

Towards sustainable land use planning for tourism destinations: clients views about the tourism development in Finnish Lapland

Liisa Tyrväinen¹, Eija Hasu², Harri Silvennoinen¹

Keywords: nature-based tourism, sustainable tourism, land-use planning, tourism services

Nature-based and eco-tourism are considered to be the most rapidly growing tourism sectors, both of which increase the interest in rural areas in Europe such as Finnish Lapland. Recreational opportunities located in scenic landscapes, as well as within protected areas, form the basis for tourism attractions to nature tourism destinations. In Lapland, the largest tourism resorts are typically located close to national parks and other protected areas and a large part of the clientele visiting nature areas are accommodated in tourism resorts.

The rapid growth of tourism and development plans of tourism centres in Lapland have raised important issues, such as how urban the built environment in tourism resorts should be in nature tourism destinations and how sustainability can be achieved in planning and construction practices. The tourism literature contains a wide variety of land development policies and planning strategies for achieving greater levels of eco-efficiency. In planning and managing nature-based tourism destinations, the challenge is to choose and implement eco-efficient strategies that appeal to the tastes and interests of tourists, while also meeting the criteria for cost-efficient solutions in production of the tourism services. The key questions are 'how to combine energy efficiency and sustainable building, landscape and nature values, housing preferences and tourism services in the planning of tourism destinations?'

Today, the research information on how foreign and domestic tourists assess development options of tourism resorts in northern Europe is limited. Understanding the tourist aspirations is even more complicated if we are to recognise the rather fragmented customer desires and needs. Changing lifestyles and values have had an impact on tourism segmentation; one tourist may represent several different leisure motives, and even their values may present inconsistencies to certain extent. Therefore, the environmental expectations and housing preferences during a visit may vary among the clientele.

This presentation reports the preliminary results of a large survey studying the travel motives of foreign and domestic nature-based tourists, the assessment of the current sustainability practises in the tourism destinations, and an evaluation of various options for tourism development in terms of scale and density. Moreover, the suitability of various types of renewable energy systems that could be installed in Lappish tourist resorts have been assessed by respondents. The data consisted of more than 1200 interviews conducted on-site in Lapland, Finland during 2009–2010. Moreover, responses were collected via an internet-survey. The research was conducted as part of a larger project called 'Land Use Planning for Sustainable Tourism Destinations', which is a joint project between the Departments of Architecture and Energy Technology at the Aalto University School of Science and Technology and the Finnish Forest Research Institute.

The presentation discusses what type of solutions are needed to implement and encourage sustainable practises in tourism development areas in Lapland. Moreover, how willing are the current and the potential clients to choose sustainability as a motivator and an attribute for the destination choice will be discussed.

¹ Finnish Forest Research Institute (Metla), Box 16, FI-96301 Rovaniemi, Finland liisa.tyrvainen@metla.fi, harri.silvennoinen@metla.fi

² Aalto University of Science and Technology, Department of Architecture, Eija.hasu@tkk.fi

The results suggest that both domestic and international tourists consider the implementation of various social and ecological sustainability principles important at their travel destination. However, the willingness to act according to the sustainability principles during their stay in Lapland varies among the clientele. Domestic tourists in particular, are somewhat reluctant to use public transport to arrive to the tourism destination as well as to minimize the use of water and energy during their visit. Moreover, the domestic tourists were more hesitant to accept wind power as a solution to energy production nearby a tourism resort due to its negative visual impact on landscape.

The results suggest that the current land-use planning policies aiming at the creation of compact urban-like tourism resorts, do not meet the expectations of large share of domestic tourists. They appreciate small-scale accommodation with an immediate access to natural surroundings, peace and quietness and even direct views to nature from the accommodation. In the future, a more profound discussion of how the sustainability principles could be successfully put into practice, and also the extent that marketing of the nature-based tourism products in Lapland needs to be refined in order to attract more environmentally aware clientele.

References

- Matkailualueiden kestävyden indikaattorit (Jokimäki, J. & Kaisanlahti-Jokimäki, M-L Eds.) Arktisen keskuksen tiedotteita 52. Arctic Centre, Rovaniemi, 82 p.
- Kelly, J. Haider, W., Williams, P. & Englund K. (2007). Stated preferences of tourists for eco-efficient destination planning options. *Tourism Management* 28: 377-390.
- Williams, P. & Ponsford, I. (2009): Confronting tourism's environmental paradox: Transitioning for sustainable tourism. *Futures of Tourism* (S. Cole & V.Razak Eds): Vol. 41 (6): 335-426.