted within a tourism destination marketing strategy, it allows to evaluate the level of brand awareness among potential customers. Images held by customers are often cited to be as socially constructed, however, it is also claimed that it is a multidimensional concept, and there is an absence of a consensus about how exactly it can be empirically measured. The results derived from researches studying such perceptions can provide tourism managers with insights into brand-building endeavours. For instance, by examining Internet users' perceptions, managers will be able to build potential tourists' destination brand loyalty that results in revisit behaviour. There should be an attempt to understand the different influences of destination brand experience and destination brand value. Given the circumstances of the Arctic region, as an extreme destination, it is also important to take note of the fact that tourists' perceptions of security, risk, and safety likewise significantly impact destination image and tourist behaviour. (Boo 2009, 219, 221–227, 384.)

2.5 Usage of Notion of the Arctic in Tourism Industry in Lapland

As it is possible to retrieve, the notion or the term of the Arctic is widely exploited by tourism companies in Finnish Lapland, both in their logo names, as well as in the names of their services, for instance the safari companies Arctic Lifestyle (Arctic Lifestyle 2014), Safarctica (Safarctica 2014b), landmarks such as Arctic Snow Hotel (Arctic Snow Hotel 2014), trips and excursion names, such as 'Arctic Delight' (Safarctica 2014a), not to mention the Arctic Circle, where the Santa Claus Village is situated. Moreover, various events held in the localities now bear the name related to the Arctic, for instance 'Arctic Design Week' (Arctic Design Week 2014) or Arctic Rally (Arctic Rally 2014). The term is also exploited by neighboring countries and tourism industry stakeholders (see, for instance, Wild Sweden 2014, Swedish Lapland 2014a, 2014 b, 2014c, VisitNorway 2014, Russian Arctic 2014). It is therefore evident that the identity of 'the Arctic' has its place in the destination brand management in Finnish Lapland. The issue which is especially interesting to elaborate on, inter alia, is how this image is perceived, and how the exploitation of this brand eventually could be enhanced, adjusted or harmonized, given the certain overlapping of different identities exploited in tourism industry in Finnish Lapland.

2.6 Tourism Experience Stages – from pre-Visit to post-Visit

A touristic journey can be roughly divided into three main stages: pre-visit, visit and post-visit. Whatever tourists' perceptions are at the outset, they will inevitably be shaped by their first encounter with the tourism destination. This contact may take different forms depending on how they travel to the destination, what their place of arrival in the destination is, the first person they meet and various other factors (Tekoniemi-Selkälä 2013, 2). Hence,

attention should be paid not only to the core parts of a tourist's visit, but also to the pre-visit stage of their journey. As cited previously, the premises for initiating a journey to a destination are embodied by the pre-visit images held by a person, pre-visit information that person acquires, which further ensues into decision making and real actions (conative stage, see above) (EU 2000 and UNWTO 2007 in Tekoniemi-Selkälä 2013, 5), see Figure 1.

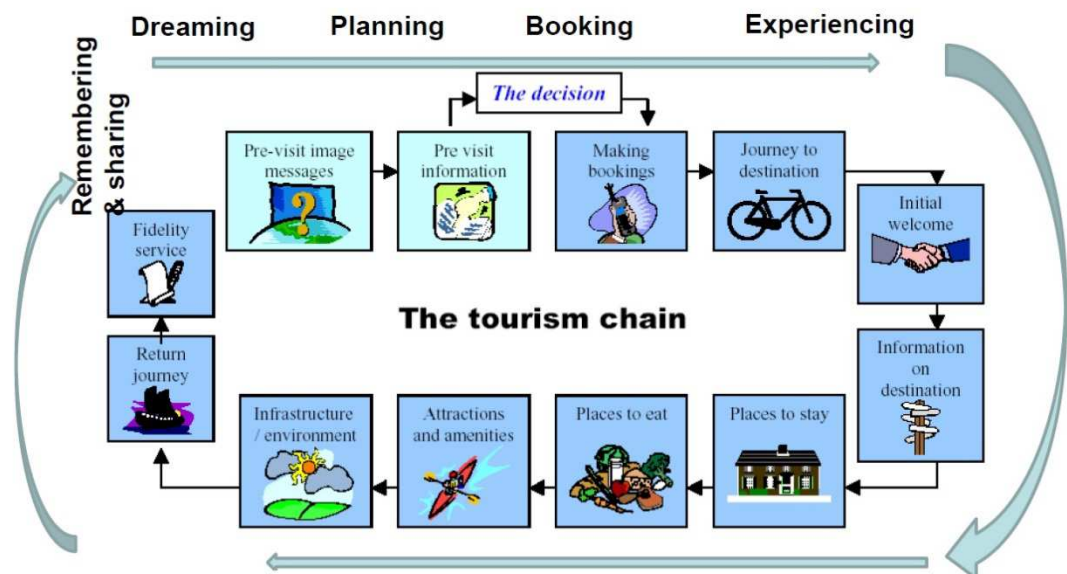


Figure 1. Tourism Chain (UNWTO 2007, 22 in Tekoniemi-Selkälä 2013, 5)

In other words, tourism customer satisfaction is measured by a comparison between pre-travel expectations and evaluations of experiences at the destination (Chen 2011, 249).

The issue of how the initial perception and images of a destination held by a tourist match up with what he has really seen on the ground leads to another important stage of a journey – the post-visit stage. It is therefore evident that tourist pre-visit perception toward a destination is a direct antecedent of post-visit satisfaction, intention to revisit and willingness to recommend the destination, all of which are prerequisites for creating a competitive tourism market; these are prerequisite factors for measuring destination competitiveness as such (Chen 2011, 259). See Figure 2:

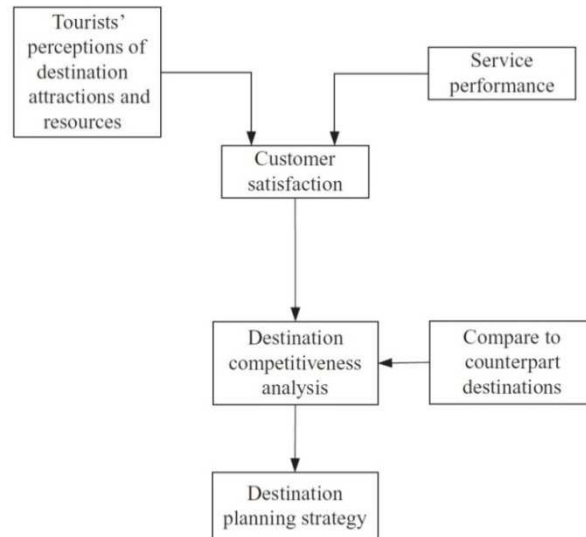


Figure 2. Tourism Customer Satisfaction Framework (Chen 2011, 251)

In modern informational world it is becoming more and more crucial, since the word spreads quicker, and feedback from acquaintances can have a great effect on decision making. It also paves the path for possible further customer relationship and repetitions of the journey, as well as it can impact the images and perceptions of other people (Tekoniemi-Selkälä 2013, 5, 7), see Figure 3.

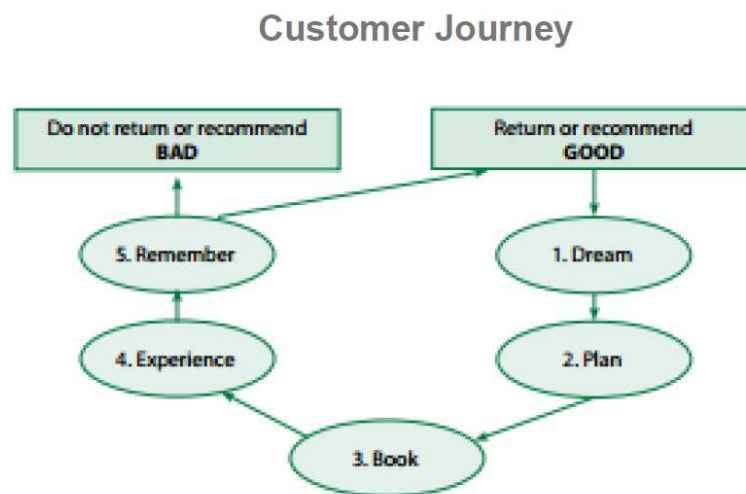


Figure 3: Customer Journey (UNWTO 2007 in Tekoniemi-Selkälä 2013, 5).

2.7 Usage of Images, 'Daydreaming' and Narratives as a Key Tool in Tourism and Destination Development

Places usually have powerful symbolic features having a strong effect on a destination image perception (Hunter & Yong, 2007 in Chen 2011, 249). It is commonly recognized that tourism is more and more turning into a 'dream industry'. Therefore, destinations are more and more covered with narratives, 'story-telling', daydreaming and imaginaries (Salazar 2012, 865, 876) which also turns to be a crucial aspect in branding and marketing of destinations. It implies that having a clever account of what associations clients share about a particular region or destination is utterly important to be utilized in destination marketing and in the service compilations on the ground. Destinations may have evolving identities, which may constitute an important aspect of a destination image construct (Salazar 2012, 866).

Creation of the distant image of a destination obviously plays a crucial role in improving interaction with tourism consumers and as a result tourist expectations could be better managed. Hence, destinations should not be regarded only as physical space, not only about the location. It is evident that travel experience is also bound by the dreams and fantasies of consumers. Tourists bear an image of a destination even if they have never been there, that is why scholars claim that destinations should be seen, metaphorically, as narratives rather than products. (Clarke 2013, 93.)

At the same time, in modern world it is highly important for destinations not to get 'stuck' in one particular narrative or image associated with a region, which could potentially spoil further development of the destination. It is clever in a way to 'diversify' the exploitation of narratives and story-telling in marketing of destinations (Edelheim 2013, 4). Tourism in a way can be said

to be an 'image production industry', where stories, images, desires are the main drivers of the business (Salazar 2012, 865-866).

Scholars often mention that planning of a destination should include rely on information from such sources as local and external perceptions of a place, as expressed in jokes, songs, literature, myths, tourist guides, media coverage and conventional wisdom (Smith 2003, 158). It is extremely important to understand the images of a destination potential customers share, because they affect the decision making of individuals. Furthermore, the perceptions held by potential customers are top value for brand marketing and developing a region into a successful tourism destination (Prebensen 2007, 747–748).

It is reasonable to assume that the Arctic has vast opportunities in creating a perfect brand image of the destination as a whole, as well as of particular regions which are part of the Arctic under the common umbrella. The purpose of the present study is to help it.

2.8 Perception of the Arctic – Theoretical Material Available

Researches about the perceptions of the Arctic as tourist destination are quite scarce. However, some main points adjacent to this topic can still be to some degree retrieved in the scholarly literature available.

Mason (1997, 153–154), for instance, underlines that the perception of the Arctic region as a wilderness is a major appeal for tourists, as well as the image of a hostile and at the same time fragile destination, possessing the clean environment, unsullied by human activity. Furthermore, the notion of a vast wilderness, relatively unvisited by tourists, nearly free from areas of people's high concentration develops the perception that the region provides

great scope for recreation, adventure and enjoyment. Another popular vision of the Arctic is being at the end of the world both geographically and culturally, a place to escape from their hasty urban life. In a way the Arctic resembles a place to escape from typical Western lifestyles. It is also argued that the Arctic carries mystic symbolism and it encourages contemplation about the links between humans, the earth and the universe (Johnston 1995, 27–35).

In addition, the presence of the indigenous peoples in the Arctic adds extra tourist appeal to the region. This serves as an attraction for tourists, their lifestyle, artefacts, manifestations of their activity, such as reindeer herding. The indigenous people are usually viewed by visitors as part of the Arctic environment and living in harmony with it. (Mason 1997, 154.)

Hübner (2009), in her thorough research dedicated to the perception of the Arctic and of Greenland, after studying the characteristics that respondents thoughtfully attribute to the Arctic, came to the conclusion that the level of awareness about the local culture, history, and indigenous peoples is rather high. The overall results of this research show that the perception of the Arctic is dominated by the images of nature, which TV sources tend to increase the associations with the ice. A large amount of naïve information affecting the images of the Arctic has been indicated by the research results, which raises questions of the potential effects of the climate change and the decrease of the ice level.

At the same time, the awareness of the geographical facts of the Arctic, rather than socio-demographical, prevailed. Ice and environmental features were the keywords with the strongest connection to the Arctic. The examination of information sources exposed that TV and newspapers were the major media referred to by respondents when receiving facts concerning the Arctic, with surprisingly low level of the Internet as a source. On the

whole, the results of this research demonstrate that the images of the Arctic held by the respondents are at an early stage of formation, that inert image sets prevail and fuse. (Hübner 2009, 163–165.)

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Patterns – Theory Overview

The topic of research patterns has thus far been dominated by discussions of the complementarity of quantitative and qualitative. When conducting a research, the major issues that should be addressed are: the research question, the accessibility of data, whether the data are or not quantified. The research techniques have seemed to be dominated by quantitative research while in the past years the qualitative research pattern gained more prominence, even though not overthrowing the dominance of the quantitative patterns. (Newman 1997, 13–16.)

Qualitative research can be described as a multimethod in focus, involving collection of a variety of empirical materials, with the help of cases studies, personal experience, introspective, life story, observations, interviews (Newman 1997, 16). Quantitative approach, on the other hand, relies on methods stemming from statistical analysis, and includes such techniques as inferential statistics, hypothesis testing, mathematical analysis, experimental and quasi-experimental design randomization, blinding, structured protocols, and questionnaires with limited range of predetermined responses (Slevitch 2011, 76).

Proponents of mixed usage of both methods have suggested that such approach is potentially superior to a single method design. However, there has been intense debate regarding whether or not it is appropriate to combine multiple methods that are often based on different paradigmatic assumptions. A number of researchers, at the same time, still claim that the coexistence of the two methods is possible and feasible and defend the efficiency of mixed-method approach. (Vankatesh 2013, 22.)

The usage of mixed method also varies in degree of co-involvement of each pattern. In some cases quantitative and qualitative research methods are used concurrently (i.e., independent of each other) or sequentially (e.g., findings from one approach inform the other), to understand a phenomenon of interest (Vankatesh 2013, 23).

Another pattern, labeled as conceptual research is also mentioned by scholars. Conceptual research is sometimes argued to be opposite to empirical research, and can be defined as a research strategy that sits mainly in the subjectivist / interpretivist paradigm (with possibilities for critical engagement), which includes attempts to formally and systematically reason about analytic statements regarding reality as well as the analytic practice and the practical ideas that have emerged from it. Furthermore, conceptual research includes, attempt to systematically clarify concepts. It is generally used to develop new concepts or to reinterpret existing ones. Since in this path of research concepts themselves eventually become an object of research, this research pattern is often characterized a too subjective, and its results unfalsifiable, thus, even though it bears a certain connection to the empirical reality, it rests in the intersection of science with philosophy and metaphysics. (Xin 2013, 70, 72.)

3.2 Destination Images and Perception Assessment Techniques

Acquisition of manufactured data with respect to perceptions and images of a destination most commonly takes places in forms of a quantitative survey through distribution of questionnaires, which reflect on the cognitive, the affective and the conative aspects of perception (see the 'Perception of Destinations section', Hübner A 2007, 156–157). Scholars cite a certain lack of qualitative techniques of assessment of perceptions of destinations (Prebensen 2007, 747). Most commonly, attitudes and attributes associated with a distant destination are researched. Cognitive aspect is usually studies

via inquiring about pictures, images, compiling attribute lists, words associated with a destination, affective stage is studies with the help of inquiring about expectations on what will be present on the ground in the tourism destination, while the conative stages is studies by asking about the degree of preparedness or eagerness to take some certain actions or to engage in certain behaviour (Prebensen 2007, 747).

In the present research the aim is to use predominantly the quantitative method, in form of a survey, where structured questionnaires are given to the respondents. Qualitative method is to be exploited by conducting an interview with Ilona Mettiäinen, who is a scholar at the Arctic Center in Rovaniemi, Lapland and, whose work is related to research of the Arctic and / or tourism in the Arctic. The two methods are going to be used in parallel from each other, and are not going to intersect. The qualitative interview will be used as a supplement to the quantitative survey. The said methods to my view are the best ways to search for answers to the research questions, and the predominance of the quantitative survey will allow it to be more reliable and unbiased, while the unstructured interviews with scholars will allow to better and more precisely interpret the achieved results of the survey. The interviewee will not know about the results which the author will have reached in the quantitative survey, which further secures the reliability of the acquired data.

The questionnaire will be given to foreign visitors spotted in Rovaniemi, Finland, foreign customers of tourism companies in Rovaniemi, and will also be distributed in form of an electronic survey among people who do not live in the Arctic. The desired goal is to make the variety of respondents as diverse as possible.

3.3 Content of Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains a number of alternative, scale and open-ended questions. The aim is to reflect on the cognitive, the affective and the conative stages of perception. The content of the questionnaire has been made available in two languages – English and Russian, the templates can be found in appendix no. 1.

The questionnaire begins with a number of questions, inquiring about the respondents' gender, age, country of origin and field of occupation, which helps acquire a picture of the background of a respondent. The following question inquired from the respondents what countries or regions belong to the Arctic from their view. The paper questionnaire also gives respondents an opportunity to graphically indicate what regions are within the Arctic with the help of the map. These questions are open-ended, in order to give respondents full freedom in their imagination, instead of disturbing them by offering some particular options. Another question also inquires about what sources of information are most valuable for respondents, with respect for getting information about the Arctic. The latter has a form of the scale question, with an open-ended answer option available. Likewise, another open-ended question about the overall view of the Arctic shared by the respondents is offered, in order to enrich the mere list of attributed previously given by the respondents. Lastly, an alternative question about the level of awareness about travel opportunities of the Arctic is offered to the respondents.

Apart from the question related to what countries belong to the Arctic, cognitive stage is also studied through the question of what associations, images or characteristics people have about the Arctic. In order to acquire a full list of possible perception attributed, this question is likewise open-ended.

The affective stage of perception is studied with the help of questions, inquiring about the anticipation of respondents, with respect to what they expect to see in the destination. They have a form of scale questions, asking respondents to assess the relevance of the options offered, as well as an opportunity for an open-ended question reserved. The options offered for respondents' assessment include a number of peculiar tourism services and products. The stage is further studied with the help of open-ended questions with respect to the respondents' overall vision of tourism in the Arctic.

The conative stage is set to explore the level of preparedness of the respondents to take some actions with respect to the subject of the research. With a multi-selection question the questionnaire offers the respondents to choose options, which in their view best express the possible impediments, which might hinder their possible travel to the Arctic. The said question also reserves an option for an open-ended answer. Another alternative question inquires about the type of travel the respondents would theoretically prefer to use when travelling to the Arctic – a package tour or a self-organized individual journey, with an alternative open-ended option reserved. Lastly, the questionnaire inquired about the likelihood of travelling to the Arctic, with the help of an alternative question.

3.4 Interpretation Methods – Margins of Generalization

The results acquired are only a piece of the overall puzzle, due to the relative scarcity of researches of this kind and the specific location where they survey has been conducted and the amount of the respondent. Possible bias on the question of whether Finland belongs to the Arctic may stem from the fact that the survey has to be big extend been conducted in Finland. Likewise, the same bias with respect to whether Russia belongs to the Arctic might stem from the fact that a big part of respondents were Russians. At the same time,

the findings show the visible trends of perception of the Arctic and illustrate the way the respondents anticipate this destination, to the degree applicable to the range of respondents surveyed.

4 EVALUATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

4.1 Findings

The respondent range of those who participated in the survey is as follows. The total number of respondents was 32. Among them were 13 male respondents and 19 female ones. The respondents were from Russia (16), Germany (3), the Netherlands (2), Hong Kong (2), Pakistan (2), Latvia (1), China (2), Nigeria (2), Kazakhstan (1), and Finland (1). The content of the filled in questionnaires provides answers to the research questions, and gives enough of examples of how people see and perceive the Arctic.

Figure 4 shows the visualization of the most popular answers to the questions of what countries and regions were a part of the Arctic:

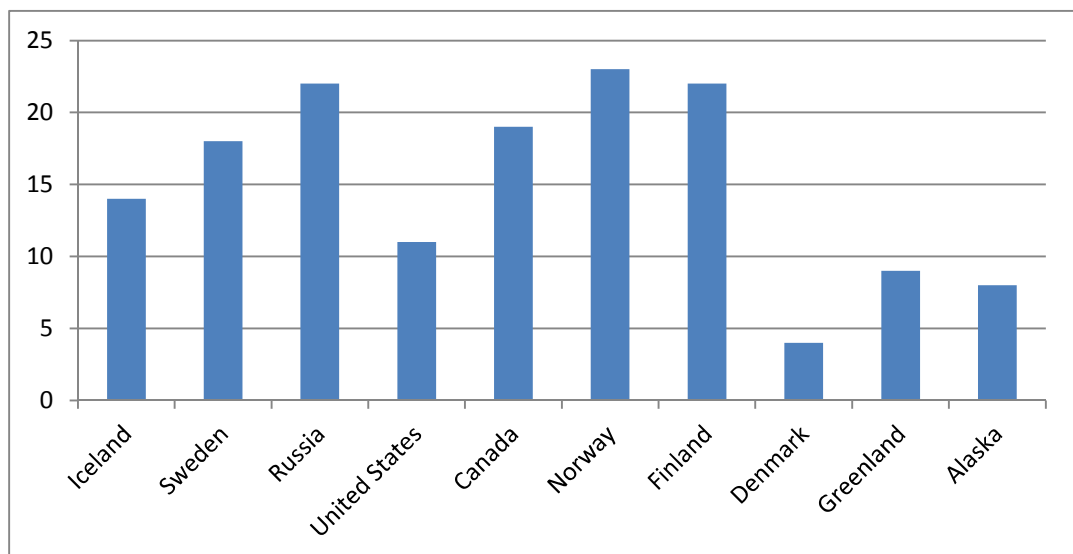


Figure 4. Countries and Regions, which are Believed to Belong to the Arctic Region

The results indicate that countries most associated with the Arctic are Norway, Russia, Finland, Canada and Sweden. Among interesting rare regions and countries, not indicated in the diagram above, there were such as Antarctica (2 times), Arctic Ocean surface (1 time), Faroe Islands (1 time).

The author has failed to notice any specific correlation between the answers with relation to the respondents' age or background. At the same time, as mentioned in the 'Interpretation Methods and Margins of Generalization' section, for obvious reasons, respondents from Russia more often tend to indicate Russia as belonging to the Arctic, as well as Finland has been frequently named as such, supposedly due to the location where a big part of the survey took place.

Below is the list of associations and attributes given to the Arctic by the respondents, together with the number of times this association has been mentioned by the respondents:

northern lights (19)	tundra (2)	sleigh (1)
snow (17)	Inuit's (2)	warm clothing (1)
polar bears (17)	snowmobile (2)	wind (1)
ice (15)	dog sledge (2)	bright sun (1)
cold (12)	sauna (2)	lakes (1)
reindeer (8)	indigenous peoples (2)	hot water (1)
midnight sun (7)	small trees (2)	coffee (1)
polar night (7)	frozen lakes (2)	hot tea (1)
icebergs (4)	open range (2)	hot wine (1)
husky (4)	trees (2)	towns (1)
moss (4)	white (2)	people (1)
Santa Claus (4)	nature (2)	sea (1)
igloo (4)	lack of people (2)	mines (1)
penguins (3)	landscapes (2)	ice bar (1)
seals (3)	ski resorts (2)	emptiness (1)
orca (3)	fishing (2)	polar researchers (1)
ice floes (3)	ice fishing (2)	purity (1)
mountains (3)	arctic circle (2)	fresh air vast landscapes (1)
animals (3)	permafrost (1)	fog (1)
whales (3)	bright (1)	long winter (1)
belugas (3)	ice-breakers (1)	Lapland (1)
forest (3)	berries (1)	minerals (1)
elk (3)	snowshoeing (1)	four seasons (1)
dark (2)	cross-country skiing (1)	ice melt (1)
freeze (2)	frozen rivers (1)	Eskimos (1)
frost (2)	ocean (1)	

The following reasons were named as having a capacity to serve as impediments to travelling to the Arctic, from the suggested options as well as the open-end answer option reserved:

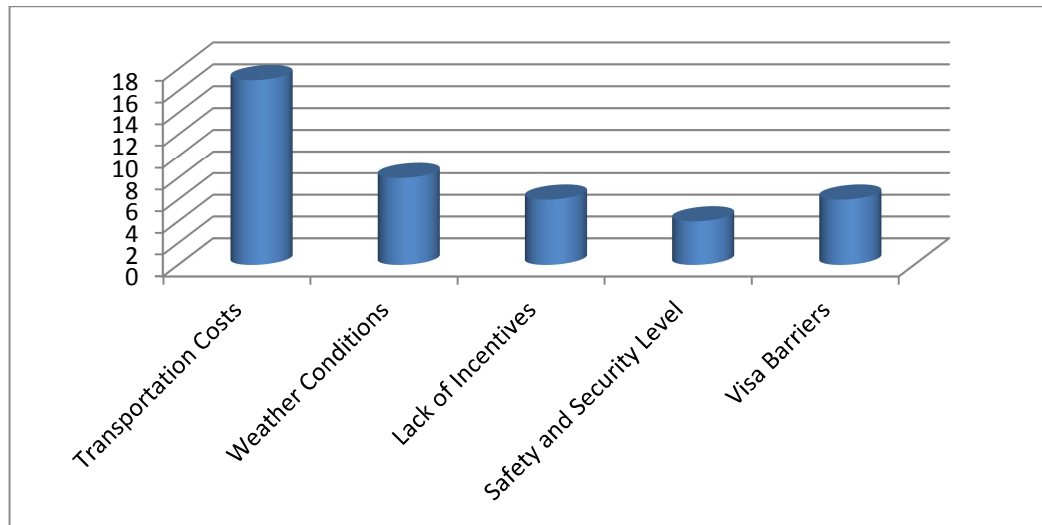


Figure 5. Impediments to Travelling to the Arctic

Additional possible obstacles, mentioned by the respondents in the open-end section were: pollution (1), lack of direct flights (1) and language barrier (1).

Below is the average ranking, given by respondents to different sources of information, from which they got information about the Arctic, in a scale from 0 to 5, where '0' is 'Haven't received information about the Arctic from this source at all', while '5' is 'Mostly received information about the Arctic from this source'.

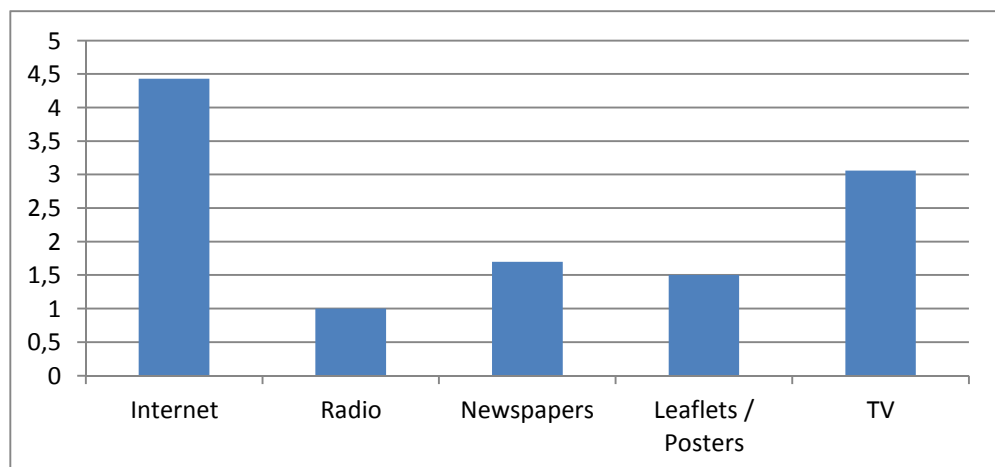


Figure 6. Popularity of Sources of Information about the Arctic

Other sources (from the open-end part reserved) mentioned by the respondents were: books (3), other people / friends (5), travel guides (1), educational programs (3) and tourism companies (1).

Below is the visualized ratio of the level of preference between a package group tour and an individual self-organized trip, with an open ended answer option additionally available:

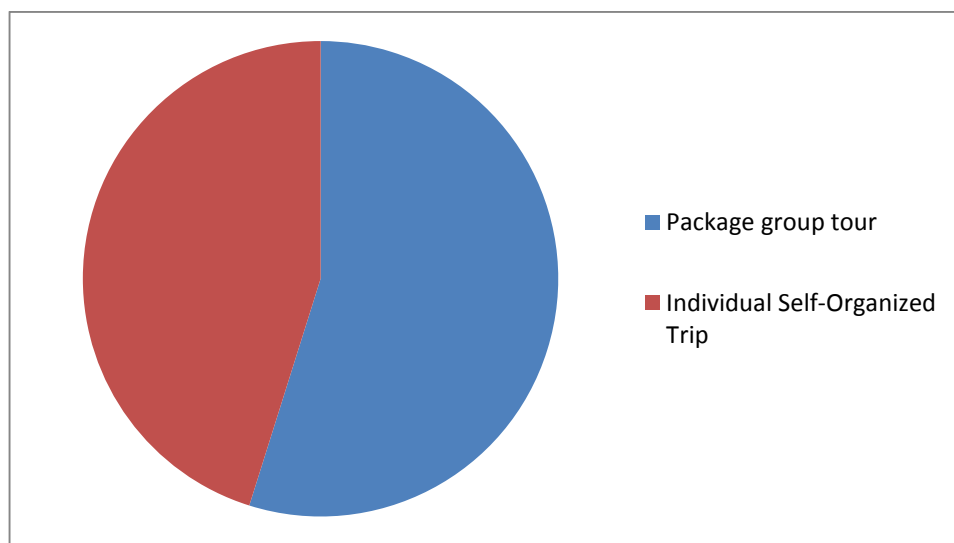


Figure 7. Preferred Types of Travel Organization

One another answer given in the open-end section was 'travelling on an ice-breaker tour'.

The following are the average ranking, given by respondents to tourism services and products, with respect to the level of expectation to see those products and services during their possible travel to the Arctic, where '0' is 'not expected at all' and '5' is 'most expected', with an additional open-end answer option available.

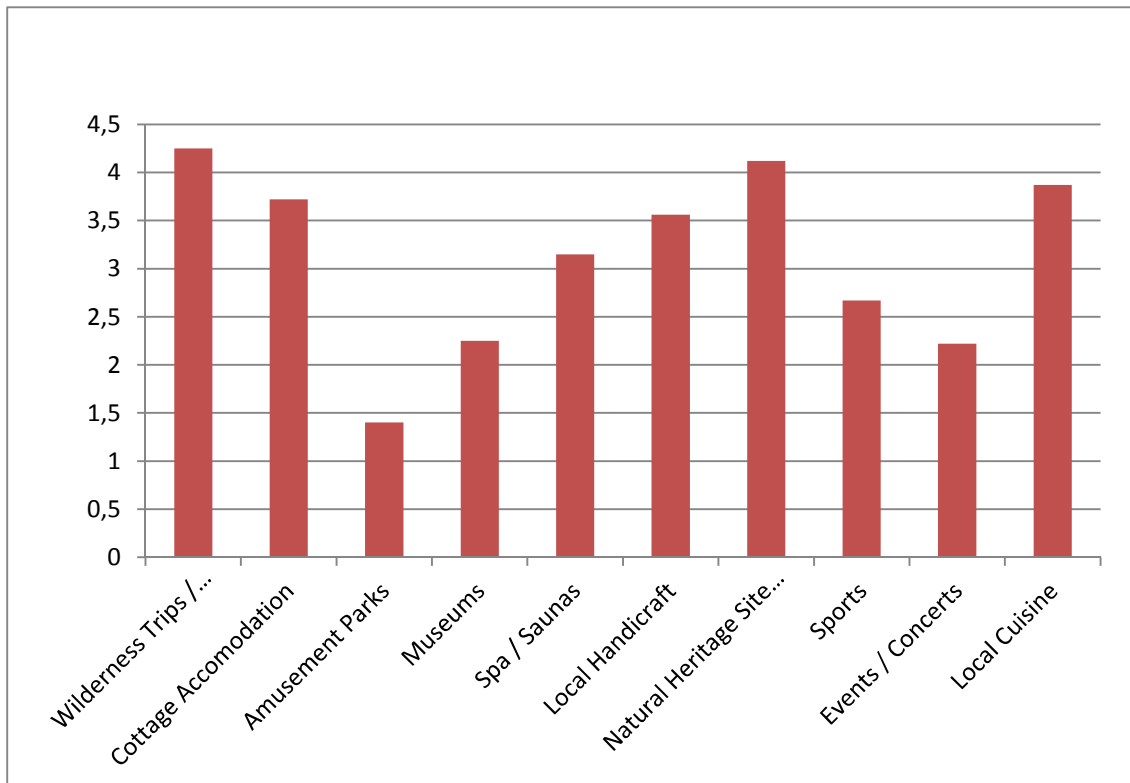


Figure 8. Expected Tourism Services and Products

Others answers written in the open-end section were: bicycle tours (1), natural preservation parks visits (1).

Next is the visualization of the results of the following question, inquiring about the level of awareness of the tourism network and travel opportunities are shown below, with respect to options, chosen by the respondents.

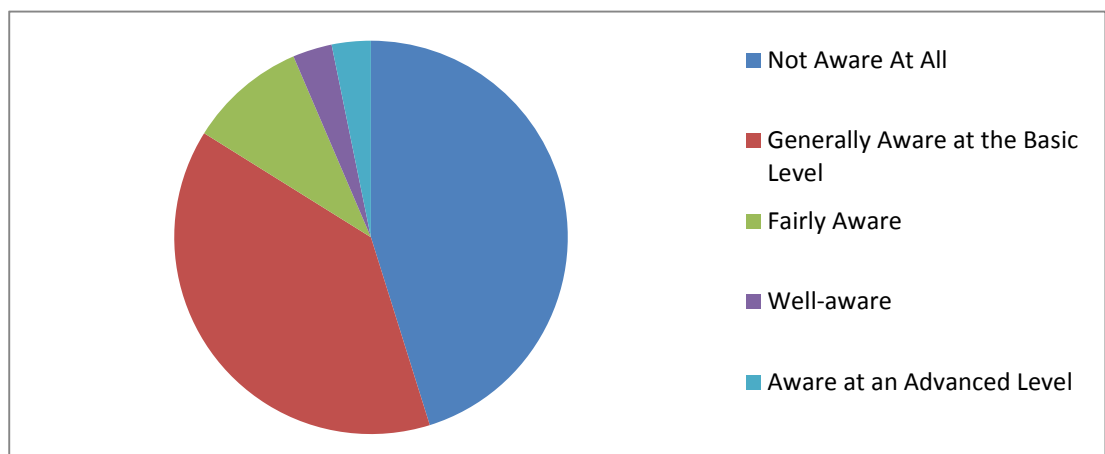


Figure 9. Level of Awareness about the Tourism Network in the Arctic and Travelling Opportunities

Below are the results of the assessment of the level of preparedness of the respondents for travelling to the Arctic, with the layout of choices from the proposed options.

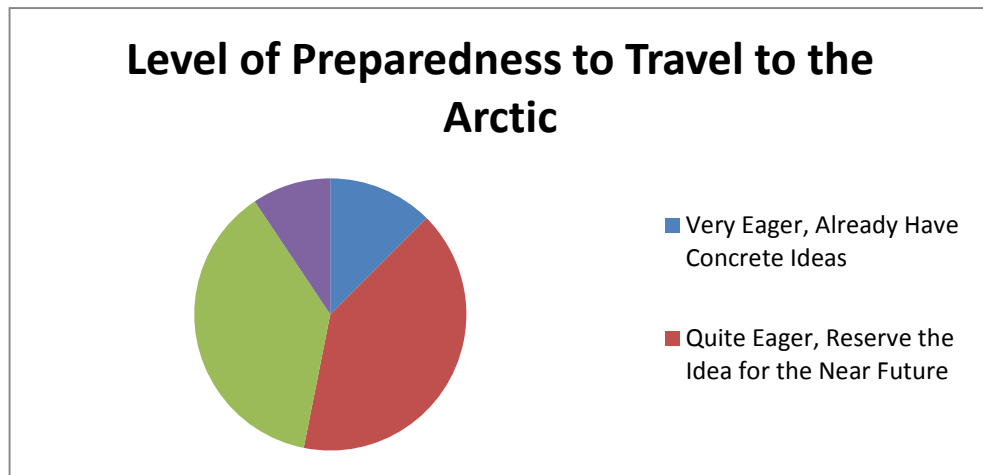


Figure 10. Level of Preparedness to Travel to the Arctic

Below is the citing of the most interesting comments from the open-ended answers to questions about the general image of the Arctic and tourism in the Arctic region:

‘Rovaniemi seems to be more promoted as a Lappish city, rather than an Arctic one’.

‘Travel programme should not be monotonous’.

‘The biggest association I have is the virgin nature, unique fauna, area rich of natural extractable resources, research stations’.

‘It seems to be a very interesting option for travelling, but, on the other hand, fear of acute frost can scare people from travelling there’.

‘It seems like the end of the world, the extreme weather, permafrost, very few people’.

‘I think ice-breaker cruises would be a great perspective’.

‘Land covered by snow, silent, cold, nature, clean environment, harsh living conditions’.

'A lot of minerals, recently the melting of the ice-cap is observed. Traveling to the Arctic is an extreme thing, not suitable for everyone'

'Travel agencies must guarantee security for travelers to the Arctic region'.

'An extreme thing, but there always will be people who would want to do such a thing'.

'People to whom this region is new would rather travel in a group, if you know the region better you can also travel on your own. I personally would prefer going alone, not to limit myself only to what is pre-made for me in a tourism package'.

With respect to the graphic determination of the Arctic, most commonly respondents circled the same areas they named in the open-end section, with somewhat more precise indication of Svalbard and Greenland. A few examples are shown on the next page.

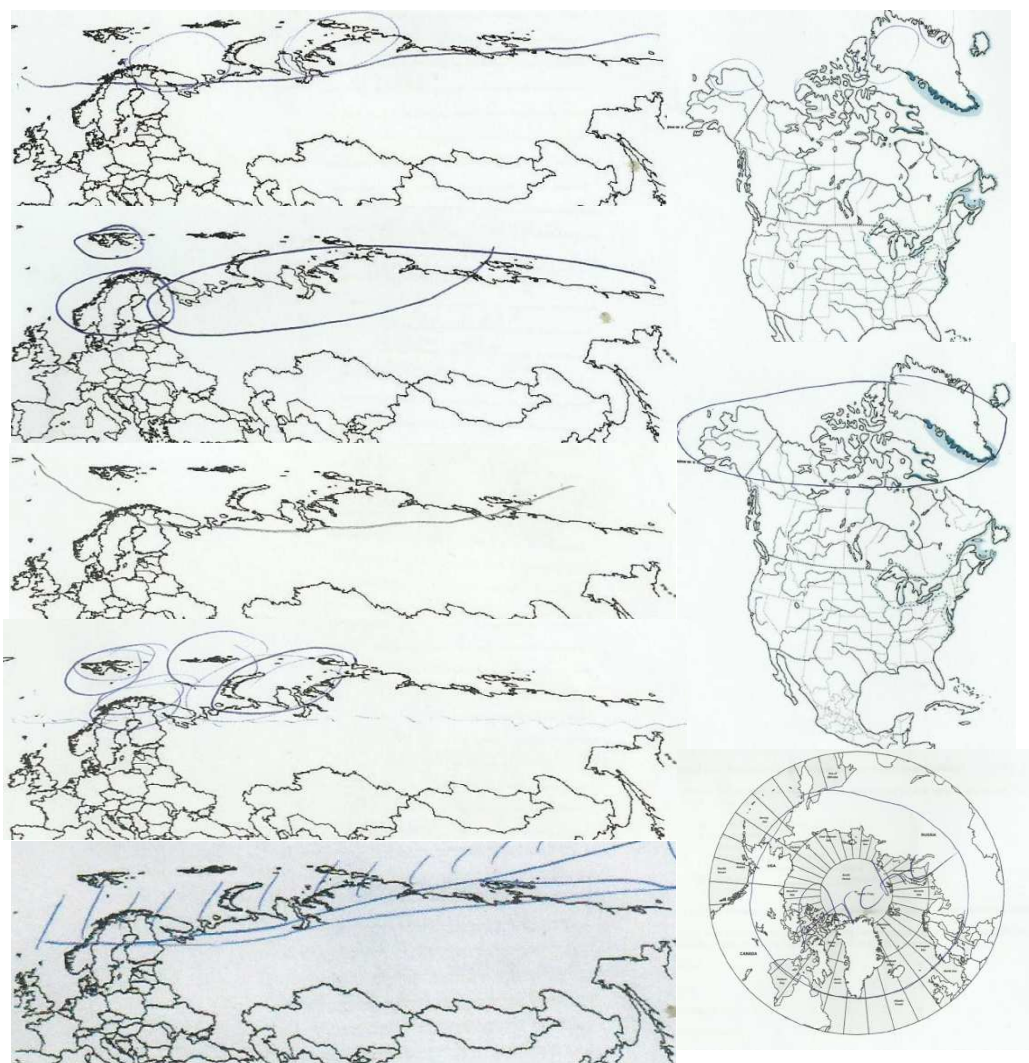


Figure 11. Graphic Indication of Areas Believed to Belong to the Arctic

According to the data indicated previously, we may conclude that people tend to associate the Arctic mostly with the countries of Scandinavia, as well as with northern areas of Russia and Canada. In the majority of cases, attributes given to the Arctic are about the nature and natural phenomena, such as the weather, light and darkness, northern lights, ice and snow, polar bears and huskies. Additionally, many respondents link the Arctic to the indigenous peoples, while some see associations with Christmas and Santa Claus. At the same time, it is possible to retrieve that images more peculiar to the areas of high Arctic dominate.

Similar trend can be seen when evaluating the degree of expectation towards various tourist services and products in the Arctic, as it is clearly seen that activities related to nature are most anticipated. This is followed by local cuisine, handicraft and spa and sauna services.

At the same time, the general level of awareness about the tourism network and travel opportunities of the Arctic is quite low among the respondents. No correlation between the level of awareness and most popular sources of information, inquired by the questionnaire, has been retrieved. However, a clear correlation is visible with respect to the choice between a ready-made tourism package or a self-organized individual trip, where the more aware about the tourism network a respondent is, the more prepared to take a self-organized individual trip he is.

The conative stage of perception, with respect to the level of preparedness to travel to the Arctic, is fairly promising, with the majority of respondents either reserving the idea for the near future, or remaining undecided about going in the future. The most popular reason, seen as capable to hinder the travel is the high transportation costs.

Based on the open-end questions with respect to perception of the Arctic, it is likewise possible to see that respondents tend to see it as an extreme destination or an edge of the world.

4.2 Qualitative Interview

As mentioned previously, in addition to the quantitative survey, a qualitative interview has been conducted with Ilona Mettiäinen, a researcher and scholar, working at the Arctic Center in Rovaniemi, Lapland. This choice of the interviewee was excellent, because she has been conducting research

work and given lectures directly related to tourism in the Arctic, its various aspects as well as issues of perception and future perspectives. The questions of the interview resembled the research questions of the current thesis project, also inquiring about the views of Mettiäinen on the future of the usage of the Arctic brand.

According to the answers of Mettiäinen, the general public still has quite a vague image of the Arctic, despite the constantly growing interest to this region. She affirms that images of the high Arctic still seem to be popular pictures held about the Arctic in general, which has its sources also in the existing tourism marketing. The presence of local indigenous populations also has its niche in the general image of the public, which according to Mettiäinen, sometimes shadows the non-indigenous peoples and cultures, present in the area. Furthermore, the identity of the Arctic nowadays more and more turns into a built construct, given the example of Rovaniemi, where the notion of the Arctic tourism greatly intersects with Christmas tourism, due to the presence of Santa Claus (Mettiäinen 2014a).

This is what she said:

‘...there are of course images, not the least because of tourism marketing, on how is the Arctic area... it seems that very often that pictures that people have in mind about the Arctic are actually from the high Arctic, such as sea, ice, glaciers and polar bears’

‘...are we able to diversify the picture of the Arctic, so that it would encompass also places without snow at that moment... that would be beneficial, or strategically wise for Rovaniemi’

‘ it seems beneficial to lean to the more wide Arctic identity. On the other hand... On the other hand, Lapland is aiming to develop summer tourism, and to that the image of the Arctic as something... as the land of snow and ice doesn’t work’

‘I don’t think it can be totally solved with tourism marketing. But... it can give a seed to that, so that people would have more ideas about the Arctic. Even with the Arctic Circle... we wouldn’t be Arctic otherwise, but we have this Arctic Circle definition. The Arctic Circle is about the light conditions. And it’s

a very remarkable thing. And even if otherwise, let's say, the tree line and so on change because of the climate change, so this is not going to change a lot. Because, if the level of snow cover is delayed very much, and still the light conditions as such do remain, it means that it will be very very dark in November and December. If there is no snow. And that's the worst kaamos there's ever been'. (Mettiäinen 2014a.)

Given this opinion of the scholar, one may come to a conclusion that it would be wise to widen the scope of the Arctic identity, and make it exceed the naïve images help by the people about it. This is consistent with the results of the quantitative survey, indicating the dominance of the high Arctic images, while other attributes could possibly serve as a potential for enhancing the Arctic identity and awareness of the Arctic among the potential customers.

These concepts show that the root-causes of this pattern of perception certainly are not limited only to tourism, but to a certain degree is dominated by mass media and growing political interest to the Arctic in general. Tourism marketing, however, may give its contribution to the enhancement of the level and depth of awareness about the Arctic, which potentially could benefit the stakeholders in such destinations as Finnish Lapland.

4.3 Analysis of Consistency with Previous Researches

The results of the survey affirm that nature plays the dominant role in the Arctic tourism, followed by the landmarks related to indigenous people, their handicrafts, as well as the local cuisine, which goes in accord with the elaborations of Mason (1997, 153–154). The popularity of naïve images of the high Arctic related to icebergs and polar bears indicated in the survey also resembles the results reached by Hübner (2009, 163–165).

At the same time, the most popular source of information revealed by the present study was the Internet, which contrasts with the research by Hübner, which found a surprisingly low level of the Internet, as a source of information about the Arctic. Moreover, in her work Hübner found that newspapers were

also a major source of information about the Arctic, which in the current survey newspapers got minimum rating among the given options. Still, TV has been described as a major source of information about the Arctic both in the present thesis work and in Hübner's research (2009, 163–165).

5 DISCUSSION

Based on the research outcome, it may be concluded that the image of the Arctic is certainly a construct, impacted by various factors. However, in this thesis the most significant of them have been indicted and classified. Despite the mainstream image line still dominated by classic images of icebergs, snow and ice, there is still a growing awareness about the local peoples, interest in their culture, handicrafts and food.

As mentioned by Mettiäinen in her interview with the thesis' author, the image of the Arctic is not very diversified, which makes it a bit stuck in the high Arctic attributes. Given the current challenges of the climate change, it certainly could serve as a potential threat for areas generally sharing somewhat the Arctic identity, but those physically far from the high Arctic areas, which images generally are equalized with the Arctic as a whole (Mettiäinen 2014b).

From the angle of the author, the local businesses, tourism boards and marketing agencies should keep in mind that getting stuck at some certain niche or image might have a bad effect in case of unpredictable changes in the operating environment. Getting a destination brand diversified is a tricky, but implementable task.

The 'Arcticness' of Finnish Lapland can be both a beneficial asset, as well as a trap for the long run future. The exploitation of the global Arctic brand in a wise sustainable way would be a key tool for keeping a destination successful. Obviously, it would be unwise not to get benefits from the umbrella Arctic brand and image, since it nowadays draws so much international attention worldwide. Apparently, tourism development boards and agencies should strive to maximize the use of the 'Arcticness' of their destinations, but at the same time one should be careful to diversify and promote the non-high-Arctic associations, associated with the Arctic, which

have been indicated through this research. More focus could be put on promoting those other aspects of the Arctic (food, handicrafts, midnight sun and polar night etc.) along with the more traditional naïve images of the high Arctic (icebergs, polar bears, etc.). Furthermore, the results of the present research indicate that high transportation costs are perceived as main possible obstacle to travelling to the Arctic. Perhaps, in addition to the said diversification of the brand image of the Arctic, it could also be highlighted that unlike the very high Arctic areas, territories of Lapland, while being a part of the Arctic, are relatively more accessible.

Interestingly, even though replies to the question inquiring about attributes associated in the Arctic are dominated by features of the high Arctic, as said before, the replies to the question about the level of expectedness towards tourism products and services at the destination reveal that not only nature-related services dominate, but also that other types of products related to handicrafts, local cuisine, saunas and spa services, which implies that the possible service range which can impact the general image of the Arctic is quite wide.

In the future, it would be clever to research not simply how people perceive the Arctic in general, but also how the Arctic brand correlates and intersects with other brands and identities present in Finnish Lapland, such as Lapland, land of Santa Claus, Scandinavia, etc, surveying a wider range of respondents. It could be very useful and interesting to see how these identities interact with each other, and which overplay which, in order to take it into account in strategic destination planning.

6 CONCLUSION

The initial aim of this thesis project has been to reveal how people see the Arctic as tourism destination, as well as to provide discussion from the practical-oriented scale about how businesses should act and develop in that respect. Such information had been successfully collected, which gave necessary empiric data allowing to answer the research question.

The Arctic tourism is constantly growing, and recently more and more stakeholders are trying to benefit from the Arctic brand, which will most likely ensue into harsher competition in the future. In the light of this, it is essential to anticipate the expectation of customers, assess the realities of a destination adequately, and conduct operational and marketing work accordingly. This research is only a small part of the overall puzzle, but it already provides answers with respect to what people's expectations about tourism in the Arctic are.

The acquisition process and analysis has been very interesting to conduct. The respondents and the interviewee have been very interested in the research topic, and were enthusiastic about expressing their views and thoughts. The findings give a good insight to this topic, while the analysis of the theoretical background sheds light on the overall framework of tourism in the Arctic with respect to the evolution of its positioning, perception and marketing. The qualitative and quantitative methods worked well since they were utilized in parallel, allowing to research this topic from different aspects and provide a more holistic view of perception of the Arctic trends and prospects.

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire.



Lapland University Consortium
LUC
TOURISM

Survey

Dear Reader!

I would like to invite you to participate in this survey, which is a part of a research dedicated to associations, anticipations, expectations and perceptions of the notion of the Arctic, from the perspective of tourism.

The survey is anonymous. Your honesty, openness and reflectiveness would be most appreciated.

Thank you,

On behalf of the Arctic Power research center,
Mikhail Malinin (mikhail.malinin@arcticpower.fi)

1. Gender

Please, choose your gender:

- Male
- Female

2. Age

Please, indicate your age by choosing from the following ranges:

- below 18
- 18 – 30
- 31 – 40
- 41 – 49
- above 49

3. Country of Origin

Please, indicate the country, which you originally come from:

4. Occupational Field


Please, choose the field of your occupation:

- Administrative and Office Work
- Architecture & Engineering
- Arts & Design
- Building & Construction
- Factory Production
- Finance
- Community and Social Services
- Education & Teaching
- IT
- Farming, Fishing & Forestry
- Food & Culinary Industry
- Healthcare & Medicine
- Maintenance, Technical Work

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www.luc.fi/tourism



- Law & Legal Services
 - Management
 - Military
 - Mining & Extraction
 - Sales & Retail
 - Transport & Logistics
 - Tourism & Hospitality
 - Student
 - Other: _____ (please, specify)
-

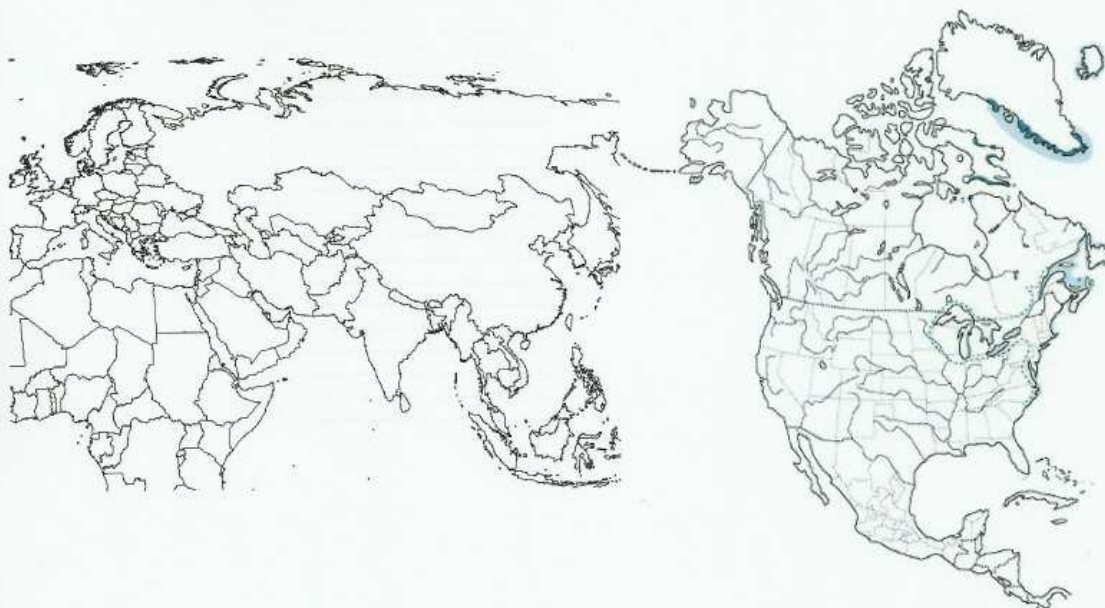
5. What countries / areas do you think are a part of the Arctic?

Remember that there is no right or wrong answer. Please, write your ideas below:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

6. How would you graphically determine the Arctic region?

Remember that there is no right or wrong answer. Please, circle the areas which you think belong to the Arctic region in each of the maps below:



Natural heritage sites trip	0	1	2	3	4	5
Sports	0	1	2	3	4	5
Events / concerts	0	1	2	3	4	5
Local Cuisine	0	1	2	3	4	5
Others: _____ (Which? Please, specify)						

13. What general image of the Arctic region do you have in your mind?

Please, explain briefly with your own words

14. How aware are you of tourism network and travel opportunities of the Arctic region?

Please, choose one option from the suggested list below:

- Not aware at all
- Generally aware at the basic level
- Fairly aware
- Well-aware
- Aware at an advanced level

15. How eager do you feel about travelling to the Arctic?

Please, choose on option from the suggested list below:

- Very eager, already have concrete ideas
- Quite eager, reserve the idea for near future
- Undecided, might be possible in the future or not
- Not eager at all, not interested in travelling to the Arctic

15. Other comments

Please, share any other comments you might have with regard to your vision of tourism in the Arctic region:

Thank you for your answers!