SUMMER TOURISM: OFF-SEASON ACTIVITIES AT TOURIST RESORTS IN LAPLAND

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Background

- Intention of research project is to identify common tourist practices in summer in context of nature-based tourism.
- Objective of this work is to reveal summertime consumer behavior of tourists at tourist resorts in Lapland and their participation in both commercial and independent nature-based tourism activities.
- Research interest concerns possibilities of nature-based tourism companies to benefit from increased summer tourism, as some entrepreneurs in Lapland say that it is hard to get a living from nature-based tourism in summer (Nikkola, 2010).
- Results presented here are empirical because topic off-season or summer activities of tourists at Lapland’s tourist resorts has not been studied a lot.
Previous research

• There is little previous research about summertime nature-based tourism at Lapland’s tourist resorts, but some information is available
  - official accommodation statistics of Statistics Finland
  - International summer tourism survey of Matkailun edistämiskeskus MEK (2010)
  - visitor surveys of National Parks made by Metsähallitus (e.g. Aikio, draft 2012; Nyman, 2012; Rantasalo & Ylläsjärvi, 2011)
• In the Nordic countries summer tourists are mostly domestic independent travelers often on a round trip by own car with family (e.g. Flagestad, Svensk, Nordin & Lexhagen, 2004; Löfgren, 1999), and are reluctant to spend money on commercial outdoor activities (e.g. Bodén, 2007; Mehmetoglu, 2006; MEK, 2010; Sievänen & Neuvonen, 2011).
Theoretical background

- Theoretical background combines theories of consumer behavior in connection with practice theory that investigates people’s routine-like ways to act and think (e.g. Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005, 2014; Shove, Panzar & Watson, 2012) and a product-based typology of nature-based tourism (Arnegger, Woltering & Job, 2010) that can be interpreted as a framework to study tourists’ ways to organize their nature-based holiday.

- Sustainable or responsible tourism was not main topic, but results are relevant from perspective of economic sustainability.
Implementation of case in practice in two phases

• **1st phase** maps current state of summertime nature-based tourism in Lapland => Research questions: Who are the summer tourists at Lapland’s tourist resorts? What kinds of services do they use? What kinds of independent or commercial nature-based outdoor activities do they participate in? What are they willing to pay for commercial outdoor activities?
  - A survey was conducted in summer 2012 on-site at tourist resorts Levi, Pyhä-Luosto, Saariselkä and Ylläs for 718 international and domestic summer tourists => Some of the survey results presented here.

• **2nd phase** is deepening our understanding about influence of tourist or consumer practices – that is routine-like ways to act and think (e.g. Schatzki, 2001; Reckwitz, 2002) – in context of nature-based tourism in summer (not yet concluded).
Results

• Summer tourists in Lapland are mostly independent domestic travelers on a family holiday making a round trip by own car.
• Many summer tourists are staying in their own cabin, rented cabin or holiday apartment or at hotel, which indicates that small accommodation units are requested.
• Most important services at tourist resorts in summer are hiking services and basic tourist services
  - Hiking services consist of resting places, picnic and campfire sites and signposted trails in terrain
  - Basic tourist services consist of accommodation services, restaurants, cafés, or kiosks and tourist information
• People use commercial nature activity products only to a small extent and are mostly unaware of the products on offer, but are interested in using them in a future trip to Lapland.
## Importance of services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Culture &amp; nature services</th>
<th>Rental &amp; transport services</th>
<th>Hiking services</th>
<th>Basic tourist services</th>
<th>Shopping services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibitions and events</td>
<td>791</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitor centre of national park</td>
<td>709</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souvenir and handicraft shops</td>
<td>634</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guided excursions or programs</td>
<td>547</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public transportation services</td>
<td>798</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment rental</td>
<td>723</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resting places, picnic and campfire sites</td>
<td>833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signposted trails in terrain</td>
<td>802</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>881</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants, cafés, or kiosks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>629</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>509</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groceries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>757</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail shops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>655</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td>721</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preferred and current accommodation on nature holiday (% of cases, multiple responses possible, n = 545)
Preferred tour companion on nature excursion

- Alone
- Spouse or family
- Friends or colleagues
- Group of <=10 persons
- Group of > 10 persons

Experiencing nature
Sports and recreation in nature
Local culture
Use of nature activity products in 2012

- smoke sauna or sauna bathing
- reindeer or sledge-dog farm
- nature excursion or hiking
- trekking
- canoeing or rowing
- inland waterway cruise
- nature photography
- cooking/catering in natural surroundings
- mushroom or berry picking
- turf treatments or turf sauna
- gold washing
- fishing
- herbal baths or treatments
- rafting
- cross-country horseback riding
- hunting
- rock-climbing or abseiling
- mountain biking or cycling
- all-terrain vehicle
- trekking with reindeer as pack animals
- diving

Number of users
Intended use of nature activity products

- trekkling
- smoke sauna or sauna bathing
- nature excursion or hiking
- canoeing or rowing
- rafting
- fishing
- turf treatments or turf sauna
- inland waterway cruise
- reindeer or sledge-dog farm
- cooking/catering in natural surroundings
- herbal baths or treatments
- all-terrain vehicle
- gold washing
- nature photography
- cross-country horseback riding
- rock-climbing or abseiling
- mountain biking or cycling
- hunting
- trekking with reindeer as pack animals
- mushroom or berry picking
- diving

Frequency
Results

• Current demand for commercial nature activity products is rather low with approximately 5 to 7 percent of the total sample for the most popular products within category excursion package.

• There is future growth potential for demand of nature activity products, as share of respondents increased to around 10 to 16 per cent in most popular products, when the summer tourists were asked about their interest to buy nature activities in a future trip to Lapland.

• Motivation to buy nature-based activities can be divided into four groups: comfort, social contacts, possibility to participate in activity and value of the product for the tourist.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation for purchase of activity</th>
<th>Comfort</th>
<th>Possibility to participate in activity</th>
<th>Social contacts</th>
<th>Value of the product for the tourist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>feeling safer with an instructor</td>
<td>830</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easier participation in ready-made activities</td>
<td>813</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saving time by buying activity</td>
<td>672</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not having special equipment needed in activity</td>
<td>802</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buying equipment for the activity too expensive</td>
<td>759</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buying the activity is the only way to be able to participate</td>
<td>742</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not having enough experience to carry out independently</td>
<td>565</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>not knowing the area and needing a guide</td>
<td>547</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meeting new people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>881</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharing the experience with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>856</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meeting other people interested in the same activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>821</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity as such</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guide guaranteeing quality of experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning more about activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>847</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>716</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Classification of summer tourists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users of commercial nature activities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed participation nature tourist</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent nature tourist</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other tourist</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theoretical and practical contribution

• Theoretically this research project as a whole contributes to research of consumer behavior of tourists from perspective of practices, and turns focus on routines and habits of tourists doing nature-based summer holiday.

• The research project tackles seasonality together with off-season tourism activities and wishes of both independent tourists and users of commercial tourism products.

• Practical contribution is mostly information for tourism planners and entrepreneurs in form of survey results about current state of nature-based summer tourism and use of services at tourist resorts in Lapland and expectations of current summer tourists for future development.
Conclusions

• Challenge for tourism businesses is that many tourists prefer to participate in nature-based tourism independently.
• Many of those who are willing to buy nature-based outdoor activities want to carry them out in small groups consisting of family and friends and are reluctant to pay much for the services, which makes it difficult to get a living from nature-based tourism solely, at present.
• The results give indications that it may be difficult to act in an economically sustainable way as a company concentrating solely on nature-based tourism in summer – at least with current products on offer – because nature-based tourism is small-scale business and people prefer to do it in small groups.
References

Aikio, K. (draft 2012) Urho Kekkosen kansallispuiston kävijätutkimus 2010, Metsähallituksen luononsuojelujulkaisuja, Sarja B.


