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A Proposal Towards Better Sustainable Consumer Information To Address Eco-certification Skepticism and Promote Sustainability Initiatives of Adventure Tourism Companies in Norway

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Declaration

We, Casey Engle and Jhoanna Mae Guevara, declare that this thesis is a result of our research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than our own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature Casey Engle
Casey Engle (Aug 14, 2022 16:54 PDT)


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Here's to our new beginnings.

Abstract

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization's Global Report on Adventure Tourism from 2014, there is a growing demand for adventure tourism globally. With Norway abiding by its tourism industry's slogan— "*Powered by Nature*"—it showcases that Norway's primary tourism identity rests within nature in the form of adventure tourism. Issues of sustainability in the tourism industry remain paramount as Norway seeks to develop sustainably with tourism. With that, the role of adventure tourism companies in participating in sustainable tourism remains vital.

The thesis extends the researchers' previous internship work of observing how Scandinavia (i.e., Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland) is home to numerous nature-based tour companies that implement sustainable tourism practices without being eco-certified. Booknordics AS provided access to adventure tourism companies. In effect, to further research on the role of adventure tour companies in sustainable tourism, the study conducted a grounded theory approach to investigate Norwegian adventure tourism companies' sustainable consumer information on websites and their opinions towards the effectiveness of eco-certification in influencing their sustainability practices. Therefore, the researchers used a combination of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling to find and select adventure tourism companies to be part of the case. With that, 16 interviews and the websites from Norwegian adventure tourism companies contributed to data collection that was analyzed thematically.

As a result, the thesis presents two main findings. First, both eco-certified and non-eco-certified adventure tour companies' skepticism to eco-certifications ability to foster sustainable practices roots in three reasons: a) the insufficiency of eco-certifications in representing their sustainable initiatives; b) the lack of a compatible certification scheme focusing on adventure tourism companies; c) the issue of credibility on data reported by eco-certified companies. Second, regardless of being eco-certified or not, Norwegian tour companies voluntarily implement several types of sustainability initiatives which are being regenerative in design, creating value for local communities, and implementing work practices. However, despite the practice of sustainability initiatives amongst adventure tour companies, they lack using a digestible framework to provide better sustainability consumer information on their websites. Therefore, the thesis proposes the Sustainable Consumer Information Badge System as a potential solution to represent a bottom-up policy building with local operators.

KEYWORDS: adventure tour companies, consumer information, Eco-lighthouse, sustainable tourism, voluntary sustainability initiatives

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Abbreviations

ATC:	Adventure Tourism Companies
CBT:	Community-based tourism
GT:	Ground Theory
HES:	Health Environment and Safety
NBT:	Nature Based Tourism
NSD:	Norwegian Center of Research Data (Norsk senter for forskningsdatao)
SCI:	Sustainable Consumer Information
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SE:	Sustainable entrepreneurs
ST:	Sustainable Tourism
TSE:	Tourism social entrepreneurship
UNWTO:	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WCED:	World Commission on Environment and Development

1. Introduction

Global tourism is flourishing into a substantial economic force (Weaver & Lawton, 2014). Tourism's actual and potential contributions to global economic development 'equals or transcend' those of other major sectors, such as oil, food, and automobiles (United Nations World Tourism Organization, n.d.). According to the Statista Research Department (2021), tourism contributed at least 10 percent to the global GDP from 2015 to 2019, hitting a peak of 10.4 percent or nearly \$ 9.2 trillion in 2019. Similarly, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the leading group representing the worldwide tourism sector, said that tourism produced 334 million jobs and increased international visitor expenditure to \$ 1.7 trillion in 2019. (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021). Most of the existing research concludes from these facts that tourism's economic prospects will continue to increase (e.g., Scarlett, 2021; León-Gómez et al., 2021; Wood, 2017; Weaver & Lawton, 2014; Webster & Ivanov, 2014; UN Environment Programme & World Tourism Organization, 2005).

However, despite tourism's vital role in global commerce and economic progress, it does not outweigh the industry's poor image in terms of its influence on our cultures and the environment (Suhi et al., 2019). For instance, Wood (2017) indicated in her book *Sustainable Tourism in a Finite Planet* how the tourism industry overlooks the critical environmental, social, and cultural consequences as part of the cost of doing business globally, although its expansion generates substantial income.

The growing sustainability criticism of tourism has led to the tourism sector utilizing certification schemes to manage these sustainability concerns (Dekhili & Akli Achabou, 2014). The certification schemes serve as a market mechanism to inform consumers of more environmentally friendly choices as the primary form of sustainable consumer information (Yokessa & Murette, 2019). However, despite certification schemes serving as a market-based solution to govern the environment (Vatn, 2015), these schemes have also been criticized in the past for concentrating more on a hotel than ecotourism operators along with being too highly skewed in favor of ecological impact (Bausch et al., 2021; Font, 2002; Jarvis et al., 2010), with many of the early schemes overlooking other dimensions of sustainability such as socio-cultural (Font & Harris, 2004).

With these existing sustainability gaps, the three facets of sustainability in tourism should not be treated as separate entities but interlinked (Fischer et al., 2020). In order for tourism to go forward with its sustainability plans, better comprehension and evaluation of

sustainable tourism's key actors, measures, and practices are crucial (Javed & Tučková, 2019). As Robinson (1999) argued that most sustainable tourism prioritizes the environmental and economic dimension rather than the social dimension, this research agrees that solutions to address the imbalance of the three dimensions should be further explored.

The Case of Norway's Tourism Industry

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD), 2020 study on Norway's tourism, one of the country's main impediments is its generally low-value creation and profitability level compared to other sectors, such as oil, food, and technology. This is prior to conditions such as a low prevalence of tourist goods with high added value, seasonal fluctuations, and a lack of collaboration across destinations (OECD, 2020). Moreover, some places confront the dilemma of unsustainable tourist development, with overcrowding becoming a grave issue during specific periods of the year. In response to the negative implications of the tourism industry, the Norwegian government has integrated sustainability into its 2020 Norwegian National Tourism Strategy since 2017 (see Chapter Two). According to the most current government white paper on tourism, nature continues to be the primary reason why visitors pick Norway as a vacation destination (Ministry of Trade, 2017). With that, the role of adventure tour companies (ATCs) remains vital (Rosenberg et al., 2021).

Adventure tourism companies (ATCs) lack a precise definition with no recognition from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) describes it as including two the following: physical activity, cultural immersion, and the environment (Huddart & Stott, 2020). Mass tourism and adventure tourism have distinguishable traits, but the niche tourism types overlap in their operations (Huddart & Stott, 2020). Sustainable tourism, conservation tourism, responsible tourism, community-based tourism, volunteer tourism, ecotourism, and wildlife tourism share characteristics and can stand within adventure tourism (Huddart & Stott, 2020). Meanwhile, Rosenberg and colleagues (2021) distinguish ATCs from that nature-based in a way that ATCs focus more on 'doing' than 'seeing.'

Adventure tourism companies (ATCs) have subsidized the growth of remote areas across the globe, making distant lands reachable to outsiders, authorizing groups to represent their cultures, and bringing monetary benefits to areas that lack resources (Oklevik et al., 2019; Rosenberg et al., 2021). Therefore, ATCs and travel agencies have made significant progress

in deliberately adapting their platforms to be as accountable as possible (Marin-Pantelescu et al., 2019). In this light, this thesis recognizes how the ATCs' unique role in the travel sector is an opportunity to make sustainably functional changes.

However, despite the contributions of ATCs in the tourism industry, there are limited studies featuring the various sustainable initiatives of adventure tourism companies (Zapata Campos et al., 2018). This thesis identified that Norway has more non-eco-certified ATCs than eco-certified ones (see appendix G and H). However, both groups of ATCs lack the digestible framework for broadcasting their sustainable practices to the consumers on their websites. The thesis problematizes the lack of sustainable consumer information (SCI) on adventure tourism companies' websites to develop participatory solutions amongst ATCs in Norway. ATCs do not use an eco-certification framework to provide information to consumers, and consumers lack a framework to make an informed decision (Olszewski-Strzyżowski, 2022). The focus of the thesis will be on determining the risks of having as well as not having eco-certification for adventure tourism companies. Therefore, SCI needs to be improved for adventure tourism companies within Norway.

Research Aims

Tourism remains to grow as one of the most economically powerful sectors, and adventure tourism is one of the fastest-growing types, but the least understood types of tourism as travelers seek more unique experiences (Beard et al., 2003; Huddart & Stott, 2020). While several countries such as Norway have widely embraced adventure tourism, its significance in the socioeconomic development of rural places and its implications on local communities, cultures, economics, and ecosystems are not well explored. Therefore, this thesis delves into Norwegian adventure tourism through a grounded theory approach to explore the various causes of eco-certification skepticism amongst adventure tourism companies.

Sustainability is the most critical challenge facing the tourism industry (Martin, 2019). To deliberately and sustainably manage tourism, transitioning from a top-down approach to a bottom-up should be considered (Wood, 2017; Zouganeli et al., 2012). Research on the use of adventure tourism as a concept has some scholars criticizing its wide applicability with a broad range of tourism that can cover almost anything (Rantala et al., 2018). Therefore, adventure tourism should be considered categorical and not an analytical concept; the suggestion is to use adventure tourism as an empirical object to research practical ways of doing adventure tourism (Rantala et al., 2018). Adventure tourism is an object of research that can adapt to more

sustainable practices. However, it would remain an overarching category that sustainable tourism can fit within.

Research Objectives

The travel and tourism sector depends not only on the security of tourists but also on the well-being of the setting, the economy, and the community of the destination. In most places, the local individuals depend entirely on the revenue tourism brings to their community. If larger companies take over their businesses, hotels, and restaurants, they risk their livelihood (Saidmamatov et al., 2020). On that consideration, this thesis aims to propose an alternative system for certification schemes that can co-exist with eco-certification without locking out the smaller companies who cannot afford to be eco-certified.

The research will consider whether such companies facilitate tourists with appropriate conservation resources for the environment they are visiting or endorse sustainable activities like wildlife sanctuaries or cycle tours (Tătar et al., 2018). The rationale is to determine how adventure tourism companies in adventure tour companies within Norway educate their consumers regarding the location's culture and recommend purchasing locally made products. All these efforts assist in keeping both the business as well as the environment sustainable for the future. Moreover, capitalizing on time in building robust, sustainable business practices provides specific excellent new marketing opportunities in a developing and growing space (Dube & Nhamo, 2021). The research rationale is to determine the benefits of eco-labeling and how adventure tour companies implement sustainable consumer information, a market-based approach to making travel sustainable.

All in all, the research aims to understand the different perceptions of ATCs on eco-certification's effectiveness, their voluntary sustainability initiatives, and the use of sustainable consumer information for solutions in making tourism more sustainable. The research objectives are as follows:

- To analyze the leading cause of skepticism of adventure tourism companies around eco-certifications in Norway
- To demonstrate the ways to improve sustainable consumer information (SCI) for adventure tourism companies in Norway
- To assess the social, economic, political, and environmental factors influencing adventure tourism companies' sustainability interpretations

Significance of the research

The SDGs reflect a top-down approach to implementing sustainable tourism (Wu et al., 2019). With that, this thesis aims to contribute to the growing bottom-up approach to tourism studies (i.e., Stoddard et al., 2012; Linnes et al., 2021; Zouganeli et al., 2012). Moreover, the thesis aids adventure tour companies—both eco-certified and non-eco-certified—in highlighting how they implement sustainability initiatives in their day-to-day operations. In addition, Norwegian policymakers will gain insight into the current causes of eco-certification skepticism among Norwegian adventure tour firms, enabling them to develop regulations that will assist these businesses in contributing more effectively to their sustainability agenda. Finally, the central contribution of this thesis is the idea of an alternative approach for providing sustainable consumer information within the Norwegian adventure tourism companies. Through this system, tour companies will be defined not only by their eco-certification badges but also by their actual contributions beyond eco-certification programs. This provides a comprehensive, bottom-up method to recognize the sustainability actions of adventure tourism companies.

All in all, the thesis will be beneficial in identifying the role of adventure tourism companies that can contribute to the long-term and sustainable growth of the tourism industry sector. The thesis will also help study the several sustainable initiatives adventure tourism companies undertake. The research thesis will help to explore the skepticism behind eco-certification and analyze the role of the adventure tourism companies that contributes to sustainable tourism in Norway. The thesis will also help to get proper factors, highlight the use of the SDGs to harness sustainable tourism, and generate different pathways for the tourism industry to be much more sustainable to lower the negative impacts.

2. Background of the Study

Sustainable tourism (ST), like sustainable development, materialized through a succession of conferences and international summits at which leaders have endeavored to form a consensus on how to address the "pressing crises" of the 21st century: poverty, growing inequality, pollution, and health deterioration (Paul, 2008; Bâc, 2014). The Limits to Growth (Meadows & Club of Rome, 1972), the 1972 Stockholm United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (United Nations, 1972), and the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) pertain to events that brought together the development discourse in concerns of over-population, environment, poverty, and under-development. In this light, this string of development

discourses provided ways of framing sustainable strategies of today (Bâc, 2014; Hanna et al., 2016). Although the purpose of the thesis is not to elaborate deeper into these discourses, it is important to showcase the top-down direction that has driven international policy in sustainable tourism that stands within the realms of sustainable development and its history.

The advent of sustainable tourism within sustainable development discourses

The Brundtland Report majorly influenced the conceptualization of sustainable development (Hanna et al., 2016; Mihalic, 2016; Mowforth & Munt, 2016). The report defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 43). To this day, the policy from the UNWTO (World Tourism Organization) and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopt this definition and apply a cohesive top-down approach for sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 2017). As (UNWTO, n.d.) regards sustainable tourism (ST) as tourism that takes into consideration the social, economic, and environmental consequences while meeting the demands of tourists, businesses, the environment, and local communities for the future and today.

Meanwhile, the 1992 Earth Summit, which produced Agenda 21, played a pivotal role in the perception of tourism as a driver of sustainable development:

"We support the development of tourism programs that respect the environment and culture, as a strategy for sustainable development of urban and rural communities by decentralizing urban development and reducing disparities among regions" (UN 1992, Chapter 7).

Meanwhile, the third United Nations Rio Summits, called the Future We Want, led to the formulation of our current sustainable agenda—the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The summit ratified the green economy and sustainable tourism for value creation, conservation, and environmental awareness. Moreover, it has brought together the economy and ecology in its objectives (United Nations, 2012). However, just like any other sustainable discourses, the SDGs continue to be criticized by researchers as greenwashing tools in a growing amount of literature that explains it lacks sizable changes and masks same-old mainstream neoliberal economic practices (Ferrón Vílchez et al., 2022; Jakobsen, 2022).

Sustainable Tourism and the SDGs

The UNWTO, the main UN organization body that focuses on tourism, recognizes the role of the tourism industry in accomplishing the SDGs by 2030. UNWTO calls on the industry to "foster sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" under SDG 8 (UNWTO, 2017, p.99). Target 8.9 mentions sustainable tourism "to devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products" (UNWTO, 2017, p.99). With that, target 8.9 contains two indicators that assess the growth of tourism overall from GDP, and the other measures the number of employments in the tourism sector deemed sustain to tourism (Bianchi & de Man, 2021). However, some academics oppose both indicators of target 8.9 for contradicting growth and sustainability since there is no proof that tourism is sustainable (Bianchi & de Man, 2021).

Tourism, an economic-driven industry, has stayed strongly tied with the notion of sustainable development in academic and policy circles (Kuhn, 2007). In addition to being firmly established and supported within the economic growth narrative, it maintains an insignia for the detrimental effects of its significant economic expansion in general (Sharpley, 2020). Therefore, despite how the industry remains an economic powerhouse internationally, the industry continuously faces the challenge of confronting critical sustainability issues (Suhi et al., 2019; Weaver & Lawton, 2014).

Norway's National Tourism Strategy 2030

Norway's National Tourism Strategy 2030 is a document that was co-created with over 400 tourism industry stakeholders and Innovation Norway to create pathways for the industry to be sustainable while lowering negative impacts (Innovation Norway, 2021). The document highlights the use of the SDGs to harness sustainable tourism with 6 of the 17 goals: (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (9) Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, (11) Sustainable cities and communities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (13) Climate Action, and (17) Partnership for the Goals (Innovation Norway, 2021). The strategy calls for a new era in tourism with the green shift and digitalization to make Norway more sustainable overall with tourism via value creation that provides jobs (Innovation Norway, 2021). Small-holders and experiences in tourism throughout Norway play a role in giving value to bringing people to Norway and keeping them longer for more economic benefits by spreading community value creation and harnessing new patterns of local tourism due to crowded cities (Innovation Norway, 2021).

Within the policy advisement, there is an encouragement to make strategic marketing strategies that allow for more income generation while minimizing emissions. Greenmarket development for the future is a strategic initiative aimed at cultural value creation with local suppliers, extended stays, and seasonal development (Innovation Norway, 2021). The amount of economic value by tourists' nationality is compared to their CO2 emissions to find high yield earnings with lower environmental impacts (Innovation Norway, 2021). The aim is to propose higher economic value from fewer tourists, potentially more sustainable due to fewer tourists staying longer and lowering the carbon footprint while growing the economic benefits (Innovation Norway, 2021).

In addition to these goals and strategies, Innovation Norway manages the launch of its Sustainable Destination Label and monitors its progress on the sustainable target 8.9 (Innovation Norway, 2021). No public certification exists for nature guides or adventure tourism companies in Norway, as Eco-Lighthouse and Nordic Swan have their criteria for parts of the tourism industry (Innovation Norway, 2021). Eco-Lighthouse is a recognized EU national certification scheme for Norway to lead sustainability standards and contribute to the green transformation (*Miljøfyrtårn Criteria*, 2019). Eco-lighthouse has a certification criterion specifically for guided experiences that includes a variety of valuable indicators that address issues in the industry with requiring sustainable consumer information to be displayed, safe work conditions, using public or electric transport as a first choice, waste and recycle measures, and recycling management practices (*Miljøfyrtårn Criteria*, 2019)

NBT and ecotourism as sustainable approaches to adventure tourism

Nature-based tourism (NBT) operates in natural areas and depends on intangible natural resources, unique biotopes, landscapes, and cultural resources for tourism destinations and experiences (Fossgard & Stensland, 2021). Silence and views are essential resources that NBT relies upon (Fossgard & Stensland, 2021). NBT firms tend to be small-scale, located in remote places, and dependent on sustainable use of resources with proper management (Lundberg & Fredman, 2012). NBT has two categories of consumptive activity, such as hunting or gathering, or non-consumptive activity, such as biking, hiking, swimming, and kayaking (Fossgard & Stensland, 2021; Fredman et al., 2012; McKercher, 2016). Research on NBT in Norway showed that guided activity, such as found in adventure tourism, firms used the least amount of consumptive activity (Fossgard & Stensland, 2021). Lifestyle was the main reason behind guided NBT due to the required high levels of personal interest and low-profit levels (Fossgard & Stensland, 2021; Lundberg & Fredman, 2012). NBT can be classified under adventure

tourism (see Chapter One), and in this research the reference to NBT or the value of nature is considered to be within the category of adventure tourism.

NBT firms have taken on the role of self-organization and voluntarily have innovative social-ecological initiatives to solve the tourism industry's negative impacts (Blanco, 2011). Most NBTs in Norway and Sweden are lifestyle entrepreneurs (Bredvold & Skålén, 2016; Margaryan et al., 2020). Research on small-scale lifestyle entrepreneurs' cases shows they are prime examples of self-enacting degrowth principles in the tourism industry with regulations that undermine the dominant neoliberal growth model (Margaryan et al., 2020). These industry leaders in sustainable principles are known for their values of nature, self-sustainable practices, contributing to sustainable development, educating people about nature, and community value creation that utilizes local resources and partnerships (Margaryan et al., 2020). NBT firms in Norway have extrinsic and intrinsic goals to convey the value of nature (Margaryan et al., 2020). Observations of small-scale tourism entrepreneurs choose personal values to balance pursuits of profit with social and ecological limits (Margaryan et al., 2020).

Ecotourism has fundamental principles that define itself: Motivation by an appreciation of nature, protection of the environment that it depends on, minimization of impacts on the host destination, education of travelers about nature, using responsible business operations that respect the environment and local people, maximize economic benefits of host destination, local participation on limits of the tourism industry, and operate infrastructure that minimizes impact on social and ecological dimensions (Wood, 2002). Many of these principles and contributions to sustainable tourism are similar to NBT. Ecotourism provides justification since it creates economic and social benefits while contributing to biodiversity conservation in some cases (Bushell & Bricker, 2017; Mandić, 2019).

Eco-labels and certifications

Eco-labels and certifications, which take ≤ 10 percent of the market, are a mechanism to help inform consumers of products and services that are environmentally friendly (Yokessa & Marette, 2019). The central sustainable tourism discourse refers to how eco-certifications bring together the economy and ecology without a consensus on the best approach (Margaryan & Stensland, 2017). For eco-labels to be effective, they must create trust for the consumer, and this becomes difficult when there is an over-saturation of different eco-labels in the market with a lack of regulation from governments while an increasing amount of sustainability factors are measured (Gössling & Buckley, 2016; Yokessa & Marette, 2019). The owners of the labels

themselves influence whether the label is credible, and the owners of most labels are from the private sector (Yokessa & Marette, 2019).

Eco-certifications can help tourism operators to establish environmental goals and objectives, which then may help them improve their impacts on the environment. Nevertheless, it is still inconclusive whether these ecological goals directly affect the environment (Vatn, 2015) Darnall & Sides, 2008; Esparon et al., 2014; Haaland & Aas, 2010). Eco-certified companies have a perception as more sustainable, but there is no indication that eco-certified firms in tourism are performing more sustainably than others (Esparon et al., 2014).

Some studies show that tourists are willing to pay more for sustainable tourism (ST), but this is not the case due to poor marketing from firms and eco-certification programs that may lack the funds (Esparon et al., 2014). More awareness among consumers can help understand what eco-certification represents to create more demand. This could positively affect the adoption of eco-certifications by tourism operators who seek to fulfill consumer demands (Esparon et al., 2014). Due to the lack of congruency and proliferation of eco-labels with different logos and programs, many consumers do not understand or may not recognize eco-labels (Esparon et al., 2014).

ST looks to account for impacts fully, but meaningful indicators are lacking that can make a difference (Stoddard et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2019). Buckley (2012) argues that improvement of environmental performance in the tourism sector needs more innovation and adoption because eco-certifications are ineffective, and more government regulation is needed.

The role of adventure tour companies (ATCs) as sustainable entrepreneurs

Sustainable entrepreneurs (SEs) play a crucial role in sustainable tourism (Belz & Binder, 2017). Entrepreneurs with a sustainable attitude see market inefficiencies as opportunities to develop triple-bottom-line (social, economic, and environmental) solutions (Belz & Binder, 2017). They vary from typical entrepreneurs in enabling stakeholder partnerships to implement the SDGs within their business plans while supporting economic growth. Specifically, SEs serve as accelerators for economic development, poverty alleviation, and other forms of social value creation (yigün, 2015; Pauceanu et al., 2021). The mechanisms of SEs move away from direct donor assistance and toward encouraging and supporting communities to 'help themselves' (Apostolopoulos et al., 2018). Here, the vital role of structural determinants in defining entrepreneurial potential and, therefore, socioeconomic success remains significant (Galindo-Martn et al., 2021; yigün, 2015). Therefore, as SEs, adventure tour companies set the

way for a more inclusive framework for environmental change that involves enterprises and stakeholders other than local governments (Apostolopoulos & Liargovas, 2018).

In effect, cooperation between the corporate sector and governments, municipal governments, and institutions promotes the formation of innovation clusters. These innovation clusters provide a systematic methodology for business firms to build public-private collaborations with people (Filser et al., 2019). These innovation clusters are associated with the entrepreneurial ecosystem that supports sustainability by promoting "living labs" in user-centered, open innovation settings (Bărbulescu et al., 2021). Consequently, these living laboratories consolidate initiatives that profit actual societies and ecosystems, such as innovative city services produced in various fields or those from the Doughnut Economics Lab by Kate Raworth (Amsterdam's City Doughnut as a Tool for Meeting Circular Ambitions Following COVID-19, n.d.; Bărbulescu et al., 202).

Limitations of adventure tour companies within sustainable tourism

a. The use of market-based instruments

According to Pirard (2012, p. 64), the private sector depends on market-based instruments (MBIs) – the rules that "put prices on nature" – to promote improved market engagement by using market signals to address market failures (Pirard, 2012). Various studies challenge the inadequacy of relying entirely on markets to manage sustainability due to the customary practice of commodifying environmental services (Estevão et al., 2021; UN Environment Programme & World Tourism Organization, 2005; Mol, 2001). Vatn (2015, p. 205) emphasizes that market failures will occur in each market transaction (with or without a positive or negative externality) since externalities are 'more ubiquitous than incidental.' Consequently, it is improbable that ecological management would immediately reap the purported advantages of markets upon implementing MBIs. Here, Pirard (2012) and Vatn (2015) conclude how conventional economic understandings of market interactions describe how market participants make decisions in response to price signals. Since MBIs reward private sector solutions, firms find them more cost-effective and adaptable than rigid laws for encouraging the correct choices for sustainable management. In other words, each organization or individual anticipates externalities as a method of "protecting" its interests. Thus, the market encourages a justification that exacerbates environmental problems (Vatn, 2015). This thesis translates these discourses into the conclusion that, even though markets may provide alternative solutions to regulations, markets alone are inadequate environmental governance frameworks for tourist sustainability. Ricciardi and colleagues (2021) paper are consistent with

Vatn's (2015) assertions. They discuss the relationship between the "central problems" of integrating sustainability in the private sector and understanding market failures as profitable. Therefore, businesses are depicted as rent-seeking market players in conventional economics, possibly exacerbating vicious cycles that exacerbate sustainability issues (Vatn, 2015).

b. Lack of Implementing Sustainable Tourism Consumer Information

There are two main gaps in sustainability consumer information for sustainable tourism: (1) the gap between consumers' stated preference for sustainable products and their behavior in practice (Esparon et al., 2014; O'Rourke & Ringer, 2016). (2) The gap in sustainable consumer information available to consumers from firms (Esparon et al., 2014). The gaps in sustainable consumer information are not just due to poor communication of booking agencies but also to the individual companies that do not communicate their environmental contributions (Esparon et al., 2014).

Finding reasoning behind these gaps is in the literature review, but there is no complete answer. Research on values, attitudes, and behavior shows that increasing sustainability consumer information does not necessarily increase consumers' intent unless they are already committed to sustainability (O'Rourke & Ringer, 2016). Inconsistencies in consumers' values and objectives show an increase in 30 to 60 percent in the desire to buy greener products, while only one to five percent follow-through (Auger & Devinney, 2007; O'Rourke & Ringer, 2016). In addition, newer research from Romania shows that consumers are becoming more aware of sustainable consumer information as impacts of digitalization with COVID-19 and the Green European Deal have encouraged it (Purcărea et al., 2022).

One of the main issues found is that there is a lack of credible information on the performance of eco-certified products, and there is criticism for how much individual consumers can make in their local context without intervention in supply chains and infrastructure (O'Rourke & Ringer, 2016). There is a must for research on how to connect consumers who are not choosing greener options because it is difficult to understand performance measurements, and there is little understanding of what influences consumers to select an eco-label or green product (O'Rourke & Ringer, 2016). Scientific data and performance measurements need to be translated into easier ways for consumers' choices to influence them because consumers have difficulty understanding what the metrics are implying (i.e., air quality, biodiversity loss) (O'Rourke & Ringer, 2016). In the Nordic region, there has been a success in the use of sustainable consumer information with eco-labeling known as the Nordic Swan (Bjørner et al., 2004). Connecting and integrating sustainable information into

consumers' purchasing habits may increase sustainability awareness and decrease biases toward greener products (O'Rourke & Ringer, 2016).

Sustainable tourism and the fallacies behind it

a. Public Transport is a significant fallacy behind sustainable tourism

Tourism is entirely dependent on transportation and carries the highest emissions in the tourism industry (Gössling, 2011; Le-Klähn & Hall, 2015). Public transportation is an essential solution for lowering emissions from the travel industry to achieve more sustainable tourism (Gössling, 2011). Research that reviews the use of public transportation in tourism shows that strategies that encourage the use of public transportation and non-motorized transportation in tourism are likely effective in reducing emissions (Le-Klähn & Hall, 2015). Research on adopting eco-certification in Scandinavia shows that some NBT firms give a price incentive for tourists using public transportation (Margaryan & Stensland, 2017).

b. Inclusive growth is challenging to achieve as labor remains toiled with problems

The tourism industry is known for its low pay, lack of workers' rights, and overall exploitation (Bianchi & de Man, 2021). Research on sustainable development and sustainable tourism criticizes the SDGs for not understanding class relations of struggle and workplace dignity in tourism that lacks opportunities, fair pay, a secure workplace with social protection, freedom to voice concerns, and discrimination protection (Winchenbach et al., 2019).

The goal of inclusive and sustainable growth from SDG 8 is challenging to achieve since small-scale entrepreneurs can have insecurity due to seasonality and market fluctuations that create disadvantages for them and those at the lower end of seasonal work (Bianchi & de Man, 2021). Norway has high standards of Health Environment and Safety (HES) regulations for workers. Yet, qualitative research on immigrant workers in the tourism industry, within hotels, has shown a lack of knowledge of proper HES, along with immigrant labor in subjected to improper contracts, overly strict supervision, being undervalued, lack of decision making even when relevant, and obligations to work while sick (Onsøyen et al., 2009). More recent research shows the desirability for immigrants to work for decent pay in Norway, which is appealing to European countries with higher unemployment that then fulfill seasonal shortages of employment in the tourism industry in Norway (Chen & Wang, 2015).

Alternatives to Sustainable Tourism and Degrowth

With the failures of international policy and sustainable tourism to address climate change and over-tourism, new alternatives continue to emerge to challenge the growth of the

developing green economy and neoliberal trends (Gössling et al., 2016; Hall et al., 2021; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Sustainable tourism is considered a well-established discourse that continues to evolve yet sits in failure as the industry continues to become rapidly more damaging to the environment and society as flights and transportation remain major fallacies (Hanna et al., 2016; Huddart & Stott, 2020; Kuhn, 2007; Lu & Nepal, 2009; Mihalic, 2016; Mowforth & Munt, 2016). With that, ecotourism and sustainable tourism contradicts its principle on the grounds that they tend to mislead and conceal destructive economic activities. (Huddart & Stott, 2020).

Both urban and nature-based tourism have contributed to over-tourism, which has resulted in environmental and social damage over the long term (Hall et al., 2021). Tourism growth is expanding with the need for action as the destruction of the environment and biodiversity loss continue (Bongaarts, 2019; Hall et al., 2021). To address climate change, environmental instability, and the state of the economy, the notion of degrowth began in the 1970s (Hall et al., 2021). Tourism research has recently started to discuss degrowth, and the existing studies examine the possibility of degrowth in tourism. (Hall et al., 2021). Over the decades, there has been degrowth within sustainability discourse as it has become a more viable option (Hall et al., 2021)

The Need for Equity in Sustainable Tourism Development

Tourism has developed unevenly, leaving an undesirable development with two significant themes from globalization: (1) Some regions and cities are being overrun with tourism that negatively impacts the host community and environment, known as over-tourism, a continuously growing problem and area of research (Goebel et al., 2019; Tribe et al., 2015). (2) Some cities and regions are experiencing depopulation and declining with growing under-tourism disparities (Blanco-Romero & Blázquez-Salom, 2021).

Depopulating areas of Europe are increasing in marginalization and isolation with the risk of losing local identity, productivity, ecological function, and culture (Tucci & Sposito, 2020). Depopulation can be traced to the rise of urbanization, with 55% of the population now in cities and soon 68% projected by 2050 (United Nations et al., 2019). Rural regions of Norway are experiencing a declining population while there is an overall increase and centralization trend (Slettebak, 2022). The decline is also due to an aging and diminishing population (Slettebak, 2022). It is argued in growing amounts of literature that immigrants will refill the gap in falling populations, but this could be a faulty premise due to immigrants moving patterns,

as they do not move to places that need growth the most (Slettebak, 2022). Immigrants move to rural places that are more viable with employment opportunities. Therefore, it could be too optimistic to rely on immigration alone, and the answer lies in an increased labor market and economic activity (Slettebak, 2022).

Small local communities can avoid value creation risks. Rural tourism has become a tool for economic growth in remote places with low populations to lower migration, enhance local value chains, and avoid losing cultural norms and the rural essence of life (Mwesiumo et al., 2022). Rural tourism can have rapid growth that negatively impacts infrastructural capacity issues, fast population growth, and irreversible environmental damage. Rural tourism should take deliberate action to ensure sustainable development to combat adverse effects due to the delicate balance between economic necessities and other dimensions of sustainability (Kaptan Ayhan et al., 2020; Mwesiumo et al., 2022; Peric & Djurkin, 2014). Community-based tourism (CBT) is an approach used for sustainable development that focuses on local stakeholders owning and managing it via the public and private sectors that could benefit rural tourism (Mwesiumo et al., 2022; Peric & Djurkin, 2014). Several factors to make CBT more effective have been identified in the research including participatory planning, collaboration and partnerships, local management/empowerment of community members, community sustainability goals, and assistance from government funding institutions or privately (Aquino et al., 2018; Bello et al., 2016; Dodds et al., 2018). CBT can embrace alternatives to tourism that fit the local community's needs to avoid the negative impacts of mass tourism. Slow tourism is part of a movement of making considerations in tourism for ethical consumption while creating local well-being with cultural and meaningful experiences outside of mass tourism (Osorio, 2020).

A two-fold response addressing over-tourism and under-tourism by balancing them with degrowth initiatives for over-tourism and value creation in areas with under-tourism is ideal (Blanco-Romero & Blázquez-Salom, 2021). Value creation can be used with lifestyle entrepreneurs in tourism to regenerate rural areas while lowering externalities in a community-based approach (Aquino et al., 2018b). Transformative tourism with lifestyle entrepreneurs is a favorable solution to some scholars for sustainable tourism as they could hold the local knowledge and motivations to uphold Tourism social entrepreneurship (TSE) for the regeneration of rural communities (Aquino et al., 2018; Ateljevic, 2020; Cunha et al., 2020). TSE combines social entrepreneurship with tourism value creation to promote alternative

business models that focus on social needs or relinquish externalities rather than profit alone (Aquino et al., 2018).

3. Research Question and Concepts

A research study by Williams & Soutar (2005) argues the role of adventure tourism companies in contributing to the long-term and sustainable growth of this tourism industry sector. However, there is a lack of research on the perspectives of adventure tourism companies using a bottom-up approach to comprehend why there is eco-certification skepticism amongst adventure tourism companies. Moreover, there are fewer studies featuring the various sustainable initiatives of adventure tourism companies.

During our previous internship, we identified more non-eco-certified companies in Norway than those that are eco-certified. However, the outstanding observation is how both groups (certified and not certified) of adventure tourism companies lack the digestible framework for broadcasting their sustainable practices to the consumers on their websites. Therefore, this thesis problematizes the lack of sustainable consumer information on the websites of adventure tourism companies in a way it can be utilized to develop participatory solutions amongst adventure tourism companies. First, adventure tourism companies are not using an eco-certification framework to provide information to consumers, and consumers lack a framework to make an informed decision. Therefore, this thesis explores the skepticism behind eco-certification and how adventure tourism companies contribute to sustainable tourism in Norway. Understanding how adventure tourism companies are skeptical of eco-certification and their sustainability practices will shed light on participatory solutions on how to communicate sustainable consumer information.

The methodology purposively selected significantly affects how the research questions should be developed and investigated, considering the report's findings. In using grounded theory, the preliminary research questions play a different role in grounded theory than in other studies (Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

The research questions would not be based on a theoretical framework or conceptual understanding. When the study is initiated, it is not advisable to conduct a literature review beforehand (Tar, 2013). As a result, the research questions are merely indicative. They will serve solely as an entry point for the topic's introduction and guide for the initial data collection.

Consequently, we present our preliminary research questions from the initial project description in the introduction and the chapter describing the results for two reasons. First, we have been primarily dedicated to adhering to the recommended guidelines for a well-conducted and documented grounded theory study (Hull, 2013). According to these guidelines, it is preferable to state the preliminary research questions and the questions that have emerged because of the study. Second, we based our research on the initial research questions individually. Through data collection, analysis, and theoretical sorting with the question in mind, we uncovered new research questions and repeated data, which we have presented as findings. Subsequently, the preliminary research questions served as an essential component of the implementation and organization of our thesis.

Preliminary research questions

The main aim of the thesis was to understand the different perceptions of adventure tourism companies on eco-certification's effectiveness in making tourism more sustainable. In doing so, we interviewed adventure tourism companies (both eco-certified and non-eco-certified) about their different motivational and demotivational factors behind getting eco-certified and not. In the preliminary problem definition, the following research questions were set up as the foundation for the study.

Main Research Question: In general, how do adventure tourism companies view the effectiveness of eco-certifications in making their operations more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable?

Sub Research Questions:

Sub RQ 1. What are the leading causes of skepticism of adventure tourism companies around eco-certifications in Norway?

- a. How do adventure tourism companies in Norway interpret the importance of ecolabels in representing their company values and sustainability efforts?
- b. How do Norway adventure tourism companies perceive eco-certifications' trustworthiness for sustainable consumer information?
- c. How do adventure tourism companies in Norway find eco-certifications compatible with their company's sustainability direction?

Sub RQ 2. What are the different factors influencing sustainability interpretations of adventure tourism companies?

- a. How do social factors influence adventure tourism companies' sustainability interpretations?
- b. How do economic factors influence adventure tourism companies' sustainability interpretations?
- c. How do political factors influence adventure tourism companies' sustainability interpretations?
- d. How do environmental factors influence adventure tourism companies' sustainability interpretations?

Sub RQ 3. What are the risks of having and not having eco-certification for adventure tourism companies?

Revised Research Questions

As the research progressed, the study uncovered undetected and unprecedented contexts within the motivational factors behind getting eco-certified or not by adventure tourism companies. The data collection and analysis trends were continuously altered by new insights, which led to discovering different and intriguing issues from the sequential data collection and investigation. The research questions answered during the study's findings differ from the initial research questions. Where the questions turned out to be ambiguous or less relevant for various reasons, the process opened new contextual factors that propelled the process forward.

Here are the revised questions:

Main RQ: How can sustainable consumer information (SCI) be improved for ATCs in Norway?

Sub RQs:

Sub RQ 1. Why are ATCs skeptical of the effectiveness of eco-certification in Norway?

Sub RQ 2. What are the industry sustainability practices of ATCs in Norway?

4. Research design and implementation

This chapter demonstrates an understanding of the research process and ensures transparency on choices made.

Choice of Methodology Approach: Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology often used in the social sciences to focus on the inductive development of theory from data. In grounded theory research, the goal is to develop a theory that accounts for the phenomena being studied (Bakker, 2019). In other words, the research bases its findings on what the researchers observed in collecting the data and does not rely on pre-existing theories or assumptions. Grounded theory research involves extensive data collection, including interviews, focus groups, and observations. The researcher then analyzes the data to identify patterns and themes. These patterns and themes are used to develop a theory that explains the phenomena under study (Bakker, 2019).

History of using Grounded Theory

Grounded theory (GT) has a long and varied history, with roots in philosophy and sociology. The first use of the term "grounded theory" is credited to Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, who used it in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Bakker, 2019). However, the idea of grounded theory was around long before that. Philosophers like Aristotle and Kant were interested in understanding the world around them without relying on preconceived notions or assumptions. This philosophy laid the groundwork for grounded theory, which tries to understand phenomena by studying them in situ rather than from a theoretical perspective. Sociologists like Max Weber also played a role in grounding theory's development as they sought to understand social interactions and group behavior through empirical observation (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Grounded theory was initially intended to be used in the natural sciences and was fully developed and documented in the early 1960s by Glaser and Strauss (Hull, 2013). However, it has been used in various disciplines, including social work, nursing, education, and marketing (Bakker, 2019). Grounded theory is often seen as an alternative to traditional quantitative research methods. It is particularly well-suited for exploratory research and for studying complex social phenomena. One of the crucial features of GT is its focus on the inductive generation of theory from data (Chun et al., 2019). Researchers start with data and then develop theories based on that data. This approach contrasts with the deductive approach, starting with

a theory and then looking for data to support it. Another critical feature of GT is its emphasis on constant comparative analysis (Bakker, 2019). This involves comparing cases to identify the data's similarities, differences, and patterns. This process helps researchers to develop hypotheses about how phenomena are related.

Comparison of two schools of grounded theory

Grounded theory has two leading schools of thought when it comes to how it should be conducted—the Glaser & Strauss (1967) school and the Corbin and Strauss (1990) school (Chun et al., 2019). The two schools have different ideas about using theory, data collection, and analysis. The Glaser and Strauss (1967) school of thought believes that grounded theory should be used to develop theories from data. The theory is developed inductively from the data and is not based on pre-existing theories (Chun et al., 2019). Data collection is done through open-ended interviews and observations. The analysis is done through constant comparative analysis. The Corbin and Strauss (1990) school of thought believes that grounded theory should be used to develop a description of a phenomenon (Chun et al., 2019). The description is based on pre-existing theories, and data is collected through interviews and documents (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). More comparison is indicated in the figure below.

<u>Glaser and Strauss (1967)</u>	<u>Corbin and Strauss (1990)</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It starts with a general idea of where to begin • Uses neutral questions • Development of conceptual theory • Development of theoretical sensitivity (the ability to distinguish variables and relationships) from immersion in data • The theory is grounded in data • A fundamental social process should be identified • The research is passive, exhibiting disciplinary restraint • Data reveals theory • Coding and continuous comparison of data allow patterns to show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It starts with a general idea of where to begin • Uses structured questions • Conceptual description (description of situations) • Development of theoretical understanding from methods and tools • The observer interprets the theory • Basic social processes need not be identified • The researcher is active • Data is structured to reveal the theory • Coding is defined by technique, leading to micro analysis of data word by word.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses two coding phases to progress concepts that explain the phenomena: simple (breaking data down into small segments and grouping into parallels that begin to define patterns in the data) and substantive (open or selective choice of a core category and relating other categories to it to explore emergent patterns) • Regarded as the 'true grounded theory.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizes three types of coding: open (identifying, naming, categorizing, and explaining phenomena), axial (the process of relating codes to each other), and selective (choosing a core category and relating other categories to it) • Interpreted as a form of qualitative data analysis rather than grounded theory.
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Table 1. Comparison of two schools of grounded theory (Source: Chun Tie et al., 2019)

a. The rationale for the choice of the version of grounded theory

This research has used grounded theory because both researchers have limited knowledge of tourism studies. Consequently, the chosen topic requires an inductive approach to data collection, leading to a more significant discovery of our research topic (Bakker, 2019). The version of Corbin and Strauss (1990) has been used because the researchers' main aim was to explain a phenomenon and not build a new theory behind eco-certification skepticism and sustainability initiatives of adventure tourism companies in Norway. Although both schools of grounded theory can systematically capture the complexities of sustainability phenomena, the researchers found it best to follow Corbin and Strauss's (1990) version for the project's feasibility. Doing a 'true grounded theory' such as those of Glaser and Strauss' will require more time than the time frame of the Master thesis. Consequently, the end goal was to use grounded theory for our qualitative data analysis.

Grounded Theory Process

Grounded Theory (GT) is a systematic qualitative research process that starts with the data and works inductively toward theory development (Tar, 2013). It differs from other qualitative methods because it does not start with a pre-existing theory or framework. The grounded theory process begins with identifying a problem or question that needs to be answered, data collection, and emergent coding of the data, followed by concept identification and theory development (Hull, 2013). The final product of GT is a substantive theory that explains the phenomena under study. The figure below illustrates the Grounded Theory research process utilized by this thesis.

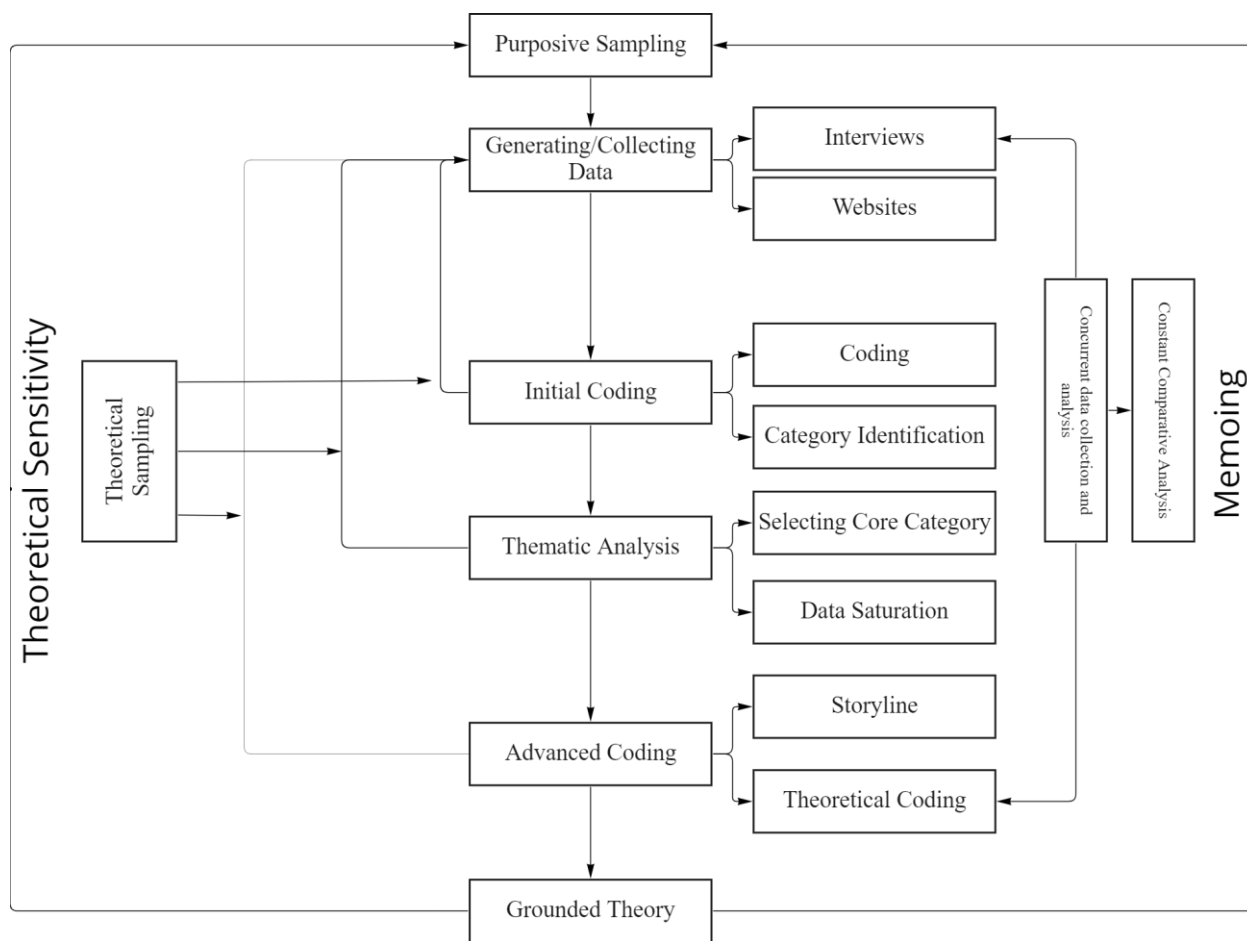


Figure 1. Grounded Theory Process (Source: Chun Tie et al., 2019)

The Research Process

a. Motivation and Choice of Theme

The subject of sustainable tourism became an exciting theme for this research due to the opportunity to become a sustainability project research intern in a startup company called Booknordics AS. The idea behind Booknordics AS is the desire to share the unique things to see and do in the Nordic region with visitors from other parts of the globe. However, during that time, online booking of tours and activities in the Nordic region was still in its infancy. Most experiences were unavailable online, even from significant competitors within Norway. Thus, as part of their go-to-market strategy, they saw the need to incorporate sustainability practices at the company's start. During our internship, we developed a Sustainable Tourism Framework aligned with the company's mission and vision for its sustainability webpage. At the same time, upon mapping out the different Booknordics' suppliers in the entire Nordics, we have seen the gap between eco-certified and non-eco-certified adventure tourism companies. This paved the way for honing our research interest in sustainable tourism.

Therefore, this research refers to sustainable tourism as:

A kind of tourism that empowers local communities, promotes sustainable tourism practices, and respects cultural diversity while flourishing within the ecological limits of our planet.

Although sustainable tourism is a new topic of research for both researchers, one of the researchers has taken a class about tourism during her bachelor's. Consequently, the internship opportunity contributed to the decision to settle on researching sustainable tourism.

Overall, the internship opportunity in the prior semester opened an interest in doing research in the field and for a future career path. The subject being new to the researchers added some constraints of new concepts needed, but links in the field with sustainable development, the researcher's undergraduate degree, benefited the study.

b. Study Parameters

The study consisted of two student researchers, the primary supervisor and a co-supervisor at NMBU. The additional supervisory support from MINA added expertise and knowledge of methodological norms in sustainable tourism research.

Meetings were held three to four times weekly in a hybrid working solution. Throughout the study, researchers either met in person or via Zoom. Meetings were structured by preparing an agenda and logging a journal for each meeting. These agendas and journals were saved on Microsoft Teams and OneDrive. These online tools allowed for establishing independent and team research and updating on progress throughout the study (Archibald et al., 2019).

The researchers acted as an insider of the adventure industry from our internship in sustainable tourism, which gave us access to the ATC for data collection. Access was limited to time constraints and overall disruptions from COVID-19 on the tourism sector in Norway. Many firms that were interviewed were struggling to survive and had other priorities than adding to research. COVID-19 impacted our capacity to collect data, as both researchers contracted the virus at different times during the study. This resulted in a loss of momentum in the study and caused a delay with constraints in the planned timeline.

Nevertheless, the research team's working dynamic developed naturally with a vital enabling factor for the study from past work experience together. Several student projects, an internship, and assistant instructor positions were completed together by the researchers before the study began. This allowed for a pre-established successful co-researching practice. The developed working styles and understanding added capacity and success for the study.

c. Scope of Study

The initial research proposal included a timeline and plan adapted based on time restraints, accessibility, supervision, iterative process, findings, background literature, and continued consultation with methodology. The study was planned to be adaptable with a spiraling research approach. This approach allows for change and refinement throughout each step in the research that flows forward in a non-linear direction with elements of research before theory and theory before research models (Lune & Berg, 2017). This approach allows for change and refinement throughout each step in the research that flows forward in a non-linear direction with elements of research before theory and theory before research models (Lune & Berg, 2017).

d. Primary data sources: sample selection approach

Two levels were used in the case study. Level one is Norwegian ATCs management and CEOs. Level two is SCI on the website of Booknordics AS and ATCs.

The case study consisted of micro to medium-sized firms. Although it was not part of the sampling criteria, most adventure tourism firms are small-sized lifestyle entrepreneurs in Scandinavia (Margaryan et al., 2020). A combination of purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling was used to find and select ATCs to be part of the case. These forms of sampling are under the umbrella of non-probability sampling, are commonly used in qualitative methods, and are relevant to best answer the research questions (Bryman, 2012; Dwyer et al., 2012; Lune & Berg, 2017).

Purposive sampling took place by gathering adventure firms and choosing to include a variety of eco-certified and non-eco-certified because it was relevant to get a holistic view of the case. Convenience sampling was due to the researcher's insider experience working for a booking agency where most of the units selected were partners in selling tourism products. This insider position opened doors to firms that saw us as more valuable contacts and not only as students. Snowball sampling was used with the supervisor, who introduced contacts that provided additional contacts for inclusions of units in the case study. The mixed methods of sample selection resulted in a variety of units that had similarities and differences, these differences we found relevant to finding theoretical saturation of data.

Theoretical saturation is when the additional units and duration of data collection stop yielding new findings (Dwyer et al., 2012). A range of units with different characteristics would supply the most holistic and deferring data to represent the case. Most of the firms that

responded were included in the case, but it happened by chance that there was a high level of a variety of eco-certified and non-eco-certified participants.

The snowball and purposive sampling approach resulted in a balanced amount of interviewing for both eco-certified and non-eco-certified companies. Nine respondents were non-eco certified and seven were eco-certified. One respondent is excluded from data analysis because their eco-certification is not for tour products, and one respondent is currently in the process of getting eco-certified.

Our respondents were chosen through two sources—Booknordics and our supervisors' recommended contact persons. Booknordics served as an entry point to access adventure tourism companies in Norway. At the same time, supervisors recommended a contact person from Kvinnherad Kommune, which in return connected us to potential interviewees. As a result, our preliminary sample size comprises 41 adventure tourism companies from Booknordics and six from Kvinnherad Kommune. However, due to time availability and willingness of participants to participate in the study, only 16 out of 47 potential interviewees were interviewed—two from Kvinnherad Kommune and 14 from Booknordics' suppliers.

Here, it is essential to note that a sample selection dilemma rested on whether to include the interviews from Kvinnherad Kommune. As they were outside the sampling criteria of being Booknordics' suppliers, the scope of the study became uncertain. However, both researchers recognized that Booknordics' adventure suppliers do not differ from the other adventure suppliers who are not partnered with the company. Booknordics was not the main target for the case study and did not bind or influence the adventure company's sustainability efforts and interpretations. Consequently, to reach data saturation, our decision to merge both groups for our data analysis has resulted in an almost equal number of eco-certified and non-eco-certified respondents for our study.

a. *Implementation Data Sheet*

Research Questions	Data needed	Collection methods	Sample Information:

<p>Why do adventure tour companies remain skeptical of the effectiveness of eco-certification?</p>	<p>1. Informants': Opinion and attitude on eco-certification's representation of their company's sustainability efforts.</p> <p>2. Informants' Opinion on eco-certifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Benefits b. Usefulness c. Lockout/inclusiveness d. Sustainability e. Profit 	<p>Semi-structured individual interviews.</p>	<p>The sample size: 41</p> <p>Units: Tour Suppliers within Booknordics in the Northern Norway region</p> <p>Sampling categories: Management/company owner, their company is operating in the Northern Norway region, is an active business, and they operate with Booknordics,</p>
<p>What are the industry sustainability practices of ATCs in Norway?</p>	<p>Informants':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sustainable practices and interpretations 	<p>Semi-structured individual interviews</p>	<p>The sample size: 41</p> <p>Units: Tour Suppliers within Booknordics in the Northern Norway region</p> <p>Sampling categories: Management/company owner, their company is operating in the Northern Norway region, is an active business, and they operate with Booknordics,</p>

<p>How can Sustainable Consumer Information (SCI) be improved for ATCs in Norway?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecolabels Displayed. • Mentions keywords related to sustainability on their <i>About Us</i>. • Website contains a sustainability policy (Either one or all of the sustainability dimensions, i.e. social, environment, economic) 	<p>Text and observations from web pages</p>	<p>Units: Tour Suppliers within Booknordics in the Northern Norway region</p> <p>Sampling categories:</p> <p>Booknordics.com and ATCs partnering with Booknordics AS in Norway</p>
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Table 2. Data Implementation Sheet

b. Primary data collection

Before we proceeded with our data collection, we followed Lune & Berg's (2017) advice in knowing "how our data will be organized and analyzed." In effect, we have mutually agreed to have a logbook to keep us in check. At the same time, we used a commonly shared Microsoft Team folder for the team to store the data (e.g., progress notes, discussion notes, interviews, transcripts, and interview guide) we have gathered.

With our data collection methods, for our interaction-based primary data, the team decided to use semi-structured online interviews and a focused group method designed with an interview schedule to have more flexibility in our interview process (Bryman, 2012). The semi-structured interviews provided valuable qualitative data for our research (Rahman, 2019). The data collection sessions involved interviews between two interviewers and one interviewee. The interview participants were informed of their consent to the interview and the expected time that the interview would take (see appendix B). Sustainability knowledge of the adventure firms was collected. However, COVID-19 was a restriction for us, so online interviews were the chosen method to gather information. At the same time, we have affiliated with Booknordics

AS to connect us with adventure tourism companies in Norway. Here, we did a purposive snowball sampling.

The interview schedule and guide (see appendix A) consisted of open questions to encourage a discussion and permit participants to give their accounts of eco-certifications' effectiveness as a tool in sustainable tourism (Bryman, 2012). As Bryman (2012) states, a semi-structured interview highlights how the interviewee frames and comprehends "events, patterns, and forms of behavior" towards a given issue, the choice of having a semi-structured group interview allowed the team to analyze interactions amongst participants and be flexible in asking follow-up questions. Furthermore, we chose the focus group technique because Bryman (2012) suggests a focus group suits better than a group interview when you want to "emphasize a specific theme or topic explored in-depth." In our case, we wanted to assess how adventure tourism companies interact and discuss their participation's effectiveness as "members of a group rather than as individuals" (Bryman, 2012).

Bryman (2012) claims that clearly, articulated research questions guide the selection of the media to be included and analyzed in the study. However, it is imperative to note that our two sub-research questions (as mentioned in Chapter 3) guided us in forming questions that will lead us to the data we needed before structuring our interview questions. Accordingly, our preliminary sub-research question enabled us to target gathering the opinions of adventure tourism companies on the effectiveness of eco-certification/labels, informants' motivations for social, environmental, and economic sustainability, and informants' opinions on eco-certification's representation of their company's sustainability efforts.

Meanwhile, as previously mentioned in Chapter 3, the choice of the grounded theory approach for the study allowed us to discover new findings than what was initially planned. Therefore, it became a strong impression for the research team on the importance of focusing on the concept of sustainable consumer information as a way of discovering "naturally arising meanings" among adventure tourism companies (Lune & Berg, 2017).

Moreover, Bryman (2012) advises sending a sample study information sheet to the participants before conducting the interview. To do this, the researchers applied to the NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata) or the Norwegian Center of Research Data to assure quality management and use of collected data. Effectively, once NSD approved the application, the

researchers organized an interview schedule for all individual interviews to track consent forms sent and signed before the Zoom interviews. Effectively, an email like an information sheet helped the researchers explain and introduce the study's purpose, the contents of the interview, the interview settings, and what kind of data the study is hopefully aiming to gather at the end of the interview session. Through this approach, the researchers were able to prepare them and control the agenda of the meeting.

On a side note, after the interviewees' gave us their consent, we assured all our interviewees of the interview's discretion and confidentiality (e.g., the Zoom meeting and audio recording). Most importantly, the consent form indicated the option to withdraw their consent in case they change their minds before the thesis publication (Bryman, 2012).

Meanwhile, for collection of text-based information available online, ATC's websites and booknordics.com were used in data collection and mapping. An overview of booknordics.com and partnering companies was done in previous research with the internship at Booknordics AS to evaluate the SCI available. The data collection was redone for booknordics.com and all ATCs' websites to see which were eco-certified (see appendix G). An additional collection of data was done on websites, for more depth, that focused on the ATCs available for interviews (see appendix H). All 16 firms interviewed had data collection of text and observations from their websites for sustainability policy pages, any words mentioning sustainability, environment, nature, being one with nature, or any phrases that indicate recognizing the importance of the environment were documented (see table 2, appendix H, and the following section for further information). The texts and text features were selected because they provided information about our research topic and overview of the gap in SCI.

c. Categorization of Doing Sustainable Tourism

Consequently, for the feasibility and time-efficiency of the study, the data collection and mapping of SCI of 16 ATC respondents was done by accessing Booknordics' complete list of ATCs in Norway. (see appendix G and H). From there, we started contacting people who wanted to be part of our study. For those who agreed to be part, the three categories of sustainable consumer information (See Figure 2) were followed in assessing their website for more data collection.

The thesis has divided sustainable tourism practices into two categories: a) Company sustainability initiatives; b) Sustainable consumer information (SCI). (See Figure 2).

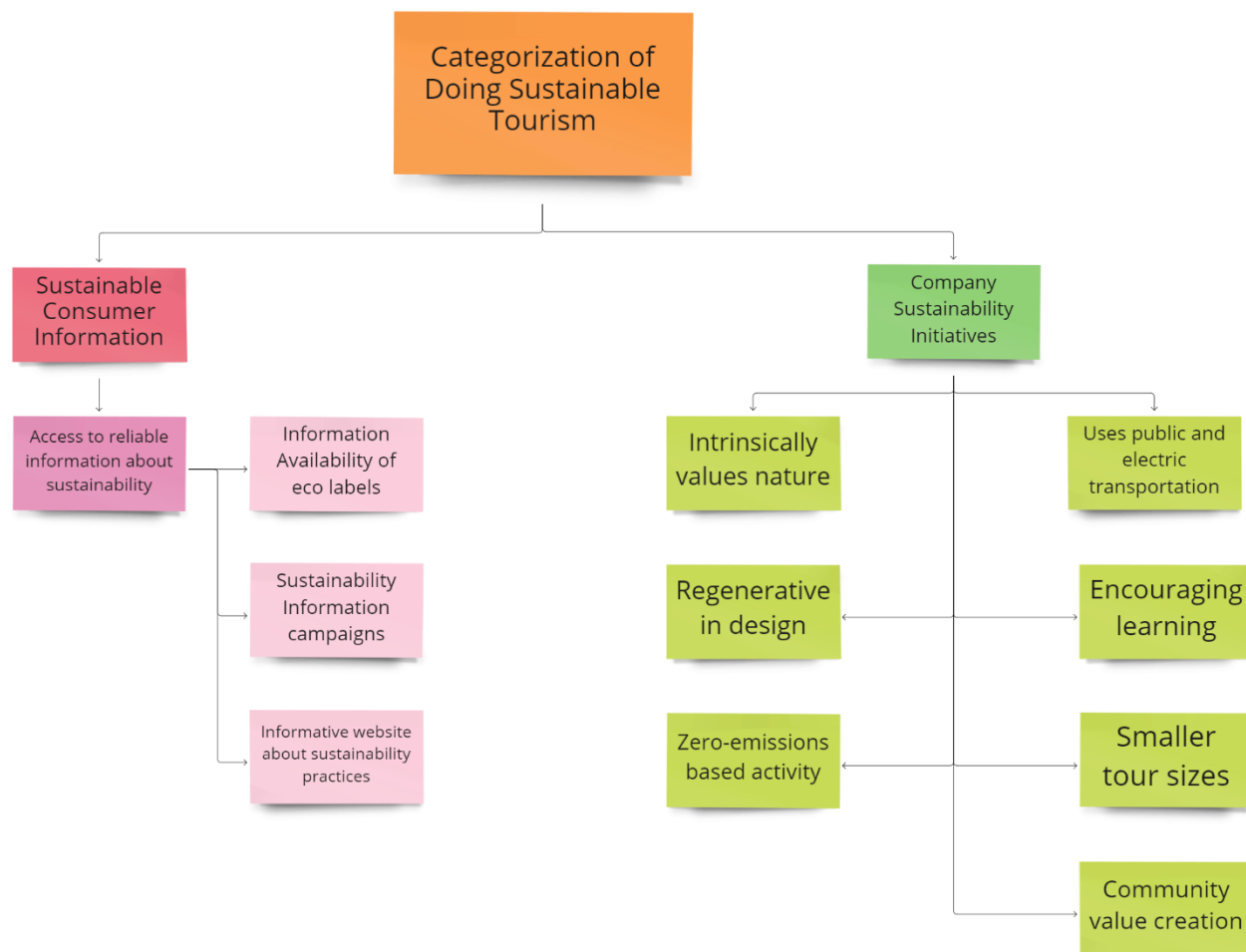


Figure 2. Categorization of Doing Sustainable Tourism

a.1. Sustainable Company Initiatives

The thesis defines sustainable Company Initiatives as specific company practices and policies that adventure tourism companies implement to develop their products. These initiatives relate but are not limited to valuing nature, encouraging public and electric transportation use, spreading knowledge through tour guides, offering small tour sizes, value creation for the local community, and being regenerative in design.

b.1. Sustainable Consumer Information (SCI)

The Nordic Best Practices Journal, published by the Nordic Council of Ministers includes SCI as a theme (Hillgrén et al., 2016). SCI reflects 'more accessible access to reliable

information about sustainability aspects. Consequently, this thesis aligns the meaning of SCI with the journals' definition. The cases include ecolabels, information campaigns, websites, and mobile applications, as well as a cooperation model for authorities. However, to apply the scope to adventure tourism companies, SCI in this thesis will mainly focus on three things:

- A. Ecolabels
- B. Information campaigns
- C. Informative website on sustainability policies and practices

Data collection methods used

Qualitative research includes methods of data collection gathering from media, websites, and other forms of information that can be used for thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012). In effect, researchers collected data through semi-structured individual interviews and assessed SCI on the websites of Booknordics AS and ATCs. The websites were screened to gather data specifically for SCI from text and observations (see appendix G and H). Semi-structured interviews allow for more richness and exploration while data is collected (Bryman, 2012; Lune & Berg, 2017). According to (Rahman, 2019), open-ended semi-structured interviews differ from other interviews because the questions are not pre-determined. This allows for a more flexible and open discussion with the participant. The interviewer can ask follow-up questions based on the participant's responses. This type of interview is often used when studying a complex or sensitive topic. There was an interview guide. Nevertheless, because we were doing a grounded theory, the first three interviews were analyzed, and the rest generated new information that will be a guide for the following interview.

The semi-structured interview follows our mixed methods and qualitative approach, allowing adventure firms to share their knowledge. At the same time, the iterative process opens a review of the project at different levels. The consideration of the iterative and grounded approach during the interviews shaped the overall research as new data emerged with exploration and follow-up questions to ensure meaning. Internal validity can be increased as the iterative process affirms that the data collected represents the case and research project (Dwyer et al., 2012). This methodology follows the inductive and grounded approach found in other tourism research cases (Dwyer et al., 2012).

The literature review built the general direction, the research purpose, and questions. The interview guide was prepared to draw out detailed information on our planned research

questions. However, with a grounded theory approach, broad questions were asked with follow-up questions to reveal data and theory inductively. The semi-structured interview guide allowed the interviewer to change the sequencing of topics in a way that brought good rapport. The interview always started with an introduction showing the researchers as non-threatening and insiders of the industry. Simple questions were always asked first to make the interview more comfortable. We followed recommendations from a qualitative methodology that instructed us to start with non-threatening questions, move to essential questions, move to important sensitive ones, and then rephrase with some validating questions to confirm uncertain data.

The questions, in general, are none-threatening, although the expectation of companies in Norway to be environmentally friendly is growing and can be essential to maintain good standing in the public eye. To eliminate the pressure to have correct answers, we have assured the interviewees were anonymous

The interviews consisted mainly of two interviewers and one interviewee. Only one interview consisted of two interviewees as partners in the adventure business that was being researched. Two roles were implemented for the research team. The main interviewer and the secondary interviewer/observer took field notes. This choice for our data collection worked well as technical issues allowed us to continue data collection in times of error or low internet connectivity. This increased the reliability of data collection

The interview setting was a mix of online meeting rooms with Zoom or Microsoft Teams with a professional and casual home-office background. This was the standard set during COVID-19, and interviewees were already accustomed to little need for assistance. The interview setting is vital for understanding the data's reliability level (Lune & Berg, 2017). Since the pandemic of COVID-19 brought the norm of communication via virtual video meetings, it was a setting that was not unusual or causing major blocks to data collection. Zoom and Teams are practical data collection methods. The duration of the interviews was 30-60minutes. Several factors impacted the interview duration; many of the Entrepreneurs we interviewed had little time, and we did not want to discourage their participation. We designed the research guide and our pacing based on the interviewee's availability. We simply verified at the beginning of the interview if the meeting could go past 30 minutes or if they could be flexible. This allowed us to take more time with some interviews. The time of an interview should be concerning the complexity of the research questions and what is needed to answer them (Lune & Berg, 2017)

During the interview, reciprocity was used to allow questions in return from the interviewee, which allowed for an exchange of knowledge that helped clarify meaning and add good rapport, as seen in qualitative research in tourism (Dwyer et al., 2012).

Reflexivity was planned for the overall data collection process and the research project due to using grounded theory. In the grounded theory process, literary bias was avoided due to the researchers' limited knowledge of tourism studies (Heath & Cowley, 2004). Therefore, the process implemented reflexivity in meetings, journals, and interviews (Bryman, 2012). Throughout the iterative process and in journal notes, the role of researchers was considered while also being part of the travel industry. Considering the potential advantages of connecting with an employee of a booking agency that works in policy building could have benefits that impact our results. Some interviewees could take this perspective to advantage by answering in a way that shows them in a better light as a future marketing benefit. This tactic could benefit them considering future projects the researchers have at the booking agency.

Data collection was planned and implemented in a phased process with step-by-step tasks, frequently updated progress, and a manageable routine for each unit. The first procedure was emailing potential interviewees to access units. This choice was made to understand that business owners have little time to respond. We used data from their websites to show why we specifically found them beneficial to the study and to make each letter slightly customized to increase the response rate. This information was also given to us by supervisors and insider information from working in the industry. A request for research and consent document was attached to inform participants of the purpose of the research and how it could impact them. Our supervisors reviewed the document, and we applied to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data to permit us to process the participants' information.

Data Analysis Tools Used

The strengths of using grounded theory include its flexibility, ability to generate new hypotheses, and ability to produce rich data. The grounded theory's flexibility allows researchers to adapt the methodology to their specific needs (Johnson & Walsh, 2019). The ability to generate new hypotheses allows researchers to explore previously unknown areas. The ability to produce rich data allows for a more in-depth understanding of the studied phenomenon. Other strengths include its focus on the data, its emphasis on understanding the phenomenon being studied, and its use of constant comparative analysis (Bakker, 2019). In this case, the flexibility of the chosen methodology allowed the researchers to understand the actual

meanings and adventure tourism companies regarding eco-certifications and sustainable tourism. With this, the first three interviews were vital in knowing what additional questions should be asked in the consecutive interviews. From there, data saturation was reached once we saw no discoveries are no discoveries (Heath & Cowley, 2004).

Meanwhile, the weaknesses of the grounded theory include its time-consuming nature, complexity, and reliance on intuition. The time-consuming nature of a grounded theory can be a drawback because it can take longer to complete a study using this methodology. In this regard, we have used multiple technical tools to help us save time and to assure that there is a triangulation on the validity of our data. These tools are the following:

a. Zoom

Zoom was used for the interviews. Zoom's video and audio recordings were saved in a secure folder on a password-secured USB. Two researchers conducted each interview. And so one was taking down meeting notes, and the other was conducting the interview. However, interviewing as a team became an advantage in our triangulation because meeting notes were compared to our transcribed data during data analysis.

b. Descript

For transcribing our data, we have used Descript. Descript is a collaborative transcription tool that eliminates the tedious work of transcribing recordings word by word. With the amount of time saved from the Descript, the supposed time used for transcribing was focused instead on checking for the accuracy of the transcribed data. Then transcribed data was compared to our meeting notes to double-check that we understood the recording as it was.

c. Word

After checking all the transcribed data, each respondent was given an Informant Key Number (IKN) and had their transcriptions imported to Word. Word was used for our initial coding. The initial coding process consisted of category identification and getting a sense of themes. Here is an example of how Word was used for initial coding:

Codes	Transcription	Themes
Maintenance of the company's nature-friendly	IKN-03: We have always had an image that we are nature	Company Novelty

image to local people and consumers.	friendly, like locally and the people.	
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Table 3. Example of Coding in Word

After the initial coding, codes were copied and pasted below the table and were grouped according to their relevance to other codes. From there, initial themes were formed.

d. Excel

Excel was used for our thematic analysis phase. To identify the core themes for each of the respondents, the themes created in Word were transferred to Excel together with their responses. Excel's Pivot table helped the study identify the themes with mostly repeated codes during the interview. This opened the next phase of thematic analysis with Miro. Here is an example of how Excel was used for initial thematic analysis:

Count of Themes		
	IKN-01	Grand Total
Eco-certification's Effectiveness	5	5
Effect: The certificate made them identify their company's weak points. We found our Achilles heel. It also makes us want to maintain our standards because you have to have better results to keep the certificate.	1	1
Effectiveness: Having the eco-lighthouse is not enough. His concern is that most should also aim to get the sustainable destination stamp.	1	1
Effectiveness: Sustainable destination ensures a better quality of strategies than an eco-lighthouse.	1	1
Effectiveness: The sustainable destination's rigorous process makes it more credible and aligned to international quality standards.	1	1
Effectiveness; The length of the process of a sustainable destination makes it more credible than the eco-lighthouse.	1	1

Table 4. Example of Coding in Excel

e. Miro

For our thematic analysis, we have used Miro as our visual whiteboard to have an overview of all the themes formed from Word and Excel. See Appendix C and D to see examples of how the study selected core categories, knowing the storyline, and determined data saturation.

f. Zotero

We have utilized Zotero for our references to save time with referencing and citations. Each chapter has its folder of literary materials, facilitating the organization of information by researchers.

Implementation Process**a. Timing Issues**

Covid-19 was the main timing issue. Some participants were either sick or unavailable on the scheduled date, so interviewing was not pushed through. At the same time, online one-on-one interviews posed some challenges due to the internet connectivity of the interviewees.

b. Triangulation

Triangulation is an essential component of the research process to ensure the validity of qualitative data. Multiple data collection modalities are intended to measure a particular concept or engage in triangulation (Lune & Berg, 2017). Using several technological solutions (such as Word, Excel, and Miro), the data analysis in this circumstance corroborated the results' measurement and validity. Additionally, the researchers shared a joint log, memos, and meeting notes to expand and confirm the interpretation of the findings.

c. Use of Research Log and Journal

The research journal is one of the most critical tools researchers use in their iterative design and discussion of findings. A research journal helps researchers to track their ideas, progress, and findings as they work on their research project (Ayobi et al., 2020). In addition, a research journal can also help researchers to refine and improve their research methods. By keeping a research journal, the researchers ensured that they constantly reflected on their work and progress towards their goals. When conducting this research, thesis and electronic means were used as two ways to keep the journals—electronically or

thesis (Ayobi et al., 2020). In this study, researchers used both keeping files on personal computers and a notebook dedicated to keeping journals.

Recording data, thoughts, and reflections regularly allows us to track our progress, analyze research methods, and troubleshoot errors or uncertainty. In addition, having a comprehensive research log helped to make the report writing process smoother by providing an overview of what has been done and what still needs to be accomplished.

d. Ethics

Several ethical considerations were considered when collecting interaction-based data. One such consideration was the handling of topic sensitivity. According to Facca et al. (2020), it is essential to remember that some topics may be sensitive for participants and should be discussed with them prior to collecting data (Fahie, 2014). In this case, there were no sensitive issues to be discussed. However, the researchers have considered some companies need not disclose any information such as their name and the company's name. Therefore, a consent form allowed participants to decide if they wanted to participate in the study and allowed them to have the choice to withdraw their consent if they changed their minds. In addition, we adopted several measures to protect the confidentiality of collected data and ensure the anonymity of interviewees (Facca et al., 2020).

All the recordings were transcribed in a transcribing program called Descript. Through Descript, names were changed with IKN (Informant's Key Number) numbers. After transcribing, names were color-coded for thematic analysis. Overall, any potential distress (disclosing their operations or company's name) caused by the topic of the study was assessed before by informing the consent of the study.

5. Findings

The thesis aimed to further understand SCI in adventure tourism by creating a framework for consumers to recognize some of the sustainable efforts of adventure tourism companies beyond eco-certifications as established by the finding in the discussion (see Chapter Six). The main observation of the data collection and mapping of ATCs and Booknordics AS showed that there are more non-eco-certified Norwegian ATCs than eco-certified ones (see appendix G). Out of 75 Norwegian ATCs, only 12 Norwegian ATCs were eco-certified. In the review of ATCs through Booknordics AS, all of the companies with eco-certification in Norway are

completed with Eco-lighthouse, and only one was with Innovation Norway's Sustainable Destination scheme.

The data on which companies were eco-certified or not was unavailable via the booking agency, which leaves a gap and ambiguity to consumers and lower incentives for certification of ATCs. Investigating further, the gap in sustainable consumer information, the data collected in this section indicates that eco-certified and non-eco-certified companies promote sustainability policies and implement sustainability initiatives in their operations regardless of being eco-certified. In doing so, the researchers strategically chose and interviewed both eco-certified and non-eco-certified companies regarding their views on eco-certification's effectiveness and sustainability practices. From the analysis of our data, the study resulted in 2 main findings:

- a. Adventure tourism companies remain skeptical of eco-certification's effectiveness for three reasons:
 - i. its inefficiency in representing a company's holistic sustainability efforts
 - ii. its incompatibility with the kinds of tours adventure tourism companies offer
 - iii. the common perception of eco-certifications' loss of credibility.
- b. Adventure tourism companies implement different sustainability practices (including economic and social dimensions) regardless of being eco-certified or not. However, the information on how adventure tourism companies implement their sustainability initiatives is not communicated well to consumers.

5.1. SUB RQ 1. Why are ATCs skeptical of the effectiveness of eco-certification in Norway?

5.1.1. Adventure tourism companies perceive eco-certifications as an inefficient tool for representing their company's sustainability values and efforts.

All adventure tourism companies interviewed are characterized by awareness of sustainability concepts and actively contribute to sustainability efforts. Likewise, both groups expressed how an eco-certification falls short in depicting a company's sustainability values and actions. For both groups, eco-certification processes require a specific measurement of how you recycle and reduce waste. However, valuable, sustainable measures such as partnering with local communities, using local products, and innovating ways to solve seasonality problems are not included under eco-certifications. For instance, most eco-certified respondents explain that the eco-certification does not represent their holistic sustainability efforts despite having an eco-

certification. Eco-certification does not measure how tourist guides spread environmental awareness using educational stories and leading by example. As Respondent 03 narrates:

During one of my travels in the national park of Minjaro, I have seen a tourist guide walk out of the track and pick up a chocolate paper. He picked it up, put it in his pocket, and did not say anything else. And since then, we have thought about that. In our company, we do it without saying anything. We lead by example.

Similarly, other eco-certified respondents display that they go beyond the minimum requirements of eco-certification for recycling and reducing waste. As Respondent 11 exemplifies,

"One of the main things that we try is that a couple of times throughout the year, we have workshops where we talk with our guides, and we try to figure out what is talked about through the tour... (Other than that), our skippers log the amount of diesel consumed daily. And what we are planning to do is that we are talking with a company in Iceland that will plant trees to help with our carbon offsetting" (Respondent 11).

Likewise, non-eco-certified respondents expressed similar views on how eco-certifications do not represent their sustainability values and efforts. As a RIB boat tour company indicated:

Eco-certification does not reflect the critical parts the company focuses on about sustainability. Some companies get eco-certified to attract investors and partners. However, it does not represent how good they are with sustainability. (Respondent 05)

Most non-eco-certified companies portray an innate characteristic to give back to nature even without certification. For example, Respondent 06 and Respondent 16 believe allowing tourists to experience nature is more effective in spreading environmental awareness than showing that they are eco-certified. As Respondent 06 explained:

Letting people experience nature firsthand is the best way to do short-term and long-term sustainability. For example, allowing people from downtown Tokyo to go to Kirkenes and experience king crab fishing makes them aware of nature and its fragility.

Both respondents believe that eco-certifications would not be able to measure how they 'bring the message and awareness to the customers.' As some offer unique tour concepts that integrate partnerships with local restaurants and local producers, they believe eco-certification is not an effective tool. For Respondent 16, a tour with a remarkable story about the sustainable

collaboration between locals is more important to represent how they are part of the shift to sustainable tourism than having an eco-certification. As he argues,

Eco-certifications are nice and proud to have, but having an eco-certification does not impact our business vision and goals for sustainability. However, if we can change the way we collaborate, maybe we can influence customers' use and habit.

Meanwhile, Respondent 06 indicates how even without eco-certification, the company has jumpstarted incorporating sustainability practices from the beginning of its operations. In effect, they abide by three principles to actively maintain sustainability. These principles are a) to create and get people to acknowledge sustainability by letting them experience nature; b) to think locally and act locally; c) to apply global perspectives to local actions. As Respondent 16 further explains:

The problem with applying global perspectives to local actions is that you get a lot of distance between what you can add to help the environment and what you can do. Therefore, the solution to the gap between local actions to a global perspective is to be a big piece in a smaller puzzle than a tiny piece in an infant puzzle. This relates to making an impact on our destinations. By being a more significant piece of the puzzle, it is easier to hold people accountable and easier to identify and measure what impact we have.

5.1.2. Adventure tourism companies perceive eco-certification schemes as incompatible with the company's needs and offer.

a. Affordability of eco-certifications

From the standpoint of view of small-sized adventure tourism companies, they view eco-certifications as incompatible for them due to them being too costly. Most non-eco-certified respondents explain that they view eco-certifications more as an 'investment' than a 'necessity.' Moreover, most respondents categorize themselves as start-ups and opt for recovering from the impacts of COVID-19. Therefore, most convey that having an eco-certification is currently not a priority. As Respondent 07 states:

I am sure that [eco-certifications] can be helpful, but as it is for us for now, that's not a priority. As I said, we are a small company, and the investment in these things is very high. There are things we have other priorities investing in other than getting certified.

On the other hand, eco-certified companies echo start-ups' concerns about eco-certification being too expensive. As Respondent 01 reiterates,

For me, the main barrier for small companies is money. When I was starting, for a long time, there was no income. And, when you should say [I need at least] 10 000 to 15 000 Norwegian Kroner to pay for a certification every year, sorry. There is no money. So, for the small companies, it is too expensive.

b. Representation of how adventure tourism companies operate

Meanwhile, adventure tourism companies have expressed a unique challenge in becoming eco-certified. Operators find that current eco-certifications' indicators do not represent how adventure tourism companies operate. Therefore, they perceive that eco-certification does not accurately measure what they are doing for sustainability. As non-eco-certified respondents expressed:

"Eco-certification measurement for adventure business is not as good as the hotel business."
(Respondent 04)

"We have been briefly looking at these eco-certification systems. The problem is that we can't find one suitable for our business." (Respondent 06)

Similarly, an eco-certified respondent 13 stated:

For Eco lighthouse, we tell them how much paper we use and how much trash we throw. But I do not feel that it shows all our sustainable efforts. I have not found a system for the sustainability that we are doing.

c. Consumers' preference

Most respondents perceived that the type of consumers in the tourism industry has a much lower demand for eco-certified suppliers than the other sectors such as food and clothing. For Respondent 16, most tourism consumers are skeptical of eco-certification because they view it as a marketing idea than an actual lifestyle vision. Therefore, the lack of consumer demand makes them uncertain if eco-certification is vital for their company. As respondent 16 explains,

Tourism is not a business field where most consumers demand to have their adventure tourism companies as eco-certified compared to those from the food industry

Likewise, an eco-certified respondent shows their views of uncertainty with how eco-certification influences their customers' behavior and choices of travel. As Respondent 01 explained:

I do not think we have gotten to the generation of young people who will choose us because we have an Eco-lighthouse. There are (ages) 20, 25, and 30 when they travel; they will double-check for this kind of tourism. But it needs to be more out there. However, the older generation is not there. They do not care. They just want value.

Another eco-certified respondent expresses the same thoughts on how consumers' preference also plays a role in why they are getting an eco-certification or not. As Respondent 03 says:

I have said before that we did not need to have the kind of brand like the Eco-lighthouse. It is unnecessary because people are unaware of the different labels and meanings. I have always suggested that what to write on your website is much more important than what you use, how you communicate when you have guests, and how you do stuff without your guests.

d. An imbalance between gaining profits and the environment

One of the main arguments of both eco-certified and non-eco-certified respondents is that the tourism industry design makes sustainability challenges. As Respondent 04 explained:

Traveling will not cease (soon). To begin with, tour operations are naturally unsustainable. Consequently, to monitor eco-certifications' effectiveness, the tourism industry should pinpoint those who pollute the most—cruises and planes.

Meanwhile, Respondent 06 further elaborates that from a business perspective, tour companies will do whatever they feel is the most profitable thing to do. As he explained:

In my honest opinion, they (business owners) do whatever they feel is the most profitable thing. So, if they did not see any possibility for that to be profitable, they would not do it, to be very frank. And that also applies when it comes to environmentalists.

5.1.3. Issues on trustworthiness

When asked about the credibility and transparency of eco-certifications, data shows various opinions amongst respondents' loss of trust in the credibility of eco-certifications. For some, eco-certification should have stricter requirements to lessen the saturation of eco-certified companies. As Respondent 09 expressed:

... It is easy to put a green mark on your company, but it must have real value, and it must be difficult to obtain

Here, Respondent 16 further argued:

Eco-certification has been abused in the last 10 or 20 years. So, they lose a bit of point. Because it is so popular, everybody went into it, but they lost a lot of credibility. For example, certification in the fishery business is just a label for their marketing strategy. But there is no anchor to a real difference to drive the business.

Meanwhile, some conveyed how the tourism industry's complex operations and structure make it difficult to evaluate and monitor eco-certifications' effectiveness. Here,

Respondent 07 gives an excellent example of how eco-certifications in fish farms do not stop these farms from polluting the sea. As he narrated:

Environmental stamps may be suitable for fish farms. (It may) change how they operate or work to become more sustainable (...). Still, fish farms do not clean up the waste underneath the merd (fish cages) when they are lying there. So, they are just piling up the seabed with tons of garbage. And they just move the sea to another place. And then they repeat. And when it comes to profit, wealth comes to only a few hands. So, looking at this, it takes away the value or trustworthiness of the whole thing. It is just rubbish if you look more into it.

In this perspective, other respondents express how eco-certifications in the tourism industry should target more cruises and planes than smaller activity-based companies. For them, more prominent companies can manipulate their data. However, for smaller adventure tourism companies, it is their way of life. In effect, eco-certifications lose their credibility when big companies get eco-certified based on specific criteria such as measuring how they recycle their waste. However, they never really resolve actual over-tourism issues.

On that note, most non-eco-certified respondents also have expressed how they see eco-certifications' inefficiency in governing the environment against greenwashing. Greenwashing allows certified companies to make themselves look better than they are. Therefore, non-eco-certified respondents argue that eco-certified companies fail to have integrity regarding their actual sustainability practices. Consequently, this causes mistrust from operators toward eco-certification companies because they believe they are not doing enough to impact sustainability. Respondent 08 acknowledges that eco-certifications are more effective for big companies who 'want a shiny, bright shining star to put on their wall.' This is evidence that some smaller operators look at certifications as 'just for the big corporations and not for scalable for the small operators.

As Respondent 06 reasons out:

Eco-certifications only represent the certification the company has. But most of these companies resort to greenwashing. [At this point], greenwashing is not a significant concern as every business is into it.

From this perspective, eco-certification normalizes the practice of greenwashing amongst different companies. For example, Respondent 07 exemplified how cruise ships 'can cause a lot of water pollution on tour areas' compared to the tours they offered. Therefore, the hypocrisy amongst big eco-certified companies such as cruise ships and airlines tends to greenwash more. Because as Respondent 07 argued:

Big companies tend to greenwash more. Not because they must hide something, but because they produce reasons to defend why it is okay to do what they are doing.

Lastly, most non-eco-certified respondents perceive eco-certifications as another marketing label. As Respondent 05 expressed:

Marketing reasons lead to greenwashing.

Here, Respondent 02 strongly expressed how he would never want to get eco-certified because he believes that eco-certification is 'hyped too much.' For him, companies primarily use these certifications as a current marketing strategy to gain more investors instead of believing in the philosophy behind the certification scheme. In turn, these companies invalidate eco-certification's relevance and reliability because it pertains to more marketing instead of effectively influencing the company's sustainable direction.

5.2. Sub RQ2. What are the industry sustainability practices of ATCs in Norway?

Ten sustainable industry practices are voluntarily implemented found in the case of adventure tourism companies in Norway in this section. The sustainability practices are formed into ten initiatives (see appendix F) that are used to design solutions to the gaps in SCI in the discussion (see Chapter Six) from a bottom-up approach that uses the voices of the adventure tourism community.

a. Value of nature in nature-based adventure tourism

Nature-based tourism has a substantial value of nature that is extrinsic and intrinsic, which can translate into sustainable practices within the industry regardless of eco-certification. The value of nature is seen as the central theme behind sustainability practices. There's also an awareness of the reliance on nature behind the business itself, as experiences in nature-based tourism aim to live together with their natural environment. Respondent 09 expresses this extrinsic value of nature by stating:

The reason behind my company is nature itself. So, taking care of nature is particularly important for me, personally, and then for the company as well.

Respondent 09 owns a hiking tour company that only uses public transport, and the company wants to show tourists the beauty that Oslo has to offer so they can appreciate it and take care of it. The intrinsic value of nature is shown behind the appreciation of nature itself. Respondent 09 expresses this by stating:

The main reason for [the company] existing is to show people this beautiful nature. Still, then again, we just want people to understand they shouldn't take it for granted that nature is there. I want to show them or make them know that we must take care of it and live in it. We have to live together with it, not two different things.

The proximity to nature with tourism operators can allow for the value of nature and awareness of sustainability within the local context. Environmental exposure can imply an innate local knowledge that eco-certification cannot measure. Respondent 8 stated that:

In Norway(...), many farmers work logically on things and do not necessarily need a certificate. It is typical for us because we live so close to nature and know this as a child. I know that in February and January, we eat herring because that is when the herring comes to the coast, and we will eat cod in March(...). We live really close to nature and together with nature.

Proximity to nature showed an awareness of sustainability in the local context and the substantial value of nature. Still, there was no indication that firms in more developed areas lack the importance of nature or awareness of their local context.

b. Sustainability and education interpretation features

Both eco-certified and non-eco-certified adventure tourism companies have strong values of nature, as seen in finding 5.2.1 and 5.1. These extrinsic and intrinsic values of nature are found to be formed into special delivery of understanding of the environmental concepts meant to inform tourists. When asked if the company includes educational features, Respondent 9 stated:

We have this small story that you are telling all the guests about how it is getting less snow in Oslo. It is getting warmer every winter, and all the animals are coming further down to the city because there is a lack of food. We have these bullet points that tell all the guests, but we do not want to be we do not want to push anything. We just like to do small talk about it. Like it is a normal conversation.

Respondent 8 teaches about how to live in the local context with nature:

I know quite a lot about what can be out in nature (...). I also run courses (...) teaching how to use old traditions, live off only what earth gives you, make cheese, milk a cow, and use a spinning wheel. Sometimes with the guests, I say, today we are going to pick our lunch somewhere, and we gather everything we can eat from outside. And we just make lunch out of nothing other than what we find, not in the garden, but outside in the woods.

Respondent 11 explains that their concept and sustainable efforts are something they teach their guides in workshops to inform tourists:

We try to talk about our sustainability efforts on our tours. And we have a couple of workshops throughout the year where we talk with our guides.

c. Public transportation

Adventure tourism companies promote the use of public transportation to lower their carbon footprint. Adventure tourism companies encourage using public transport to reduce their carbon footprint. Respondent 09 stated:

We only do public transportation to all our targets, so we will never have a busload or cruise of tourists, and we are not driving cars. Only public transport, which is vital for us. And then, when we are out in the forest, we try to put as low a carbon footprint as possible.

Using public transport to get to the meeting point can be incentivized for tourists. Respondent 12 stated that:

We have a 5% discount if you are coming by public transport. So, we incentivize it to remind people that public transportation is available.

d. Regenerative practices

Sustainable tourism suppliers have innovative regenerative practices that reduce, reuse and recycle material, lowering environmental impacts while providing community value. Respondent 15 stated after being asked if there are aspects of sustainability that Eco-lighthouse does not measure for their company:

When we got our shop a year ago, we had to start building the shop from top to bottom. So, we reused furniture for free. We reused free stuff from shops that are pre-closing already.

Respondent 12 buys old equipment to lower emissions. It allows the community to use it at a maximum discount, reduction of equipment being sent from overseas:

We have secondhand stores in Bergen. It took me weeks to get the equipment [all used], to find the proper boots, the poles, the skis. If I could buy everything secondhand, they did not have to send [more equipment] around the world again. And so, we also rent out all the equipment we have to locals for a small amount of money. So, it is in use also when we are not using it. So, we do the trivial things that I think have an impact, but people cannot know about this.

e. Tour sizes

Community relations and sustainable consumer experiences are essential to adventure tourism companies, and they implement policies to show that. By not having large groups, they use these relationships to add community value and context to tourism experiences. Respondent 12 lost business opportunities because the tour sizes are small and there is often pressure from other companies to have double the number of tourists per guide. The company keeps its small tour policy to protect the community and create quality experiences. Respondent 12 states:

The size of the group is essential to not invading a local community. Furthermore, if you are a large group, like some of the buses, for example, with forty people, some have one guide on the bus and then stop. You do not get to know forty people on one tour(...) I had a vision that we could be a company that makes money and does it well, even going the other way. So, as I had a maximum number of hiking, we had a maximum of ten people. In the long term, I am sure that these companies [like mine] that can provide small groups with a particular service and not interrupt the local community will be more substantial. Furthermore, I had so many turning me down, and then we had the opposite with a visit to Bergen.

This shows that Respondent 12 is more interested in connecting with tourists for genuine connections with clients and genuinely connecting with the community with lower impacts. Visit Bergen has promoted the company for their quality and personal tours. Many companies have gone for something that costs less due to other available large tour sizes.

f. Zero direct emissions

Adventure tourism companies are part of the shift to renewable energy and have integrated technological advances to have zero direct emissions. Various technological advances have made adventure tourism have zero direct emissions with electric cars, electric bikes, sailing, electric yachts, and electric snowmobiles.

Respondent 11 shared how they use hybrid boats currently, and the next build will be fully electric:

The next ship that is being built right now is going to be fully electric.

Respondent 15 explained how his company makes a small impact with sailing and electric bike tours:

I want my company to contribute to the environment. Although [we are] small, we know we do not significantly impact [on the climate] ... I started biking myself with an e-bike. [I thought] it would be fun to bring people along with biking. So, we started [electric bike tours].

Respondent 14 shared how they currently have an electric car and are planning their switch to electric snowmobiles:

We have one e-car today that we just bought. We have started looking for electric snowmobiles, and we are looking into suppliers that can give us enough distance in the mountains for electrical engines.

Respondent 13 states:

One of the most important things for this company is the environment. We now have electricity for the taxi part [part of the company].

g. Slow tourism

Slow tourism is aimed at lowering negative impacts, and adventure tourism companies in Norway seek answers from their backyard for fewer consequences of industry norms. This means that more extended stays and more local people are found to a reasonable solution to keep impacts low and effective sustainability. Respondent 13 states:

We decided a bit before the pandemic that we were going to exclude Asia from our marketing because of sustainability... [and] we would work with Europe one or two days more instead of making just the weekend getaway.

Respondent 08 has similar views on the need for targeting demographics with less of a carbon footprint as stated:

We have mainly Norwegian tourists, and that is the, we are thrilled with that. Not because they are Norwegian, but because they do not need to have a big mark for a big footprint trip to get here.

h. Community value creation

Adventure tourism companies include and promote local culture, products, and supply chains to foster livable income and job creation in the host community while avoiding economic leakage or environmental impacts.

a. Balancing destinations and collaboration

There is a recognition of how tourism does not always spread equally, and there is a need to collaborate with small remote companies. Respondent 07 states:

The only way that you can succeed is with collaboration. You must collaborate with the partners, the community, and the people around you... Thus, we started contacting small companies like us in isolated places. Moreover, if you go to this remote place and do not visit them, that is not right. So, what we want [when doing tours] is to take our guests there.

Respondent 07 further elaborates:

I think the social enveloping of the community as part of the sustainability term is much more critical in the districts and for smaller companies than it is for the more prominent companies. And this is more in our blood with thinking sustainability. It is just in our blood.

b. Avoidance of economic leakage

Adventure tourism companies want to keep value in the local area and use local solutions as much as possible. Respondent 13 shares how they work locally. He explained:

Sustainability is essential for the company (...) and using local suppliers not to give away all our incomes to foreign agents (...) And for us, it is one of the things is making sure that we leave money behind on the place using local providers [while] we could go other places. We need to rent the space or pay for parking, ensuring that we are not taking advantage of the whole logistics of northern Norway. We do not want to deliver, for instance, a transport service to a company that brings their guides, (...) we want to use local guides.

i. Sustainable employment practices

Sustainable work practices and government tax considerations benefit locals and immigrants in an integrated approach that goes beyond the considerations of short-term profit with practices to keep people employed all year. Respondent 13 states:

So, what is special for Tromsø is that we have an excellent winter season, and then the summer season, Lofoten, is taking most of it. And we are trying to get people further north to keep them happy all year around. we keep them [employees] happily working and paying taxes to Norway and making sure that this is sustainable, that this is sustainable for the future (...) I think that is good for the product as well. And for the competence of people working with us. A seasonal worker only stays here for five or six months, and they do not know about the area. It costs money to train them, and then they are often here only a couple of months anyway. We want to keep [workers year-round], educate them, and put money into them to stay... and give them Norwegian classes so they can communicate and get a social life.

Respondent 13 explains that their hours and services must have sustainable pay for workers and that their partners fulfill enough hours to make sustainable employment for a full-time job all year. Respondent 13 states:

If you are going to use our services, you need to fill out the rest of the day hours so we can deliver the correct payment for the driver and have sustainability in the business (...) It is also this thought about people hired a whole year and not some of a season.

Respondent 07 reaffirms the aims of sustainable work practices with year-round employees, stating:

We just want to make all-year-round employees. It is like questioning what is built up in the local society.

5.3 Main RQ: How can sustainable consumer information (SCI) be improved for ATCs in Norway?

Examining the gap in SCI available to consumers in Norway shows adventure tourism's main data issues that need improvement. The mapping of ATC working with Booknordics As resulted in 75 ATC located in Norway (see appendix G and H). The 75 in Norway showed that there are several gaps in sustainable consumer information available to consumers, (1) product eco-certification is not displayed on the booking agency website to inform consumers, (2) the company's environmental policy did not transmit to the booking agency website, (3) no differentiation for more environmentally friendly options (no filters or web navigational features to direct consumers).

Although eco-certifications remain a vital tool for sustainable tourism, they do not holistically represent a company's sustainable contributions. From the research's gathered data, identifying the causes of eco-certification skepticism (in Findings 5.1) amongst adventure tourism companies and recognizing their different sustainable initiatives beyond eco-certifications (in Findings 5.2) are essential steps in improving adventure tourism's sustainable

consumer information (SCI). Identifying the causes behind eco-certification skepticism uncovered how most adventure tourism companies are contributing different sustainable initiatives beyond Norwegian eco-certification indicators (see Discussion, Chapter six)—for example, operating in smaller tour sizes, creating value for local communities, and applying a regenerative design in their operations are not measured.

Therefore, the study has identified that eco-certifications are insufficient tools for communicating sustainability efforts to consumers currently in Norway. With the communication gap, adventure tourism companies who do not communicate their sustainability policies on their website may lose the opportunity to showcase what they are doing for sustainable tourism. This contributes to a lack of consumer awareness and the ability to make sustainable choices.

When respondents were asked how they see their effectiveness in communicating sustainability efforts, some expressed sustainable consumer information as a concern.

Respondent 13 explains:

We see that operators are not good at marketing their story to consumers of what they do within their sustainability efforts and thus underplay the importance of sustainability. I do not think we are good enough at telling people what we do because we just do it. We do not know the market and say, hey, look at what we are doing. We do not have a strategy for that.

Respondent 06 also reaffirmed that sustainable consumer information is not appropriately communicated:

Then I must admit we are extremely poor at doing it (i.e., communicating their sustainability efforts). And I think it has to do with that since even though we exist companies that have been running for many years, as early as the mid-eighties, we as a unit still try to find out what our voice is going to be or how our tone of voice is going to be. So, the focus now is to get all the operational bits in place, and my responsibility is marketing and sales, which also includes this. Nevertheless, we need to get other bits working together before we can push this out. So, regarding how we communicate sustainability to our guests, I would rate that as a two out of ten.

6. Discussion and Analysis

The existing gap in communicating sustainable consumer information from adventure tourism companies to tourists

The process behind identifying the existing gap in sustainable consumer information from adventure tourism companies to tourists is rooted in the researchers' project of mapping and examining 226 adventure tourism companies' websites within the Nordic region during their internship, that was recollected with more detailed methods (see Chapter Four). In doing so, several gaps have been identified, as mentioned throughout the research. The gaps include:

- a. The eco-certification is not displayed on the booking agency website to inform consumers.
- b. The company's sustainability policy was not transmitted to the booking agency website.
- c. There is no differentiation for more environmentally friendly options (no filters nor web navigational feature to direct consumers).

The research was further developed to utilize a grounded theory approach to understand the 'actual phenomenon' behind adventure tourism's role in sustainable tourism. Therefore, the entry point of the study's interviews was to understand their belief in the effectiveness of eco-certification schemes. However, as we progressed with more interviews, the topic of the SCI gap became more evident as a concern to our respondents and from data collection of websites showing missing information from internal sustainability efforts.

From here, the study's findings align with Wehrli et al. (2017)'s study showcasing the different communication preferences in the travel market regarding promoting a sustainable destination. Their findings indicate that people prefer to have the sustainability attributes of a product conveyed in words. As the individual sustainability benefits of a tourism product are not always apparent or accessible to customers (McDonald & Oates, 2006), particularly before experiencing the product itself, it is crucial to communicate these aspects of sustainability in a manner that traverses consumers on an emotional level (Wehrli et al., 2017). This is particularly significant since most travelers have never booked a sustainable tourism product (Wehrli, Egli, Lutzenberger, Pfeiffer, & Stettler, 2012) and are unlikely to understand what sustainable tourism entails (Miller et al., 2010). Consequently, they suggest adventure tourism companies

utilize emotive images; to convey the product's sustainability sentimentally by utilizing narratives and storytelling that directly addresses customers and creatively compose texts. Their findings demonstrate the significance of communicating sustainable tourist products from adventure tourism companies to consumers with better SCI.

Similarly, this study's findings from the interviews uncovered how adventure tourism companies implement sustainability initiatives with or without eco-certifications to address sustainability issues within their community. The study interprets the respondents' initiatives from understanding the local context and activity-based tourism from a bottom-up approach that seeks to use their voluntary sustainability initiatives as a policy-building instrument to create better sustainable consumer information and awareness solutions to tourism. These initiatives are being voluntarily implemented yet are not all widely used in the industry or required for standardization. Consequently, this thesis further identified that the tourism industry lacks a digestible framework that allows consumers to make sustainable travel decisions. For instance, consumers' interest in environmentally friendly options lacks effective strategies to direct new demand (Purcărea et al., 2022; O'Rourke & Ringer, 2016). Scientific information and indicators lack meaningfulness for the public and need to be transformed for effective communication to make environmentally friendly choices (Bjørner et al., 2004; O'Rourke & Ringer, 2016). Therefore, this research reiterates that closing the gap in sustainable consumer information informs tourists of their decisions on experiences that can lead to more sustainable tourism (Esparon et al., 2014).

6.1. Identifying the causes of eco-certification skepticism

Eco-certification can be a tool for communication of SCI (Milioti et al., 2018), but as found in a mapping of adventure firms working with Booknordics.com and recollection of the data, most do not have eco-certification. Therefore, the study also interviewed the different perceptions of adventure tourism companies regarding the effectiveness of eco-certifications in making them more sustainable. As a result, the study discovered that both eco-certified and non-certified ATCs both have sustainable efforts, yet both remain skeptical of the advantages of eco-certification. To create sustainable consumer information pathways, the study's findings suggest the importance of identifying the causes of skepticism of adventure tourism companies around eco-certifications.

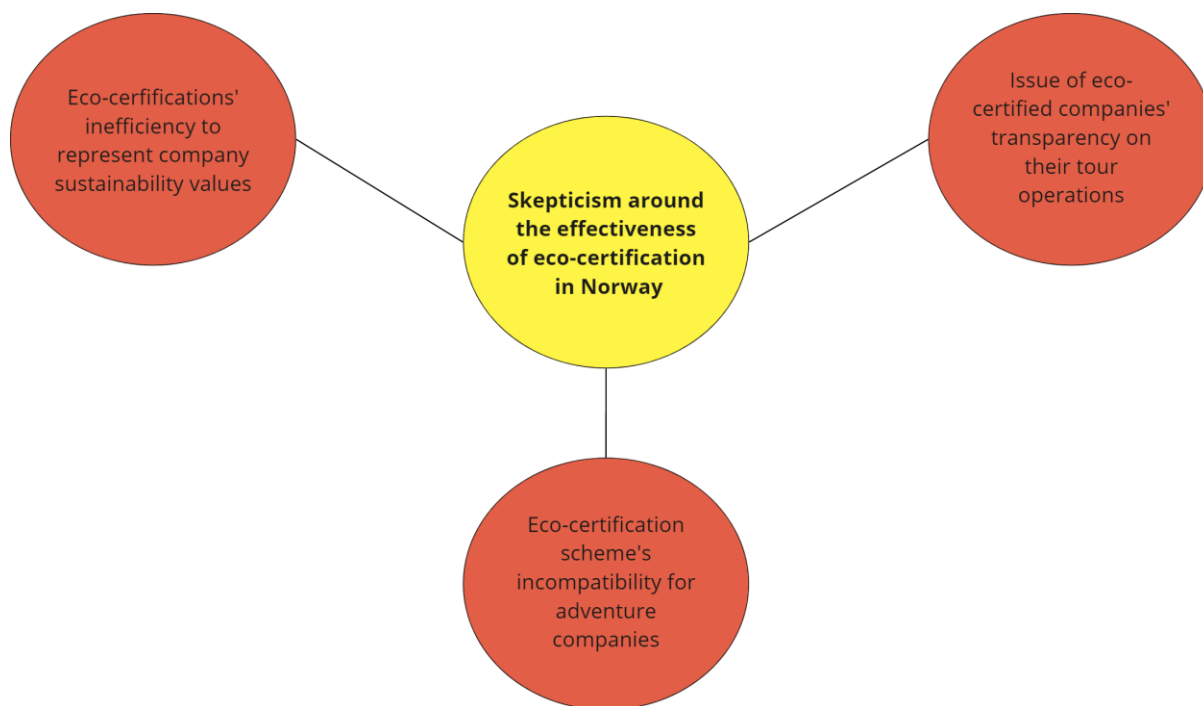


Figure 3. Eco-certification skepticism of adventure companies in Norway

Based on our grounded theory approach's observations and interviews, eco-certification skepticism of adventure tourism companies in Norway roots in these three causes:

1. Eco-certification's inefficiency in representing a company's sustainability efforts
2. Eco-certification's incompatibility for adventure tourism companies
3. Issue of trustworthiness of eco certifications' transparency.

In this light, most have expressed how eco-certifications do not see the bigger picture of tourism. As it targets to measure specific sustainability practices (i.e., environmental), eco-certifications do not holistically represent how adventure tourism companies contribute to the other dimensions of sustainability, such as socially and economically. For instance, some respondents expressed how most of them did their research about eco-certifications even before they started the business. Meanwhile, others have expressed how small businesses value networking and contacting other small companies in isolated places while contributing to environmental awareness on their tours with tourists. As Respondent 07 explained the importance of social sustainability is just as important as environmental sustainability, she said:

Owners believe in the quality of service of other small businesses. They form a camaraderie amongst other entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are helping entrepreneurs.

a. Benefits of eco-certifications despite its lack of representation of company values

Nevertheless, both groups of respondents reiterate how eco-certifications give companies a common goal to reach. Eco-certifications give companies a guideline and framework to start working toward a universal standard on how to contribute to sustainable tourism. Although the standard is not consistent throughout the industry, it is a step in a direction that can make sustainability more achievable. Respondent 11 highlights this by saying, "It [eco-certifications] gives people a standard goal to reach." There is evidence that industries are beginning to change. Even financial institutions are stepping toward universal sustainability standards already. Here, Respondent 14 similarly states, "Two weeks ago the bank... asked us, what kind of eco-certification do you have? I said we were working toward ISO, and they said that is good." This is evidence of a growing movement toward eco-certifications becoming the standard. For those who are eco-certified, the eco-certification process puts structure to the sustainability operations of a company. For instance, respondent 03 and respondent 08 explain how Eco-lighthouse gives you a total overview of what the company should do to progress its sustainability practices. When you start an eco-certification process, you become better at implementing proper procedures and organizing documents to get a good overview of the critical points of sustainability measures because everything is in one document. So, those that were not written before had to document it.

As Respondent 03 says, "We were not demotivated to get eco-certified. However, it was challenging to put all the (sustainability practices) we had before into the Eco-lighthouse system. So, it was more of organization and structuring the old practices to some new ones (from Eco-lighthouse indicators) and stuff like that."

These responses prove that eco-certification remains a valuable tool for a company in terms of obtaining market opportunities and standardizing the measurement of sustainable tour operations. For some adventure tourism companies, eco-certification creates a generalized framework and agrees upon rules for operators to follow. This puts pressure on companies to question how they do things and ultimately make changes to become certified. The more operators that become eco-certified, the more it is recognized by consumers, and thus creates a more significant desire. Here, eco-certified companies repeat how obtaining an eco-certification should be part of every business plan, more so if a company has amassed sufficient financial

resources and is already operating sustainably. As respondent 01, who is certified under the Sustainable Destinations, argued:

"If you do not have a certificate but operate sustainably, you cannot just say that you are sustainable. Of course, most entrepreneurs are sustainable in a way in Norway. We are all living on electricity made from a windmill or water. Nevertheless, how do you do your litter? Where do you get your food from? So, I think we will have to honor eco-certificates in a way. You must give it the value".

b. Some eco-certifications are incompatible for start-ups and small companies because they are too costly.

As most adventure tourism companies categorize as small companies or as start-ups, most of the respondents expressed how they are finding the right moment to get eco-certified. They are not against eco-certified, but for them, eco-certification is not a priority at the beginning of the business. This aligns with Margaryan & Stensland's (2017) study that shows how company size and income are linked to having an eco-certificate or not.

c. Eco-certifications are embedded with the paradox of sustainability.

There are many different eco-certifications, and it can be difficult for other operators and consumers to recognize them. The "UN global impacts program influenced IKN-12.". They understand how "It is not an eco-certification, it is more of an abroad program...[And], In our situation [it] may be the best ones because it is international and easier to understand... Eco-lighthouse, green flag, blue flag, it is much harder to understand each other when one company meets another crossing the borders." The lack of international agreement and consensus adds to the confusion around the consistency of international sustainability standards.

d. Benefits of eco-certifications despite its shortfall in trustworthiness

Nevertheless, there still are some benefits of eco-certifications despite their shortfall in trustworthiness. As eco-certifications and sustainability become more popular and recognized, consumers begin to see and understand what it means to be sustainable and eco-certified. It creates a unique marketing opportunity and allows them to leverage their sustainability to attract more customers. Respondent 13 explains, "Visit Tromsø approves us, and you have to have sustainability thoughts... because they are promoting us as a sustainability provider." Respondent 13 uses its influence by "Promoting the employers to buy electric cars... it is the [our] business language.". This suggests that there is a trickle-down effect from larger companies (or organizations) to smaller ones by having policies regarding sustainability and eco-certifications.

Most adventure tourism companies are doing more than what eco-certifications require them to do. From our data analysis, adventure tourism companies implement sustainability initiatives regardless of being eco-certified or not. Most eco-certified adventure tourism companies have implemented sustainability practices in their company even before getting the certification. Likewise, most non-eco-certified companies in Norway believe they are contributing beyond what an eco-certification requires them to do (Blanco, 2011).

Consequently, the data shows us that most certification schemes do not holistically represent the sustainable initiatives of a company. For instance, some indicators that Eco-lighthouse does not include are a) forming local partnerships and cooperation; b) regenerative in design; c) and developing solutions for seasonality problems.

e. Avoid lock-out

Operators see considerable expenses to becoming eco-certified— from the actual certificate to changing their internal systems to qualify for the certificate. Respondent 12 said, "...if I had the chance to join [an] eco-certification course today and it did not cost much, I would jump right on it." This acknowledges that operators find eco-certifications too much of an expense for their business. For example, Sustainable Destinations are too demanding and costly to be attained. In this regard, small companies' financial capability makes them choose Eco-lighthouse as a more straightforward and cheaper option than Sustainable Destinations. In effect, the lack of appropriate certification schemes for adventure tourism companies makes them doubt the essence of the available eco-certifications in Norway.

From here, the size of the company, the financial capability of the company, and the customer preference of their customers are three deciding factors in getting eco-certified. For instance, in Respondent 01's case, he wanted to get eco-certified even at the company's beginning. However, no income was coming in. This can be very costly for startup companies because you must include it in your operational costs yearly. On the other hand, older business owners may not find it essential to get eco-certified because their loyal customers do not look for it, so they find no use in their business. Lastly, some companies may be too focused on the impact of the pandemic and surviving financially.

Many large companies can afford the time and cost of eco-certification. Small companies that do not have the resources may not get eco-certification even though they are implementing sustainable initiatives outside the scope of an eco-certification. The value creation that these small companies provide is essential to developing regions that are depopulating. We include adventures that are not eco-certified to avoid the lock-out of sustainable small companies. More points are given to companies with eco-certification in our rating to encourage the credibility of a verifiably sustainable framework. Booknordics.com stands for all partners to become eco-certified when possible.

6.2. The Sustainable Consumer Information (SCI) Badge System



Figure 4. The Sustainable Consumer Information (SCI) Badge System

There is an importance of transforming ineffective consumer communication through a digestible framework due to issues found in the gap of SCI and skepticism on eco-certification. Hence, the public needs an innovative solution to improve how information is accessed and presented for greener consumer choices.

This research proposes a supplemental framework to increase sustainable consumer information while avoiding dismantling eco-certification pursuits. Our Sustainable Consumer

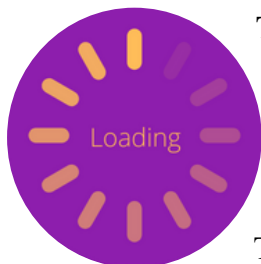
Information (SCI) Badge System is a framework to help SCI transform and broadcast the ten sustainable initiatives (see appendix F) for the public to understand. These ten sustainable initiatives integrated into the SCI Badge System represent policy building by using voices of small lifestyle entrepreneurs that work within ATCs. By acknowledging the voice of small lifestyle entrepreneurs, it reflects a bottom-up perspective for alternatives and degrowth in sustainable tourism. In other words, the SCI Badge System serves as guideline for ATCs to communicate their sustainability initiatives better and innovatively to consumers. The system is a result of the grounded theory investigation done. Throughout the interviews, some respondents have expressed that even if they are an established ATC, they are not good at conveying what they are doing for sustainable tourism (e.g., Respondent 06 and Respondent 12). Therefore, the SCI Badges may transmit sustainable practices from tourism operators to consumers and other tourism stakeholders.

To clarify, the badge system is neither a ranking nor a certification system. Instead, it serves as a communication tool to make it easier for tourists to find sustainable adventures designed around the UN SDGs and the voice of ATCs working in the industry that resulted in the 10 sustainability initiatives (see appendix F). For ATCs to communicate their sustainable advocacies to their consumers, the badge system allows consumers to distinguish how a company is sustainable beyond an eco-certification. It places sustainable experiences in a badge system depending on the tour operator's sustainability initiatives. The badge system categorizes operators into leading, best nature-based tourism practices, best low impact practices, best community value creation practices, best work practices, and best sustainable consumer information practices. The badges given to adventure tourism companies depend on the checklist of their different sustainable tourism practices.

The SCI Badge System is designed for further research or integration into eco-certification schemes for better indicators that explain to consumers what sustainable initiatives are enacted. Research of this system is essential to understand its impacts on current government action and consumers. An example of an implementation sheet with criteria fulfillment by a questionnaire for ATCs can be found in appendix E. This example will be used to showcase how to operationalize the SCI Badge System with indicators that will be used in this discussion.

Different Badges Explained

a. Loading



The main goal of the badge system is to avoid lock-out for adventure tourism companies. Therefore, the badge system categorizes operators as loading when they do not implement sustainability initiatives yet and lack information about sustainability on their websites.

The symbol portrays a loading sign to signify the ‘in progress’ process of adventure tourism companies taking part in the drive for sustainable consumer information.

b. Best Nature-Based Tourism Practices



The Best Nature-based tourism practices badge is based on two categories: a) The tourist experience contains nature-based tourism activities; b) The tourist experience contains education and interpretation of local culture and the environment.

The emblem has a mountain in the background to symbolize nature-based tourism. At the same time, the human figures indicate the significance of tour guides in educating visitors about environmental concerns and local culture.

Indicator/s

a.1. Nature-based tourism (NBT)

Guided nature-based tourism or ecotourism is mainly a non-consumptive form of tourism with hiking, skiing, and touring, that are operated by small firms holding strong values of nature and implementing voluntary sustainable initiatives with local knowledge (Blanco, 2011; Fossgard & Stensland, 2021; Margaryan et al., 2020). Due to low-profit levels and high levels of interest needed, lifestyle is the main reason behind guided NBT (Fossgard & Stensland, 2021; Lundberg & Fredman, 2012). The companies guiding tourists had an awareness of their reliance on nature, knowledge from the proximity to nature and community, and a desire to show their appreciation and value of nature (see finding in chapter 5.2 a). These sustainability elements are not easily communicated to tourists from booking platforms or the operating firms (Esparon et al., 2014; Margaryan & Stensland, 2017). Considering there are many forms of adventure tourism that sustainability practices can be applied (Rantala et al., 2018), NBT can be a form that can be more sustainable. Guided NBT or ecotourism are forms of adventure tourism that can be identified and communicated for consumers to make better environmentally

friendly choices for travel. Eco-lighthouse's criteria for guided experiences are catered to nature-based tourism activities to recognize environmental sustainability (Miljøfyrtårn Criteria, 2019). Indicator 1.1 (see appendix E) is an example of how nature-based tourism can transform data and transmit it to tourists as an indicator of sustainable practices.

b.1. Sustainability and education interpretation features

Sustainability and education interpretation features stand as a voluntary initiative to spread awareness. Values and awareness of nature are passed on to tourists to appreciate and learn about human impacts. From finding 5.2 b, environmental education and interpretation features within the NBT firms help the public understand the importance of culture and the environment with awareness. These findings fit the same meaning as ecotourism principles found in the literature (Wood, 2002).

Sustainability and education interpretation features are valuable tools found as a voluntary sustainable initiative that spreads awareness and values of nature that can be used as an indicator of best practices. Consumers can choose experiences that include these features in sustainable consumer information broadcasted, such as in our proposal (see appendix E). Eco-lighthouse requires, with indicator 1445, that experiences define criteria of knowledge for employees and experience leaders with training, but there are no specifics for sustainability and education interpretation features involved (Miljøfyrtårn Criteria, 2019). The gap in sustainable consumer information could be narrowed with Indicators can be developed that include more specific information about sustainability and education interpretation features to communicate sustainable consumer information better (appendix E, indicator 1.2).



c. Best Low Impact Practices

The best low-impact practices badge is based on five categories: a) the tour experience only uses public transportation or private electric transport for guests; b) the tour consists of group tours with ten or fewer participants; c) the tour consists of zero motorized activities; d) the tour operator strategically targets demographics with low emissions and high economic yield; e) the tour operator buys used equipment and recycled materials to lower emissions and waste.

The emblem represents the color of SDG 9, focusing on Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure. The five categories are imprinted around the circle representing innovation and

regenerative initiatives of adventure tourism companies.

Indicator/s:

a.1. Promotes the use of public transportation or electric options

Using public or electric transportation is a way to lower tourism emissions (Le-Klähn & Hall, 2015). From our finding 5.2 c and research on nature-based tourism (Margaryan & Stensland, 2017), small-scale adventure tourism companies promote, incentivize, and develop a business around public transport and electric options to lower emissions. These sustainable efforts are not found to be communicated to consumers.

Sustainable consumer information is lacking with differentiation between sustainable practices of adventure firms that use only public or electric transportation. Eco-lighthouse has several indicators to measure transportation, and firms encourage tourists to take public or electric transportation. Still, there is no indication that firms only use these options for more sustainable practices (Miljøfyrtårn, Criteria, 2019). Indicator 1.3 (see appendix E) shows how these sustainable practices can be used to show what companies only use public transit or private electric transport for guests and employees.

b.1. Regenerative in design

Adventure tourism companies have voluntarily chosen to re-use, reduce, and recycle in regenerative practices that lower pollution by limiting more goods produced, transportation emissions, and economic leakage to international firms. Finding 5.2 d shows how lifestyle Entrepreneurs use voluntary sustainable initiatives to buy old equipment to have less pollution. This shows the degrowth and purpose outside profit by the value of nature in adventure firms in Norway. Eco-lighthouse measures recycling, but it does not measure the amount of material that is bought that is used to reduce and reuse in the tourism industry (Miljøfyrtårn, Criteria, 2019). Sustainable tourism and the UNWTO (2017) and the Norwegian National Tourism Strategy 2030 (2021) call for lowering emissions and making tourism more sustainable. However, there is a focus on growth that lacks radical changes sufficient to deviate from neoliberal norms (Bianchi & de Man, 2021). Sustainable lifestyle entrepreneurs hold degrowth principles that go against typical growth and profit focus (Margaryan et al., 2020), and this is seen in finding 5.2 d with buying used equipment to operate businesses. The SCI Badge System (see appendix E) uses indicator 2.6 to show asks if firms buy used equipment for business operations.

c.1. Small tour sizes

Over-tourism continues to be an issue as the tourism industry grows and causes degradation of the local community and environment (Hall et al., 2021). Tour sizes are essential for personal connection and impact on local communities in findings (see finding 5.2 e). Little research was found on the impact of tour sizes. Eco-lighthouse does not include indicators on tour sizes in their certification (Miljøfyrtårn, Criteria, 2019). More research is needed to have a deeper understanding of tour sizes and the optimal amount for a tour size to include cultural connection and low local impacts. The type of tour and the local context makes the number of optimal tourists challenging to assess.

d.1. Embraces slow tourism

Norway's National Tourism Strategy 2030 (2021) calls for targeting demographics with low environmental impact and high economic yield with aspects of slow tourism from more extended stays. Adventure tourism companies also support these practices voluntarily (see finding 5.2 g). These practices are found in ATCs by removing marketing from China to lower emissions and aim for more extended stays. Eco-lighthouse does not have indicators about targeted marketing for demographics with lower emissions and does not evaluate if there is a strategy for more extended stays (Miljøfyrtårn Criteria, 2019). The SCI Badge System (see appendix E) uses indicators 2.4 and 2.5 to include more information on more extended stays and firms targeting travelers with lower CO2 emissions.

e.1. Zero emissions activity

Norway's National Tourism Strategy (2021), enacted with the SDGs, calls for action for tourism to be part of the green shift for renewable electricity use. From our finding 5.2 f, adventure tourism is becoming part of the green shift with companies transitioning to electric options instead of the typical use of emission-based transport and activities.

Much of nature-based tourism is in the far reaches, and transportation can be challenging to obtain for electric options or costly. However, the total time of the experience being allowed to use emissions for transportation is a starting point to be inclusive on remote destinations with less development. Because of the current transitional phase for zero direct emissions with electric options, we propose that exemptions can be made. This is also consistent with eco-light house criteria that indicate exceptions should be made when electric-based solutions are not yet

possible (Miljøfyrtårn, Criteria, 2019). Local context should be considered when exemptions are made. More research is needed to determine how exemptions should be made.

d. Best Community Value Creation Practices



The best community value creation practices badge is based on four categories: a) the company includes and promotes local culture, local products, and local supply chains to foster livable income and job creation in the host community; b) the company provides tourism and value creation in depopulating regions of Norway.

There are two main factors for tourism to be more equitable identified by adventure tourism companies: balancing destinations and collaboration and avoiding economic leakage. These two factors are within community value creation in findings chapter.

Indicator/s:

a.1. Balancing Destinations and Collaboration

Sustainable tourism's definition by the UNWTO (2015; 2017) calls for sustainable development, includes the use of the SDGs, and corresponds with policy trends being developed in Norway (National Tourism Strategy 2030, 2021). SDG 8 and target 8.9 calls for promoting local culture and products through tourism for inclusive economic growth (UNWTO, 2017). Tourism is used as an economic growth means (UNWTO, 2017) that is being implanted in Norway for sustainable value creation (National Tourism Strategy 2030, 2021), yet tourism growth is debated to be problematic as over-tourism and under-tourism increase disparities while harming social-ecological dimensions (Goebel et al., 2019; Tribe et al., 2015).

A two-fold solution can be implemented to help avoid unbalanced development by implementing strategies for degrowth in places with too many visitors and strategies for sustainable value creation in areas lacking development (Blanco-Romero & Blázquez-Salom, 2021). Norway lacks development in depopulating regions, and solutions with immigration are not likely for communities that need growth the most (Slettebak, 2022). However, sustainable lifestyle entrepreneurs hold potential for value creation that regenerates communities while lowering externalities in a community-based approach (Aquino et al., 2018; Ateljevic, 2020; Cunha et al., 2020). Factors from CBT can be used to reinforce sustainable development with participatory planning, collaboration, and partnerships, local management/empowerment of community members (Dodds et al., 2018).

Eco-lighthouse does not measure or consider local participation in value chains or tourism in depopulating areas that need value creation (Miljøfyrtårn Criteria, 2019). However, Adventure tourism companies seek to build partnerships and the community to balance tourism and bring more equitable tourism (see finding 5.2 h). The SCI Badge System (See appendix E) uses indicators 3.1 and 3.2 to indicate firms that provide needed growth from tourism in depopulating regions.

b.1. Avoidance of economic leakage

Adventure tourism initiate strategies to keep value in the local area and want to use local solutions that provide value that does not have economic leakage (see finding 5.2 h). Eco-lighthouse does not measure if ATCs use local value chains or policies (Miljøfyrtårn Criteria, 2019). The SCI Badge System (see appendix E) uses indicator 3.2 to identify which ATCs support local culture and value chains.



e. Best Work Practices

The best work practices badge is categorized with two indicators: a) the company allows 75% of its employees to work year-round; b) the company uses innovation to avoid seasonal lows and provides or plans to provide locals with full-time employment options.

Indicator/s:

a.1. Develops innovative solutions for employment practices

Regarding social sustainability, ATCs can enhance participative decision-making by understanding the importance of empowering local communities' agencies (Miriyala & Gade, 2016). Helgadóttir and colleagues' (2019) research on Iceland uncovers how sustainability strategies often neglect local agencies in the procedural dimension of sustainability in tourism despite being directly affected by the industry. Just like in the case of activists and locals in renowned tourist locations such as Venice and Barcelona, where they protest to call for an end to tourist activities because of their adverse effect on locals' quality of life (Millar, 2017). Thus, partnerships between corporations and local communities remain vital in business operations (Helgadóttir et al., 2019; Sica et al., 2020). Locals can thrive and become resilient from over-tourism if better governance structures exist. As Helgadóttir et al. (2019, p. 417) relay, "(locals) plea not for fewer visitors, but for a better tourism infrastructure capable of delivering the

hospitality they wish to provide." With that, locals anticipate and propose public authorities and businesses to improve tourism's strategic planning and organization (Al-Khateeb, 2021).

Sustainable work practices and government tax considerations benefit locals and immigrants in an integrated approach that goes beyond the considerations of short-term profit with practices to keep people employed all year. Respondent 13 states:

So, what is special for Tromsø is that we have an excellent winter season, and then summer season Lofoten is taking most of it. And we are trying to get people further north to keep them happy all year around. we keep them [employees] happily working and paying taxes to Norway and making sure that this is sustainable, that this is sustainable for the future (...) I think that is good for the product as well. And for the competence of people working with us. A seasonal worker only stays here for five or six months, and they do not know about the area. It costs money to train them, and then they are often here only a couple of months anyway. We want to keep [workers year-round] and educate them and put money into them to stay... and give them Norwegian classes so they can communicate and get a social life.

f. Best Sustainable Consumer Information (SCI) Practices



The best sustainable consumer information (SCI) practices badge pertains to two categories: a) the company has an informative website regarding sustainability (e.g., mission and vision, information campaigns, sustainability webpage, and blogs); b) the company has an eco-certification and has the label displayed on their website.

The emblem illustrates how well a company communicates sustainability and its eco-certification on its website.

Respondent 13 explains that their hours and services must have sustainable pay for workers and that their partners fulfill enough hours to make sustainable employment for a full-time job all year. Respondent 13 states:

If you are going to use our services, you need to fill out the rest of the day hours so we can deliver the correct payment for the driver and have sustainability in the business (...) It is also this thought about people hired a whole year and not some of a season.

For indicators, see Figure 2.

7. Research limitations and trustworthiness

Several factors are essential when using grounded theory and having trustworthy research, including reliability and validity. The reliability of the research refers to how consistent it is across different sources, researchers, and contexts (Johnson & Walsh, 2019). Validity is the accuracy of what the research claims (Bryman, 2012). Trustworthiness of research in qualitative research is assessed through four criteria that use different terminology than validity and reliability: credibility (same as internal validity), transferability (same as external validity), dependability (same as reliability), and confirmability (same as objectivity) (Bryman, 2012). These four criteria are used to assess the research project.

Limitation of the study

The researchers know that a sample size of 16 interviewees is insufficient to provide a reliable representation of how adventure tour companies view the effectiveness of eco-certification nor generalize that all adventure tourism companies in Norway are implementing sustainability efforts. Using the quantitative research method would have helped reach a higher sample size but would lack the quality and depth that qualitative methods allowed. It could be argued that quantitative would help the researcher gather data faster (Trišić *et al.*, 2021), but depth was desired for this explorative research. The research provided insights that quantitative could not.

Other than this, the researchers recognize that there could have been two kinds of biases. One was a qualitative internal research bias when they divided the dataset into two groups for data analysis. Two, the sample selection approach—snowballing and convenience sampling—resulted in respondents that cannot represent the larger population of the adventure tourism companies in Norway. The researchers know that a quantitative methodology could have helped address this limitation. However, the researchers resolved this potential conflict by turning the researchers' different data insights into a triangulation.

Finally, qualitative research tends to have subjective interview questions, making it another study limitation. Although the researchers formatted it with open-ended questions, it is difficult to determine whether the researcher's questions were high quality and gathered the information to meet the aim of the study.

Credibility

When using grounded theory, it is essential to ensure that the data is credible to be used to develop a valid theory. Credibility, also known as internal validity, assesses the acceptability, methodology, and good research practices as social phenomena can be interpreted differently (Bryman, 2012). The study's credibility was planned through appropriate methodology, experience in sustainable tourism, and supervisors' advice. The nature of grounded theory leaves options for changes as an exploratory case study for more extensive research (Lune & Berg, 2017). Exploratory studies start with an idea and unfold through the research process, but this does not make for an excuse for inadequate planning, an organizational framework is essential for the validity and reliability of the study (Lune & Berg, 2017). Using two researchers and two primary supervisors allowed for the data and interpretations to be evaluated for acceptance of methods used and quality of work. This allowed for triangulation of interpretations of the overall data research. Thematic analysis was more credible than an independent analysis. More triangulations could have been planned with respondent validation, a practice that provides the finding to the respondent to ensure proper understanding (Bryman, 2012), but this was not used in the research. Validation of the findings was sought when there was little clarity of meaning from respondents in interviews.

The approach to presenting the SCI Badge System to shed light on solutions to SCI is a unique approach unfamiliar with what is found in the literature. The grounded theory works well for preliminary theory building and is a credible method, but more research is needed after an exploratory study for the SCI Badge System proposal. The issue lowering credibility is the lack of methodological examples found to lead direction of research, and there is low credibility behind the proposal's implementation. The SCI Badge System is not designed for immediate implementation for ATCs and therefore this preliminary theory does not overstate its ability to shed light on possible solutions for sustainable tourism.

Transferability

Transferability considerations are to understand the context in which the research can be applicable (Bryman, 2012). Explorative studies with grounded theory can be used as a pilot study for discovering theory that then can be used for a more extensive future investigation (Lune & Berg, 2017). The study reveals data and theory as a pilot study that can be used for potential policy building, further research, and knowledge for adventure tourism companies to use to further their sustainability efforts. The study lacks generalizability to the larger

population, as probability sampling is not used, as designed. The study seeks to understand the depth and richness of data rather than breadth due to its qualitative design (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research is encouraged to use thick description, as done in the study, which provides rich data for others to interpret or use as secondary data in research (Bryman, 2012). The research has transferability for further research.

Dependability

Dependability, also known as reliability, ensures the trustworthiness of data and can be used with peers and self-auditing that uses complete records of all phases of research (Bryman, 2012). A detailed research log with meeting notes was used to establish choices made through research and organ organizational completeness. The research was audited by both student researchers and three supervisors, adding more dependability. Time restraints and capacity for guidance limited the depth of the audit by supervisors, and more dependability would be added with a complete review of all records. The research process is well explained throughout the study for transparency of dependability. All details of choices made are kept in the log and not provided in the research. More information regarding choices could benefit the study's dependability for auditing, but limitations and prioritized information prevent more of it.

Independent logs and a joined research log were used. The joined research log was used for more straightforward navigation and control of independent ideas. It helped the researcher to verify the direction and consistency of each other's work in unison with the shared log. The number of platforms used for organization and data storage allowed for safely kept and reliable records, but the management of the vastness of data became somewhat less reliable when documents took longer to find. The dependability of data was increased by the inability to reach the previously sought sample size of 41. The amount of data took ample time to transcribe, with more data than it would spread resources thin and account for possible errors. Creating transcriptions were split in half by researchers and then audited by each other to ensure quality. The transcriptions were compared to field notes and transcription during the data collection. This allowed for high levels of triangulation that increased reliability. The data collection was dependable, with a backup recording set up by a secondary device and then uploaded to Microsoft teams. This acted as a backup in case there were failures. Internet consistency could have lowered dependability, but a few issues happened.

The over-saturation of data in sustainable tourism with many different conceptualizations causes some dependability issues with the researcher's lack of familiarity with it. More time could be put into further literature review to increase the dependability. Also, some language barriers were present with the researchers not being fluent in Norwegian.

An area of the study that could be improved is data collection, as the analysis and direction of the thesis changed during the collection period. The research evolved; some questions or verifications would have been helpful for dependable results, with questions missing from some respondents filled with a follow-up interview. The research guide worked well for framing the semi-structured interviews for dependable results. However, both researchers recognize that notes and more delineation at earlier stages would have improved more evenly developed data collection that resulted in more targeted and relevant data. However, it was the first time the researcher conducted a grounded theory methodology. Furthermore, the broad data collection allowed for rich data and the ability to get an overview for theory building.

The findings chapter could have more dependability by sharing more specifics of how each question was asked before presenting the thick description.

Confirmability

Confirmability, concerned with the remaining objective of the research, is used to identify bias, values, and influences to avoid impacting the research as much as possible (Bryman, 2012). The primary bias recognized by students is their employment at a travel agency which could impact the desire to have the company and ATCs look more sustainable. Recognition of this bias helped avoid impacts on the study and gave readers transparent information to make their interpretations.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, the thesis presents three significant findings. First, regardless of eco-certification status, adventure tour companies in Norway engage in sustainability activities. The study determined, through interviews, how the owners of these adventure tour companies remain passionate about their work and how they may contribute to sustainable tourism. Consequently, most adventure tourism companies believe that eco certifications have little or

no impact on the quality of service a company provides or its sustainability values. As most interviewees claimed that certifications bring value and structure to a firm, most believe their organization has exceeded the requirements of an eco-certification. Overall, there is rising ambiguity over the relevance of a company's sustainability activities to the certification.

Second, with an increased number of companies able to attain eco-certifications, it becomes difficult to monitor the effectiveness of eco-certification on different adventure tourism companies. Consequently, the saturation of eco-certified companies results in a lack of trust in the credibility of eco-certification's effectiveness in governing sustainable tour operations.

Third, with an existing eco-certification skepticism amongst adventure tour companies, the thesis identified how sustainable consumer information is missing on most websites to bring more awareness to consumers. Therefore, the thesis suggested an alternative system—the SCI Badge System. A badge system will allow tour companies to communicate their sustainability efforts to consumers efficiently. In this, adventure tourism companies can progress in helping consumers understand better that their sustainability effort does not only pertain to the environment but also contributes to social and economic dimensions of sustainability.

Implications for business development and management

The study contributes to policymaking strategies by proposing the Sustainable Consumer Information (SCI) Badge System. The main aim of the SCI Badge System is to find a way to communicate the three dimensions of sustainability and the ten sustainability initiatives (see appendix F) to the consumers, the ATCs, and other stakeholders in the tourism industry. To reiterate, the badge system is not to replace certification schemes but to supplement the scheme by guiding ATCs on better communicating their sustainability initiatives to the public. In this way, the system allows ATCs and non-ATCs to have a better tool on how to advocate what kind of sustainable initiative they are currently doing. At the same time, it will show them the parts in which they can improve more in their operations, cooperate with others, or contribute to environmental management.

Moreover, this study encourages the importance of community-based tourism in going forward with sustainable tourism. Using a bottom-up approach and community-based tourism for policy making in integration with the SDGs or top-down international policy allows for inclusive policy building that is situated in the local context. In the case of Norwegian adventure tourism companies, the role of local stakeholders and the role of value creation by networking

and collaboration tends to be weak. Moreover, despite the centrality of the community, other stakeholders such as policymakers and non-governmental organizations remain vital. Therefore, the study promotes investigating how community-based tourism might be a solution for the many ills of industry-driven tourism. Moreover, this study encourages the importance of community-based tourism in going forward with sustainable tourism and using a bottom-up approach for policy. The study promotes investigating how community-based tourism might be a solution for the many ills of industry-driven tourism. In the case of Norwegian adventure tourism companies, the role of local stakeholders and the role of value creation by networking and collaboration tends to be weak (Millar, 2017; Ministry of Trade, 2017). In effect, the centrality of the community, other stakeholders such as policymakers and non-governmental organizations remain vital.

As OECD (2020) echoes, communities may act as integral to sustainable tourism with destinations (OECD, 2020). In contrast, failing to engage them proactively might transform the opportunity into a risk (e.g., Millar, 2017). Furthermore, since tourism contributes significantly to the socio-economic well-being of the people via employment (Yigün, 2015), it is crucial to forming a relationship between the community and the authorities responsible for guaranteeing sustainable growth (Bello et al., 2016).

Inspiring the entrepreneurial mindset is crucial in sustainable tourism (Bărbulescu et al., 2021). The cooperation of the private sector with innovative adventure tourism companies and sustainable entrepreneurs may establish innovation clusters that promote sustainability and innovation via research. These innovation clusters have already begun, as shown by (Raworth, 2017) Doughnut Economics Thinking in the Policymaking of Amsterdam.

Tourism capital flow financing (Snyman & Spenceley, 2019). The private sector might invest in new tourist activities and marketing strategies to increase money flows within the tourism ecosystem.

Future scope of the research

The qualitative nature of this study laid out the theoretical foundations for further action research or quantitative research in seeing how ATCs can adopt the badge system on their websites. Moreover, further research can explore how the badge system can impact the awareness of both adventure tourism companies and consumers. As this study developed the theoretical foundations on how the system can be, the researchers highly encouraged future

research to improve it and see how different tour companies can mobilize the badge system as their sustainability communication tool.

Therefore, future research can analyze how adventure tour companies can utilize sustainability standards to plan tourism activities. Moreover, advertising these standards will inspire destinations to reach them and attract new consumers (Wehrli et al., 2017). Therefore, it will help the researchers understand how suppliers can work with local authorities, for instance, in waste management schemes (Bello et al., 2016).

Policy Recommendations

This thesis recommends the importance of building a sustainability policy that recognizes the role of adventure tourism companies in sustainable tourism. Most ATCs in Norway are built from a *friluftsliv* lifestyle—making the company's principle do more than just what an eco-certification entails. Therefore, to have effective policies, policies must foster a market environment that allows ATCs to foster better. For example, start by addressing the causes of eco-certification skepticism amongst ATCs. At the same time, promote what is being voluntarily done by these companies to contribute to a better tourism action. This thesis acknowledges how eco-certification schemes' can result in a market failure (Vatn, 2015). Subsequently, alternative systems should be recognized and implemented, such as the SCI badge system. The SCI badge system can be applied as a guideline better to communicate ATC's sustainable initiatives to the public. At the same time, the badge system can be a way to support, encourage and emphasize local community participation to enhance knowledge, awareness, and commitment between ATCs and different tourism stakeholders. All in all, policymakers should be able to promote and endorse the role of ATCs in driving sustainable tourism. The emphasis must be on facilitating support at both global and local levels.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide

Adventure tour companies' interpretation of eco-labels importance in representing their sustainability efforts

- a. What do you think are the roles of tour companies in making tourism more sustainable?
- b. How can tourism companies become more transparent regarding their sustainability efforts?
- c. Do you think being eco-certified holistically represents how sustainable a company is?
- d. In general, what does sustainable tourism mean to you?
 - i. For us, it means
 - ii. If so, what are the main advantages and disadvantages of eco-certifications for tour companies? For example, in terms of profits?

Motivations and Demotivation in getting eco-certified

1. How do you perceive eco-certifications' effectiveness in improving your profits and sustainability efforts?
2. What are the main barriers for your company in getting eco-certified?

Sustainable Consumer Information

1. Does your company have a policy on sustainability? What do you think is the importance of having a sustainability policy?
2. Sustainability has three dimensions: social, ecological, and economical. Each has its role and importance in making our societies and environment more equitable. How do you think your company would integrate sustainability in your tours offered? If eco-certified and has a sustainability policy, how do you think your company ensures and maintain the integration of sustainability in your tours offered?
3. How does your company communicate its sustainable efforts and policy to customers?

The role of information from categorizing tour suppliers according to their sustainable best tourism practices and sustainable consumer information

1. How do you think an informative tool for indicating the level of your sustainability efforts will help you align your operations toward more sustainable tourism?
2. Do you have any alternatives for eco-certifications to indicate that your company is sustainable?

Appendix B. Information Letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

The Role of Adventure tourism companies in Fostering Sustainable Tourism: An exploratory study of sustainability efforts of adventure tourism companies in Norway

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project whose primary purpose is to understand sustainable pursuits and motivations of eco-certification of tourism operators. In this letter, we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

The current tourism trend is expanding at a tremendous rate that does not seem to be slowing down anytime soon. Although the pandemic put a halt to leisure travels, it will still be inevitable to travel once all tourist destination countries allow leisure travel again. With that in mind, the question is whether tourism can become truly sustainable. Therefore, this master thesis project aims to explore three things: to explore the different understandings of Norwegian adventure tourism companies regarding the importance of integrating sustainability in their tour operations; to uncover the different motivations and barriers of adventure tourism companies in getting eco-certified, and to find out alternative solutions from the inadequacy of the effectiveness of eco-certifications. The thesis' scope is on Norwegian adventure tour companies operating within Norway.

Main Research Question: What are tourism suppliers' interconnected attitudes, motivations, and barriers to getting eco-certified in Norway?

Sub Research Questions:

SUBRQ1: In general, how do tour suppliers in Norway interpret the importance of eco-labels in representing tour suppliers' sustainable efforts?

SUBRQ1.1. What motivates tour suppliers to get their companies eco-certified?

SUBRQ1.2. What demotivates tour suppliers to get their companies eco-certified?

SUBRQ2: What are tour suppliers' motivations for participating in sustainable tourism?

SUBRQ2.1. What external/intrinsic factors motivate suppliers to offer more sustainable tours?

SUBRQ2.2. What external/intrinsic factors demotivate suppliers in offering more sustainable tours?

SUBRQ3: How can information from categorizing tour suppliers according to their sustainable best tourism practices and sustainable consumer information motivate tour suppliers to become eco-certified?

Note: Research questions and purpose are subject to change as the study develops

Other uses of Data

The data gathered may be used by a third-party booking agency to find innovative ways of using sustainable consumer information. Innovation with this data is to find solutions for broadcasting sustainable efforts that are supplemental to tourists and helpful for tourism operators.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The research project is being ran by two master students, Casey Engle and Jhoanna Mae Guevara at Norges Miljø- og Biovitenskapelige Universitet (NMBU).

The master's students responsible are also employed by Booknordics AS (a Norwegian booking agency). The company will provide information for networking and may use data collected for innovative purposes described above if consent is given. The study is independent of Booknordics AS, and communication during research does not reflect Booknordics AS conduct or operations.

Why are you being asked to participate?

We would like the opportunity to interview you or other employees at your tourism-operated company to understand your views on policy, eco-certification, and sustainability within your company and in Norway. We have been granted permission to contact you by our trusted informants from the municipality and a booking agency.

Your participation in our research may help shape the future of sustainability and eco-certification in Norway. Your opinion matters, and it is crucial in the research that will shed light and inform future policy and research on eco-certification in Norway.

What does participation involve for you?

We would like to have an interview through a video meeting online for 30 minutes to an hour, depending on your availability. We ask to record the meetings, but your data will be anonymized, and recordings will be deleted after the project's completion in June 2022. Some participants may be asked to do a group interview if willing.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. You will have no negative consequences if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your privacy – how we will store and use your data

We will only use your data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your data confidentially following data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- • two students and supervisors will have access to your data
- • Any data shared with a booking agency will be completely anonymous
- • Data management practices will secure data and be stored with multi-authentication and encryption before being deleted when the project is completed.
- • Names will be replaced, and codes to identify will be held separately from the personal data and recordings.
- • Findings and processing of data will not be recognizable as an identifier for a publication

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your data be deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you be corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your data

What gives us the right to process your data?

We will process your data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with NMBU, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that personal data processing in this project follows data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- NMBU via:
 - o Lars Olaf Eik. Email: lars.eik@nmbu.no
 - o Jhoanna Mae Guevara. Email: jhoanna.mae.guevara@nmbu.no
 - o, Casey Engle. Email: casey.engle@nmbu.no
- Our Data Protection Officer: Jan Olav Aarflot. Email: jan.olav.aarflot@nmbu.no
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Jhoanna Mae Guevara, Casey Engle, and Lars Olaf Eik

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project, *The Role of Adventure tourism companies in Fostering Sustainable Tourism: An exploratory study of sustainability efforts of adventure tourism companies in Norway*, and have been allowed to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an interview that is video and voice recorded
- to participate in a group interview if needed
- for my data to be processed outside the EU – if applicable
- for information about me/myself and the company employed with to be published in a way that I can be recognized
- to allow data to be used for Booknordics AS (Norwegian booking agency) to develop innovative solutions in sustainable consumer information

I consent for my personal data to be processed until the project's end date, approx. June 2022.

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix C. Figures and Tables

Examples of Initial Thematic Analysis using Miro

Under process of being part of a bigger project	COVID-19	Business owner/Project leader	Film actor/author/documentarist	Part-time business owner	CEO of the geopark	Akksjelselskap	Became employed again after 45 years of entrepreneurship
Need to hire someone to do the certification.	It took two years to complete certification because working half-time.	Role of Innovation Norway and Visit Norway in eco-certification	Eco-certification's Challenges	Eco-certification's Weakness	Role of tour companies	Belief	Tour Operators' Demotivation
Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Sustainable Consumer Information Barrier	Tour Operators' Demotivation	Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Tour Operators' Demotivation	Eco-certification's Process
Belief	Eco-certification's strength	Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Eco-certification's strength	Market Demand	The importance of sustainable consumer information	Natural characteristic of Norwegian companies	Motivational Factors of Getting Eco-certified
Under process of being part of a bigger project	COVID-19	Business owner/Project leader	Film actor/author/documentarist	Part-time business owner	CEO of the geopark	Akksjelselskap	Became employed again after 45 years of entrepreneurship
Need to hire someone to do the certification.	It took two years to complete certification because working half-time.	Role of Innovation Norway and Visit Norway in eco-certification	Eco-certification's Challenges	Eco-certification's Weakness	Role of tour companies	Belief	Tour Operators' Demotivation
Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Sustainable Consumer Information Barrier	Tour Operators' Demotivation	Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Tour Operators' Demotivation	Eco-certification's Process
Belief	Eco-certification's strength	Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Eco-certification's strength	Market Demand	The importance of sustainable consumer information	Natural characteristic of Norwegian companies	Motivational Factors of Getting Eco-certified

Example 1. Informant Key Number 01 (IKN-01) Response

Themes	Technical Difficulties During the Meeting (Observation)	Opinion on Eco-certification's Purpose	Response to consumer's preference	Lack of consumers' awareness	Importance of communication more than eco-certification	COVID-19
Eco-lighthouse strength	Desire to get eco-certified even without subsidiary	Employment Opportunity during COVID-19	Eco-certification's Effectiveness	Opinion	Opinion on Eco-certification's Challenges	Duration of having the eco-certification
Opinion on Eco-certification's Challenges	Natural characteristic of Norwegian companies	Friluftliv Belief System	Culture of Norwegian businesses	Eco-Lighthouse ineffectiveness	Natural characteristic of Norwegian companies	Eco-lighthouse Effectiveness
Opinion on Eco-certification's Challenges	Natural sustainability characteristic of the company	Natural characteristic of Norwegian companies	Company's sustainability effort	Sustainable Consumer Information	Natural sustainability characteristic of the company	Practiced friluftliv for three years

Example 2. Informant Key Number 03 (IKN-03) Categorization of Response

Background with Nature	Personal Identity	Altruistic	Eco-certification
Eco-certification motivations	Sustainable efforts	sustainability and challenges in adventure tourism	Effectiveness of eco-certification
Education and interpretation features for sustainability	Carbon offsetting	Belief behind sustainable tourism and practices	Government acting as driver for Sustainability
Effectiveness of eco-certification	sustainability and challenges in adventure tourism	Eco-lighthouse	

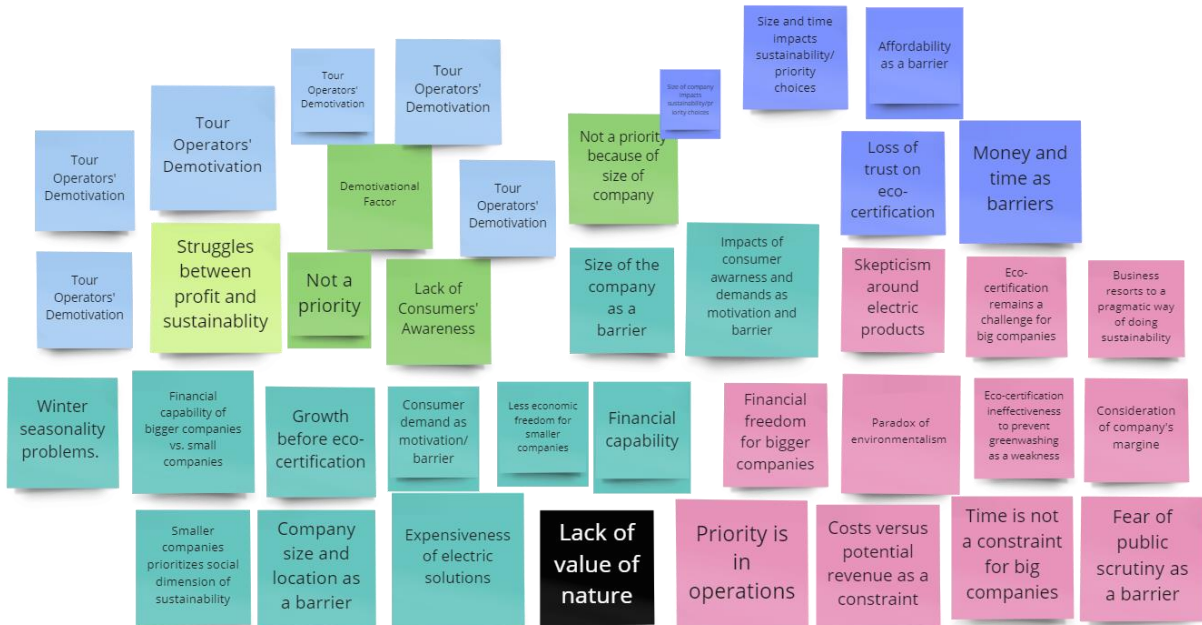
Example 3. Informant Key Number 11 (IKN-11) Categorization of Response

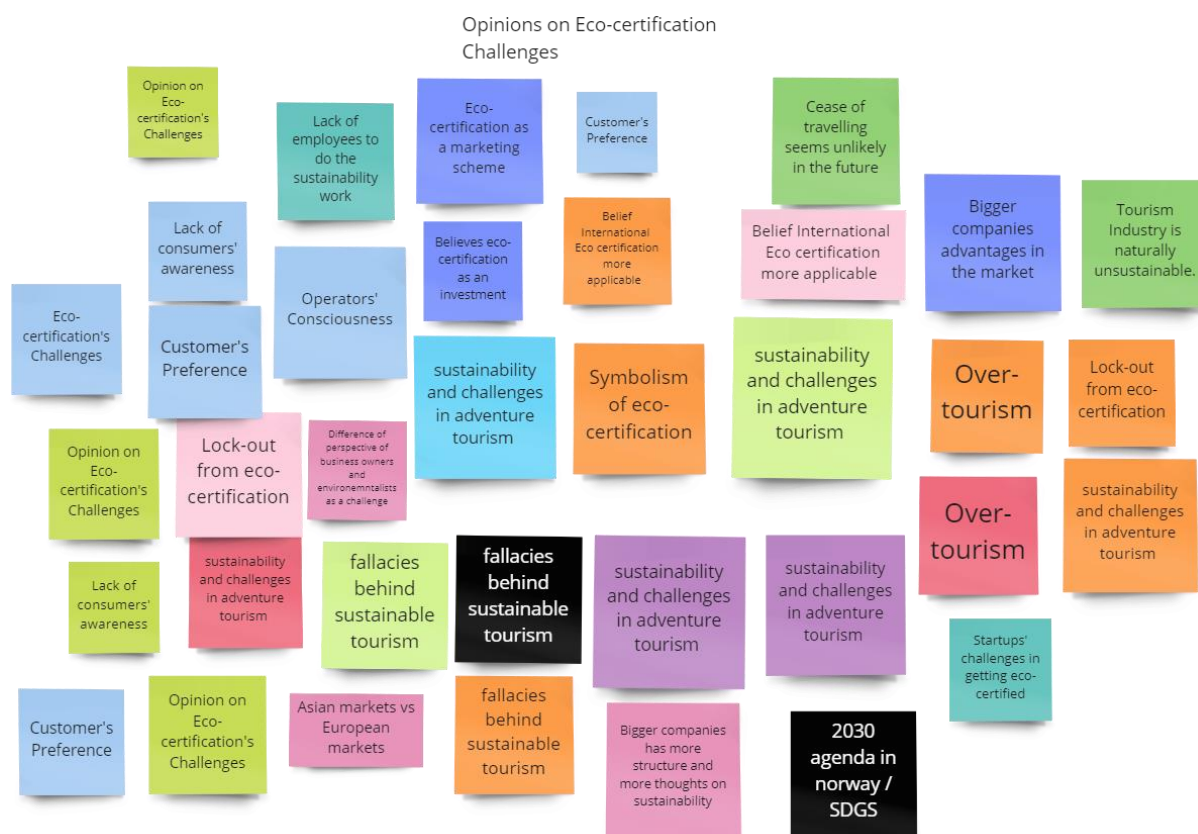
Appendix D. Example of Initial Thematic Analysis using Miro

Sustainable Consumer Information



De-motivational Factors





Appendix E. Example of Implementation and Criteria fulfillment questionnaire

	Sustainable Consumer Information and Practices Framework for Adventure Tourism Companies	
Product Name	Example Hiking Tour in Oslo	
Indicators		Answers
1	Best NBT and Ecotourism practices	
	Sustainable Activity Indicators	
	<i>Does the tourist experience contain:</i>	
1.1	- ecotourism or nature-based tourism?	No

	<i>Note: Ecotourism and nature-based tourism are motivated by observing and appreciating the natural environment and local culture. Examples include hiking, identifying wildlife, photography, stargazing, camping, birdwatching, sledding, skiing, fishing, and visiting parks.</i>	
1.2	- cultural and environmental education and interpretation features?	No
	<i>Note: Cultural and environmental interpretation is a communication technique focusing on unconventional education styles to explain environmental/ecological concepts to the general public.</i>	
2	Best low-impact practices	
2.1	- only uses public transportation or private electric transport for guests and employees?	No
2.2	group tours with limited participants based on local participation?	No
2.3	- zero motorized activity with the release of emissions? Transportation emissions below 30% of the total time of experience are exempted from inclusion if the company has plans to transition to electric	No
	<i>Note: Transportation emissions of 30% of activity or less are exempted to allow for more remote activities to transition to electric and to avoid lock-out of small remote companies. Future evaluations may not include the exemption.</i>	
2.4	- promotes more extended stays and packages that embrace slow travel	
2.5	- targets domestic travel with low CO2 and high economic yield	
2.6	- Buys used equipment and recycled materials to lower emissions and waste	No
3	Best Sustainable community value creation practices	
	Community value creation Indicators	
	Does the company provide the experience:	
3.1	- provide tourism and value creation in depopulating regions of Norway?	No

3.2	- include and promote local culture, local products, and local supply chains to foster livable income and job creation in the host community?	No
4	Best work practices	
4.1	- allow 75% of its employees to work year-round?	No
4.2	- use innovation to avoid seasonal lows and provides or plan to provide locals with full-time employment options?	No
5	Best SCI practices	
	Does the company provide the experience:	
5.1	- have an informative website regarding sustainability? (E.g., mission and vision, information campaigns, sustainability webpage, and/or blogs)	No
5.2	- have an eco-certification and have an eco-label displayed on their website?	No

Appendix F. Sustainable Consumer Information and Practices Framework for Adventure Tourism Companies

Sustainability practices of adventure tourism companies

1. Value of nature
2. Sustainability and education interpretation features
3. Promotes the use of public transportation
4. Regenerative in design
5. Small tour sizes
6. Offers tours that have zero direct emissions
7. More equitable community value creation
8. Avoidance of economic leakage
9. Embraces slow tourism
10. Develops innovative solutions for employment practices

Appendix G. Mapping of ATCs in partnership with Booknordics AS

Country	Eco-label certification (Yes / N/A)
Norway	Yes
Finland	No
Norway	No
Iceland	No
Norway, Lofoten	Yes
Sweden	No
Iceland	N/A but operates sustainably
Iceland	Temporarily Closed
Iceland	Yes
Sweden	No
Iceland	No
Norway	N/A
Norway	N/A but follows leaves no trace behind principle
Norway, Tromso	N/A
Sweden	N/A
Finland	N/A but mentions commitment to sustainable travel in website
Norway	N/A but uses eco-friendly vessels (electric yachts and cars)
Finland	N/A but business is based in slow travel
Norway, Tromso	No
Finland	N/A but mentions ecologically friendly equipment used in tours
Finland	Yes
Norway	Yes
Iceland	N/A but mentions utilizing latest technology with minimum environmental impact
Norway	No
Norway	N/A but mentions company's aim to operate responsibly to minimise impact on nature
Iceland	N/A but includes an environmental policy in their website
Iceland	No
Finland	No
Finland	Yes
Iceland	No
Finland	
Software	
Software	
To be asked	
Iceland	No but it was nominated by the Nordic Council Environment Prize in 3030
Norway	Yes
Norway	No
Iceland	No, but mentions how tours are nature and adventure focused, catered for nature lovers
Iceland	Yes
Sweden	o, but is nature-based tourism that offers a chance to meet animals in their true natural environmer

Iceland	No but it was nominated by the Nordic Council Environment Prize in 3030
Norway	Yes
Norway	No
Iceland	No, but mentions how tours are nature and adventure focused, catered for nature lovers
Iceland	Yes
Sweden	No, but is nature-based tourism that offers a chance to meet animals in their true natural environment
Sweden	No, but is nature-based tourism that offers a chance to learn about how fish live and how to fish for it.
Norway, Lofoten	No
Sweden	No, but mentions how changing our ideas of disgust may help us embrace the environmentally sustainable foods of the future?
Sweden	No
Finland	No, but implements sustainable tourism goals
Iceland	No, but mentions their mission is to strive to be social and environmentally responsible
Iceland	No, but promotes slow travel
Norway and Baltic	No
Iceland	No, but is nature-based tourism
Iceland	Yes
Iceland	Yes
Sweden	No
N/A	No, but the company operates as a carbon negative business/supports one tree planted
Iceland	No, but the company uses the icelandic pledge to encourage green travellers/uses leave no trace behind motto
Norway	No, but is culture-based tourism
Iceland	No
Norway	No
Norway	No, but is nature-based
Iceland	No
Norway	No
Norway	Yes
company doesn't have a website	
Iceland	No
Iceland	Yes
Iceland	No, but has sustainability policy
Iceland	No
Iceland	No
Norway	Yes
Iceland	No
Iceland	Yes
Norway	No
Greenland	N/A but has sustainable tourism indicated in their website
Norway	No
Norway	No

Norway	No
Sweden	No
Finland	No, but is nature based tourism
Iceland	No, but pledges the tourism declares, an initiative declaring climate emergency
Iceland	No
Norway	No
Iceland	
Finland	Yes
Norway	yes
Scotland	YES
Norway	no
Iceland	No
Finland	yes
Sweden	No, but uses eco products and has sustainability philosophy
Norway	No, but follows responsible tourism principles/Established the Varde Foundation
Norway	No, but provides sustainable activities
Iceland	N/A but has environmental policy
Norway	No
Iceland	No, but provides sustainable activities
Iceland	No
Iceland	Yes
Iceland	No
iceland	no
iceland	Yes
Iceland	No
sweden	ecommerce platform
Finland	No
Norway	no
Sweden	no
Finland	no
Norway	no
Finland	N/A
Finland	N/A
Iceland	N/A
Finland	N/A
Sweden	N/A
Finland	Yes
Sweden	N/A but eco based tourism
Sweden	N/A possible sustainable activity
Sweden	N/A
Iceland	N/A
Norway	N/A
Norway	Yes
Finland	N/A but eco-based tourism

Norway	N/A but culture-based/eco based tourism
Norway	N/A
Norway	N/A (has sustainability policy)
Norway	N/A
Iceland	Yes
Faroe Islands	Yes
Iceland	N/A but mentions consciousness of environmental impacts
Iceland	N/A
Norway	Yes
Iceland	N/A (no)
Norway	N/A
Norway	N/A but eco-based tourism
Norway	can't find website
Finland	N/A (has sustainability policy)
Norway	N/A
Iceland	N/A (no)
Iceland	N/A (has sustainable activity and policy)
Norway	Yes
Norway	N/A
Norway	N/A
Sweden	N/A
Denmark	N/A
Iceland	N/A (has sustainability policy)
Norway	N/A (has sustainable activity)
Norway	N/A Possible sustainable activity
Norway	CHECK N/A (sustainable activity)
Norway	N/A (sustainable activity)
Iceland	N/A
Finland	N/A
Iceland	N/A
Iceland	N/A
Iceland	N/A
Iceland	N/A
Norway	N/A
Norway	N/A
Iceland	N/A
Finland	Applying
Iceland	N/A
Norway	N/A
Finland	N/A
Iceland	N/A
Norway	N/A

Iceland		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Iceland		N/A
Iceland	N/A sustainable activity (search for animal ethical policy)	
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Iceland		N/A
Can't find website		Can't find website
Norway		N/A (look again)
Norway		Sustainable activity (look for animal ethical policy)
Sweden		N/A Sustainable activity
Sweden		N/A Sustainable activity
Sweden		N/A
Sweden		N/A
Iceland		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Finland		N/A (Has sustainability policy)
Iceland		N/A
Iceland		N/A (Has sustainability policy)
Iceland		N/A
Denmark		N/A possible sustainable activity
Denmark		N/A
Iceland		N/A possible sustainable activity
Sweden		N/A (Has sustainability policy)
Norway		yes
Can't find website		Can't find website
Iceland		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		N/A
Norway		Yes
Norway		N/A
Norway		Yes
Norway		Yes
Norway		N/A
Iceland		N/A
Sweden		N/A

Sweden	N/a (Has sustainability policy & awards)
Finland	N/A (Has sustainability policy)
Copenhagen	N/A
Sweden	N/A
Iceland	N/A (Has sustainability policy)
Iceland	N/A
Norway	N/A
Can't find website	Can't find website
Norway	N/A but contributes to whale research/team is involved in whale preservation
Finland	Yes
Norway	N/A
Norway	N/A
Finland	N/A
Sweden	N/A but has sustainability policy
Iceland	N/A
Iceland	Yes

Appendix H. Data collection of websites for the 16 ATCs interviewed

ATC Website data collection

Website Identification Number	Ecolabels Displayed	Mentions keywords related to sustainability on their About Us	Website contains a sustainability policy (Either one or all of the sustainability dimensions, i.e., social, environment, economic)
1	Eco-lighthouse, not displayed on website	Leave no trace behind' principle	Yes, contains environment and safety policy.
2	Not eco-certified	No keywords	No, they don't have any sustainability policy on their website
3	Yes, Ecolighthouse certified.	Minimal impact, closer to nature, recycled, energy sufficient	Yes, contains environment policy and supports UN Global Compact
4	No, not eco-certified		
5	No, not eco-certified	No keywords mentioned	No, they don't have any sustainability policy on their website
6	Yes, Ecolighthouse certified.	nature-based adventures, 'transport without a trace' principle	Yes, contains environment policy on their website.
7	Not eco-certified	culture, mountains, local everyday life	No, they don't have any sustainability policy on their website
8	Not eco-certified	sustainable, real Norwegian culture, live of the nature	No, but labels themselves as 'a conscious company with a big heart'
9	Not eco-certified		
10	ISO14001, Not displayed on website	No keywords mentioned	
11	Not eco-certified	No keywords mentioned	
12	Not eco-certified	Mentions sustainable and nature based activity	No sustainability policy found, Sustainable Development Goals logo displayed without indication why
13	Eco-lighthouse, displayed	Mentions zero emissions activity and minimal impact	Environmental and Safety policies
14	Not eco-certified	Mentions being closer to nature and cultural immersion	No sustainability policy found
15	Sustainable destination certified, not displayed on website	Includes educational, cultural, environmental, and climate features	No sustainability policy found
16	Eco-lighthouse, Not displayed on website	No keywords mentioned	No sustainability policy found





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