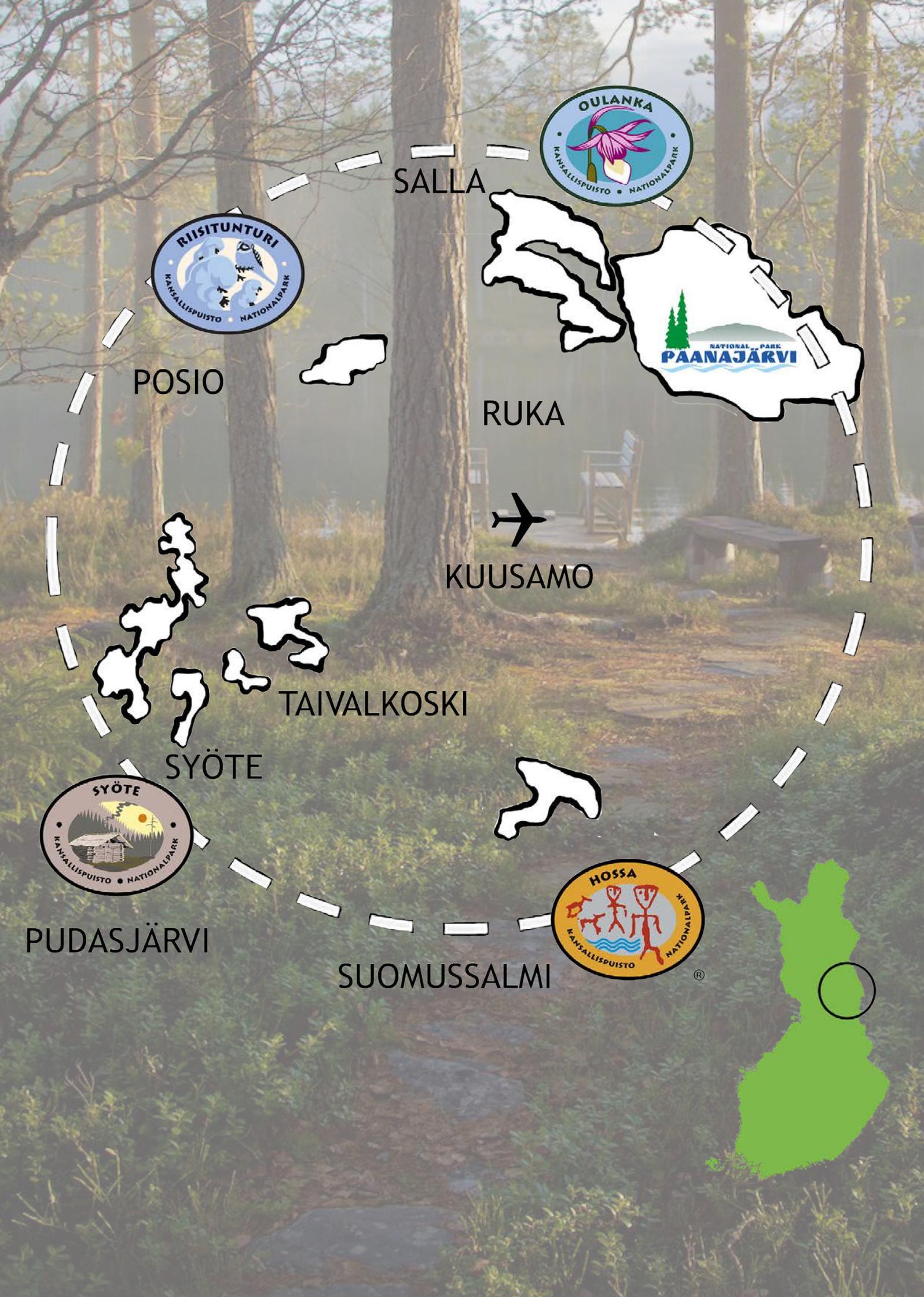


GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

LAND OF NATIONAL PARKS





SALLA



POSIO



RUKA



KUUSAMO



TAIVALKOSKI

SYÖTE



PUDASJÄRVI



SUOMUSSALMI



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FOREWORD

The tourism industry is growing strongly and generating prosperity in the surrounding area. However, the adverse effects of tourism have been proven around the globe. The United Nations, the World Tourism Organization UNWTO and several other organizations have identified the development of sustainable tourism as one of the most important themes at a global level. Visit Finland also sees that with the recent strong growth in tourism, the issue is one of the most important themes to promote in the development of Finnish tourism. Advantages of Finland as a tourism destination are beautiful nature and nature experiences. Responsibility is closely related to the brightening of the competitive advantage of our main attraction, nature, and to the utilization of purity. If we want to continue to regard this as a competitive advantage and to continue to grow in the future, the responsibility for action must be a clear policy in all Finnish tourism companies.

Tourists and business partners make choices based on values and challenge entrepreneurs in the tourism sector to make the most of the values behind the company in the future. Some international tour operators already require their partners to have plans or certifications for responsible operations as an annex to the cooperation agreement. The importance of this issue is also increasing among customers in Europe at a steep pace.

The visibility of sustainable choices in the customer interface is a prerequisite for competitive operations. A responsible company that is able to share its activities and values in the way customers want is a success in the future. Research shows that customer satisfaction and quality levels in responsible companies are higher. Companies also benefit from significant cost savings through energy and water saving measures.

I hope that this guide will enable tourism companies to take action and that responsibility will become the guiding value of business throughout Finland. In this case, the entire Finland has a good opportunity to be a country that anticipates the challenges of growing tourism and may continue to welcome tourists welcome in the future.

Terhi Hook, *Development Manager*
Business Finland Ltd, Visit Finland



FOREWORD

National parks, the pearls of our nature sites, are established by law to protect the special nature values of the area. At the same time, they are also intended for general recreational and camping purposes. These goals, sometimes contradictory, we try to combine to our best ability.

National parks and other nature reserves play a major role in the attractiveness of tourism. We operate in an area with a concentration of valuable nature sites and spectacular scenery - a true Land of National Parks!

In national parks, if anywhere, the use of the area should be sustainable: acknowledging nature values and respecting nature. The nature conservation status of the area understandably limits its use. Metsähallitus has prepared the principles of sustainable nature tourism, according to which nature sites work in cooperation with tour operators.

However, the national park is not an island into which the sustainable policies should be narrowed, but they should cover as well as possible the entire tourism area and different actors. Sustainable tourism is the future of tourism that crosses the entire journey from home to destination - let us all make our own contribution to it.

*Sari Alatossava, Park Director
Kainuu Nature Services
Metsähallitus*



FOREWORD

This guide focuses on the economic, cultural, social and ecological sustainability of tourism development in the Land of National Parks region: In the vicinity of Syöte, Hossa, Oulanka, Riisitunturi and Paanajärvi Lake National Parks. The guide provides tourism companies with an understanding of the different aspects of sustainability in their operations. The purpose of the guide is to help and enable the tourism companies to create their own plans for sustainable tourism.

The first chapters in the guide provide the reader general information about the sustainability aspects and their importance in tourism. The third and fourth chapters contain concrete examples of aspects of sustainable tourism and ways to bring these issues to the forefront of marketing communications. At the end of this guide, you can find tips for making your own sustainability plan and the various indicators for assessing your own sustainability. We have also collected a list of good information sources for obtaining further knowledge on this topic.

Several excellent and extensive guides have been produced in recent years on sustainable tourism themes. This guide has been inspired by influences and information from previous literature, such as the Competitive Advantage for Rural Tourism from Sustainability, (Kestävyydestä kilpailuetua maaseutumatkailuun), KESMA II project, Sustainability Compass - The Rural Tourism Entrepreneur's Handbook, (Kestävyyden Kompassi – Maaseutumatkailuyrittäjän käsikirja) and Visit Finland's sustainable tourism materials. The ideas and insights that have emerged in the project team have also been considered when preparing the guide. The guide is specifically targeted to the Land of National Parks region tourism entrepreneurs, and its key new offering is the sustainability indicators that have been launched to support the planning process, as well as the simplified sustainability plan template for tourism entrepreneurs.

Gateway to Kuusamo Lapland Project Team



1. SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM

WHY DEVELOP SUSTAINABLY?

The debate on sustainable tourism and its importance has increased in recent years as a result of the rapid growth of tourism. Larger numbers of tourists, in which new tourists from heavily populated Asian countries have joined due to rising living standards, have significantly increased the impacts of tourism at both global and local level.

Why should individual tourism companies pay attention to sustainability? Essentially, the sustainability of tourism is about guaranteeing future generations the opportunity to engage in tourism-related business activities and to gain meaningful experiences as tourists (UNWTO & UNEP 2005). In addition, a good and vibrant environment to live and work must be guaranteed for the local populations. Tourism is often based on the specific features of the region's natural and cultural environment and the responsible use of these resources is vital to the continuity of tourism. Sustainable development does not necessarily just mean limiting tourism growth, but also changing the operational culture so that tourism can be practiced in the future.

Pure and beautiful nature has long been a key advantage for tourism to Finland. The preservation of northern natural environments as natural as possible is a common goal of the tourism industry and nature conservation actors. Tourism companies often operate in areas where the natural environment is both attractive

and particularly sensitive to change. Thus, the responsibility of the tourism industry to invest in sustainable development is greater than in many other industries. Companies that consider sustainability also create a positive customer image. Investing in sustainability in the development of tourism products and services improves the image of the company and can help create new customer relationships. Depending on the country of origin of the tourist, the degree of attention to sustainability varies considerably, but especially in the Central European market, such as Germany and France, sustainability is a significant factor influencing the tourist's purchasing decision.

Climate change is one of the biggest uncertainties for the future world and for tourism as well. In addition to changes in the environment, the tourism industry is particularly affected by changes in attitudes towards travel and increasing environmental awareness: an increasing proportion of international tourists pay attention to the sustainability of the destination and the services it offers when making a purchase decision. Some tourists are also prepared to pay more for tourism products and services that consider sustainability.

Contrary to what is often thought, sustainable operation does not necessarily mean increasing costs. For example, saving energy and water, reducing food waste, and instructing customers in the above-mentioned actions will quickly pay back in the form of reduced costs.

"HIKING AT SYÖTE"

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development came to the attention of the general public in 1987 when the United Nations Brundtland Commission published its report *Our Common Future*. In the report, sustainable development was defined as “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: 43).

The rapid growth of tourism and the number of tourists in recent decades has highlighted the need to consider the principles of sustainable development seriously also in the development of tourism. Worldwide, the number of international journeys rose to 1.3 billion in 2017 and growth is expected to continue (UNWTO 2018). Such a large volume of tourism has a great impact on the natural, social, cultural and economic environment. Therefore, the sustainable use of resources utilized in tourism is an absolute prerequisite now and in the future.

Sustainable tourism is not its own form of tourism, but rather a way of thinking and developing the industry as a whole. The aim is to make all types of tourism more environmentally friendly and socially, culturally and economically sustainable. There are many different definitions of sustainable tourism. For example, according to the World Tourism Organization, UNWTO and United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP (2005), sustainable tourism should:

1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

COMPOSING A SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

A sustainability plan is a plan that a company can compose to guide and support its goals for developing economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability. The plan consists of aspects that define the means to achieve the goals, schedule the activities and evaluate the implementation of the plan. The purpose of the sustainability plan is to help the company to form and strengthen its own vision of how and in what way to implement sustainability in its own operations.

The first step in composing a sustainability plan is to assess the current state of the company. At this stage, the company charts its baseline, after which the company analyzes its situation from different perspectives on sustainability. Next, the company composes a vision of what the goals of the company development are and how they can be achieved. When implementing the sustainability plan, it is important to remember the monitoring and evaluation of the process and the results (Asikainen & Blinnikka 2012).

Thus, composing a sustainability plan can proceed as follows:

The Four Steps of the Sustainability Plan

1. **Assessing the company's baseline - what kind of and how sustainable the company's operations are at present**
2. **Choosing the most important development areas - what kind of sustainability the company wants to improve**
3. **Defining goals, means and schedule - what can be done, how and in what timeframe**
4. **Monitoring and evaluation of goals - whether the goals have been achieved, what still needs to be done**

2. ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

After the implementation of the plan, the current situation will be assessed, new goals will be set if necessary, the measures required to achieve them will be determined, and so on. Developing sustainability in the company is a continuous process proceeding in cycles.

When composing a sustainability plan and selecting the most important development areas, the company should look at all the dimensions of its business. These may include:

- marketing and communications
- quality
- product development
- staff and know-how
- company's cooperation networks
- procurement and production, and
- company's physical operating environment

Sustainability should be present in all dimensions relevant to the company's operations.

This guide contains instructions to help your company prepare its own sustainability plan. Every company is different, and the goals of the sustainability plan should be considered and aligned with the operations of one's own company. Sustainability steps and time goals should also consider the company's staff and other resources. Sustainability indicators can be used to help you plan and evaluate your formulate. In chapter 5, we have collected useful indicators and tips for utilizing them from the company's perspective. At the end of this guide, we have attached a form that you can utilize in formulating your own sustainability plan.

Four different aspects can be distinguished in sustainable development: economic, social, cultural and ecological. When it comes to sustainability, the ecological perspective is often emphasized, but this does not mean that other aspects of sustainability are less important. An appropriate balance between these four important aspects is central to responsible tourism business. A responsible tourism company takes responsibility for its own actions, recognizes the effects of its actions and strives to act sustainably.

This chapter explores these four areas of sustainable tourism and provides examples of how a company can develop in a more sustainable direction. In addition, the chapter provides information and examples of the concrete ways in which sustainability in tourism has been considered in the Land of National Parks region and its tourism companies, and how a responsible tourism company can consider sustainability when composing its own sustainability plan. In order for the various aspects of sustainability to be in the right balance with the company's operations, it is good for the company to set appropriate goals for all aspects from its own perspective.

BALANCED GROWTH AND CONTINUITY ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Economic sustainability is the basis for business operations. Economic sustainability is based on balanced growth without over-indebtedness and over-consumption (What is Sustainable Development, Mitä on kestävä kehitys 2017). Economically sustainable operation

"HAPPY HIKING AT SYÖTE."

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aims in offering products and services in a less environmentally straining way, saving energy and natural resources. Nor should economic growth lead to the waning of natural resources (Erkkonen & Kyöstitä 2016).

A sustainable company is competitive and its operation is economically profitable. A prerequisite for this is the appropriate pricing of services and products and careful planning when making investments. The long-term viability of business is also essential for a sustainable tourism company. Economic sustainability is linked to all aspects of the company's operations, such as the various stages of product development and the production chain, subcontracting, recycling and human resources (Blinnikka & Hauvala 2014; Responsibility at the Core of Business, Vastuullisuus liiketoiminnan ytimessä 2018). A stable economy helps the company to adapt to various changes and challenges and serves as a basis for all other sustainable development (What is Sustainable Development, Mitä on kestävä kehitys 2017; Finnish UN Association 2018). In addition, it is good to remember that the impacts of ones' business activity extend to the surrounding area and its people: sustainable business can have a positive impact on the vitality of the entire region.

In terms of economic sustainability, it is good to consider the year-round nature of the products and services offered. In the Land of National Parks region, the regional economic impact of tourism is largely concentrated in the summer or winter season, due to climatic conditions and the supply of activities, and it is therefore important for companies to invest in the provision of year-round services. This not only ensures economic balance but also strengthens the region's vitality outside peak-seasons. Thus, it would be important for the company ones' year-round tourism, for example through diverse activities and services.

High customer satisfaction also improves economic sustainability, especially if a large proportion of customers are return customers. The more customers want to buy a tourism product or service again, the

less resources have to be used to market the product to new customer groups. Satisfied customers can also recommend a tourism product to other potential customers.

HOW CAN A COMPANY DEVELOP IT'S ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY?

A company's responsible attitude towards economic sustainability can also bring economic prosperity to the surrounding society. At best, the income from tourism industry can be utilized in the region's natural and cultural conservation activities. The following examples of economic sustainability indicate what the company can consider in its sustainability plan.

The company can maintain and improve its own and the region's economic sustainability, among others, by:

- investing in year-round tourism
- identifying the target markets for specialized products (e.g. nature photographers)
- investing in the quality of products and services
- making the purchase of products and services as easy as possible
- pricing services and products correctly
- improving accessibility (e.g. via signage and web pages)
- training their staff, developing know-how
- investing in content on the website and other communication channels
- matching supply to demand (e.g. pooling of equipment and lending of staff)
- reducing unnecessary spoilage
- increasing cooperation
- providing nature-saving solutions and products to customers and partners
- ensuring that the company's goals are known to the entire staff and that everyone is working together for them

"RIISITUNTURI IS AN EXCELLENT WINTER DESTINATION."
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EXAMPLES ARE COLLECTED FROM VISIT FINLAND'S TIPS FOR RESPONSIBILITY COMMUNICATION, VINKKEJÄ VASTUULLISUUSVIESTINTÄÄN (2018B)), RURALIA INSTITUTE'S WITH EMOTION AND KNOWLEDGE - MARKETING SUSTAINABILITY IN A RURAL TOURISM COMPANY, TUNTEELLA JA TIEDOLLA – KESTÄVYYDELLEÄ MARKKINOINTI MAASEUTUMATKAILUYRITYKSESSÄ REPORT (2015) AND PROJECT DISCUSSIONS.

Communicating Economic Sustainability

- it is economically sustainable for the company itself to find the right communication channels through which marketing reaches its desired audience
- economic sustainability can be communicated, for example, by emphasizing investing in products with a long lifetime instead of disposable products
- economic sustainability can be communicated by telling about the economic returns to the region: the role of the tourism economy as a growing national and local employer is a key aspect of regional economic sustainability
- both the appropriate wages of the employees, and the operating income remaining in the region are important factors for the operation of the company, especially among the local population
- as such, a specialized tourism product or service already represents sustainability in relation to large-scale mass travel

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY IN THE LAND OF NATIONAL PARKS REGION

Year-round services and products support and develop economic sustainability very well. Various tourism companies offer a wide range of outdoor activities and services throughout the year, also during the quieter seasons, such as summer. A Ruka-based company offering accommodation services aims to enhance its year-round services, e.g. by maximizing occupancy rate by renting privately owned apartments when the owners do not use them. This in turn reduces the need to build new infrastructure. Another good example are the reindeer farm operations that support year-round tourism by offering services in all seasons.

Digitalization significantly changes the tourism industry, especially in terms of selling and buying services. Online platforms, such as Icelandic Bókun, help small businesses to join forces to achieve economic sustainability. Through online platforms, various tourism operators can create combined products of their services, distribute revenues per operator, and cross-sell each other's services. Since Bókun collaborates with TripAdvisor and similar worldwide key actors, the services offered by a small business can also be sold to the target customer on the other side of the world without any intermediaries.

TOURISM FOR EVERYONE, VITALITY TO THE REGION SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Social sustainability from the entrepreneurship perspective refers to all the impacts that a company's operations have on various communities, such as local communities and different groups of people (Responsibility at the Core of Business, Vastuullisuus liiketoiminnan ytimessä 2018). Social sustainability means, for example, the economic benefits remaining in the region and respect for local traditions. A socially sustainable tourism company utilizes the services of other local businesses and strives to provide jobs to local people. Identifying new types of differentiated customer groups is also important. For customers, social sustainability can mean, among other things, that all groups of people are considered equally in tourism services: age, gender, ability, ethnic background, sexuality or religion, for example, do not affect the way the tourist is treated. Aging population, different constraints of tourists, backgrounds, lifestyles and interests affect travel (Blinnikka & Hauvala (ed.) 2014; What is Sustainable Development, Mitä on kestävä kehitys 2017; Sustainable Development in Tourism Company, Kestävä kehitys matkailuyrityksessä 2018). It is important for tourism companies to know how to meet and consider the wishes and needs of different customer segments. At the same time, special attention must be paid to the safety of services and products (Iivari 2012).

Social sustainability can also be considered from the tourism planning perspective, where the question of how genuinely the wishes and views of the local population and other stakeholders are considered in the development of the destination, becomes important. Therefore, the integration of the local community is important. Favorable local attitudes and support for tourism can be promoted by involving local people in tourism planning and decision-making. Particularly important for planning is effective communication between local people and different stakeholders in tourism (Blinnikka & Hauvala (ed.) 2014; Silvennoinen (2014); Erkkonen & Kyöstilä 2016; Sustainable Development in Tourism Company, Kestävä kehitys matkailuyrityksessä 2018).

HOW CAN A COMPANY DEVELOP ITS SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY?

Socially sustainable tourism should create something positive for both the tourist and the local community. Tourism can be a major factor in maintaining and improving the vitality of the region, especially in regions outside major urban centers. The following examples of social sustainability indicate what a company can consider in its sustainability plan.

A company can maintain and improve its own and the region's social sustainability, among others, by:

- considering the wishes and needs of all customer groups such as different minorities, people with reduced mobility and the elderly
- developing accessibility generating economic benefits for the local community by supporting other local businesses through own activities (for example, laundry and cleaning services and buying local food products such as berries and mushrooms)
- enhancing community spirit through its activities (for example, organizing small-scale events / theme days together, recommending the services of another local business to their customers)
- selecting actors with similar values as partners
- adhering to traditions and local culture
- cooperating with other companies in the area
- favoring local products
- honest and high quality communication
- taking care of safety issues
- investing in wellbeing at work
- being a good and bold example to other entrepreneurs in the region

"OULANKA RIVER LOWER PART PADDLING ROUTE IS SUITABLE FOR FAMILIES AND BEGINNERS, AS WELL AS FOR SUP-BOARDERS, BECAUSE IT DOES NOT HAVE LARGE RAPIDS."

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Communicating Social Sustainability

- reporting on accessibility (considering human diversity in designing and implementing a built environment (The Finnish Association of People with Physical Disabilities, 2018)) on the company's website and marketing materials is a key tool in communicating social sustainability
 - ⇒ for example, it is very important for a tourist using a wheelchair to know how the disabled are catered for in the entire operating environment
- highlighting accessibility to services and products is important: company information, map and timetables for possible public transport should be easy to find
- considering different customer groups, for example, in the production of multilingual marketing materials and tourism services: all material should be available in at least in English in addition to Finnish
- considering the various stakeholders is an important part of social sustainability, which is why the tourism company actions as an employer and a conservator of regional services are good image building materials also in marketing
- social sustainability in marketing material is well conveyed by images of different people: the local population, the tourism entrepreneur with her/his reindeer, families with children, and so on

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE LAND OF NATIONAL PARKS REGION

The Hossa National Park is an excellent example of how the needs of people with reduced mobility can also be considered in the design of the national park. Many of Hossa's nature trails and routes are designed to be the trails are wide, and the facilities (toilets and lean-tos) are spacious to cater for people with reduced mobility. The National Park has several accessible cabins, an electrified rental cabin and a campground designed for people with reduced mobility. The rental cabins are equipped with an accessible indoor or outdoor toilet, sauna, and wheelchair ramps facilitating mobility. The piers are also designed to allow the wheelchair to enter the boat. Several Hossa fishing piers are also accessible: spacious piers are located along an accessible nature trail or close to a car park and near an accessible toilet.

A company providing horse activities in Kuusamo offers social pedagogy based horse activities and riding therapy to customers of all ages and life situations. The company also considers different special groups and offers activities, rehabilitation and support for all.

In 2016, the region also hosted the first Pride event, which promoted equality in the form of skiing and having fun. Since its launch, it has become an annual event.

In addition to camp school and nature tourism activities, many of the Youth Centers in the Land of National Parks Region provide training for young people in everyday life and life management. Activities are based on pedagogy that emphasizes experientialism and functionality, which aims in, among other things, strengthening the self-esteem of young people, increasing teamwork skills and deepening responsibility.

MAINTAINING TRADITIONS -CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

Apart from nature, the most important attraction factors of tourism are the unique culture and history of the destination. In general, tourists are most interested in destinations whose culture differs significantly from their own. Maintaining and emphasizing the region's own culture and traditions are the cornerstones of culturally sustainable tourism development. Tourism plays a very important role in maintaining old traditions and livelihoods, which may have become less important with modernization and development of new industries (Blinnikka & Hauvala (ed.) 2014; Sustainable Development in Tourism Company, Kestävä kehitys matkailuyrityksessä 2018). The utilization of the region's cultural heritage in tourism can thus contribute to the preservation and strengthening of culture, concerning not only tourists, but also local residents (Finnish UN Association 2018).

However, it is good to remember the preservation of authenticity in the productization of cultural heritage (Sustainability in Tourism Company, Kestävyys matkailu-ryityksessä 2018). Tourists appreciate authentic experiences, stories and cultural environments. The risk of excessive commercialization is the transformation of the destination into a theme park by itself and the loss of this authenticity.

Tourism is an industry through which cultural interactions and exchanges, especially with international but also domestic tourists, take place. The entrepreneur should always remember to consider the different backgrounds of people. Knowing the cultures can increase tolerance, internationalization and multilateral understanding, and otherwise enrich life (Bramwell etc. 1996).

HOW CAN A COMPANY DEVELOP ITS CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY?

A company can base its products and services on local culture and history. However, the challenge of productization culture is to maintain authenticity so that it is also passed on to the company's customers. Tourists are more and more interested in the cultural aspects of tourism thus, a good knowledge of local history and cultural heritage are advantages for the entrepreneur.

The following examples of cultural sustainability indicate of what a company can consider in its own sustainability plan.

The company can maintain and improve its own and the region's cultural sustainability, among others, by:

- respecting the local cultural heritage and nurturing its vitality
- restoring and renovating old buildings and other infrastructure in a way that is appropriate to their history
- choosing building materials, furniture and decorative items suitable for their environment
- basing events, services and products on local history
- importing stories as a part of tourism products and services
- highlighting the local traditional handicrafts
- accommodating the needs of traditional livelihoods and tourism
- developing the skills of their staff (for example, by increasing the knowledge of local culture and history among staff)
- enhancing interaction between business and tourists and thus, increasing understanding of other cultures, as well as mutual understanding
- giving the employees' own genuine personalities shine through to the customers

**"COFFEE MADE ON OPEN FIRE CREATES AMBIANCE AND IS A PART OF FINNISH CULTURE."
© HENNA TRÄSKELIN, 2018**



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Communicating Cultural Sustainability

- cultural sustainability can be highlighted in marketing by emphasizing locality
 - ⇒ the characteristic cultural features of the region emphasize the peculiarity of the location in relation to other regions
- the manifestation of national or regional cultural history in company services (e.g. reindeer husbandry) is a typical example of cultural sustainability that is easy and meaningful to use in marketing
- importing stories as a part of a tourism product or service, for example, through the history of a family business or utilizing landmarks or events of cultural historical importance is a great marketing tool
- local cuisine is a key cultural factor that can be easily utilized in marketing communications by telling about local food production in vivid terms
- it is also advisable to tell about the origin of other local products (such as handicrafts) and cooperation with local actors in the marketing material
- traditional celebrations (or festive days, for example, Christmas and Midsummer, hunting feasts) provide meaningful and interesting marketing opportunities
- cultural sustainability can be hard to highlight by presenting only cultural history (buildings, traditional food, etc.), which is why culture-oriented tourism products require a story behind them

CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE LAND OF NATIONAL PARKS REGION

Business-to-business cooperation can increase the community's sense of community and increase business success. A good example of this is Saunatour, which is a service created by Kuusamo's local sauna companies, where each cooperation company has its own and individual saunas and sauna stories. Saunatour combines both business-to-business cooperation and storytelling in services and products. In addition, a Kuusamo based handicraft company appreciates old local traditions by maintaining the old handicrafts of the region. The company is already in its second generation and maintains local stories and history through its activities.

In the Land of National Parks region, also the larger tourism companies have included locality in their image, for example in the form of interior decoration. Various premises are also named with respect for locality and locally produced food prepared in the traditional way can be found in the menus of various restaurants.

A Kuusamo based tourism service company provides international tourists with an authentic experience of Finnish culture by offering a day full of traditional Finnish activities, such as baking buns, chopping wood, heating the sauna, and exploring local cultural history. Activities are built according to the seasons, respecting cultural traditions.

An example of cultural sustainability is also provided by accommodation and / or program services, which have respected the cultural history of the region by reconstructing old-fashioned buildings and courtyards. The use of traditional rustic and log buildings, for example, as accommodation or banquet facilities, ensures the preservation of cultural history and draws from the past in a way interesting to customers.

A Kuusamo based restaurant company represents cultural sustainability by influencing its menu with traditional cuisine and utilizing only locally sourced raw materials. The company also actively utilizes these features in its marketing, so that the values that come from local food and local culture heritage are effectively brought to the attention of customers.

"A KUUSAMO-BASED REINDEER AND FISH FARM WORKS WITH REINDEER ALREADY IN SIXTH GENERATION."
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NATURE WELLBEING -ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY

When it comes to sustainable tourism, the first thing that often comes to mind is the sustainable use of nature. In destinations where tourism attraction and tourism products are based on nature and the opportunities it offers, nature conservation and curbing consumption are particularly important issues. Tourists traveling to nature sites often pay particular attention to how ecological sustainability has been considered. Each company can contribute with their own actions in decreasing negative

environmental impacts and promoting the sustainable use of nature.

The actions do not always require large investments neither, but positive changes can be made even with a small investment. For example, by sorting waste and avoiding environmentally harmful chemicals in cleaning reduces the environmental load (Blinnikka & Hauvala (ed.)). 2014, Sustainable Development in Tourism Company, Kestävä kehitys matkailuyrityksessä 2018). Favoring other local companies in procurement reduces emissions from transport, in addition to the positive regional economic impacts.

"IN ADDITION TO LANDSCAPES, THERE ARE OTHER TREASURES IN NATIONAL PARKS - SUCH AS BERRIES AND MUSHROOMS. "
© RUKA-KUUSAMO TOURISM ASSOCIATION, 2014



On the other hand, the environmental impact of tourism is also global. The earth is surrounded by a single, common atmosphere, where emissions may be local, but the impacts ultimately affect the entire earth's climate. The majority of the international tourist carbon footprint consists of flying to and from the destination (Gössling etc. 2007). Flying emissions are emphasized by long flights and short visits, whereby the proportion of carbon footprint of the tourist's choices made in the destination itself remains very low. By combining different forms of travel, it is possible to reduce emissions, and a tourist destination can consider from which areas particularly to attract tourists. The diversity of tourism attractions can lengthen the stay of tourists.

The attraction of the Land of National Parks region as a destination is largely based on nature and its proximity. In addition to attractiveness, natural environments also have a scenic value for people. The company should therefore consider the potential impacts of their operations on the natural landscape and seek to reduce these impacts through, for example, environmental and landscape management.

HOW CAN A COMPANY DEVELOP ITS ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY?

Destinations located in the vicinity of beautiful natural environments are often exceptionally attractive. In these destinations, it is essential for the company to pay attention to the environmental friendliness and the sustainable use of nature in their operations. It is also good to talk to customers about environmental friendliness and to enable and encourage them to act with respect for the environment. The following examples of ecological sustainability indicate what a company can consider in its own sustainability plan.

The company can maintain and improve its own and the region's ecological sustainability, among others, by:

- improving energy, water and waste management solutions (energy efficiency and savings) (e.g. energy-saving lamps, water-saving taps / nozzles, versatile waste dispensers)
 - ⇒ also results in significant cost savings
- using renewable energy sources
- minimizing the amount of emissions caused by operations, for example with heating solutions using renewable energy sources (e.g. wood and pellet, geothermal heat)
- minimizing waste and spoilage (for example, renouncing disposable tableware)
- ensuring that the group size of the activities is appropriate (the size of the group relative to the activity is appropriate
the guide is able to manage the group all the time, minimizing the disadvantage to the nature)
- utilizing existing infrastructure (instead of new construction)
- protecting the natural landscape
- favoring local and organic food
- striving to lengthen the stay of tourists in the area (for example, by offering versatile activities)
- encouraging customers to act sustainably
- providing tourists with weather-appropriate equipment, such as snow suits (especially in the case of international tourists this is a remarkable ecological and economic saving)

"HOSSA LANDSCAPES"
© HANNU HUTTU

EXAMPLES ARE COLLECTED FROM SUSTAINABILITY COMPASS - RURAL TOURISM ENTREPRENEUR'S HANDBOOK, KESTÄVYYDEN KOMPASSI – MAASEUTUMATKAILUYRITTÄJÄN KÄSIKIRJA (2014), RURALIA INSTITUTE'S WITH EMOTION AND KNOWLEDGE - MARKETING SUSTAINABILITY IN A RURAL TOURISM COMPANY, TUNTEELLA JA TIEDOLLA – KESTÄVYYDELLÄ MARKKINOINTI MAASEUTUMATKAILUYRITYKSESSÄ (2015) AND SUSTAINABILITY IN RURAL TOURISM – HIDDEN RESOURCE, KESTÄVYYS MAASEUTUMATKAILUSSA – PILOTETTU VOIMAVARA (2012) PUBLICATIONS AND PROJECT DISCUSSIONS

Communicating Ecological Sustainability

- an ecological sustainability perspective in marketing means telling the management of environmental impacts of tourism
- a key element in ecological sustainability communication is telling about energy savings. The use of energy-saving lamps, consideration of energy-efficiency in accommodation constructions, extended interchanges of towels and sheets and water-pressure adjusting showers are all things worth communicating to customers.
- it is advisable to communicate on ecological sustainability on site at nature attractions, for example, by guiding to stay on the marked path and not litter the environment
- locally produced (organic) food and the benefits of choosing local food from both ecological and health perspectives are key marketing assets
 - ⇒ good index terms could be, for example, "(nature) purity", "locality", "freshness"
- sharing information about cycling routes and public transport increases awareness about alternatives for car-dependent mobility to customers
- it is meaningful to emphasize those environmental actions that relate with the customers' everyday choices
- clear examples of management of the natural environments, e.g. waste sorting guidelines, are an important tangible element in communicating ecological sustainability. Visual factors, such as nature-related images and elements, can also be utilized to emphasize the company's ecological responsibility in marketing material.
- justification for the chosen principles can happen via communication - for example the waste sorting guideline explains how the company's waste volumes have been reduced by so and so much because of waste sorting.

ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE LAND OF NATIONAL PARKS REGION

Many companies in the region are committed to more sustainable choices, for example in heating solutions, including pellet heating and geothermal heat. Tourist can rent electric bicycles from the ski resorts, which is an ecological alternative for utilization of cars.

For example, the expeditions of a husky company in Posio are completely emission-free, as the group's guide also moves with a dog-sled instead of a snowmobile. Snowmobile-free attitude supports ecological sustainability and can be a competitive edge in marketing through the experience of authentic silence.

Karhunkierros trail, located in the Oulanka National Park, is also accessible by a Karhunkierros bus instead of a private car, which provides an important step in ecological sustainability. The bus that runs between Kuusamo - Ruka – Käylä – Ristikallio contributes to car-free movement in the area.

3. RESPONSIBLE AND SUSTAINABLE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

It is not advisable to hide the light of sustainability under a bushel, nor should one understate telling customers about sustainability. This chapter discusses the means of sustainability communication. Communication is a key part of marketing a tourism product: communication builds knowledge and awareness, assures the profitability of the purchase decision and maintains awareness of the tourism product or service for the tourist also after the trip. Sustainable communication is based above all on responsibility and honesty: all the information about the environmental responsibility that is passed on to customers must be based on facts. Communication is ethical when producing reliable, truthful content (Kuvaja & Malmelin 2008).

SUSTAINABILITY AS A MARKETING AND COMPETITIVE EDGE

Tourists are increasingly aware of the environmental impacts of tourism. Adopting responsible practices and

communicating them are important for a tourism entrepreneur who cares about the future of his livelihood and natural environment. It is worth highlighting the sustainability of a tourism product or service in marketing, as sustainability elements can act as a pivotal factor for a tourist when choosing or deciding on a product or service. Customers may also be more willing to pay more for a sustainable tourism product or service - sustainability increases the value of a product or service in their eyes. For example, according to a study conducted by Booking.com in 2017, up to 64% of tourists would be willing to pay more for food if it were locally produced. Marketing goals are traditionally defined as boosting the profits and competitive advantage and increasing the attractiveness of a product or service. Communicating sustainability brings the values of sustainability to customer awareness and acts as both a competitive advantage and educational aspect. Marketing creates a sense of quality and responsibility of the tourism product or service for the customer (Middleton & Hawkins 1998). The market value of sustainability is not achieved unless it is utilized in company communications. Many elements of sustainability, such as savings in energy consumption, are often not directly apparent to the customer unless specifically disclosed.

Communicating on sustainability must always be based on telling about actual operations and values, but there is no reason not to tell the consumer about responsibility (Väisänen & Törn 2014). Respect for natural environments and consideration of sustainability aspects are often taken for granted in Finland, and not necessarily made an issue of. Thus, both a major marketing advantage and the opportunity to make sustainability thinking more known are lost. By marketing sustainability, you can achieve a significant competitive advantage and stand out from your competitors. Communicating the sustainability of a tourism product or service is meaningful, above all, because it helps in justifying to the customer the price of a tourist product or service that may be increased due to acting sustainably (e.g. a local, handcrafted product vs. a low cost import product). Sustainability is a significant added value for a tourism product or service, and taking it into account when planning marketing has monetary value.

KEYS TO COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABILITY

Unambiguous signs and evidence of a company's sustainable business practices are the most effective way to convey the message. The message must be meaningful so that the message it conveys fits the recipient's interest and information needs. It is also important to address emotions and values. In an ideal situation, sustainability in the company's operations and communications is fully communicated even without separate reports or campaigns. The key to successful communication is that all employees of the company are aware of the company's goals and values (Kuvaja & Malmelin 2008). Sustainability certificates are one way of highlighting your company's sustainability thinking. Through the certificate, the message about environmental work is transmitted quickly and reliably, as the certificate serves as a concrete guarantee that the company's operations meet the criteria it requires. However, the wide range of different sustainability certificates is a challenge: it is impossible for customers to identify and understand the principles contained in all labels. Therefore, it is good to focus on strong certificates known to customers.

Reliable and well-known certificates are typically fee-based and require documentation of work towards sustainability goals even after the label is awarded. However, the effort has its pros: the certificates serve as a marketing edge for sustainable tourism and sustainability monitoring can facilitate the achievement of the company's own sustainability goals (Certifications, Sertifiointeja 2018; Certificate mapping, Sertifikaattien kartoitus 2018). One possible way of communicating sustainability is to enter into a cooperation agreement with Metsähallitus and utilize the logos of the national parks in the company's communications. Metsähallitus cooperation companies have committed themselves to the sustainable tourism principles of Metsähallitus and have the opportunity to use national park logos on their websites or brochures when communicating on sustainable tourism in nature reserve area.



"THE SWAN LABEL IS THE MOST FAMOUS ECOLABEL IN FINLAND"

© VISIT FINLAND, 2018

"THE GREEN KEY CERTIFICATE IS A GLOBAL HOUSING INDUSTRY ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM"

© VISIT FINLAND, 2018

The role of the Internet in communication continues to grow. The importance of interaction in communication is constantly emphasized, and the utilization of social media channels is an increasingly important part of company communication. Internet-based applications have changed the attitude of particularly the younger generation to tourism: applications based on peer-to-peer reviews, such as TripAdvisor, allow for a quick and efficient review of tourism services and destinations and decision-making. The use of Internet-based applications in tourism marketing has significant advantages: social media applications such as Instagram and Facebook are generally free and allow for easy reach of large audiences.

The recommendations and reviews of other tourists on the Internet, as well as the active presence of companies in social media, are increasingly influencing customer choices, which is important to consider when creating social media channels.

Each company can choose the most appropriate channels for digital marketing, but suitable clientele can be reached, for example, on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Businesses across different industries are increasingly exploiting opportunities for collaboration with social media content providers. Collaboration can significantly increase visibility and expand your customer base.

From a marketing perspective, a good starting point is to identify sustainable features of own tourism products or services and to emphasize these in marketing. The key to successful marketing is to know your own customer segments and products. Sustainability should be conveyed as clearly as possible to the tourism product or service in order to achieve the best competitive advantage (Väisänen & Törn 2014).

Marketing communications can utilize (according to Väisänen and Törn 2014)

1. Factors that appeal to reason
 - for example, healthy organic food and the effects of energy savings on environmental well-being
 - reliable information in a clear format
2. Factors that appeal to feelings
 - for example, stories and images that are strongly linked to a place or telling the story of a family business: people and story behind the business
 - genuine, distinctive information that seeks to connect with the customer

When planning your marketing communications, it is good to consider the following:

- What factors in a tourism product / service bring added value to the tourist by sustainability?
- What kind of image do you want to create of your business?
- What kind of clientele do you have and how important is sustainability for them?
- How to communicate the sustainability of your business authentically and attractively?



4. STEPS FORWARD

In order to maximize sustainability and the benefits it brings in a tourism company, it is important to evaluate and adapt all the elements of a tourism product to the aspects of sustainable development when composing a sustainability plan and developing activities. This can be achieved in tourism at a more general level, such as accommodation and transportation, but also in individual products and services.

The tourism product and own activities should comply with the basic principles of economic, social, cultural and ecological sustainability. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a company should equally consider the following aspects in planning:

1. Conservation, thus preserving biodiversity and natural resources, but also strengthening the understanding and the acceptance of how important preserving the environment is, among both, residents and customers
2. local participation plays an important role: the locals should be benefit from tourism by improved living standards, local empowerment, poverty reduction and positive cultural exchanges
3. sustainability for tourism business means long-term profitability through tempered price policies (customer and investment) and attractive and diverse products

Equally important is the monitoring of potential new, more sustainable practices and the assessment of their effectiveness, but also the assessment of concrete economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts. For example, sustainability indicators may assist in the assessment.

"AUTUMN COLOR TRIPS INVITE WITH THEIR
COLORFULNESS."
© METSÄHALLITUS / MINNA KORAMO

SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS

In order for a company to start composing its own sustainability plan, the assessment of the company's current state of sustainability is of paramount importance. Sustainability indicators help to perceive the sustainability of the current state and monitor and guide future development. They also serve as a tool for assessing future situations, problems and risks. The indicators help the company concretely understand what factors can affect the sustainability of operations on which issues the company can influence at company's level or at local level. At this point, it is good to recall the different steps of the sustainability plan from chapter two.

The following list of sustainability indicators has been compiled for companies to use. The list is subdivided into sub-aspects of sustainability, but may have some overlapping. However, the indicators give an indication of what kind of things to pay attention to when assessing a company's performance in different aspects of sustainability. The list consists of five columns, the first tells with which aspect the indicator is associated. The second column identifies the indicator and the third gives it a more precise definition. The fourth and fifth columns help you perceive why the indicator may be an appropriate or important indicator for your business and how the indicator can assess your performance.



Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
Economic Sustainability	Number of customers	Number of incoming customers in a given time, for example, per month, per year.	<p>The company can contribute to the number of customers arriving in the region through efficient marketing of their tourism products and services.</p> <p>However, the number of incoming customers should remain within the range of capacity of the region and the company's own resources.</p>	<p>Is the number of customers sufficient to cover production costs?</p> <p>What kind of changes take place in the volume? (growth, fall, seasonal variation)</p> <p>Can changes be affected?</p>
	Accessibility	Accessibility / distance from nearest airport, train station, bus station, freeway, road, etc. Number of routes to destination.	The availability of the company affects the number of customers. Accessibility can be improved by, for example, clear and illustrative directions on the company's website and good signposts.	<p>Are there clear and illustrative directions available on the company's website?</p> <p>Can a company be found by way of signposts?</p> <p>Can accessibility be improved?</p>
	Products / services quality-price ratio	Appropriate pricing relative to the quality of the product / service, cost, demand, productivity and market situation.	<p>Starting from customer orientation: variable demand is responded to by flexible pricing. The minimum price for a product / service should cover the cost of it.</p> <p>Appropriate pricing also improves the company's competitiveness. When determining the price, it is good to consider the market situation of similar products in addition to the company's profit and goals and the added value the customer receives from the product.</p>	<p>Is the product considered worth the price?</p> <p>Are customers satisfied with what they get for their money?</p>
	Duration of visit / stay	How long does the visit last (e.g. number of nights spent in accommodation, time spent on activities).	The longer the duration of the trip, the greater the amount of revenue typically generated by tourism in the region.	<p>Is the average duration of the visit appropriate for the company?</p> <p>Can /want you extend / shorten the duration of the visit?</p>

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
	Number of returning customers	The number of returning customers relative to the number of visitors visiting the site only once.	Revisiting customers tell about customer satisfaction. The more customers return to the tourism product, the less resources needed to market the product. Satisfied customers can also recommend a tourism product to other potential customers.	How many customers visit the site only once? Does the company monitor the number of returning customers? Can the number be increased / grown?
	Skilled staff	Orientating the staff with their own work and the level of education.	Training and thorough orientation with work support the wellbeing of the employee and maintain the quality of the work.	Has the entire company staff been given a comprehensive orientation to their work? How many staff have a vocational / higher education degree linked to their job description? Do the entire company staff know the company's sustainable development goals? Does the entire staff work according to the goals?
	Efficiency of communication	Effective use of different media channels in company communications, clarity of information, versatility.	By communicating, the company can increase its awareness and assure the customer's purchase decision. Social media channels can easily reach large audiences with ease. The more languages a company uses to communicate, the wider audience can be reached. Social media channels allow new audiences to be reached.	Does the company have a website? Is information available in several languages? Does the company use social media? Is the use of social media regular and active?
	Favoring local products	Use of local products (e.g. local food) relative to those acquired from a distance.	Keeping the income from tourism in the region supports the economic vitality of the entire region, which also helps the future for business.	What is the current percentage of purchases from local producers? Can this share be increased?

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
	Year-round tourism	Number of tourists during off-season relative to the number of tourists during the peak-season. Number of products, services, and activities offered outside the peak-season relative to the total number. Accommodation capacity occupancy rate.	The year-round nature of tourism strengthens the economic balance throughout the year and supports the vitality of the region beyond the peak-season. Ideally, the number of tourists would remain roughly balanced throughout the year. However, the tourist seasons have a strong impact on the occupancy rate of accommodation.	Does the company also provide services or products outside the peak-season? What is the company's peak-season at the moment? Is it possible to extend / decentralize the season? What is the use of accommodation capacity at the moment? Can the usage percentage be increased?
	Year-round employment	Number of seasonal employees relative to year-round employees. Number of employees in the off-season relative to the number of employees in the peak-season.	Longer-term and year-round employment relationships are in the interests of both the employee and the employer in many aspects. Year-round employment also increases the vitality of the region if employees live in the area all year round.	How many employees of the company work all year round? Can this amount be increased or grown?
	Funds for investment, renovation and restoration	Turnover surplus.	The turnover should be high enough so that the funds also for new investments and renovation exist.	Are the company's funds sufficient for infrastructure maintenance and renovation? Does the company have to take a loan?
Social Sustainability	Number of local employees	Number of local employees in the company relative to non-local employees.	The more employees are local, the more extensive the tourism income will remain in the region in the form of tax revenue.	Are most of the company's employees local? Is it possible to increase or grow this number?
	Accessibility	The total number of accessible services and infrastructure.	Considering different groups of people in the planning of tourism services is of paramount importance. Destinations and services planned accessible are also an important competitive edge that should also be utilized in marketing.	Has accessibility been considered when planning a tourism service or product? For which customer groups do the products / services fit?

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
	Safety of the destination / product / service for the tourist, employee and entrepreneur	Ensuring the customer, employee and the entrepreneur the undisturbed use of the destination / product / service. Safety contributes to the quality of the product / service.	For the customer, safety means being able to enjoy the travel experience without the risk of harm or additional fears. Employee safety means, for example, the health and safety of the work environment. For the entrepreneur, safety can also translate into business continuity and reputation.	Does the company take care of safety issues (e.g. safety of premises and equipment, quality of the environment, staff competence and hygiene level)? Has there been "near miss" situations or accidents in the company? Does the company have a clear operating model for "near miss" situations and accidents?
	Staff wellbeing	Staff wellbeing can be assessed, for example, through job satisfaction surveys.	Incentive working atmosphere motivates both employees and entrepreneurs. A good working atmosphere, where the employee feels safe and appreciated, is also reflected in the work results.	Kerääkö yritys tietoa työtyytyväisyydestä? Reagoidaanko saatuihin tuloksiin? Ovatko työntekijät sitoutuneita yritykseen?
	Tourists' satisfaction with the destination / service / product	Collection and analysis of customer feedback.	Customer feedback has a significant value in developing a product or service in a customer-oriented direction. A satisfied customer possibly returns to the service again at best, and tells others about their positive travel experience, making valuable marketing efforts.	Does the company collect information about job satisfaction? Do results received lead to actions? Are employees committed to the company?
	Recommending local businesses	Supporting other local businesses through own business.	Businesses' support to each other builds valuable community spirit. Keeping the income from tourism in the region supports the economic vitality of the entire region, which also helps the future for business.	Does the company recommend to its customers the services or products of other local businesses?
	Local community support	Local people have positive attitude towards the business operations.	Local support for business can play an important role in business success and continuity.	Has the company experienced some kind of conflict with the local community?

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
	Versatile offering	Versatility in the range of services, products and activities offered, considering the different groups of people.	There is a wide range of activities available for different groups of people and tourists with different interests. It is important for the company to consider the different target groups and their needs and expectations.	Does the company consider different customer groups in its service offering?
Cultural Sustainability	Maintaining local traditions	Products and services utilize local history and traditions through stories, including oral, written or concrete physical environments (for example, buildings, interior, etc.)	Displaying local traditions and history in company services and products can both strengthen the vitality of local culture and make the company stand out from other companies providing similar services.	Do local history and traditions appear somehow in the company's activities (services or products)? Are customers told about local traditions? Are local traditions taught to customers? Could the region's traditions and history be added more to services / products?
	Number of restored / renovated buildings	Number of restored / renovated buildings and infrastructure relative to non-maintained (and modern buildings).	Maintenance of old buildings is an effective way to protect and preserve the valuable cultural heritage and environment of the region. By taking good care of the built environment, the company can also save costs in the long run and reduce the need for new infrastructure.	If there are old buildings in the company's yard, does the company maintain the condition of the buildings at regular intervals?
	Multilingualism in communication	The company communicates its activities and services in a number of different languages through a variety of communication channels.	Considering the language skills of different customer groups is a key starting point for tourism. The more languages a company communicates with its services, the wider customer base can be achieved.	Is information on the company's operations and services available in several languages?
	Selection of building materials and decorative items	Building materials, decorative items and interior exude the region's distinctive character, traditions and history, or, for example, local handicraft.	Furnishings and interior solutions can help maintain a local historical spirit. By investing in personal and unique building and interior solutions, the place will also be better remembered by the customer by increasing the experientialism.	Does the company invest in furnishing and decorating its premises with respect to local spirit or traditions / stories?

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
	The authenticity and personality of products and services	Preserving authenticity and personality in products, services and experiences, despite the cultural and historical production.	For example, the sense of authenticity is enhanced by the fact that the entrepreneur and the employees really know the stories and history of the region. With customers, it is good to be courageously your own self and let your own personality shine through.	Do the entrepreneur and employees know the history of the region? Could the region's traditions and history be added more to services? Does the company offer its customers personal service?
	Educational value for customers	For example, telling about local nature, traditions and values as part of a product / service.	Products and services utilize local history and traditions through stories.	Does the company's values pass on to customers? Do customers understand why a company / local culture works exactly like this?
	Considering different cultural backgrounds	The company considers the different cultural backgrounds of its customers in its services (e.g. habits, norms, diets).	Enhancing interaction between the company and the customers can increase understanding of other cultures and mutual understanding.	Does the company consider the different cultural backgrounds of its customers?
Ecological Sustainability	Energy consumption	E.g. kWh / m ² Vattenfall Energy Consumption Counter and Energy Saving Tips: www.vattenfall.fi/energianeuvonta/arvioi-energiankulutuksesi/	The use, quantity, age and condition of electrical equipment have a significant effect on the amount of energy consumption. The condition of the electrical equipment should be taken care of at regular intervals and equipment should be renewed on time. Energy consumption can also be minimized with energy-efficient solutions such as energy-saving lamps.	Does the company monitor its energy consumption? Does the company effectively utilize various energy-efficient and energy-saving solutions to reduce its own consumption? Does the company also encourage its customers to save energy on the site?

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
Ecological Sustainability	Water consumption	Water consumption e.g. l / person / day	Water consumption is influenced by age and renovation year of buildings, condition of pipelines, properties of water fixtures, consumption and usage habits and consumption monitoring. Usually water is consumed most in connection with kitchen work, laundry and washing, as well as through the toilet seat. Water consumption can be reduced by, for example, favoring solutions such as a water-saving tap. It is important to note that reducing the use of hot water also saves on heating energy costs.	Does the company monitor its water consumption? Does the company strive to reduce its water consumption with various savings solutions? Does the company also encourage its customers to save water on the site?
	Heating energy consumption	Motiva Oy's formulas for energy consumption of heating: www.motiva.fi/julkinen_sektori/kiinteiston_energian_kaytto/kulutuksen_normitus/laskukaavat_lammitysenergiankulutus	Heating costs can be minimized, for example, by following the recommended indoor temperatures and with sufficient seals on windows and doors.	Does the company monitor its heating energy consumption? Does the company seek to reduce its heating energy consumption and costs?
	Use of renewable energy sources	How much of the energy consumption comes from renewable energy sources.	The aim is to increase the use of renewable energy in line with the Energy and Climate Strategy and the National Renewable Energy Action Plan. Sources of renewable energy include solar, wind, water and bio-energy and geothermal energy. Electricity bidding can affect both the price of the electricity used and its origin.	How much of the company's energy comes from renewable energy sources? Can the amount be increased?
	Amount of waste generated by the destination	E.g. kg / year	Minimizing waste is ecologically sustainable. Waste and spoilage can be reduced, for example, by, renouncing disposable tableware.	How much does the company produce waste a year? Can the amount be reduced?

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
	Recycling / recycling opportunities	The percentage of total waste recycled. The versatility and quantity / region of recycling containers. Recycling opportunities in different locations vary considerably - not all recycling guidelines are suitable for all sites	Recycling is an aspect of ecological sustainability that every entrepreneur and customer can contribute to. Recycling containers tell customers quickly that ecological sustainability is important to the company. Waste management solutions should be designed with the emphasis on sorting waste by placing waste sorting containers in accommodation facilities, for example. Recycling containers in outside areas must be well placed allowing taking recycled waste to the appropriate recycling containers from which they will be transported forward. For example, bio-waste, glass, metal and paper should all have their own recycling bins at waste disposal points.	Does the company recycle their waste? How much is the share of recycled waste? Have customers been instructed to recycle with appropriate signs?
	Emissions from business operations	Calculating emissions, Motiva Oy: www.motiva.fi/files/6817/CO2-country_country_pdf.pdf (Hippinen, I. & U.Suomi (2012).	Fuels are a major contributor to emissions. Reducing emissions also achieves economic savings in addition to ecological sustainability. Private car use consumes much more fuel than public transport. In activities and mobility, the company is encouraged to encourage physical movement, which is health-friendly and eco-friendly.	Does the company strive to avoid private car use and use of motorized forms of mobility? Can the amount of fuel / private car emissions be reduced? Does the company have catalytic converters or other similar emission control devices?

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
	Effect of soil erosion	The size of the land that is subject to significant erosion or other wear.	For example, the trampling of popular hiking and camping routes cause soil erosion, while widening and deepening the paths. Tourist deviation from marked routes can cause damage to vegetation and the emergence of new undesirable routes in addition to soil trampling.	Does a company operating in nature pay attention to the prevention of soil erosion?
	The company's carbon footprint	The carbon footprint of a tourism service or product, Y-HIILARI, is a counter for calculating the company's carbon footprint by the Finnish Environment Institute: www.syke.fi/fi-FI/Tutkimus_kehittaminen/Kulutus_ja_tuotanto/Laskurit/YHilari	From the ecological sustainability perspective, it is important to pay attention to the company's carbon footprint. Ways to keep the carbon footprint low include increasing the company's energy efficiency, using renewable energy sources, reducing the amount and waste of spoilage, favoring local food and vegetarian food, and reducing fuel consumption.	Has the company calculated its own carbon footprint? What are the company's biggest sources of carbon emissions? Can the carbon footprint be reduced?
	The amount of natural landscape in the area	The amount of natural landscape in the area.	The development of tourism and the construction of new infrastructure and roads can cause a reduction in the amount of natural landscape. However, the natural landscape is a major attraction for tourists, so its conservation should be protected not only from an ecological perspective, but also from tourism perspective.	Does the company, through its own activities, strive to preserve the authentic natural landscape?

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
Ecological Sustainability	Environmental impact assessment	Indicators in Luontoon.fi website: www.luontoon.fi/ retkeilynabc/ ymparistovinkit/ ymparistovaikutustenmittarit Environmental impacts can be assessed e.g. by calculating carbon footprint, ecological footprint or MIPS (Material Input Per Service Unit).	Human activity always has an impact on the surrounding nature. Efforts can be made to limit local negative impacts by planning (e.g. energy saving solutions in building planning) and environmental protection (e.g. reducing the use of fossil fuels to reduce acidification of soil and water).	Does the company monitor the environmental impacts of its own operations? Can the impacts be reduced?
	Environmental awareness of entrepreneurs, employees, tourists and the community	Environmental awareness can be measured through surveys, but also through everyday choices. Employees' environmental awareness can be improved through comprehensive orientation and training.	Environmental awareness is a growing trend. By sharing the same values of ecological sustainability with the local community and tourists, the survival of natural environments can also be guaranteed to future generations.	Does the company (operating in nature) consider the carrying capacity of the environment?
	Number of tourists / group sizes / capacity of the destination	Number of tourists in a region at a given time / man-made pressure on nature / appropriate group sizes.	The number of tourists is an important factor in ecological sustainability, as large groups of tourists are burdening nature sites. The capacity of a tourist destination means the maximum number of tourists who can take advantage of the area's recreational opportunities at a time without over-straining the natural environment and without reducing the quality of the travel experience.	Does the company (operating in nature) consider the carrying capacity of the environment?

Aspects	Sustainability Indicators	Definition	Justification	Assessment
	Companies with sustainability certificates	Number of companies with sustainability certificates relative to the total number of companies. Sustainability certificates with prerequisites: www.visitfinland.fi/kestava-kehitysmatkailu/yrityksessa/sertifiointeja/	Through sustainability certificates, the message about environmental work is transmitted quickly and reliably, as the certificate serves as a concrete guarantee that the company's operations meet the required criteria. Sustainability certifications indicate that sustainability issues are important for businesses.	Does the company have sustainability certificates?
	Ecological sustainability in procurement	Considering sustainability when choosing different materials and supplies, such as detergents, building materials, papers, raw materials, etc.	A responsible company considers sustainability in its procurement.	In what ways does the company seek to favor local actors and consider environmental impacts in its procurement?

Information based of the discussions in the project and from the following sources has been utilized in the indicator list: Hammitt & Cole (1998); Jewell & Hammitt (2000); Rebello & Baidal (2003); Information Society Development Center, Tietoyhteiskunnan kehittämiskeskus ry (2005); (Choi & Sirakaya (2006); Kuvaja & Malmelin (2008); Schianetz & Kavanagh (2008); Use of Apartment-specific Water Meters... (2009); Lapland Tourism Security System: ... (2009-2014); Iivari (2012); Lozano-Oyola etc. (2012); WWF examined, WWF selvitti: ... (2012); Blinnikka & Hauvala (ed.) (2014); Blinnikka & Hauvala (2014); Jäntti etc. (2014); Nuijanmaa (2014); Salminen (2014); Silvennoinen (2014); Tunkkari-Eskelinen (2014); Törn & Väisänen (2014); Väisänen & Törn (2014); Kennell (2016); Man Affecting the Environment, Ihminen vaikuttaa ympäristöön (2018); Juholin & Luoma-aho (2018); Heating Energy Saving Tips, Lämmitysenergian säästövinkit... (2018); Electricity Bidding, Sähkön kilpailuttaminen (2018); Renewable Energy, Uusiutuva energia (2018); Tips for Saving Energy, Vinkkejä energian säästämiseen (2018); Environmental Impact Indicators, Ympäristövaikutusten mittarit (2018).



5. USEFUL LINKS AND MORE INFORMATION

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Principles of sustainable tourism of Metsähallitus: <http://www.metsa.fi/kestava-luontomatkailu>

Metsähallitus (2016). Principles of Sustainable Tourism - National Parks, Nature and Historical Sites and World Heritage Sites, Kestävän matkailun periaatteet: Kansallispuistot, luonto- ja historialkohteet sekä maailmanperintökohteet: <https://julkaisut.metsa.fi/julkaisut/show/2233>

Erkkonen, J. & M. Kyöstilä (2016). Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas - Guide for Tourism Companies, Kestävä matkailu suojelualueilla - Opas matkailuyrityksille: <https://julkaisut.metsa.fi/julkaisut/show/2067>

Visit Finland: Sustainable Development in Tourism Company, Kestävä kehitys matkailuyrityksessä: <http://www.visitfinland.fi/kestava-kehitys-matkailuyrityksessa/>

Turunen, A. (Association of Finnish Travel Agents AFTA), Sustainable Tourism Information Package: <http://www.smal.fi/loader.aspx?id=2989ale4-a78f-4e3a-981f-2663b4398e07>

Sustainable Development Society Commitment (2016): <http://kestavakehitys.fi/documents/2167391/2186383/FINAL+Kest%C3%A4v%C3%A4n+kehityksen+yhteiskuntasitoumus+20+4+2016.pdf/d2d827e7-033a-4d2b-9239-aed6605a12c4/FINAL+Kest%C3%A4v%C3%A4n+kehityksen+yhteiskuntasitoumus+20+4+2016.pdf.pdf>

Business Finland, Investing in Sustainable Development Creates a Competitive Advantage for a Tourism Company, Investoiminen kestävään kehitykseen luo matkailuyritykselle kilpailuetua <https://www.businessfinland.fi/ajankohtaista/uutiset/tiedotteet/2017/investoiminen-kestavaan-kehitykseen-luo-matkailuyritykselle-kilpailuetua/>

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Motiva (2017). Property Heating Guide for Municipalities. https://www.motiva.fi/files/13534/Kiinteistöjen_lammitus_-_opas_kunnille.pdf

With the help of a counter, you can use Vattenfall's website to evaluate your own energy consumption: <https://www.vattenfall.fi/energianeuvonta/arvioi-energiankulutuksesi/>

CERTIFICATES

Visit Finland, Certifications

<http://www.visitfinland.fi/kestava-kehitys-matkailuyrityksessa/sertifiointeja/>

OTHER

Koillismaa Summer Tourism Growth Program: http://www.naturpolis.fi/files/2614/8403/2595/Koillismaan_kesa-matkailun_kasvuohjelma.pdf

Report by Ruka-Kuusamo Matkailu ry (Tourism Association) and Naturpolis Oy on key figures for tourism in Kuusamo: <https://visiittori.fi/kuusamo>. The site report is updated every time a new report is completed.

Visit Finland's database Rudolf provides up-to-date statistics on Finnish tourism: <http://visitfinland.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/en/VisitFinland>

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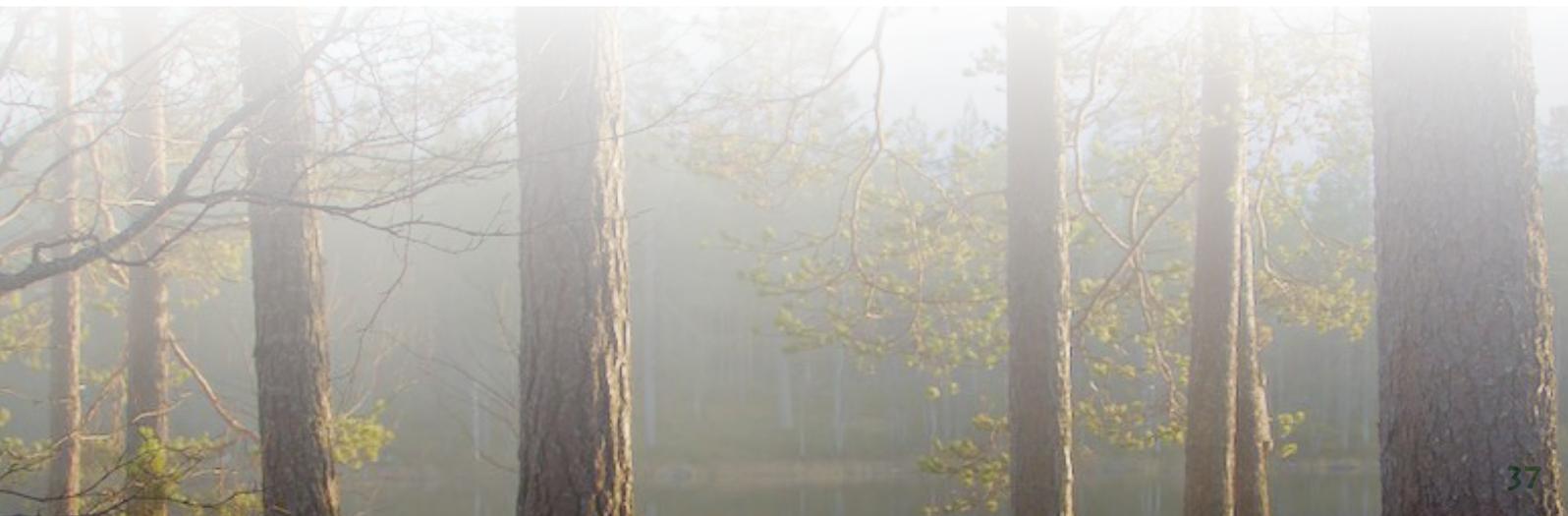
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Steps of the Sustainability Plan

Following and inspired by the KESMA II Sustainability Compass - Rural Tourism Entrepreneur's Workbook, Kestävyyden kompassi – Maaseutumatkailuyrittäjän työkirja (2014), Asikainen and Blinnikka (2012)

The following questions will help you understand the current state of your business.

1. Baseline assessment

1. What kind of products and services do we offer?
2. Who are our customers?
3. What kind of staff does our company have?
4. In what aspect of sustainability (economic, social, cultural and ecological) are we strong?
5. In what issues would we like to improve our operations?

2. Choosing the most important development areas

Questions divided into sustainability aspects help the company assess its current state. Based on responses, the company can more clearly see which aspects of sustainability are well managed and which require further development. The aspects where the company gathers the most "requires development" responses are also likely the aspects where the most suitable development needs can be found.

The questions are based on the indicators discussed in the indicator list. The indicator list can be used to answer questions, and you can choose additional help questions to assess your own sustainability.

Economic Sustainability

1. Is the number of customers sufficient to cover production costs

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

2. The company is easily accessible (e.g. directions are available on the company website, the company can be found by way of signposts)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

3. The company is reviewing the number of returning customers and is working to return customers

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

4. All employees are fully orientated with their work and the company's sustainability goals

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

5. The company is active in social media (e.g. own account that is updated regularly)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

6. The company strives to make its procurement (where possible) from local producers

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

7. Company invests in year round nature of business (e.g. offers services or products outside peak-season, employees work all-year round)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

1. Most of the company's employees are local (tax revenue remains in the region)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

2. Tourism services and products are suitable or capable of being applied to a variety of customers (including disabled people, families with children, etc.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

3. The company has a security plan

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

4. The company collects information on job satisfaction and responds to the results

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

5. The company collects customer feedback and responds to the results

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

6. The company supports other companies in the region through its own operations (e.g. the company recommends other companies in the area to its customers)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

7. The company takes care of the wellbeing of its staff

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Requires development	halfway there	we perform well

1. Local history and cultural traditions are part of the company's operations (services and / or products)

Requires development

halfway there

we perform well

2. Local history and cultural traditions are somehow conveyed by the premises used by the company and their interior design

Requires development

halfway there

we perform well

3. The entrepreneur knows the history and cultural traditions of the region

Requires development

halfway there

we perform well

4. Staff skills are being developed by increasing knowledge of local history and cultural traditions

Requires development

halfway there

we perform well

5. Company values are passed on to customers

Requires development

halfway there

we perform well

6. The company considers the different cultural backgrounds of its customers (e.g. habits, diets, norms).

Requires development

halfway there

we perform well

7. Information on the company is available in several languages

Requires development

halfway there

we perform well

1. The company monitors its electricity, water and heating energy consumption and strives to reduce its consumption with various savings solutions

Requires
development

halfway there

we perform
well

2. A significant part of the company's energy comes from renewable energy sources

Requires
development

halfway there

we perform
well

3. The company recycles its waste

Requires
development

halfway there

we perform
well

4. The company is monitoring its own carbon footprint

Requires
development

halfway there

we perform
well

5. The company monitors the environmental impacts of its own operations

Requires
development

halfway there

we perform
well

6. The company conveys environmental awareness to its employees and / or customers

Requires
development

halfway there

we perform
well

7. The company (operating in nature) considers the constraints imposed by the carrying capacity of the environment

requires
development

halfway there

we perform
well

3. The company sets its own goals and schedules to develop sustainability

The company sets clear goals for itself based on the most meaningful development areas. Desired development should support or add value to the business idea and help the company stand out from its competitors.

The goals should be ambitious, but realistic and adjusted to for the number of staff and available resources. For example, if a company considers procurement and production as key development area, it may decide to pursue ecological sustainability via replacing all detergents with eco-friendly alternatives. The company does not necessarily have to look for a something to develop for each of the four aspects of sustainability, but can focus on the most important ones. The Sustainability Indicators list can, again, be used to help set goals.

Scheduling the goals is a key part of the sustainability plan. As with goal setting, scheduling should be realistic but determined. It is a good idea to make the goals visible to the entire work community so that everyone can work together to reach the goals and to monitor success in attainment.

For the achievement of the goals, it is best to set their estimated time of completion in the near future. However, scheduling also has to consider the scale of goals: taking smaller sustainability steps does not require as long a period as larger scale goals.

1. Goals for developing economic sustainability. What are we aiming for?

What concrete steps are required to achieve the goals?

Schedule. What is the schedule for achieving and meeting the goals?

3. The company sets its own goals and schedules to develop sustainability

2. Goals to develop social sustainability. What are we aiming for?

What concrete steps are required to achieve the goals?

Schedule. What is the schedule for achieving and meeting the goals?

3. Goals for developing cultural sustainability. What are we aiming for?

What concrete steps are required to achieve the goals?

Schedule. What is the schedule for achieving and meeting the goals?

3. The company sets its own goals and schedules to develop sustainability

4. Goals for ecological sustainability. What are we aiming for?

What concrete steps are required to achieve the goals?

Schedule. What is the schedule for achieving and meeting the goals?

4. Monitoring and assessment

Measuring and attainment of desired objectives are equally important as are the setting and pursuing goals. It is essential to acknowledge for the work done well, both for yourself and for the staff. You also have to look into the future - what are the future objectives of the company

1. How do we monitor the realization of the sustainability goals? (when and what kind of indicators we use)
2. Did we meet the goals as expected in the estimated schedule?
3. What new did we learn along the way?
4. What are the company's sustainability goals in the future?



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