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TOURISM'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

A Greenlandic Case Study

ABSTRACT

As tourist numbers increase in the small town of Ilulissat, impacts on the environment, economy and society are enhanced. Using the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11, as a framework, will be beneficial to preserve the environment and cultural heritage, while developing the economy and quality of life.

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Master's Thesis

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Abstract

As tourist numbers increase in the small town of Ilulissat, impacts on the environment, economy and society are enhanced. It becomes crucial to explore how a tour operating company can contribute to the sustainable development of tourism. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11, *Sustainable cities and communities* is used as a framework, with three specific targets studied. As argued by Higgins-Desbiolles (cited in Ren & al., 2016), tourism is not solely an industry creating economic means, but rather a social force with strong transformative ability for societies, cultures, and the environment to develop themselves. Yet, destinations are confronted with many risks and undesired outcomes of tourist development.

The purpose of this thesis is among other, to contribute to literature by exploring how tourism growth impacts residents and environment in Ilulissat. More specifically, the aim is to elaborate recommendations on how Vision of Scandinavia (V.O.S.) can develop their tours to Greenland, in a manner that would help in achieving United Nations Goal 11. Complexities of integrating a sustainable development approach in this context will be highlighted.

I have discovered through interviews with tourism stakeholders that awareness on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) is limited and so, decisions are not necessarily aligned with the achievement of the goals. I will focus Combining these findings with theoretical grounds show that tourism growth in Ilulissat provides both opportunities and threats.

Finally, four recommendations will emerge from research; *Values and principles, Training – Educating, Targeting customers* and *Group Size*. By following these advices, V.O.S. as well as other tour operating companies, will contribute to the achievement of *Sustainable cities and communities*. They will ensure that tourists visiting Ilulissat will preserve the environment and cultural heritage, by minimizing their impacts on the community and environment.

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During the last 27 years, my father Pierre, has been encouraging me to give my 110 percent in everything I undertake, which is reflected in my thesis project. I want to thank him for everything he has done for me and more specifically for the help in this thesis.

Finally, I also want to thank my dearest husband Mads who has always been there for me. He supported me throughout the challenges I faced during the last months. He has also inspired this project by being half Greenlander and sharing with me his love for the land.

Abbreviations

Visit Greenland: VG

United Nations: UN

Sustainable Development Goals: SDGs

Vision of Scandinavia: V.O.S.

World Tourism Organization: WTO

Gross Domestic Product: GDP

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
1.1. Setting the Scene.....	6
1.1.1 Greenland.....	7
1.1.2. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.....	9
1.1.3. V.O.S. Tour operating company	12
1.2. My Beliefs as a Researcher	12
1.2.1. What are my values.....	13
1.2.2. Personal motivations.....	14
1.3. Problem Statement and Research Question	14
1.3.1. Aim of project.....	15
1.3.2. Limitations	15
2. THEORY	17
2.1. Sustainable Tourism Development	17
2.1.1. Defining Sustainable Tourism Development.....	18
2.1.2. The three pillars in Sustainable Tourism Development.....	21
2.2. Impacts of Tourism	25
2.2.1. Improvement of the environmental management	26
2.2.2. Stronger local culture	28
2.2.3. Benefits from host and guest encounters	29
2.2.4. Improvement and investment in infrastructure	31
2.2.5. Poverty alleviation through job creation.....	31
2.2.6. Stimulation of the country's economy	33
3. METHODOLOGY	37
3.1. Social Science	37
3.1.1. A Phronetic approach.....	38
3.1.2. A Social constructivism approach	39
3.2. Literature Review.....	39
3.3. The use of a Case Study.....	40
3.4. Research Design.....	41
3.4.1. Qualitative and quantitative research.....	41
3.4.2. Deductive and inductive research	42
3.4.3. Trustworthiness.....	42

3.5. Data Collection Techniques	43
3.5.1. The informants	43
3.5.2. Interview techniques	45
3.6. Data Analysis	47
3.7. Limitations and Critiques.....	48
4. ANALYSIS	49
4.1. Tourism Growth in Ilulissat - An urge for Sustainable Practices	49
4.1.1. The UNSDGs as a framework	51
4.1.2. Implementing the UNSDGs in a Greenlandic context.....	53
4.2. Target 1: Protection of the Cultural heritage	54
4.2.1. Host-Guest encounters	56
4.2.2. Economic benefits for locals.....	60
4.2.3. Revitalizing dog sledding traditions	61
4.2.4. Size of groups	63
4.3. Target 2: Minimize Environmental Impacts	64
4.3.1. Protection of natural heritage.....	65
4.3.2. Waste management issue	67
4.4. Target 3: Improvement of Transportation Infrastructure	70
5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS	72
5.1. Recommendations.....	72
5.1.1. Values and principles.....	73
5.1.2. Training - Educating	73
5.1.3. Targeting customers.....	74
5.1.4. Group size	75
5.2. Challenges and Opportunities as Researchers	75
REFERENCES.....	77

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasingly high quantity of global tourism arrivals and its growth speed undoubtedly led to significant economic contributions worldwide. In fact “Over the last 60 years, tourism has evolved into one of the world’s most powerful, yet controversial, socio-economic forces” (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016, p. 7). According to United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in 2013 international tourism generated more than 1,159 billion American dollars and if predictions are right, by 2020 it would rise to two trillion American dollars (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Surely the previous numbers seem to be an attractive developmental catalyst and an excellent economic growth strategy, however it is crucial to note that “development is no longer tied solely to economic criteria” (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016, p. 1). In fact, there is a growing focus not only on the environment, but also on the socio-cultural context of betterment of human conditions.

With an increase in the understanding of tourism and its impacts, as well as transformations of tourism patterns, academics and non-academics are highly critical of the international tourism’s role in regional and national development (Cooper & Hall, 2008; Harrison, 2014). Nevertheless, the WTO (2017, p. 15) claims that tourism is the best positioned economic sector to “drive socioeconomic growth, provide sustainable livelihoods, foster peace and understanding and help to protect our environment”.

The objective of Chapter 1 is to introduce this research project to readers, by first setting the scene of Greenland, the United Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), and Vision of Scandinavia (V.O.S.). Thereafter, my beliefs as a researcher will be discussed as they contributed to the formulation of the problem statement. Finally, research questions will be discussed and will act as the red thread throughout this project.

1.1. Setting the Scene

This following section sets the table for readers as it is important to have basic knowledge of Greenlandic spatial context and the UNSDGs. Moreover, there will be short description of the company V.O.S. which is the focus of this project.

1.1.1 Greenland

Greenland became autonomous within the Kingdom of Denmark in 1979 when Home Rule was established (Visit Greenland, 2017a; Johnston & Viken, 1997). Nowadays, the population of around 55 860, lives in towns or small settlements mostly along the coast and nearly one-third of locals live in Nuuk, the capital (Greenland Statistics, 2017). Declining population numbers, migration and urbanization, where younger people move to larger towns, and settlements are depopulated, result in demographic challenges (Egede, 2017). Out of a total area of 2,166,086 square kilometres, no less than 81 percent is covered with ice (Greenland Statistics, 2017). The arctic and subarctic climates result in extreme living conditions where temperatures rarely exceed 10 degree Celsius (Greenland Statistics, 2017). Consequently, agriculture is confined to specific areas in the South and most products need to be imported.

Hunting, marine and terrestrial species, is the primary industry in Greenland, which accounts for 90 percent of national exports, exposing national economy to variations in world demand (Shackel, 2011; Index Mundi, 2018). Another important industry is mining and recently important deposits of rare minerals such as uranium, fluoride and thorium, have been discovered (Index Mundi, 2018). If these lucrative minerals are exploited, Greenland could become economically independent from Denmark and “create a new and prosperous future” for residents (Ren, Rastad Bjørst, & Dredge, 2016, p. 1). This controversial subject positions Greenland in the international centre stage regarding quest for energy resources. Tourism, which is a flourishing sector although still in its formative stages, will be presented in this following sub-section

Tourism

In the 1960's, tourism became an organized industry in Greenland (Johnston & Viken, 1997). In the beginning, Icelandair was bringing tourists in the south of Greenland, during summer, to fish and do glacier excursions, but seal hunting restrictions in 1980's reduced arrivals (Tommasini, 2012). In 1991, the first strategic plan to boost tourism was put into place, however the far too optimistic objectives were not fulfilled nor profitable (Tommasini, 2012). Since 2010, a more successful strategy has been in practice by Visit Greenland (VG) and by 2015, there was 45,486 land-based tourists and 22,390 cruise ship tourists (Visit Greenland,

2017b). VG, a government owned agency, is the Destination Management Organization and is now formed of 15 employees (Greenland Corporate, 2018). The purpose of VG is to “serve as the national tourism resource centre of Greenland, to work to brand and promote Greenland as a tourist destination and to work to promote and develop the tourism industry and tourism activities in Greenland” (Árnadóttir, 2019, p. 38). Their vision to create responsible growth with partners through shared knowledge, focus and idea development (Greenland Corporate, 2018). Finally, VG advises Greenland’s Ministry of Industry and Energy, which is responsible for tourism. However, Greenland is also regulated by Danish rules and legislation, for instance regarding aviation sector (Árnadóttir, 2019). Political context is beyond the scope of this project, but it is important to be aware of the complexities of a two-stage tourism governance.

Greenland faces important challenges that are slowing down potential growth. Geographic and environmental factors complicate the development of infrastructure, especially regarding transportation. Indeed, travelling between towns and settlements is difficult as there are few



Figure 1: Greenland’s towns by municipality
From (Greenland Statistics, 2017, p. 4)

roads and no railways connecting them, thus passengers and goods need to be transported by air or sea (Greenland Statistics, 2017). Consequently, the lack of connectivity limit tourist flow around the country (Árnadóttir, 2019). Additionally, tourism infrastructure such as accommodation and restaurants have limited capacity (Ren, Rastad Bjørst, & Dredge, 2016). Finally, there is imbalanced distribution of tourists throughout the year and within regions. Seasonality impacts a range of factors like preventing full-year employment and strain on

infrastructure and resources (Árnadóttir, 2019). There is a need to expand high season which is concentrated during June, July and August (Ren, Rastad Bjørst, & Dredge, 2016).

Ilulissat

Ilulissat, which means icebergs in Greenlandic is the focus town of this study. It was established as a trading area due to its strategic location along the Disko Bay, in mid-1700s (QaasuitsupMunicipality, 2017). Today, it is the residence of approximately 4555 people and another 353 people living in settlements nearby (Greenland Statistics, 2017). The town has basic facilities such as a hospital, schools, shops, hotels, restaurants, churches and a small airport in the north. Ilulissat is North Greenland's growth centre and the country's leading tourist destination (QaasuitsupMunicipality, 2017). The municipality indicates that tourism is the industry with greatest potential for social and economic development, nonetheless fishing is still predominant (QaasuitsupMunicipality, 2017). The tourist office supports organization of activities including hiking to the ice cap, boat trips, whale safaris, dog sledding and settlement visits. Finally, there is a gap in literature regarding the manner local residents perceive and react in front of recent tourism growth, thus highlighting the relevance of this chosen case study.

1.1.2. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

During a historic United Nations (UN) summit in 2015, 193 world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, made of 17 goals and 169 targets with measurable indicators (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). The UN (2018) indicate that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the best plan to build a better world for global populations, by 2030. For 15 years, all countries and all people, poor, rich and middle-class, will work together to “end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change” (United Nations, 2018). The goals are known to be inclusive since they were developed by myriad stakeholders of 193 UN member states, civil societies and stakeholders which could negotiate and share their interests, during a two year process (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). The goals are an integral part of national and regional plans and visions worldwide and focus especially on poor, vulnerable communities to ensure their development (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016).

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and Tourism

The 17 goals which are setting a “supremely ambitious and transformational vision” are presented in the following iconic image.



Figure 2: UN 17 SDGs

From (United Nations General Assembly, 2015, p. 3).

The UN mention that tourism is a significant contributor to achieve goals: 8 (decent work and economic growth), 12 (responsible consumption and production) and 14 (life below water), all having specific targets directly linked to tourism practices. Hitherto, the WTO indicates that tourism's cross-cutting nature enables it to be an effective tool to contribute to all 17 goals (UNWTO Annual Report 2016, 2017). António Guterres, UN Secretary-General (World Tourism Organization, 2018, p. 16), demonstrates tourism's potential for positive transformative change as he states:

“Every day, more than 3 million tourists cross international borders. Every year, almost 1.2 billion people travel abroad. Tourism has become a pillar of economies, a passport to prosperity, and a transformative force for improving millions of lives. The world can and must harness the power of tourism as we strive to carry out the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

This research project will demonstrate that tourism development is a decisive factor in achieving Goal 11: *Sustainable cities and communities*

Selected Targets of Goal 11:

- 1) *By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.*
- 2) .
- 3) *By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport.*

Considering time and resource constraints, this thesis will study the previous three of ten targets, with a special focus on target (1) and (2) (See Appendix 6, p. 34). These targets have been chosen to the detriment of others because they are more suitable for assessment in a Greenlandic context. Moreover, these targets provide a holistic approach to sustainable tourism development as it draws upon economic, socio-cultural and environmental pillars. In target (1), the term *reduce* has been changed to minimize, considering theory stating that tourism always results in environmental impacts. Finally, irrelevant words have been deleted, in order to have more concise and adapted targets for this case study.

Targets studied in this research:

- 1) **Protection of Ilulissat's cultural heritage.**
- 2) **Minimize environmental impacts.**
- 3) **Improvement of transportation infrastructure.**

The lack of consensus in literature, on how these targets are impacted by tourism presents a challenge for this project. However, focusing on Ilulissat will enable to generate an understanding of the effects of tourism in a specific place.

1.1.3. V.O.S. Tour operating company

This research is made in collaboration with Vision of Scandinavia (V.O.S.) tour operating company. Jean-Marc Bret and Ann Kirstina Bret have been offering round-trip tours since 1998. Now, with a team of 70 employees, V.O.S. is specialised in what they class as Group tours, Individual tours, Winter tours, City Breaks and Guaranteed Departures in Northern countries; Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland,



*Figure 3: V.O.S. logo
From (V.O.S., 2019)*

Iceland, Faroe Islands and Baltics; Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia. By 2020, Greenland will be added to the list of destinations. Over 65 percent of customers are from France, while the remaining 35 percent come from all around the world. The company vision is “to be the leading and preferred incoming tour operator in Scandinavia, Finland, Iceland and the Baltics” (V.O.S., 2019). V.O.S. is guided by five values which are leadership, commitment, teamwork, innovation and passion. The owners explain that their multicultural, enthusiastic creative and qualified team is one of the greatest assets. This enables V.O.S. to “provide our partners with a wide range of high quality and innovative products, competitive rates and destination intelligence” (V.O.S., 2019). I have been working for V.O.S. since February 2019. My daily contact with colleagues, clients and partners permitted me to have a greater understanding of the company.

The project’s main topics have now been introduced. The next section will explain how my values and personal motivations, regarding these themes, have inspired my choice of research.

1.2. My Beliefs as a Researcher

All researchers, even though not intended, are influenced by their personal background and beliefs. Indeed, as Tribe (2004) explains, pursuit of knowledge is never interest-free and is motivated by technical, practical and emancipatory interests. Moreover, Tribe (2004, p. 52) adds that “facts do not speak for themselves” and are interpreted and analyzed by researchers. Therefore, it is imperative to be aware of one's position by reflecting upon values and personal motivations.

1.2.1. What are my values

This thesis is underpinned by three of my core values. They guide my research and ensure me to stay on a path that leads to a final product which represents me. Being aware of and respecting my values during this research project, will lead to a greater sense of self-achievement. Moreover, my values influence angles I take to critique literature and analyze data.

Meaningful Work

I am working intensely on a specific subject while keeping a high standard of work quality in order to deliver meaningful recommendations to V.O.S. and Aalborg university. The knowledge I will create will also be relevant for VG's next tourism strategy plan and in turn be beneficial for Ilulissat. Also, I believe that producing professional work will create awareness of how a Greenlandic destination is impacted by tourism. This will be especially useful in small communities which are facing rapid tourism growth.

Sustainable development

Environmental and social sustainability are central parts of my life. I am mindful of my impacts on environment and on individuals and this guides my daily decisions. I have a desire to promote sustainable tourism development which will contribute to Greenland's well-being in a holistic manner. The country will face great changes in the following years regarding tourism development. With the upcoming groups of V.O.S., it is essential to ensure it is done in a beneficial way for all. Understanding economic, environmental and social impacts are focal to this research.

Adventure

I am constantly seeking for new adventures in my life such as living in different countries, learning languages, trying new sports and getting out of my comfort zone. Writing this thesis project is also one genuine adventure. It is full of challenges and overcoming each one of them gives satisfaction and motivation to continue further. I will be seeking and taking advantage of new opportunities to improve the adventure as a whole and maximize my learning.

1.2.2. Personal motivations

Motivation also guides research, therefore it is crucial to reflect upon what motivates me and how it influences my choices. This thesis project journey started in January 2019 when I met V.O.S. employees and had discussions on developing tours to Greenland, as demand has been increasing. Afterwards, I have been reflecting on “How can I, with my tourism knowledge and strategic position at V.O.S., make a difference in Greenlander’s lives through sustainable tourism development?” and “I have responsibilities as a tourism researcher and an employee of a tour operating company, to ensure sustainable practices”. Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to travel to Greenland, discover the land and be emerged in culture, but this enables me to be more objective in my research project.

I am writing this thesis with a Tourism Master degree student perspective, and with the combination of my values and my strategic position in V.O.S., I have elaborated the following problem statement and research question.

1.3. Problem Statement and Research Question

With the increase in tourism, which passed from 25 million international tourist arrivals in 1950, to 1.235 billion in 2016, there has been an exponential focus on how tourism impacts the world. Idealists suggest that tourism provides hope for a positive change and that it will significantly contribute to the achievement of the UNSDGs and reach a better future (World Tourism Organization, 2017). Yet, it is crucial to investigate negative impacts and find ways to counter them while enhancing positive impacts.

With the aim of understanding how tourism in Greenland is affecting the achievement of Goal 11, and considering the impacts of tourism growth in the specific town of Ilulissat, the following central research question emerged:

How can V.O.S. contribute to the achievement of Goal 11, Sustainable Cities and communities, from the UNSDGs, through their guided tours in Ilulissat?

In order to investigate this, a Theoretical Framework has been elaborated. The foundation of this study is composed of two theoretical grounds: Sustainability Tourism Development and Impacts of Tourism. Aligned with these theories, and to respond to the central research question, three sub-research questions will guide this study:

1. How can the UNSDGs be used as a framework for tourism development in Greenland?
2. How does tourism affect the cultural heritage in Ilulissat?
3. How does tourism impact local environment with a focus on waste management in Ilulissat?

1.3.1. Aim of project

On a micro-level, the main aim of this project is to provide V.O.S. with recommendations on how they can develop their tours to Greenland in a manner that would help in achieving UN Goal 11. The recommendations produced will also be transferrable to worldwide companies operating tours in Greenland. Moreover, I will inform and inspire V.O.S. in respecting residents, whom are often vulnerable actors, while minimizing environmental impacts and ensuring that it is not undervalued for greater economic benefits, which are crucial to achieve sustainable development.

More generally this project aims to contribute to literature and reduce gaps between the UNSDGs' theoretical framework and practice. Choosing a specific case study helps to understand practical issues of the framework and how to overcome them. Moreover, this thesis will contribute to the understanding of how different stakeholders are aligned in achieving the UNSDGs.

1.3.2. Limitations

Focus on Ilulissat.

There will be a special focus on Ilulissat in Qaasultsup municipality. Greenlandic regions offer different types of experiences and their individual challenges and development potentials vary from one area to another. Therefore, an adapted approach must be elaborated to fit each town's needs. For this project, it is especially important to focus on Ilulissat, since it is the first and

main destination V.O.S. is planning on operating their guided tours. Thus, results of this project will propose specific recommendations for this town, but will create food of thought for other towns in Greenland.

Focus on Goal 11

The UN has elaborated 17 Sustainable Development Goals and tourism is known to be a means to contribute to all. As the aim for this project is to recommend a tour operating company on how to ensure sustainable development in a Greenlandic town, it has been chosen to focus on Goal 11, *Sustainable cities and communities*. Moreover, there is a focus on three specific targets of Goal 11 which relate to the economic, environmental and socio-cultural spheres of sustainability.

Focus on the analysis of target (1) Protection of Greenland's cultural heritage and (2) Minimize environmental impacts.

Although target (3) *Improvement of transportation infrastructure* will be touched upon in the Theoretical Chapter, the decision was made to not develop on it in the analysis chapter as it is beyond the scope of this project. Elaborating a holistic approach with the three pillars of sustainable development, as well as enabling V.O.S. to have knowledge on target (3); through theories, are reasons of inclusion.

Sub-conclusion Chapter 1.

Chapter one has introduced core topics of this project: Greenland, UNSDGs with a focus on targets of Goal 11 and V.O.S. Following this, my values of Meaningful work, Sustainable development and Adventure as well as my personal motivation explained how the subject of this thesis was elaborated. The last section of this chapter highlighted the research question and aim of the project while explaining limitations.

2. THEORY

Hannam and Knox (2010) underline the importance of choosing adequate theories, since tourism is a complex cultural phenomenon which has social, cultural, political, economic and environmental impacts and is based on complex relationships. This led to the selection of the following theoretical grounds: *Sustainable Tourism Development* and *Impacts of Tourism*. The three pillars (socio-cultural, environmental and economic) will be assessed in both theoretical grounds.

The objective of this chapter is to provide relevant theoretical grounds for the analysis. It combines perspectives from various academics in order to have a more objective view. This chapter also demonstrates gaps in literature and consequently which primary data should be collected.

2.1. Sustainable Tourism Development

The concept of linking sustainability and tourism started by some negative reactions of an increase of mass tourism causing environmental and social issues (Bramwell, 2015). Similarly, Tefler & Sharpley (2016) explain that the initial euphoria over the potential benefits of tourism development in the 1960`s and 1970`s was replaced by a cautionary approach, since a wider audience were becoming aware of potential destructive effects.

2017 was the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development where the WTO recognized the clear contribution of tourism to the achievement of the UNSDGs. Their thematic framework was based on: 1) *Sustainable economic growth*, 2) *Employment, social inclusion and poverty reduction*, 3) *Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change*, 4) *Cultural values, diversity and heritage*, 5) *Mutual understanding, peace and security* (World Tourism Organization, 2018, p. 18). The UNWTO (World Tourism Organization, 2018) state that the International Year of Sustainable Tourism will never end, as they will maintain the momentum served to raise awareness on sustainable practices, created during 2017. They have also elaborated guidelines for sustainable tourism development published at regional, national and international levels.

Tefler & Sharpley (2016, p. 63). discuss a principle of sustainable tourism development as “all agencies organizations businesses and individuals should cooperate and work together to avoid potential conflict and to optimize benefits to all involved in the development and management of tourism”. Indeed, myriad authors advocate cooperation and collaboration between tourism stakeholders such as community residents, governments and social institutions, to work towards sustainable tourism development (Elkington, 2013; Cooper & Hall, 2008; Hwansuk, 2015). Additionally, Hwansuk (2015) highlights the importance of integrated policy, management, monitoring and social learning processes to have a successful implementation of sustainable tourism.

2.1.1. Defining Sustainable Tourism Development

A variety of articles, books and material have been written on sustainable tourism development (Bramwell, 2015). However, even though researches abound, there has not been a univocal definition of this vital theme, which creates important challenges. Due to its multi-faceted nature, individuals do not comprehend sustainable tourism development in the same manner. In addition, there is a complex network of stakeholders implied, such as policy makers, local communities, public sector and private companies. All have different interests and ideologies, which influence their understandings and results in weak cohesion from actors (Hall, Gossling, & Scott, 2015). Jörn Mundt (2011, p. 86) indicates that many believe in the importance of sustainable tourism development, but are not able to “articulate its meaning”. However, one tends to agree with “the absence of a precise good definition is less important than general movement in the correct direction” (Clarke, 1997, p. 229).

The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development specified that tourism should be promoted in order to “Increase the benefit from tourism resources for the population in host communities, while maintaining the cultural and environmental integrity of the host communities and enhancing the protection of ecologically sensitive areas in natural heritages” (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016, p. 42). While the Member States of the United Nations (2018) agreed during Rio 2012 conference to “the need to support sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building that promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, flora, biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural diversity” and “improve the welfare and livelihoods of local communities by supporting their local economies

and the human and natural environment as a whole”. Indeed, several authors indicate the priority of favourable impacts for local communities like “developing domestic decision-making capacity or empowerment” and “improvement in host quality of life” (Weaver, 1998, p. 17; Sofield, 2003, p. 71). More generally, Hunter (1995, p. 156) underlines the importance to “satisfy the needs of the major stakeholders: hosts, guests, entrepreneurs and bio-cultural assets” and believes that tourism should bring benefits not only to the local communities, but also to the national economic sector. The UNWTO indicates the importance of high tourist satisfaction for a destination to maintain its attractiveness (UNWTO, 2014). Finally, Royle (2006, p. 34) who specifically analyses cold water islands embraces the four following points: “durable natural and cultural assets; improved host life quality; enduring visitor enjoyment and; long-term enterprise profitability”.

These definitions are based on the three pillars of sustainable development. While some are concentrated on one or two of the pillars, others have a more integrated approach. Moreover, varying perspectives and ideologies are part of the complexities of sustainable tourism development, which will further be discussed in the following sub-section.

A Complex Concept

According to a plethora of authors, sustainable tourism development is a highly controversial, challenging and complex concept (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; Hall, Gossling, & Scott, 2015; Lea, 1988; Ong & Smith, 2014). Sustainable development alone, responds to the criteria of what social scientist would describe as “A wicked problem” (Hall, Gossling, & Scott, 2015, p. 1). Firstly, many authors relate it to an oxymoron since development requires resource exploitation and should be achieved at the same time as sustainability, which minimizes resource depletion (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Butler (2013, p. 225) argues problematics as “sustaining physical environment is difficult enough as nature is always subject to trade-offs for human comfort and it is even harder to apply to social structures and cultures”. Hall & al. (2015) believe it is a serious policy failure to promote tourism as a tool for economic development while simultaneously it significantly contributes to environmental change.

To this is added tourism, which is undoubtedly an even more complex *wicked problem*. Tourism creates among others, pollution from transportation and disturbance of local

communities, contradicting sustainable development. In addition of having myriad definitions, tourism is a cultural phenomenon, that implies social, cultural, political, economic and environmental spheres and is based on complex relationships of multiple stakeholders with conflicting agendas (Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Sustainable tourism development is also an idealistic concept that is difficult or even impossible to achieve and described as a “fantasy” by Butler (2013, p. 225). Indeed, it is an ever-lasting process, there is no “identifiable and achievable end-state” to the pursuit of sustainable tourism development (Bramwell, 2015, p. 914). Robinson (2004, p. 381) accuses the concept of “encouraging hypocrisy and delusion” among others, due to its ambiguity. Indeed, many criticize sustainable tourism to be a “subjective”, “loose”, “vague”, “ambiguous”, and “impractical” concept (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016, p. 53; Bramwell, 2015, p. 91). Similarly, Andrea Cornwall (2007) argues that sustainability and development are contested buzzword which unfold a plethora of questionings. The lexicon has “vague and euphemistic qualities, their capacity to embrace a multitude of possible meanings, and their normative resonance” and debates the absence of a real definition (Cornwall, 2007, p. 472).

Some affirm that its ambiguity is an advantage as it can be applied in different societies. However, in practice, tourism is highly contextualized and unique. Indeed, approaches need to be specific to the context, especially in terms of place, scale and point in time (Bramwell, 2015; Hunter, 1995). Accordingly, Tefler & Sharpley (2016) argue that this inflexible blueprint cannot be reproduced in other destinations.

Moreover, sustainable tourism development, a global multi-sectoral industry, is always changing and impossible to control as tourism systems are dynamic, unpredictable and responsive to external factors (McKercher, 1993; Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007). The process of transition towards sustainability is affected by external factors, such as green-washing marketing techniques, that are also increasing complexity (Bramwell, 2015). Finally, it can take a long time to evaluate impacts of tourism development and measuring methods are largely criticized. Indeed, classifying what is sustainable and unsustainable forms of tourism in different contexts, is highly subjective (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). To facilitate this, Cooper & Hall (2008, p. 203) stress the importance of identifying “relevant indicators for sustainability

which are measurable, meet objectives, and on which stakeholders agree as to their relevance and as to how results should be interpreted” however, this alone can be difficult to achieve.

Although sustainable tourism development is a controversial and complex subject in constant evolution, this thesis approaches economic, environmental and socio-cultural pillars with equal value.

2.1.2. The three pillars in Sustainable Tourism Development

During the UN’s *Conference on Sustainable Development*, also known as Rio 1992, tourism was stated to be a significant contributor to the three pillars of sustainable development: socio-cultural, environmental and economic (United Nations, 2018). There is a consensus that a suitable balance needs to be established between the pillars to ensure long-term sustainability. In this regard, the society, environment and economy must be developed in an integrated way.

The Triple Bottom Line concept recognizes the intertwined relationship of the three pillars and argues that the concept comes as a whole (Elkington, 2013). On one side environmental sustainability could not be achieved without the socio-cultural and economic spheres (Elkington, 2013). The same as social development is dependent on economic growth and both society and economy depend on the management of the planet’s natural resources (United Nations General Assembly, 2015; Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Thus, proving the equal

importance and interconnections of the three dimensions.

Cooper & Hall (2008, p. 162) illustrate interrelationships between social, economic and environmental, tourism impacts in Figure 4. The three pillars are interconnected and become one integrated approach, in the middle. Figure 4 is criticized because it does not take into consideration cultural impacts of tourism. Omitting the cultural sphere would create

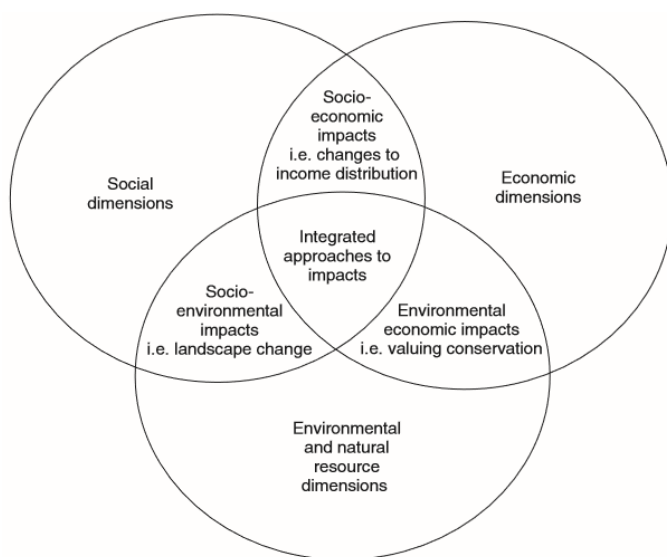


Figure 4 Interrelationships between dimensions of tourism’s impacts

From (Cooper & Hall, 2008, p. 162)

weaknesses in this project and having a fourth section would limit the depth of research, therefore social and cultural impacts will be merged to socio-cultural.

Each pillar needs a defined result-based framework that identifies strategic objectives, challenges, potential problems and the expected long-term outcomes (Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2015). This will be introduced in the following three sub-sections, and further discussed in *The impacts of Tourism*

Economic

The UNWTO (2013) identified the economic sustainability objective as “ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation” (UNWTO, 2013). Some characteristics of the tourism industry greatly challenge economic sustainability.

The tourism industry is predominantly composed of small, private companies, striving for immediate profit maximization to the detriment of a long-term vision that sustainability advocates. Moreover, even though global tourism revenues are immense, the highly competitive industry faces price wars and often lose-lose situations where competitors use cost-cutting measures such as decreasing fixed costs (McKercher, 1993; Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007). Local employment, especially in emerging economy countries, suffers from lower salaries and unstable working conditions (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007). Seasonality causes fluctuations in employment and during low seasons, locals can temporarily lose their jobs and be deprived from revenues (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007). Considering this, the UNWTO (2012) recommends “a good integration between tourism and other economic activities to provide a sufficient year-round source of livelihood”.

While profit-oriented companies often prioritize economic sustainability, they need a shift in approach through greater transparency and a longer-term perspective on environment and societies.

Environmental

According to the UNWTO (2013), the objective of environmentally sustainable tourism is to “make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity”. Many academics and non-academics are critical about this sphere as the main concern became the earth’s capacity to support human existence, with finite resources required to respond to overproduction and overconsumption, in addition to absorption of wastes (Hall, Gossling, & Scott, 2015; Tefler & Sharpley, 2016).

With a tourism perspective, authors agree that a core issue is related to pollution generated due to transportation, by land, sea and air (Hall, Gossling, & Scott, 2015; Butler, 2013; Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Moreover, transformations of natural landscapes for tourism activity and infrastructural projects can potentially lead to an over-exploitation of natural resources (McKercher, 1993, p. 14; Ong & Smith, 2014). Finally, Hall & al. (2015, p. 493) state that tourism is “a substantial contributor to the decline in the Earth’s natural capital”. Climate change, a dominant political-environmental issue of modern world, has a major impact on global mobilities and threatens vulnerable destinations such as islands (Hall, Gossling, & Scott, 2015). These characteristics oppose the UNWTO objective, thus creating controversies on environmentally sustainable tourism development.

Finally, as illustrated in Figure 4, the three pillars are interrelated in a fragile equilibrium and the socio-cultural dimension also needs to be equally respected, to achieve sustainable tourism development.

Socio-Cultural

Initially, the socio-cultural sphere received less attention than the economic and environmental spheres, however, in recent years there has been a growing realization of its equal importance. Nonetheless, there is still a lack of consensus in literature on exactly what socio-cultural sustainability consists of (McClinchey, 2017). The UNWTO (2013) ideally describes the concept as “respect socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance” however, this description is incomplete.

This pillar should strengthen social sectors of employment and education in communities, promote poverty alleviation and reduce regional inequalities while improving lifestyles and opportunities for local communities (Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2015; McClinchey, 2017; Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). More specifically, basic human essentials such as housing, transportation, healthcare and feelings of security should be fostered. Though subjective, socio-cultural sustainability should also be “the constant betterment of quality of life, which refers to the wellbeing of both individuals and societies at large, both now and in the future” (Zifkos, 2015, p. 8).

Moreover, empowerment defined as the control people have over their own lives, should be enhanced, through community involvement. Yet, Andrea Cornwall (2007) is highly critical towards terms like empowerment indicating it is a buzzword which sounds intellectual and scientific, but only experts truly understand it. Natives are core actors in socio-cultural sustainability as they have knowledge and know-how which has been passed to them since many generations. Thus, empowering them is beneficial as often their knowledge cannot be translated to foreigners.

Key Theoretical Findings Chapter 2.1. Sustainable Tourism Development

Sustainable tourism development is a complex concept as there is lack of precise definition, the involvement of multiple stakeholders with differing agendas and it is a phenomenon implying many disciplines of the social world. It is necessary to consider knowledge from various academics and non-academics, to be aware of differing perspectives.

The three pillars of sustainability are controversial when assessing them with a tourism approach. While the economic pillar has been dominant in the past, some stakeholders fail to recognize its equivalent importance to the environmental and socio-cultural pillars. The environment, which is known to be highly degraded by tourism infrastructure and pollution, has global attention. Finally, the socio-cultural pillar, overlooked in the past, is now creating awareness of tourism’s potential benefits and consequences on local communities. Most importantly, to achieve sustainable tourism development, these three pillars need to remain in a fragile balance.

2.2. Impacts of Tourism

With a holistic approach embracing tourism growth, the following theoretical section will discuss some impacts by illustrating both positive and negative effects. This theoretical ground is crucial to enable an analysis of tourism impacts in Ilulissat and effects on the UNSDG 11 and its targets.

Certainly, tourism brings important benefits in various sectors of a country. Saner & al. (2015, p. 5) core message summarizes some potential advantages and opportunities of tourism:

“Tourism is an industry with great potential and has strong links with economic growth and development. Local people living in LDCs [Least Developed Countries] could benefit in multifaceted manner from tourism investments. Tourism also provides LDCs opportunities for economic diversification and skills upgrading. Finally, tourism can support protection of environmental and cultural assets. LDCs have many unexploited tourism assets which could be offered as a very different tourism experience, rarely found in more commercialized destinations”.

However, these points are highly criticized since tourism growth does not only lead to benefits for the receiving community. Indeed, first criticisms of tourism were related to “uncontrolled growth, overexploitation of natural and cultural resources, and the dependency that some tourism models give rise to” (Navarro-Jurado & Nel-lo Andreu, 2015, p. 256). In addition to this, even if investments are high, profitability can be slow to achieve, there can be unequal distribution of revenues, real-estate speculation, dependency on countries of tourists’ origin, to name a few (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Bramwell (2015, p. 915) even mentions “there are indications that overall progress may be at best static or even moving backward due to tourism’s continuing overall growth”. Therefore, the mainstream belief that tourism is an efficient tool for the development of a destination is highly questionable.

As explained by Cooper & Hall (2008), consequences of tourism are contextual and situational which result in a complex challenge to be exhaustive. Certainly, a complete review of tourism impacts is well beyond the scope of this project so, only the most relevant for this case study will be presented.

2.2.1. Improvement of the environmental management

Tourism can contribute to a stronger focus on environmental sustainability and increase protected areas (Navarro-Jurado & Nel-lo Andreu, 2015). Accordingly, Tefler & Sharpley (2016, p. 286) recognize that “tourism may act as a catalyst for environmental protection and improvement, in particular the designation of nature reserves, national parks, wildlife reserves and other categories of protected areas/landscapes”. They (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016) also explain that expenditures to improve, restore and clean areas can be driven by the desire to increase attraction of a site to tourists. This is aligned with Lea`s (1988) belief that the prospect earnings of foreign visitors provide a stimulus to invest in environmental conservation and that in many instances, it would not occur without financial benefits. Saner & al. (2015) indicate that governments in emerging economy countries do not always have the financial resources to preserve the natural environments, however tourism revenues can be a solution. Moreover, local populations understand the importance of their natural assets to attract tourism, since these assets need to be preserved to maintain a healthy image of the destination (Hunter, 1995; McKercher, 1993). In fact, Hwansuk (2015) clarifies that most often, it is natural factors that convince tourists to travel to a specific destination.

However, a multitude of academics argue that due to development of touristic destinations, there is most often environmental deterioration (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016, p. 281; Butler, 2013; Hunter, 1995). Academics indicate the permanent transformation of physical areas, which uses up land that was most often destined to agriculture or natural landscapes. On a longer term, ecosystems and wildlife habitats can also be threatened, not only due to infrastructure, but also tourist activities disrupting local environments. Moreover, during high tourist seasons, environmental impacts are more severe since congestion and overcrowding in specific areas increase pollution and causes physical damage (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). This is also due to overutilization of resources (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1999). Tefler & Sharpley (2016) highlight complexities of this theme when they explain that there is no baseline for measuring and monitoring environmental impacts from tourism activity. In addition, there are immediate and secondary environmental impacts and some caused directly by tourism and others by local human or economic activity, which makes it difficult to assess the actual causes and consequences of tourism on the environment (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; Hunter, 1995).

In some countries where natural resources are limited, there is an ethical dilemma regarding tourists' consumption of resources. Indeed, vital resources such as water, food, land and energy sources, can be restricted to local populations in order to serve tourists needs, especially during high seasons (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007; UNWTO, 2012). The UNWTO (2012) underlines that modern tourists' high standards and overconsumption is in extreme cases threatening local communities' survival by placing strain on scarce resources. The Globe 90 Conference in Canada elaborated three basic principles to guide tourism planning and management, while recognizing its developmental potential. One principle implies that tourism should not compete for scarce resources (Cronin, 1990). On the contrary, McKercher (1993, p. 13) indicates a fundamental truth as "in order to survive and grow, the tourism industry has to compete for scarce resources". With the use of economic means, tourists and foreign companies, come to dominate locals over these resources, even though they are only temporary visitors (Tucker & Akama, 2012). Furthermore, the Department for International Development add that it is rural poor whom are mostly disadvantaged as their livelihood is dependent on these resources (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007).

Furthermore, the generation of waste and pollution of air, land and water, is not only critical for residents and their resources, but also on a global level. Firstly, as Tefler & Sharpley (2016, p. 281) explain, transportation, which by definition is used by all tourists, represents "a major source of air and noise pollution". Aviation is known to be the world's fastest growing source of greenhouse gases and should pass from five percent of global warming contribution, to 15 percent in 2050 (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Lea (1988) exposes consequences on water quality, coming from raw or untreated sewage ending in oceans and petrol from boating. Reports claim that "cruise ship dumped more than 1 billion gallons of sewage in the ocean in 2013" (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016, p. 282). Solid waste is another problem caused by tourists. Many destinations do not have infrastructure to properly dispose extra waste, which can lead to health hazards for humans and wildlife, unattractive and degraded nature and land contamination (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016).

Tourist activity has numerous other environmental consequences which destinations need to control without discouraging tourists to visit. Finally, the UN (1999, p. 6) state that "coastal tourism is particularly vulnerable in this respect, as it typically involves some of the world's most fragile ecological areas", relating to this case study on Greenland.

2.2.2. Stronger local culture

On a socio-cultural point of view, tourism can among others, strengthen local culture, community resilience, self-reliance and revitalize traditions (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; Hall, Gossling, & Scott, 2015; Sofield, 2003). As explained by Tefler & Sharley (2016, p. 62) the “principle of community involvement appears to satisfy the specific requirements of self-reliance and endogenous development”. Moreover, tourism can provide the financial incentives to invest in, promote and preserve local cultural patrimony (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1999)

Saner & al. (2015) believe that similarly to environmental assets, revenues generated by tourism can also help to ensure the preservation of local culture. There is an increasing focus on the importance of protecting cultural and historical assets within a destination (Flores & Scott, 2015). Lea (1988) demonstrates through case studies the rehabilitation of existing buildings and historic sites. For example, Angkor Wat temples in Cambodia attract over two million tourists every year and 30 percent of ticket revenues is invested in restoration and management of the site (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). However, some attractions’ popularity, can evolve in a potential physical threat of the place (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Planning procedures and control are crucial in such cases.

Traditional art and artefacts production are increased in many areas of the world and often result in financial success (Lea, 1988). In fact, tourism encourages “redevelopment of traditional art forms and production techniques” (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016, p. 294). On the other hand, degrading quality and imitations are common to respond to high demand and pressure for low prices (MacCannell, 1973). Adapting to suit tourists’ tastes, can lead to deterioration of cultural handicrafts and practices such as dances, music and festivals (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1999, p. 7; MacCannell, 1973).

There are important discourses regarding the authenticity of tourist destinations. Firstly, Urry (1992) argues that even though tourists are passive, just by being in a foreign area, they change the mood and atmosphere of the place. Staged authenticity became a common term when for example, hosts receive financial benefits in exchange for *making a show* in front of guests (Tucker & Akama, 2012; MacCannell, 1973). This results in a binary between local

communities framed to be attractive, and guests believing in the authenticity and goodwill of natives (Tucker & Akama, 2012). MacCannell (2015) argues that tourist bureaus, planners, politicians and entrepreneurs drive tourism market as they “alter local society and physical space on what they believe tourists want”, resulting in dependency on the countries of tourists’ origin. In other words, it is these countries that will both, define experiences and dominate local stakeholders to make sure expectations are met (Harrison, 2014; Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Tucker & Akama (2012, p.8) define this as “one culture works to interpret, to represent, and finally to dominate another”.

In such cases, locals and their traditions become commodities for guests, which reduces authenticity (Tucker & Akama, 2012; MacCannell, 1973). McKercher (1993) opposes this by stating the fundamental truth that “tourists are consumers, not anthropologists” hence they will be satisfied with commodities. Tefler & Sharpley (2016) specifically indicate complexities regarding religion. In many destinations, religious buildings and rituals are disrupted by gazing tourists whom act as if it was attractions (Urry, 1992). This can result in conflicts and/or in places or practices becoming commoditized (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; MacCannell, 1973). Tefler & Sharpley (2016, p. 290) argue that too often visitors “travel with an apparent lack of knowledge, understanding or sensitivity to local culture or customs in destinations areas”. Creating awareness of respecting local communities and their customs is crucial to counter this. For example, the WTO (2018, p. 23) made a consumer-oriented communication campaign, titled “Travel.Enjoy.Respect” which is based around the acknowledgment that each travel changes guests, hosts and surroundings and that everyone is responsible for the changes. The influences this has on host-guest encounters will be discussed below.

2.2.3. Benefits from host and guest encounters

Host and guest encounters, which inevitably occur, often leads to socio-cultural impacts. The UNWTO focuses on benefits of contact between guests and hosts, highlighting that it can be “a means of achieving greater international harmony and understating” and that it increases “awareness of cultural, environmental, and economic issues and values, on both sides” (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016, p. 288; UNWTO, 2012). A greater awareness and acceptance of other cultures result in a reduction of national xenophobia (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Whereas John Urry (1992) would see the contact between host and guest only as a passive encounter.

However, many argue that even if a tourist is passive, he is affecting the social environment and modifying behaviours of residents. Academics critic these encounters due to a lack of spontaneity since they are often pre-planned, shallow and superficial, since the contact is transitory and constrained spatially and temporally (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Thus, not resulting in a greater international harmony.

Tefler & Sharpley (2016, p. 289) argue that “the more unbalanced or unequal the encounter or relationship, the more likely it is that negative impacts will occur” which is especially linked to tourists’ wealth. In fact, in emerging economy countries, encounters tend to be unbalanced and locals can feel a sense of resentment or inferiority in front of wealthy tourists. Furthermore, there can be the demonstration effect, where locals attempt to emulate tourists’ behaviours and change their own values or lifestyles (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Similarly, tourism accelerates the acculturation process whereby two cultures whom are in contact, become more like each other over time. If there is a dominant culture, it will more likely be a one-way process, where the dominated will borrow from the dominant (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). The United Nations (1999, p. 7) also stress negative changes in locals’ patterns of “religious observance, dress, behavioural norms and traditions” due to interaction with incoming guests.

The intensity of socio-cultural impacts depends on many factors. For instance the ratio of visitor to resident, the type and rate of tourism growth and the resilience of a host community (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1999). Moreover, seasonality influences host-guest encounters as overcrowding and congestion deteriorates the everyday life of locals and change their perception of guests (Flores & Scott, 2015). Lea (1988) explains that the stage of development of a destination as well as the type of tourist, will also influence the seriousness of impact of host-guest exchanges. Indeed, there is major differences between mass tourism and infrequent “explorer” tourist arriving in a remote place (Lea, 1988, p. 62). The context in which contact is made determines the depth of communication, such as language ability and length of stay (Lea, 1988). Cross-cultural communication is minimal in cases where for example, Chinese tourists disembark their cruise ship for a few hours, to explore a city. Finally, the intermediary actors such as tour guides and interpreters, limit potential benefits of host-guest contacts (Lea, 1988).

2.2.4. Improvement and investment in infrastructure

The UNWTO (2012) states that a country with a strong economy will have more funding to improve infrastructure and invest in health, education and transportation. Although tourism can be an important source of revenue for governments, Tefler & Sharpley (2016) question to what extent they transfer revenues to invest in social infrastructures. Moscardo's (2005) analysis of case studies have proven that there is an emphasis on accommodation and transportation infrastructure to the detriment of other needs such as water and waste treatment and disposal, which creates problems on a local level. In addition, within accommodation, there is a common lack of analysis of market needs, that often results in inappropriate developments and project failures (Moscardo, 2005).

Lea's (1988) beliefs are consistent with Moscardo's, suggesting that there is little evidence that social services are positively stimulated by tourism, as it is rather the entertainment and leisure facilities such as swimming pools, casinos and night clubs that will benefit. The United Nations (1999) indicate the critical role of Governments in infrastructure development and their need to "ensure that [Governments] cater not only to the needs of the tourism sector, but also to the needs of other industries in the area, as well as to the local community as a whole". Indeed, the WTO aims to increase opportunities for better livelihoods to communities, by ensuring that the maximum benefits can reach the hosts (World Tourism Organization, 2017). Finally, a lack of adequate tourism infrastructure, particularly long-term and costly construction projects like airports, creates bottlenecks and is a major barrier for tourism growth (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1999). Therefore, attracting tourism can be an incentive for governments to invest in infrastructure.

2.2.5. Poverty alleviation through job creation

A core potential benefit from tourism is known as poverty alleviation (UNWTO, 2012; Navarro-Jurado & Nel-lo Andreu, 2015). One of the main and most relevant methods against poverty is through job creation (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007; Ong & Smith, 2014). Obviously, tourism creates direct and indirect employment, which according to the UNWTO (2017) is as high as one in every 12 jobs or 235 million jobs worldwide. It is predicted that this extremely fast-growing industry will account for one in 10 jobs by 2023 (Saner, Yiu, &

Filadoro, 2015). Since tourism is “a relatively labor-intensive sector”, and does not require high qualifications, it creates opportunities for “women, young people and disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minority populations” (UNWTO, 2012). Tefler & Sharpley (2016) explain that employment opportunities brought freedom, independence and better social conditions to many women. Additionally, employment is created not only in urban areas, but also in rural areas where job options can be limited. There is also an increase in indirect employment which can be for instance agriculture, transport and handicrafts, as the tourism industry is a large and complex supply chain where a multitude of actors are implied in (UNWTO, 2012). Moreover, multiple opportunities are created for entrepreneurs to answer tourist demand, by offering products and services, which often require little investment (Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2015; UNWTO, 2012; Tefler & Sharpley, 2016).

However, many academics such as Tefler & Sharpley (2016), believe that a lack of evidence restricts one from saying that tourism leads to poverty alleviation. Indeed, some critics imply that revenues generated by tourism is not distributed equally among communities as some groups can withdraw more than others (Bramwell, 2015). Tefler & Sharpley (2016, p. 71) criticize that too often “tourism only benefits the local elite or multinational corporations or is achieved at significant economic, social or environmental costs”. Similarly, the UNWTO (2012) communicates that tourism incomes benefit the “better educated and well-off segment of society” to the detriment of poor communities.

Saner & al. (2015, p. 12) argue about job quality as they specify the following disadvantages “job insecurity, usually with no guarantee of employment from one season to the next, difficulties in getting training, employment-related medical benefits, and recognition of their experience, and unsatisfactory housing and working conditions”. In most destinations, tourism is seasonal and so directly impacting employment from one season to another, leaving locals in a vulnerable position when tourists are rare (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007). Therefore, it is questionable if jobs created through tourism are the best option for locals employed. Finally, the UNWTO (2012) recommends that tourism should not be taken as the solution to eliminate poverty, but as a contributor.

The postcolonial discourse is one critical point to be aware of when discussing poverty alleviation through tourism growth. Theory stipulates that there is a form of dependency

between colonized nations which are often indirectly exploited by more powerful Western and wealthy countries (Tucker & Akama, 2012). Tefler & Sharpley (2016, p. 65) argue that “the external and internal political, economic and institutional structures keep them [colonized countries] in a dependent position relative to developed countries” thus limiting their opportunities to progress. Tucker & Akama (2012) explains how tourists are the main actors in neo-colonialism since they unconsciously support colonizers control over emerging economy countries. A direct relation can be made to tourism employment, where colonizers are most often employers (multinational corporations, tour operating companies, international investors) and colonies are most often the employees (Tucker & Akama, 2012). Finally, tourism development initiatives in colonized countries are influenced by western values and ideologies, since the exploitative relationships to colonizers are far from over (Tucker & Akama, 2012). In this regard, Navarro-Jurado & Nel-lo Andreu (2015, p. 256), indicate that the tourism industry should be managed with “more equitable objectives and greater social justice” which would help in improving the quality of life of poor communities.

2.2.6. Stimulation of the country’s economy

Numerous academics agree that tourism can potentially rise foreign currency revenue, increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP), diversify sources of revenue and increase tax revenue (Navarro-Jurado & Nel-lo Andreu, 2015; Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2015; Lea, 1988). Saner & al. (2015, p. 4) more specifically explain that in emerging economy countries, governments allocate important funding to promote tourism as it is “a key pillar for economic growth”.

Tourism leads to an increase in a country’s GDP, through sales tax, tourism-employed income tax and tourist tax (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). The worldwide contribution is enormous and it is predicted that by 2023, the industry will account for 10 percent of GDP in global economy (Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2015). Although an attractive industry, it presents some important risks of dependency, which especially threaten islands with a limited diversified economy (Navarro-Jurado & Nel-lo Andreu, 2015; Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). In fact, in extreme cases, such as the Maldives, travel and tourism industry can account for over 90 percent of national GDP (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Countries should strive to diversify their economy and maintain a balance with other industries in order to reduce dependency on tourism (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1999; Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2015).

Academics agree on the fact that an overreliance of a country on its tourism industry leads to vulnerability to external factors impacting tourism numbers, especially for poor communities (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007; Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2015; UNWTO, 2012). This can be related to political instability, terrorism, natural disasters or health risks. For example, the Arab Spring revolution, in 2011, left Egypt with half the tourism revenues in 2013 compared to 2010 (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Harrison (2014, p. 199) also highlights that there will be more and more “global and regional financial crises, religious fundamentalism, political unrest and related terrorism and violence” which will have direct impacts on destinations and global mobilities.

The multiplier effect of tourism, even though complex to evaluate and often forgotten, is an important tool to calculate overall economic benefits (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; UNWTO, 2012). Similarly, to employment, there is direct, indirect and induced tourism incomes, from both domestic and international visitors. Induced incomes come from suppliers of tourism goods and services, which themselves purchase goods and services. This process of expenditure continues in successive rounds and results in a multiplier effect which stimulates local economies (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016).

Saner & al. (2015) specify that from a governmental perspective, the main constraint in emerging economy countries is leakages and limited fallouts to local economy. Indeed, economic leakage is a downside of tourism which most academics agree upon (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007). It is the case when most economic benefits are left out of host countries and in the hands of international corporations linked to transportation, accommodation, tour operators and more (UNWTO, 2017). Saner & al. (2015) stipulate that it is the responsibility of governments to secure economic benefits, however in LDCs, most governments cannot manage it. In Kenya up to 60 percent of tourists travel with all-inclusive packages (Sinclair, 1990). The UN Environmental Program indicates that in such cases potential financial gains are diverted, as 80 percent of tourist expenditure is to airlines, hotels and other international companies (Sinclair, 1990). After other forms of leakages, there is only around five percent which will be distributed between local businesses and workers (Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2015). To partly counter this, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (1999) communicate the importance of employing local people to limit expatriate labour and keep revenues in host destinations.

There are two main types of leakages in tourism activity. Import leakage which considers the imports needed to answer tourists' standards in this "luxury and pleasure seeking industry" (2007, p. 152). Indeed, Chok & al. (2007) argue that a variety of quality goods and services is needed for tourist destinations' survival. In lower-income countries, import costs are especially high since there are fewer supplying industries or resources and import leakages can be as high as 40 to 50 percent of tourism earnings, whereas it is 10 to 20 percent in developed countries (Saner, Yiu, & Filadoro, 2015). The other type is export leakage which Saner & al. (2015, p. 11) explain as "when overseas investors who finance the resorts and hotels repatriate their profits back to their country of origin". Again, emerging economy countries are especially disadvantaged since they lack financial resources to invest in tourism infrastructure and through a laissez-faire policy, international tourism investors and developers will take over (Tucker & Akama, 2012).

A brief summary of potential positive and negative impacts has been elaborated in Table 1. Impacts not discussed in the previous section have also been added, to give a more holistic view.

Table 1: Tourism impacts

From: (Harrison, 2014; Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; UNWTO, 2012; MacCannell, 1973; Cooper & Hall, 2008; Janusz, Six, & Vann, 2017)

	Economy	Environment	Socio-cultural
The complexities of integrating Tourism with a sustainable development approach	+Poverty alleviation +Increased employment +Economic diversification +Redistributes wealth from richer nations of the world. +Higher GDP +Improved investment in infrastructure +Increased value of real estate	+Increase protected areas +Enhance environmental values	+Strengthen local culture +Revitalize traditions +Improve infrastructure +Exchange between cultures (host-tourist) +Increase local pride and community spirit +Rising interest in maintaining and preserving historic buildings and sites
	-Creates dependency on the sector	-Travel and carbon footprints	-Commodification of goods and services

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Invisible burden -Economic leakage -Localized inflation and price increases -Seasonal unemployment -Governmental investment in tourism instead of other services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use of locals' resources -Destruction of nature to build infrastructure -Exceeding physical carrying capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pressure on local infrastructure -Feeling of alienation in residents own community -Loss of authenticity -Destruction of cultural heritage -Unfair working conditions
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The Theory chapter has been written before the methodology since readings on sustainable tourism development and tourism impacts formed the first phase of the project. Furthermore, I wanted to understand gaps in literature to produce relevant data. I have used the circular process of going back and forth between theory, empirical data and analysis, to create the most valuable work. Interviews shined the spotlight on opportunities and problematics that led me to elaborate on theories I had initially not thought applicable.

Key Theoretical Findings Chapter 2.2. Tourism Impacts

Studying impacts of tourism represents important challenges as it is highly contextual and complex. Direct as well as indirect consequences of tourist activity needs to be assessed on the short and long terms.

Academics argue different positions on impacts of tourism growth, but they agree that the overall objective is to be able to harvest and strengthen positive impacts, while minimizing negative ones, so that tourism contributions to economic, socio-cultural and environmental development are optimized (World Tourism Organization, 2018; Hall, Gossling, & Scott, 2015; Harrison, 2014).

3. METHODOLOGY

The following chapter explains the academic approach, literature review, research design and data collection methods which compose this study. Informants will be introduced as well as why they were chosen. Finally, there will be an overview of data analysis and a discussion on limitations and critics of the research design.

Methodological considerations have been reflected upon and chosen in order to achieve the final objective of this project which is to answer the following question:

How can V.O.S. contribute to the achievement of Goal 11, Sustainable Cities and communities, from the UNSDGs, through their guided tours in Ilulissat?

More specifically, the following overarching sub-research questions will be addressed:

1. How can the UNSDGs be used as a framework for tourism development in Greenland?
2. How does tourism affect the cultural heritage in Ilulissat?
3. How does tourism impact local environment with a focus on waste management in Ilulissat?

3.1. Social Science

Natural sciences seek specific patterns, regularities, definite predictions and recurrent connections in actions and events. Whereas social science, seeks to get an understanding of the complex world we live in. Indeed, the social world is made up of a variation of different experiences, people living these experiences, sharing them with others and telling about them (Pickering, et al., 2002). As Flyvbjerg (2001) explains, strengths of social sciences lie particularly in “reflexive analysis and debate over meanings, values and interests” (Pickering, et al., 2002, p. 401). Therefore, regarding tourism studies as a social science is extremely relevant, especially in this case where natural science is weak (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Moreover, Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 42) highlights complexities of the social world as he argues “the problem in the study of human activity is that every attempt at a context-free definition of an action, that is, a definition based on abstract rules or laws, will not necessarily accord with the pragmatic way an action is defined by the actors in a concrete social situation”.

Tribe (2004) argues that tourism research has been marginalized by what he calls gatekeepers, whom steer research agendas and have power over knowledge production. In fact, he states that “tourism knowledge exerts a subtle power to define, to objectify, to foreground some issues, to privilege some groups, to leave some issues untouched, to exclude other groups” (Tribe, 2004, p. 57). Moreover, one of Tribes’ (2004, p. 52) paradigms demonstrates that “knowledge is not independent of, but rather is conditioned by, the particular culture or society in which it is produced”. Therefore, knowledge produced on the same topic, might differ from one researcher to another, as the latter are affected by their surroundings and this influences their understandings. Objectivity of researchers will be further assessed.

3.1.1. A Phronetic approach

Flyvbjerg (2006b) explains that epistemic rationality, is based on applying established laws and theories to solve problems, which is in fact more suitable for natural sciences. Considering complexities of social science, a phronetic approach has been chosen to carry this research project as it is more value-based than its alternative epistemic approach. Indeed, objectives of this research is to comprehend how values and interests function together in practical situations, to inform and create knowledge on topics touched upon and to produce “food for thought for the ongoing process of public deliberation, participation and decision making” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 39).

One of Flyvbjerg’s (2006b, p. 40) key elements of phronetic approach forms the base of this project, as he mentions “how values and interests affect different groups in society”. Indeed, analyzing how V.O.S. can contribute to the UNSDGs, requires data collection from multiple stakeholders with differing interests and ideologies. A variety of perspectives will be taken into consideration, which will produce various paths to sustainable tourism development.

Finally, a phronetic social science approach is coherent with the subjective nature and complexities of sustainable tourism development as it recognizes that “there exists no general principle by which all differences can be resolved” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 40). It is also problem-driven and adopts a value-based analysis.

3.1.2. A Social constructivism approach

Many scholars use the terms constructivism and constructionism interchangeably since the distinction between both is thin, but crucial. While social constructionists' approach focuses on artefacts created through social interactions, social constructivists focus on individuals' learning from his interactions in the social world. Scholars define three forms of constructivism in distinct categories: sociological, psychological and radical constructivism. Nevertheless, all categories share the “epistemological assumption that knowledge or meaning is not discovered but constructed by the human mind” (Yilmaz, 2008, p. 163).

The philosophical assumptions supporting my research, is from a social constructivism approach, deriving from social science, which is common in qualitative researches and highly relevant to tourism studies (Creswell, 2013; Crotty, 1998). In order to answer the sub-research questions, I have chosen to draw from a social constructivism approach, as knowledge will be formed through my active involvement in interactions with others and by engaging with my environment and making sense of it. Moreover, this approach recognizes that knowledge created changes through time as perceptions, and beliefs are contextual. This approach is most suitable as it enables to acquire insights on the values and existing constructions of participants in a specific moment. As Crotty (1998) indicates, social constructivists encourage research of specific contexts and collecting information personally to understand settings participants live in. Similarly, Yilmaz (2008) stresses that learning should be situated in the context in which it occurs. However, due to financial and time constraints, it was impossible for this research to be physically conducted in Greenland. Nonetheless, various stakeholders have been visited in their own environment, which permitted to get a sense of their surroundings. Moreover, theory postulates that learning is an active process of knowledge construction which requires building conceptual structures, self-regulation and abstraction in order to interpret new ideas and events, which does not impose one to be in the context studied (Yilmaz, 2008).

3.2. Literature Review

A plethora of information is available online and offline, thus I had to elaborate a strategy for my literature review. Once I had chosen the topic and focus areas of this thesis, I generated

keywords in order to retrieve relevant literature. Following this, I found what topics had already been studied as well as gaps in literature (Bryman, 2008). Indeed, minimal research linking Greenland and the UNSDGs had been done, leaving me with a multitude of unanswered questions. I selected literature within theories and concepts of sustainable tourism development and tourism impacts, which enabled me to get a deeper understanding of my subject. Finally, finding differing opinions among authors was useful to broaden my approach.

3.3. The use of a Case Study

The use of case studies has been criticized by many researchers due to for example its context-dependent knowledge, which restricts contributions to scientific development. The Dictionary of Sociology also asserts that “a case study cannot provide reliable information about the broader class” (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1984, p. 34). Moreover, there are critics on researchers preconceived notions of case studies which lead to issues regarding subjectivity, reliability and validity (Flyvbjerg, 2006a). However, Flyvbjerg (2006a) has been elaborating arguments against some previous negative perspectives as he underlines benefits within social sciences and its important role in human learning. Indeed, Flyvbjerg (2006a, p. 222) explains that case studies produce knowledge that allows people to “develop from rule-based beginners to virtuoso experts” and that with context-independent facts, academics would stay in a beginner level. Yilmaz (2008) agrees as he specifies that researching in specific contexts is beneficial and enables knowledge to be constructed in the most suitable manner. Furthermore, this is aligned with Harvard University’s approach that communicate “Forget the conventional wisdom, go ahead and do a case study” recognized worldwide for their teaching methods (Flyvbjerg, 2006a, p. 223).

Therefore, taking these arguments in account, this thesis will use the empirical context of Ilulissat in Greenland as a case study. The latter will permit readers to understand among others, tourism development realities in Greenland and effects it has on the UNSDGs. Moreover, as explained in the theoretical chapter, sustainable tourism development is a *wicked problem* due to its multiple complexities and so having a specific case to investigate will decrease these complexities.

3.4. Research Design

As Tribe (2004) explains, tourism is a phenomenon that can be studied from diverse disciplines but does not provide a distinctive way of analyzing the world. Even though tourism can be analyzed through different concepts, they are rarely particular to tourism studies and have been contextualized to bring a tourism dimension (Tribe, 2004). This thesis will focus on the three pillars of sustainability: sociology, economics and environment. The targets from the UNSDGs will be used as targets of sustainable tourism development of Ilulissat.

The following section will discuss qualitative and quantitative research, as well as inductive and deductive research and reasons why certain methodological decisions were taken.

3.4.1. Qualitative and quantitative research

According to Hannam and Knox (2010) combining qualitative and quantitative methods, is most appropriate in dynamic research projects. This is aligned with Tribe (2004) stating that simply using quantitative methods in tourism research is often not enough and he highlights the shift from quantitative towards qualitative approaches in tourism studies. Qualitative methodologies are dominant in this project, but there will also be quantitative methods to create a balance.

Hannam and Knox (2010, p. 175) argue numerous benefits of qualitative methods and claim that they are most appropriate to understand “complex motivations, desires, feelings and opinions” of tourism stakeholders, which is highly relevant in tourism development research. Hennink & al. (2011) are aligned as they explain that qualitative methods are best suited for understanding people’s motives and behaviours. Moreover, qualitative techniques are also used to offer information to develop quantitative research further (Decrop, 1999). Some natural science researchers criticize these methods due to a lack rigor and credibility (Decrop, 1999). Thus, to counter this, various methods are used to complement each other for instance, in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews and participant observations within V.O.S. Undoubtedly, letting individuals explain themselves in their own words and according to their perspectives will help to gain deeper insights of the subject. Yet minimal, there will be

quantitative methods as it will provide a wider perspective about tourism in Greenland and the UNSDGs. This is mainly through Statistics Greenland website and reports from VG.

This research project is aligned with interpretivism as Decrop (1999) argues, qualitative methods are approached by interpretivism while positivism is more inclined towards quantitative research. Indeed, interpretivists claim for a “multiple and socially constructed reality” and they focus on specific and unique contexts to understand and generate interpreted meanings (Decrop, 1999, p. 157).

3.4.2. Deductive and inductive research

This research uses a dual approach, both deductive and inductive, in order to be more reliable, valid and accurate (Hannam & Knox, 2010). The project will partly use the deductive approach, where the theoretical frames of sustainability and tourism impacts, will contribute to the analysis. As Hannam & Knox (2010) argue, these theories will influence questions asked in interviews, through testing of hypotheses.

The inductive approach is also important as too few academics have evaluated DMO's contributions to the achievement of the UNSDGs. Inductively, data will be collected, without any preconceived ideas, to get a better understanding of this specific situation of VG and inform on the discourse.

3.4.3. Trustworthiness

As mentioned, the qualitative approach used can affect trustworthiness of this research. In this regard, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 111) have elaborated four precise criteria for qualitative methods which parallel quantitative inquiry:

- 1. Credibility (internal validity): How truthful are particular findings?*
- 2. Transferability (external validity): How applicable are the research findings to another setting or group?*
- 3. Dependability (reliability): Are the results consistent and reproducible?*
- 4. Confirmability (objectivity): How neutral are the findings (in terms of the researcher's biases and prejudices)?*

These criteria are crucial to reflect upon while creating knowledge and as Decrop (1999) mentions, they must be implemented in research design. This is mainly done through triangulation which incorporates different methods when analyzing a specific phenomenon, as it enhances trustworthiness of research (Smith, 1975). Theoretically, triangulation implies that “a single point is considered from three different and independent sources” or from at least more than one source of data (Decrop, 1999, p. 158). The various angles information is coming from, can be used to contradict, corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research problem (Decrop, 1999). Additionally, it can prevent potential personal biases and one-sidedness and enhance accuracy and validity (Jick, 1979).

As suggested by myriad academics advocating triangulation, I have used interviews, observations, VG’s Tourism Strategy 2016-2019 report and newspaper articles on Greenland. Using these multiple techniques, which are formed by different interests, “paves the way for more credible and dependable information” (Decrop, 1999, p. 159). Finally, triangulating theory and empirical data, enabled me to incorporate views and interests of multiple stakeholders with theories, to get a deep understanding of the topic.

3.5. Data Collection Techniques

This section will present the informants, their backgrounds and aims of interviews. Moreover, considerations and decisions made to conduct interviews will be presented.

3.5.1. The informants

Choosing informants was central in the process of data collection, as they influence directions of analysis. Thus, it was important to have informants from various backgrounds, age, gender, education, and so on, that have an ability to provide useful knowledge on topics studied. These participants were also believed to be able to talk on behalf of their organizations or communities to create as wide insight as possible. Mind maps have been elaborated, during various moments, to discover which actors were most relevant to these criteria and how they were linked to each other.

Identification	Role	Background	Objective of the interview
S	Visit Greenland Senior Consultant	Around 40 years old woman. Senior Consultant - Marketing, PR & Relationship Management of VG since six years. She has lived 10 years in Greenland and been working in tourism industry for over 15 years.	As a core stakeholder in Greenlandic tourism, I want to understand VG's idea of sustainable development. I want to know what is driving them and how they position themselves in achieving the UNSDGs.
R	V.O.S. Greenland Specialist	French, 26 years old woman, employed for three years as sales manager in French department, and now Greenland Specialist, working directly with C.	With her focus on Greenland, I want to be aware of her understandings of sustainability which would influence her decisions, learn about the type of tours she is planning, and her relationship with VG.
C	V.O.S. Product Development Manager	Italian man over 35 years of age, employed for six years at V.O.S., as Italian department manager and recently promoted as Product Developer. He has been tourist guide in Scandinavia and Greenland.	With his years of experience in V.O.S., I want to get general knowledge of the company and his vision on developing Greenland. He is also in a position to reveal challenges of guiding tourists in Greenland.
K	Local Tourism Developer in Ilulissat	Over 60 years old Danish man whom has worked for 13 years in developing tourism in Ilulissat. He founded Ice Cap Tours and was the managing director of Destination Disko.	K is an important actor in tourism in Ilulissat. He has a lot of experience in development and directly with tourists. I wanted to learn his aims and fears of increasing tourist numbers.
D	PhD Student conducting research in Greenland	35-year-old German woman living in Denmark. She is a tourism academic whom conducted numerous researches in Greenland in the past years.	Get deeper knowledge of specific points of sustainable development in a Greenlandic context. I also want to ensure that I am aware of subjects omitted in literature, but that are still relevant.

Hannam & Knox (2010) mention how each interview requires a significant amount of time and resources, which limits the quantity a researcher can conduct, and highlights the importance of choosing accurate participants. In relation to this, it has not been possible to achieve sampling saturation. However, considering the diversity of characteristics present in the sampling, it is possible to mention that data collected represent relevant and varied social realities to have a sense of the phenomenon and answer the research question. I could of conducted more

interviews, but as Kvale (1997) indicate, interviews are chosen to provide sufficient data to answer the problem statement, without overburdening the analysis.

3.5.2. Interview techniques

For this project, an important amount of data was collected through interviews. Dwyer & al. (2012, p. 365) indicates “as with most qualitative techniques, interviewing is especially effective when the research question at hand requires depth and specificity. This method is well-suited for issue-oriented research questions or problems” which explains why it was chosen for this type of research project. There are many other advantages such as adaptability to a range of topics, creating rich, descriptive and illustrative examples of individual’s experiences, and the interactive structure of interviews enhancing validity and accuracy (Dwyer, Gill, & Seetaram, 2012). Holstein & Gubrium (1995) indicate benefits of using the same questions in different interviews in order to understand varying views and to reflect on how reliable answers are. Therefore, this was considered when elaborating questions. While interviews create relevant knowledge on a subject, it is important to be aware of limitations such as time-consuming and poor quality if major status differences between interviewee and interviewer (Dwyer, Gill, & Seetaram, 2012). Moreover, Andersen (2010) indicates the risk of communication through email, as there can be issues of unanswered questions and misunderstandings. Hence, all interviews were done face-to-face. Finally, multiple other considerations were reflected upon, before conducting the interviews, such as the type, structure, surroundings and language.

Active interviews

Tribe (2004, p. 56) criticizes the unequal power relations between researcher and researched, but addresses this by recommending the use of interpretive methods even though the latter does not escape effects of ideology “how a regime of beliefs that directs the thought and practices of those who inhibit it” and hegemony “how particular ideas dominate thinking in society”.

Both interviewees and interviewer had active roles in the interview, which resulted in collaboration between both parties and co-construction of social realities according to constructivism. Holstein & Gubrium (1995) explain that active interviews create knowledge, which is beneficial for both individuals, rather than just transferring knowledge. For instance,

I have shared my knowledge of VG's Tourism Strategy to the V.O.S. employees whom did not know about it. Unconsciously, this made us feel on the same level where both I and them were in a learning process.

Semi-structured interviews

The interviews were semi-structured as questions had been prepared beforehand, but deviations were frequent. I was aiming to get interviewees perspective of among others tourism impacts in Greenland, and I added or modified some questions in order to go deeper in some areas. Bryman (2008) underlines the importance of flexibility with the willingness to ask open questions and follow them up with improvised sub-questions. As Hannam & Knox (2010) claim, semi-structured interviews are informal and open to direction and input from both actors, which is essential to create an informal atmosphere required to collect relevant information. In addition, as a result of social construction of knowledge, both the researcher and research subject negotiate meanings and understandings (Hannam & Knox, 2010). I structured the interviews with questions on both sustainable tourism development and on the UNSDGs, with socio-cultural, environmental and economic focus, to understand informants' knowledge on the subjects. Also, I followed Flyvbjerg's (2006b) four value-rational questions as guidelines of the interviews, where indirectly I was collecting data on: *1) Where are we going? 2) Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power? 3) Is this development desirable? 4) What, if anything, should we do about it?*

Surroundings and language

The location of interviews is significant in creating an informal environment able to lead to knowledge sharing. Trøst & Jeremiassen (2010) indicate that there are three vital points when considering interview surroundings: no disturbance, no unintended listeners, and the informant needs to feel comfortable. Therefore, the two interviews with V.O.S. were conducted in a private room in the company's office, where no one else was present and it was calm and quiet, in order for both the interviewer and interviewee to fully focus. Similarly, VG and PhD student's interviews was conducted in their offices, while I met informant K in a restaurant.

All the interviews were conducted in English, even though it was not the mother tongue of any informants. The language was agreed beforehand to make sure interviewees felt comfortable.

Transparency

When planning the interviews, I roughly mentioned the theme of my project; Sustainable tourism development in Greenland and the UNSDGs, so that informants would have an idea of what to expect. Nonetheless, I did not want to share my specific research question as it could influence or change behaviours.

3.6. Data Analysis

To start the analysis in an efficient manner, it was important to have data in a usable format. Therefore, all interviews were transcribed, and visual charts were created to present data appropriately. Even though time consuming, I highly valued transcriptions as it enables one to engage directly with the interviews (Kvale, 1997). Having a transcription also allows to come back to specific sections and understand details that might have slipped away during the interview. Moreover, it permits specific references to be made and quotations to be taken and added in the text. Most importantly, it enhances the quality and of the interviews. Indeed, taking an audio recording enables the interviewer to be more active in conversations, instead of trying to take numerous notes (Kvale, 1997). The process of forming themes and grouping data indicate important findings of the project (Hannam & Knox, 2010).

I analyzed qualitative data with an interpretivist epistemology approach (Bryman, 2008). Indeed, I interpreted, clarified and explained data according to my own understanding of information, which can be perceived as subjective. In fact, Tribe criticizes the fact that the analysis of tourism knowledge “points to hidden values, tacit understandings, taken-for-granted assumptions and therefore unintended consequences in the outcomes and results of research” (2004, p. 58). However as explained in the section trustworthiness, triangulation is vital to oppose potential critics (Decrop, 1999). As a social constructivist I agree that “knowledge is certainly temporary, non-objective, internally constructed, developmental, and socially and culturally mediated” and it is created through my involvement in social interactions (Yilmaz, 2008, p. 168). As Flyvbjerg (2006b) explains, informants’ narratives provide a strong source of data that can be used to support hypothesis. He (Flyvbjerg, 2006b, p.40) also indicates that interpretations are an ongoing process that have no right or wrong answers, but “better” ways

of explaining a phenomenon will replace old interpretations. Thus, highlighting constant improvement in the elaboration of this research.

Finally, data analysis was elaborated according to targets of Goal 11 and according to sub-research questions. The interaction with relevant literature from sustainability and tourism impacts, ensured a solid ground throughout the project.

3.7. Limitations and Critiques

As previously mentioned in this chapter, the core of primary data collected was through qualitative methods as it was most suitable for this research. The most advanced form of understandings comes when researchers place themselves in the context studied (Hannam & Knox, 2010; Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, this project has been written without visiting Greenland, limiting opportunities of possible data collection. Indeed, it would have been interesting to interview local inhabitants whom are living in Ilulissat. However, it must be taken into consideration that even though the place of context was not physically explored, all primary and secondary data have contributed to my knowledge and understanding of the destination.

Sub-conclusion Chapter 3. Methodology

The phronetic social science approach used throughout this research is relevant to study complexities of sustainable tourism development as it adopts a value-based analysis. In order to answer the sub-research questions, I have chosen to draw from a social constructivism approach, as knowledge is created through my active involvement in interactions with others in a specific moment and by engaging and making sense of my environment. Researching on the specific case of Ilulissat was necessary to limit complexities of the social world. In order to enhance trustworthiness of qualitative research, triangulation of empirical data was achieved. I have conducted five interviews with critical actors, from differing backgrounds and missions. These interviews created relevant knowledge for the analysis.

4. ANALYSIS

The following chapter will provide an analysis of targets of Goal 11, which have been cautiously selected to address the three pillars of sustainable tourism development. Firstly, to set the grounds, there will be a section on the UNSDGs as a framework in a Greenlandic context. Following this, there is two main parts, which will answer a sub-research question by analyzing targets from Goal 11; *Protection of Ilulissat's cultural heritage* and *Minimize environmental impacts*.

An analysis of empirical data on the case study and theory on sustainability and tourism impacts will generate knowledge which will be used to formulate this chapter. The chapter Concluding thoughts, will bring these findings together to answer the main research question **How can V.O.S. contribute to the achievement of Goal 11, Sustainable Cities and communities, from the UNSDGs, through their guided tours in Ilulissat?**

4.1. Tourism Growth in Ilulissat - An urge for Sustainable Practices

This sub-section aims to respond to the first sub research question: How can the UNSDGs be used as a framework for tourism development in Greenland?

In recent years, Greenland has been welcoming more and more visitors. In fact, between 2016 and 2017, there was an increase of approximately 10 percent, which resulted in over 85 000 guests during 2017 (Árnadóttir, 2019). This is partly a result from two of the most influential travel media who recognized the uniqueness of Greenland, in 2016. Indeed, Lonely Planet listed Greenland in their *Top 10 Best in Travel* and National Geographic as their *Traveller's Top 20* publications (Stenbakken, 2017). Moreover, VG indicated that there are increasingly more foreign travel agencies adding Greenland to their portfolios (Stenbakken, 2017). This is the case for V.O.S., as employee C mentioned an increase in interest from their clients, which encouraged them to start developing tours to this new destination (Appendix 3, p.16). Tour operating company V.O.S. will start offering group guided tours to Ilulissat in December 2019. Although a small quantity of tourists at first, they will nonetheless contribute to a greater increase in tourism and so, enhance economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts.

Therefore, it is crucial that V.O.S. respects the framework set by UNSDGs in order to contribute to the sustainable development of this Greenlandic town.

Undoubtedly Greenland, more specifically Ilulissat, offers exceptional experiences to visitors which is becoming more and more known worldwide. All informants agreed that natural landscapes as well as culture are unique. Interviewee S (Appendix 1, p.2), who has lived in this country for over 10 years, elaborated

“There are other destinations out there that can give you some of the experiences Greenland has to offer. If you want to see icebergs you can go to Antarctica, they are humongous there. If you want to see northern lights, you can go to Norway and if you want to see whales you can go elsewhere in the Caribbean [...] But I think it is the combination of all these experiences dog sledding as well with an indigenous population, with a very strong still extremely alive culture. This mix of nature, culture, history, indigenous people, amazing landscape, it is this cocktail mix that makes Greenland very different.”

Similarly, interviewee R specified a few times that “this destination has the full potential” referring to northern lights, glaciers, beautiful landscapes and winter and summer activities (Appendix 2, p.14). While Ren & al. share that wild rocky landscapes, changing weather and inaccessibility make it a “mystical” and “forbidden land” (Ren, Rastad Bjørst, & Dredge, 2016). These are only a few of the factors making Greenland an attractive destination for tourists.

VG indicates in their strategy “It is difficult to think that anyone would disagree that this growth in tourism should benefit Greenland and its population, but this will not happen automatically” (Stenbakken, 2017, p. 19). Indeed, it is the responsibility of Greenland tourism stakeholders to implement an aligned and realistic framework to ensure this. Similarly, informant D explained that Greenlandic DMO’s want an increase in tourist numbers, but they are “aware that it is not going to be positive if they do nothing” (Appendix 5, p. 33). In this matter, in March 2019, D participated in a tourism manifest meeting on community guidelines, where DMO’s discussed measurements and actions to take to ensure benefits for municipalities (Appendix 5, p.29). Moreover, The Nordic Tourism Policy, published in March 2019, stated “there is growing

awareness of the fragile relationship between tourism and sustainability among the general public in the Nordic countries as well as in the political sphere” (Árnadóttir, 2019, p. 48). Therefore, politicians, policy makers and tourism companies are facing an increasing pressure to act accordingly. Finally, this highlights the importance of using Goal 11 as a framework to ensure the sustainable development of Ilulissat. However, is the UNSDGs adapted to fit in a Greenlandic context?

4.1.1. The UNSDGs as a framework

A starting point is to be aware of the different tourism actors’ understandings of the UNSDGs. More specifically, the five individuals interviewed hold a strategic role in the development of tourism in Greenland, as their work functions give them capacity to develop tourism aligned with the UN Goals. As explained by Hall & al. (2015) stakeholders have various interests and ideologies that has been forged by their social context (language, culture, background), which influence their perceptions and priority of implementation of the UNSDGs. Thus, asking about their opinions and knowledge on the topic was vital.

Actors enthusiasm and challenges

K, who has been developing tourism in Greenland for the last 13 years, has very limited knowledge about the UNSDGs as he recently heard about them. Nonetheless, he believes that people should be aware of them, focus on them and act accordingly. K hires local entrepreneurs to provide experiences to his guests. His strategic position makes him a central actor in setting sustainable benchmarks or objectives. However, it is uncertain that he will assess and modify his tours to become more sustainable, after learning about the UNSDGs.

Similarly, C, V.O.S. Product Development Manager, did not know about the UNSDGs before the interview, but showed a great interest in them. The other V.O.S. employee R, had read a report and is somewhat aware of the different goals. She is in favour of implementing the goals in Greenland especially due to the climate change effects. According to my observations during the last months working at V.O.S., the core mission of the company is surely profitability. Currently V.O.S. is not integrating UNSDGs in their products, and employees R and C have not taken specific actions towards sustainable tourism in Greenland as they lack knowledge.

Responses from these informants demonstrate the usefulness of this project and the urgent need to produce, develop and share knowledge on the topic.

S recognizes the responsibility of VG to create a frame that focuses on ways to achieve the goals. Interestingly, their Strategy 2016-2019 has not a single reference to the UNSDGs. Nonetheless, the section *To Visit Greenland, Responsible Tourism Development* elaborates points that are comparable to Goal 11's targets (Appendix 7, p. 35) (Stenbakken, 2017). With the global increasing awareness of the 17 Goals, VG has planned to integrate them in their next tourism strategy, 2020-2023, which will be more target oriented and focus on the Goals 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 12 (Responsible production and consumption) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). When asked about specifically Goal 11, informant S explained that they are working on a national level and this goal applies on a regional level (Appendix 1, p.5). Moreover, S mentioned that it is impossible to focus on all goals (Appendix 1, p.4). Finally, VG recognizes that tourism activity is sensitive to the effects of nature, environment and culture, hence there needs to be a stronger focus on responsibility and sustainability, to be able to develop without straining resources. Therefore, even if VG does not specifically mention the UNSDGs in its strategic plan, many aspects demonstrate that they are aligned.

Informant D shared a similar view as S, she believes that “no country can actually fulfil all the goals” and “they are quite ambitious” (Appendix 5, p. 31). Acknowledging this, S indicates “we cannot achieve them alone that is why I like the goal 17 [Partnerships for the Goals] it is a priority because we need cooperation to be able to actually achieve these sustainable goals we are aiming for” (Appendix 1, p. 4). VG strategic approach takes into account the company's size and their need to optimize human resources, by collaborating with stakeholders on a regional, national and international level to create “synergy, co-ownership and co-financing” (Árnadóttir, 2019, p. 39). V.O.S. has already been in contact with VG to learn about the destinations and tourism opportunities. Informant S shared that she has a desire to see their relationship grow in the coming years, which would be a benefit not only for both parties, but also for the destination as a whole (Appendix 1, p.3). As the DMO, VG has authority to promote responsible practices.

While informant D is in favour of the goals acting as a framework for nations, she criticizes that they were developed in a western context and she is having issues with “one framework

that fits all” (Appendix 5, p. 31). Indeed, countries have different access to resources in order to develop, hence this will impact their likelihood to fulfil these ambitious goals. The UN explained during the General Assembly in 2015, that there are “different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve sustainable development” (2015, p. 13). Thus, it indicates a consideration of the potential of each country. The next section will therefore specifically analyze the goals with a Greenlandic approach.

4.1.2. Implementing the UNSDGs in a Greenlandic context

The Nordic countries have incorporated the Agenda 2030 of the UNSDGs into national policy objectives (Árnadóttir, 2019). Moreover, these countries are perceived as having an emphasize and value for sustainability (Árnadóttir, 2019). Informant C believes that the Nordic countries “are already very much ahead” compared to other destinations where more work is needed, to reach these goals (Appendix 3, p. 17). This indicates that C sees Greenland on the same development level as other Nordic countries, which is highly contestable. In fact, it is difficult to approach Greenland in the same manner as other wealthy and developed countries. Even though it is the world’s largest non-continental island, it shares challenges of small developing island states in regard to for example: “distance from markets, limited economic diversity, lack of expertise, difficulty of attracting investment, high seasonality and highly sensitive environments” (Ren, Rastad Bjørst, & Dredge, 2016, p. 2). Moreover, Greenland faces numerous socio-economic problems like “the high rate of unemployment and seasonal depression” which lead to important levels of alcoholism, domestic violence and suicide (Shackel, 2011, p. 82). In fact, Greenland has the highest suicide rate in the world (Greenland Statistics, 2017).

Therefore, even if Greenland wants to achieve the goals, their fulfilling capacity is limited due to social-economic issues. Informant D explains this as “there is a gap between where those goals come from and where they should be applied. Different countries have different means on doing them” (Appendix 5, p. 31). On an economic point of view, Greenland is classed as an emerging economy country which is struggling for self-sufficiency. In fact, this self-governed Danish territory is highly reliant on their mother country which subsidises more than 50 percent of government revenues (Index Mundi, 2018). This financial burden is likely to increase in the

next years due to an aging population, a negative net migration and low fertility rate (The Arctic Institute, 2018). Moreover, implementing the goals is highly contextualized as even from one region to another, resources differ. It is necessary to take in account the situation of the town studied and as D recommended, “they [the goals] need to be adjusted to the specific capacities and needs of the communities and also the way to apply them and implement them” (Appendix 5, p. 31). In this regard, there has been a focus on Ilulissat which has specific opportunities in implementing the UNSDGs.

The following three sections will analyze how tourism growth is affecting targets of Goal 11; *Sustainable cities and communities*.

Key Findings Section 4.1. Tourism growth and the urge for sustainable practices

The growing popularity of Ilulissat is increasing tourist numbers, which consequently enhance effects on the area. Three of the five informants interviewed have insufficient knowledge on the UNSDGs even though they are influential actors in the development of Ilulissat.

Using the UNSDGs as a framework for tourism, is complex as it assumes Greenland has similar capacities than other wealthier countries. However, the country faces numerous socio-economic difficulties as well as geographical challenges. It is crucial to adapt the UN goals in a Greenlandic context in order to produce relevant knowledge on the topic.

4.2. Target 1: Protection of the Cultural heritage

With tourism growth in Greenland, it is necessary to be aware of the impacts on the cultural heritage. Literature on socio-cultural sustainability demonstrates the importance of protecting the authenticity of host communities, historical assets and traditions, for future generations to enjoy their cultural heritage. Tourism can ensure preservation of the latter, notwithstanding it

can also lead to social unrest and cultural instability. Egede (2017, p. 1) stresses the importance of the native Greenlanders' culture in the achievement of the UNSDGs as he states "I would also like to emphasize the value of getting native Arctic people's cultures involved and appreciated in the work of implementing the sustainable development goals".

This section will analyze the first target from Goal 11, which focuses on protecting cultural heritage. It will answer the sub-research question: *How does tourism affect the cultural heritage in Ilulissat?* First there will be an analysis of *Host-Guest Encounters* with a spotlight on languages and photograph issues. Following this, *Economic benefits for locals* will be discussed, as well as *Revitalizing dog sledding Traditions*. Finally, the determining factor of *Size of groups* will be addressed.

Kallallit Nunaat, which means Greenland in local language, is translated to "the country of the Greenlanders" (Greenland Statistics, 2017). Without elaborating the colonial context of Greenlandic history, it is important to note the complex relationship between natives and foreigners. Even though exploitation of Greenland's resources has been of foreign interest for many years, most inhabitants remain natives. In 2016, net migration was -312, meaning that more people have left than entered the country (Greenland Statistics, 2017). Remoteness, climate and limited resources are some of the phenomenon's reasons. It is only recently that Greenland became a touristic destination, which increased the contact between foreigners and natives. According to literature, the process of acculturation where foreigners and locals borrow from one another's cultures, has not been as strong compared to countries with higher immigration populations. This is one reason why Greenland has a "very strong still extremely alive culture" (Appendix 1, p. 2). Nonetheless, Greenlanders will be integrating more and more international values and lifestyles in the coming decades. Tefler & Sharpley stipulate that tourism greatly contributes to acculturation and the dominated, referring to hosts in emerging economy countries, will borrow from the dominant; wealthy tourists (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016).

Theoretically, tourism can provide economic incentives "to invest in, promote and preserve local cultural patrimony" (United Nations Economic and Social Council, 1999, p. 8). In Greenland, expenditure in culture passed from 169 million Danish Kroner in 2011, to 188 million Danish Kroner in 2016, an increase of 11 percent (Greenland Statistics, 2017). During the same years, overnight stays passed from 73801 to 96222, a 30 percent increase (Greenland

Statistics, 2017). This project is not positioned to connect expenditure increase solely to tourism, nonetheless, it certainly acts as an incentive. In Ilulissat, the municipality focus on preserving two main cultural districts: firstly, the trade and administration district which has architectural heritage from up to 300 years ago, during colonial times. Secondly, the church and museum district including Zion church, a town museum and a chapel, which are listed on Act no. 11 “cultural heritage preservation of cultural relics and monuments” by Greenland Parliament (QaasuitsupMunicipality, 2017). The municipality recognizes the value of preserving these sites as they state “taking advantage of the architectural heritage are important for further developing tourism” (QaasuitsupMunicipality, 2017). Therefore, this indicates that the municipality is theoretically aware of benefits of preserving physical sites, however cultural heritage is beyond buildings and institutions. The municipality does not mention a desire to preserve traditions and local way of life.

This following section will study the effects of tourism on the Greenlandic cultural heritage in Ilulissat, with a focus on non-physical culture, by analyzing different factors which V.O.S. needs to be aware of and reflect upon.

4.2.1. Host-Guest encounters

When analyzing tourism impacts on the target *Protection of Cultural Heritage*, one needs to understand the outcomes and risks of host-guest encounters as guests interfere in good and bad ways with local life. Theoretically, the UNWTO claims that host-guest encounters contribute to “intercultural understanding and tolerance”. Interestingly, informants have indicated how tourists learn from local’s way of life. In fact, C mentioned that after traveling to Greenland, tourists will often talk about this culture to their networks and bring back home memories and even characteristic of Greenlandic lifestyle (Appendix 3, p.19). By showcasing distinct characteristics of their way of life, history and culture, tourism can produce a sense of pride and identity to communities. Interviewee R stated “the way Greenlanders live is so unique so they [foreigners] can only learn from them and realize how spoiled we are” implying fishing and hunting traditions and living in harmony with nature. Informant S had a similar understanding as she stated (Appendix 1, p.2);

“people go often there because they were attracted by nature, but what they bring back with them is the local interaction that is what they remember the most. The local guide, the smile they get from people in the street, the children playing and their different approach to life”.

Interestingly, these narratives contrast how media has been framing Greenlanders; high rates of alcoholism, drug addiction, domestic violence and depression. This may be related to the front and backstage, where tourists only witness superficially Greenlanders’ everyday life and socio-economic problematics are blurred (Trandberg Jensen, 2014).

Academics stress that in emerging economy countries such as Greenland, encounters are unbalanced and are more likely to lead to negative impacts, where locals can feel resentment or inferiority in front of well-off tourists (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). In this matter, R see benefits unidirectionally as she wonders what Greenlanders could learn from tourists. Nonetheless, she believes that locals are happy to share their culture with foreigners because “they are very proud people who want to maintain the land and talk about it” (Appendix 2, p.12). According to academics, as long as residents’ daily life is not altered, and their values are respected, sharing culture to foreigners is not degrading cultural heritage (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). Interviewee C from V.O.S was aware of the vitality of respecting locals and not interfering “too much with their daily life, their traditions and their culture” (Appendix 3, p.18). However, data does not prove that in practice C knows how to be aligned with theory.

Finally, the UNWTO advocates that intercultural contacts are a way to achieve greater international harmony. Tefler & Sharpley (2016) disagree especially when visits are constrained temporally, which is the case for V.O.S. groups as they will be in Ilulissat for only two to four days. Additionally, groups will follow a structured program so exchanges are mostly pre-planned such as “kaffemik” which will be explained in section 5.2.2. *Economic benefits for locals*, and cross-cultural communication is minimal, which all decreases intercultural betterment.

The language

The depth of encounters depends partly on language ability (Lea, 1988). Natives speak Greenlandic and learn Danish as a second language and some also learn English. S mentioned

that in the industry, local operators are generally able to communicate in English, however the problematic comes from unilingual visitors (Appendix 1, p. 3). V.O.S. biggest market is France and their clientele most often does not speak English. Informant S, which has worked in tourism for over a decade and is originally from France, revealed that French, Germans and Spanish, expect hosts to speak their languages (Appendix 1, p. 3). Thus, in these cases, cross-cultural communication is minimal and benefits from host-guests encounters are reduced. V.O.S., groups will have multilingual foreign guides to translate, however Lea (1988) stipulate that intermediary actors limit potential benefits of these encounters. VG employee, S, explains that if it is foreign guides showing Greenland;

“guests will be missing on the local experience [...] the local guides and companies have a know-how from the destination that foreigner guides do not have. They can share stories about how it is in Greenland, how it was when they were children or how the country has developed. They can talk about myths and legends that foreigners would not have”.

Local developer K explained that foreign guides can tell tourists how Greenland is, but he claimed “the more Greenlanders tourists meet, the more authentic it is going to be” (Appendix 4, p.24). This statement challenges theory as the more tourists Greenlanders meet, the more they are shaped by tourism. Moreover, K believes that quantity is a determining factor of authenticity which is also contradictory as a profound interaction with one local resident can offer greater benefits (Appendix 4, p.24). This is the perception of a tourism developer, but literature does not show it is the case, thus the quantity is not a determining factor of authenticity.

Briefly, narratives coming from local voices, whom have knowledge passed to them since many generations is the best way to share culture. V.O.S. needs to manage expectations of guests, regarding language barriers, and encourage contact with locals.

Photograph issues

Two informants had a similar answer when they were asked to give an advice to tour operating companies in order to have more responsible tourism. Both D and K described a problematic locals are facing: “in Ilulissat they have big problems with tourists running over to city taking

pictures into private homes as well as taking pictures of the kindergarten and the kids that are playing” (Appendix 5, p.31). While K also indicated “if local people are in their national clothing [...] you often see tourists coming with their cameras and pushing the local people on the side so they can have a good picture of them” (Appendix 4, p.22). He related this behaviour explicitly to cruise ship tourists and mentioned how disrespectful it is. This results in an ethical issue as it stigmatizes privacy and might influence Greenlanders’ desire to publicly walk in their traditional uniforms. To tackle this problem, D explained that municipalities are elaborating guidelines for tourists, on how they should behave in relation to people, culture differences and the environment (Appendix 5, p.31). There are even signs in the city, indicating that one is not allowed to take pictures of children.

This is becoming a common issue in destinations around the world. In this matter, the consumer-oriented campaign “Travel.Enjoy.Respect” launched by the UNWTO raises the awareness of tourists to respect nature, culture and hosts. There is also the manual *Tips for a Responsible Traveller*, which provides a list of recommendations for responsible choices. Under the section *Honour your hosts and our common heritage* it is recommended to always ask before taking a photograph of someone (World Tourism Organization, 2018, p. 61).



Figure 5: School children wearing traditional clothing in Ilulissat
From (Visit Greenland, 2017b)

Finally, if locals feel disturbed in their everyday life, or when attending special events wearing their traditional clothing, it will deteriorate their perception of tourism. In fact, K explained that Greenlanders are open minded and glad to see foreigners, however they become slightly angry if foreigners do not respect their daily life (Appendix 4, p.22). Therefore, tour operating companies play an important role in ensuring respectful tourist practices. V.O.S. employee C stated that they try to teach tourists on how to respect locals and their traditions. It is a benefit for locals which in turn will be better hosts, but also for tourists as they are more aware of what to expect and so are able to enjoy more their tour (Appendix 3, p.17).

4.2.2. Economic benefits for locals

Foreign interest in learning about Greenlandic culture has led to opportunities for locals. For instance, Ilulissat Tourist Nature cooperates with local families to offer tourists the opportunity to experience kaffemik, a traditional Greenlandic social event where people gather in a home to drink, eat and socialize. Through this, visitors can visit a Greenlandic home, have contact with residents, see how they live, discuss with them and “find out more about everyday life in the far north” as is advertised on VG’s website (Visit Greenland, 2017b). Certain locals have collaborated with local tourism developer K to offer this type of experience to his groups. However, due to tourism growth over the years, prices increased and K explained that it is becoming too expensive, since locals “think they can have a fortune” (Appendix 4, p.24). It is challenging for a tour operating company wanting to offer cultural activities, while being affordable. R explained that prices need to be kept low for group tours otherwise V.O.S. will not sell, however they still want to “keep a good balance price-quality” (Appendix 2, p.14). Again, V.O.S. focuses on profitability, and as a solution, this type activity will only be for guests paying a supplement and thus greatly valuing the experience.

Undoubtedly, it is beneficial for locals taking advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities as it generates an extra income and livelihoods can be improved. However, two main risks emerge: residents can become reliant of this income which is minimal in low seasons, and traditions can be altered to answer guest demands.

Finally, this exchange of money against cultural practices unfolds on what theory states as staged authenticity, which will be discussed in the following section *Authenticity* (MacCannell, 1973).

Authenticity

The *Nordic Tourism Policy Analysis* states that “Future growth and development within Nordic tourism relies on the countries being able to safeguard the environment and nature, as well as their culture and way of life” (Árnadóttir, 2019, p. 48). This quote indicates how municipalities are responsible for implementing measures to preserve their socio-cultural distinctiveness and prevent undesirable consequences. This is aligned with theory stipulating that there is an increasing focus on protecting historical and cultural assets within communities (Flores &

Scott, 2015). Furthermore, the quote implies that attractiveness of a destination depends on how it has been conserved. C claimed “the more authentic it stays, the more people will be attracted to Greenland” which results in an increase of potential sells for V.O.S. (Appendix 3, p.18). Therefore, if V.O.S. and other tourism stakeholders respect Ilulissat’s cultural heritage, on a longer term they will be able to continue offering authentic cultural tours to customers. Informant R believes that it is possible to preserve cultural heritage, on condition that “it [tourism] does not boom straight away and that we go step by step [...] and that it is not massive tourism too fast” as it would leave time for hosts to familiarize and be able to manage groups of visitors (Appendix 2, p.12).

The local tourism developer K explained his objective has been for many years “to give the clients a more cultural experience” while highlighting the incomparable characteristics of local culture and his desire to share it (Appendix 4, p.24). Interestingly, K explained that “it has to be in the way they [Greenlanders] are doing it and not the way they are showing it” implying authenticity (Appendix 4, p.24). One activity K has initiated, is to bring his guests in a church to witness Greenlandic religious practices. Even though tourists sit passively in the church, theory indicates that social environment is affected. Moreover, there are complexities of commoditizing religion as it can modify behaviours, disrupt practices and even create conflict (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; MacCannell, 1973). Thus, this should be reflected upon if V.O.S. plans this type of activities.

4.2.3. Revitalizing dog sledding traditions

In many Arctic communities, dog sledding is a 5000 years old tradition that is passed from one generation to the next. Modernization lead to a transition of dog sledding to snowmobiles, as a way of transportation and hunting. Indeed, owning snowmobiles is cheaper and it permits to travel longer distances in shorter time. In 2011, there was only one registered snowmobile and by 2016, there was 1179 in Greenland (Greenland Statistics, 2017). However, this important increase in snowmobiles can also be caused be stricter registration laws. Ilulissat, unlike most other towns, has faced an increase of approximately 500 sled dogs between 2014 and 2016 (Greenland Statistics, 2017).

Informant D indicated that VG is very active in sustainable projects to preserve cultural heritage, for example, projects connecting tourism to dog sledding (Appendix 5, p.30). This is an example that proves how tourism can revitalize traditions. On the other hand, reintegrating dog sledding in local cultural is affecting the natural modernization of Ilulissat, which is criticized. In fact, locals may prefer snowmobile and the feeling of forming part of modern dynamic world rather than going back to dog sledding period.

During winter months, dog sled journeys has become one of the most requested activities by tourists. In fact, it is so important for foreigners to experience this traditional mode of transport, that local informant K had to cancel the trip of a group, since he could not secure enough dogsleds. He revealed “I will not send people up there to do something in winter time if you cannot do dogs sledding because that is the main thing they can do” (Appendix 4, p.26). The growing demand from tourism puts strain on limited supply of mushers and dog sleds, especially during peak winter weeks.

Interviewee K believes partnerships between local operators could maximize offer as if an operator cannot supply the service promised, other companies could help. However, this is not common as there is a feeling of competition and locals do not cooperate enough. K explained “they [local operators] have to be much more united so they all have the same goal: when we have guests in Greenland, they have to get the best out of it. If one cannot do it, the neighbour or whoever it is, should do it” (Appendix 4, p.26). VG is working on these types of cooperation, but is still not active enough according to K. In any way, tour operating companies need to invest in strong relations with local suppliers and elaborate partnerships.

VG promotes on their website, on dog sledding page “Living in and off of the nature is central to Greenlandic identity, and therefore when you are close to the nature, you are also close to the Greenlandic culture”. This quote implies that visitors are emerged in Greenlandic culture when doing this type of activity, as it has been such an important part of history and identity. Thus, supporting dog sledding is a relevant way for both, sharing culture and reviving traditions. However, it entails complexities like local identity as they perform in ways tourists want them to.

4.2.4. Size of groups

Tour operating companies bringing smaller groups will have two major advantages. First, it will be easier to find suppliers that have enough capacity to handle the group, as options are limited for large groups. With smaller groups, one can work with smaller operators like an entrepreneur starting a company of dog sledding. Second, it is much easier to share local culture to single travellers or small groups compared to larger groups. For example, individuals can stay in guesthouses instead of hotels, or enjoy kaffemik experiences. Groups can still have local experiences, but it needs to be more structured as in this example, many homes would need to welcome tourists at the same time. Benefits of host-guest encounters will be greater as locals will not feel as overwhelmed or even invaded by groups.

Finally, according to the UN Economic and Social Council (1999) the intensity of socio-cultural impacts is related to certain specific factors such as “the ratio of visitor to resident” which a tour operating company like V.O.S. has an influence on. Thus, proving again that smaller groups minimize negative impacts while increasing positive ones.

V.O.S. employee R is aware of this. Instead of forming groups of 50 people, like in most other destinations, she explained that in Greenland they will adapt and limit their groups to 25 people (Appendix 2, p.12). However, local developer K mentioned that groups in Greenland should be of 12 guests, since activities such as hiking, are limited to 12 people for security reasons and fast boats are also for 12 (Appendix 4, p.27). Thus V.O.S. should review again the size of their groups to support sustainable tourism activities.

Key Findings Section 4.2. Protection of the Cultural Heritage.

Protecting Ilulissat’s cultural heritage, which is threatened by growing tourism is vital. Temporary visitors influence the everyday lives of natives and in certain situations encounters can be harmful. On the other hand, opportunities to improve welfare and livelihoods are created and locals feel a sense of pride to share their culture. Tourism can play an important role in re-activating local traditions in Arctic communities, however cultural identity of natives can be altered as tour operating companies shape the way they ought to be in front of guests.

4.3. Target 2: Minimize Environmental Impacts

This section will analyze the second target of Goal 11, which focuses on environmental impacts. It will answer the sub-research question: *How does tourism impact local environment with a focus on waste management in Ilulissat?* This section is divided in two main parts: *Protection of natural heritage* and *Waste management issue*.

As Tefler & Sharpley (2016) argued, there is no baseline for measuring environmental impacts from tourism activity, due to complexities of assessing short and long term as well as direct and indirect consequences. Thus, it becomes controversial to study if attracting more and more tourists in a long-haul market such as Greenland is aligned with the UNSDGs.

As literature demonstrated, developing touristic destinations increases environmental consequences as it always creates air and noise pollution from transportation and it often implies environmental degradation and resource exploitation (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; Butler, 2013; Hunter, 1995; Hall, Gossling, & Scott, 2015). Firstly, due to Ilulissat's geographical remoteness, flights are the most used method to get there. Moreover, discussions on extending the airport runway to respond growing tourist demand, support the fact that more and larger aircrafts will enter the town. This infrastructural project alone will result in a transformation of natural areas as well as exploitation of local resources. On a longer-term consequences are still difficult to assess, but undoubtedly a larger amount of tourists will be able to reach Ilulissat (Bramwell, 2015; Tribe, 2004). For this matter, with a transportation perspective, growth in tourism opposes sustainable development as it enhances pollution challenges natural landscapes and threatens the possibility of future generations to meet their needs (WCED, 1987).

Informant R acknowledges that the sector she works in causes important environmental consequences. However, she mentions that V.O.S. tries to minimize their emissions, for example by recruiting local tour guides to avoid flights of foreign guides (Appendix 2, p.11). It is difficult to say if the main reason is less flight emissions or financial savings. Moreover, R was not aware of the importance of supporting local economy by hiring Ilulissat residents, and the benefits for tourists to have host contact. Nevertheless, in Ilulissat, limited availability to local guides speaking various languages forces V.O.S. to employ foreign guides.

Informant R also mentioned that, in Scandinavia, she is trying to choose buses according to group sizes in order to produce less emissions (Appendix 2, p.11). My experience working with V.O.S. shows that currently, it is not always possible to adapt buses to group size as most suppliers only offer 50-seaters. In relation to this, I discussed with V.O.S. General Manager and he believes that developing partnerships with competitors offering similar tours would improve this type of situation, as groups could be combined. Hence, resources could be used more efficiently, and profits increased if there was cooperation within tour operating companies. However, there are still numerous aspects to overcome, as currently it is fierce competition.

In this regard, one of the 12 aims of UN's and WTO's Environment Program is "resource efficiency" (UNEP/WTO, 2005). Therefore, investing in partnerships and ensuring that services are adapted to group size, would ensure an efficient use of resources. This can be especially beneficial in Ilulissat, where many resources are scarce. Moreover, academics indicate that temporary visitors take advantage of these resources to the detriment of poor residents and without paying taxes (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren, 2007; Tucker & Akama, 2012). Informant S from VG is especially concerned with road usage, toilets and trash management (Appendix 1, p.5).

Product developer C state that with all their tours, V.O.S. tries "to not have a strong impact especially on the nature" (Appendix 3, p.17). He explained that it will especially be the case in Greenland as tours have a focus on nature experiences and so he believes travellers will respect the environment. To support his statements, he explained that V.O.S. will choose low impact boats to sail around glaciers, with expert guides and only small groups, instead of using big boats. Yet, informant R admitted that she has difficulties in finding suppliers with capacity and so, V.O.S. is not able to choose types of boats (Appendix 2, p.10).

4.3.1. Protection of natural heritage

Greenland is facing severe climate change consequences, therefore it is crucial to create global awareness and to protect Ilulissat's local environment, to ensure a natural heritage for future generations. Scientists argue that "Greenland's ice is melting four times faster than thought" where most is from the ice sheet itself (Leahy, 2019). In fact, between 2003 and 2013,

Greenland's southwest region is the area that lost the most ice in the world. The increasing global concern about climate change leads to an urge to see icebergs and so attracts not only tourists, but also celebrities, journalists and researchers (Visit Greenland, 2019). With a tourism perspective, academics describe it as “a last chance to see” destination (Ren, Rastad Bjørst, & Dredge, 2016).

In Ilulissat, the ice fjord has been recognized as a UNESCO site, which put the spotlight on the area and boosts attraction. This accreditation leads to various opportunities and challenges.

Attraction to UNESCO World Heritage Sites

In 2004, Ilulissat's 61-kilometre-long ice fjord became the first UNESCO site in Greenland (Árnadóttir, 2019). Extremely large icebergs calved from the feeder Sermeq Kujulleq glacier, follow the stream to the Disko Bay, making it one of the fastest moving glaciers in the world. Although Greenland has abundant untouched nature with magnificent glaciers, visiting Ilulissat's UNESCO site gives a guarantee to tourists that they will experience something meaningful (Visit Greenland, 2019). While the fjord is too dangerous to sail due to floating icebergs, it is the landscapes around that feel pressure of tourist activity and overexploitation becomes a concern.

Árnadóttir (2019) describes UNESCO as “a marketing and development platform which aims to protect unique world heritage sites, while making them more accessible in a sustainable way”. This statement implies controversial themes: promoting a heritage site which is an icon of climate change, with the aim of preserving it, while increasing visitation. On one side, it attracts funds which are invested in conservation, foster local responsibility and increase awareness of climate change. On the other side, the recognition leads to an abundance of tourists, which VG (Visit Greenland, 2019) states as “a breathtaking magnet for all tourists”. Planning, monitoring and regulating visits is required in the area to ensure development is done in a sustainable, integrative manner, otherwise there will be tensions on the society and environment (Cravidão, Nossa, & Santos, 2018; Visit Greenland, 2019). In other countries, there are a multitude of UNESCO sites facing visitor pressure, however one needs to take in account the slow recovery rate of the fragile Arctic ecosystems.

Informant K believes that Ilulissat community is focused on environmental sustainability mainly because of the UNESCO protection around the ice fjord (Appendix 4, p.22). Indeed, the constant development of the site is supported by engaged communities nearby who feel proud to share their land (Visit Greenland, 2019).

Briefly, UNESCO recognition in Ilulissat attracts even more visitors and creates awareness of the effects of climate change. It results in an increasing focus of environmental conservation. As theory claims, tourism can lead to an increase in protected areas, which is the case in Ilulissat (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; Navarro-Jurado & Nel-lo Andreu, 2015). Nonetheless, there is a fragile balance between socio-economic benefits and conservation of the ice fjord. Tour operating companies need to understand the “interplay between the value of visitor experiences and the preservation of the site” (Visit Greenland, 2019).

4.3.2. Waste management issue

The target *Minimize environmental impacts* of the UNSDGs specifically indicates “paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management”. While discussing with informants about environment, an important issue on waste disposal in Ilulissat and the surrounding settlements emerged. Therefore, this sub-section will specifically analyze waste management of the area. S from VG explained that waste management is an issue in all Greenland due to its location and infrastructure (Appendix 1, p.5). It is crucial that each municipality plans the disposal of extra trash generated, before welcoming more visitors.

Certainly, in destinations like Ilulissat, where natural landscapes are the main reason for visitation, clean environment is vital. Informant R mentioned that “all the activities which are outdoors rely on how clean and maintained it is” (Appendix 2, p.11). Indeed, guests expect “untouched” and “unexplored” nature, also implying its exclusivity as this type of destination is becoming rarer (Appendix 3, p.16). An aim from the UN’s Environment Program and the WTO is “environmental purity” meaning that they want to ensure areas like Ilulissat maintain untouched fauna and flora (UNEP/WTO, 2005).

Ilulissat has only a small incineration plan, which cannot support the town and so it results in accumulation of garbage and inadequate disposal. In fact, most waste (non-combustible waste, hazardous waste, metal scrap) is deposited in a dump beside the road leading to the airport,

domestic sewage is pumped in the sea without being treated and grey wastewater is discharged on hills, which slowly slide into the ice fjord (QaasuitsupMunicipality, 2017). Theory claims that land contamination, health hazards as well as unattractive and degraded nature can result from this inadequate disposal (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). On the long term, in the case of Ilulissat, where most activities are outdoors, unattractive and degraded nature can abate foreigners' desire to visit the area and so affect sells for V.O.S.

K stated “It has been a disaster over the years” referring especially to Ilimanaq, a settlement of around 50 people, 15 kilometres south of Ilulissat. Visiting this settlement is a common day tour for tourists staying in Ilulissat.

K described that on one side there is beautiful nature, but on the other side there is a dumping site where all waste is thrown and toilets emptied (Appendix 4, p.25). Figure 6 was taken in Ilimanaq and illustrates a strong contrast. More positively, K added that World of Greenland, a Greenlandic company located in Ilulissat and offering excursions in the Disko Bay area, has worked on removing garbage in



Figure 6: Rubbish dumped in Ilimanaq, with icebergs behind from the Sermeq Kujullaq Photographer: (Cooper, 2017)

this location (Appendix 4, p.25). The company has also built Ilimanaq Lodge, which consist of 15 cabins overlooking Disko Bay (Visit Greenland, 2017b). Literature indicates that without potential financial benefits, desire to invest in environmental conservation is not as high (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; Lea, 1988). This project is not in a position to determine the core-driving factor of World of Greenland. However, one can assume that they were stimulated in restoring the area to improve the image of Ilimanaq and thereafter, increase satisfaction and earnings from their guests. As Flores and Scott (2015) explain, the image of a destination is a vital contributor to its attractiveness.

K also mentioned “the last couple of years they have focused very much on it”. On a local level, actions are taken to tackle this critical situation for example, children are sensitized in

school and people gather once a year to collect garbage. This is aligned with academics, explaining that local residents understand the importance of preserving their natural heritage to attract tourists (Hunter, 1995; McKercher, 1993). Nonetheless, it is not locals' responsibility to collect trash left behind by tourists. This type of situation can potentially lead to conflicts between hosts and guest. Therefore, it is crucial that visitors are properly informed about where to dispose trash. Regarding this, Visit Greenland states on their web page:

“The Arctic is fragile, vast and beautiful with pristine spaces and extreme climate, and a wealth of natural resources. Therefore, it is extremely important to take precautions not to disturb unnecessarily or leave anything behind but footprints.”

Thus, highlighting the importance of limiting disturbance on the community.

In relation to waste management issues, informant D explained that money is what is the most needed in many areas of Greenland and “is quite an important asset in relation to development” (Appendix 5, p.31). As in other emerging economy countries, Greenland has limited financial resources and preserving natural environments is not their priority, but an increase in revenues from tourism activity creates opportunities for municipalities to invest in better waste management systems. However, theory has demonstrated that in many destinations, there is a focus on improving tourism facilities to the detriment of other types of infrastructure (Moscardo, 2005; Lea, 1988). In Ilulissat, waste management needs to be a priority in order to maintain an image of untouched nature, which guests expect, well before investing in more accommodation.

Finally, in order to be aligned with the target *Minimize environmental impacts*, a tour operating company like V.O.S. needs to ensure they offer sustainable tourism activities and that they promote environmental awareness towards their clients, in a manner that each individual contributes to conservation and protection of the environment, respect of fauna and flora, biodiversity and ecosystems. Undoubtedly, V.O.S. will increase tourism revenue in Ilulissat, which in turn can be invested in protecting the natural heritage and improving waste management infrastructure. However, the company needs to see further and safeguard the destination and act consequently. For example, organizing small-scale projects for their groups like cleaning settlements would help Ilulissat.

Key Findings Section 4.3. Minimize environmental impacts

Ilulissat's fragile natural environment is threatened by tourism growth. Pollution from transportation is currently a global problem, which leaves Ilulissat in a vulnerable position. The UNESCO title of the ice fjord is complex as it both increases focus of environmental conservation, but also attracts tourists, which creates disturbance in the area. Balancing socio-economic benefits and environmental risks is crucial. Finally, tourism enhances the already existing waste management issue in Ilulissat. Better disposal is necessary to safeguard the *untouched* nature of the area.

4.4. Target 3: Improvement of Transportation Infrastructure

Discussions on air accessibility have been ongoing for years in Greenland. In 2018, final decisions were taken to build new airports and extend runways. This is the case in Ilulissat where the runway will be extended from 845 metres to 2 800 metres, thus permitting larger planes to land (QaasuitsupMunicipality, 2017). It is a highly criticized theme as major consequences will unfold from an explosive intake of tourists.

On one hand, it will “increase productivity and competitiveness as well as open up new business opportunities”, thus creating local employment (Egede, 2017, p. 1). This will lead to an increase in economic resources through tourism employed income tax, sales tax and tourist tax (Tefler & Sharpley, 2016). However, with important investments in tourism infrastructure, Greenland would become more dependent more on tourism revenues. Literature demonstrates that it is risky especially in emerging economy countries, which like Greenland do not have a diversified economy (Navarro-Jurado & Nel-lo Andreu, 2015; Tefler & Sharpley, 2016; Stenbakken, 2017).

While on the other hand, an increase in tourist numbers will enhance all impacts on the environment, society and economy. Will the local community and natural resources be able to

support such a rise in visitors? Will social infrastructure capacity follow? How much will the locals really benefit from this? A plethora of questions are left unanswered, by the government and major stakeholders.

Analyzing *Improvement of transportation infrastructure* seemed relevant at first as it brings an economic perspective, while touching social and environmental concerns, however it is beyond the scope of this project. It is difficult to measure future impacts and the complexities of a foreign tour operating company like V.O.S. in a situation that is still uncertain.

5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This chapter provides concluding thoughts related to the previous Analysis section which has offered an understanding of how an increase of tourists in Ilulissat affects two targets of Goal 11, *Sustainable cities and communities*.

This thesis was conducted using a phronetic approach with the objective of contributing to literature on sustainable tourism development with a focus on the UNSDGs within a Greenlandic context. As a researcher, I have created not only knowledge on the topic, but also space for new ideas, which was nourished by reflection and questioning.

As stated by Higgins-Desbiolles (2016) tourism is a social force with power to transform destinations on socio-cultural, economic and environmental levels. Through their guided tours, V.O.S. has the potential to contribute to the sustainable development of Ilulissat. Thus, it has been relevant to study consequences tourism growth will have on this destination, in order to discover manners to protect the cultural heritage and minimize environmental impacts. On a global level we, citizens of the world, will be one step closer to achieving 2030 Agenda from the UNSDGs.

5.1. Recommendations

As explained in the section *Setting the Scene*, Greenland faces challenges due to its historical background, climate and geographical location. The unique culture and environment of Ilulissat is fragile and various precautions need to be taken to keep its capital. It is vital for tour operating companies to adapt to the destinations they operate in, and limit their negative impacts while enhancing benefits to communities. V.O.S. should not take for granted their 20-year experience, but rather approach Greenland in a flexible and cutting-edge manner. Foreign companies need to understand the context of Ilulissat and be aware of potential challenges for example capacity limits. Developing partnerships with local operators and following their advices regarding group size, time of the year and activities, would help to elaborate adequate tours.

The following recommendations do not only apply to V.O.S., but for any company operating in Ilulissat. The four following recommendations aim to create a balance between positive and negative effects on local society and environment, while respecting corporate interests of tour operating companies.

5.1.1. Values and principles

My first recommendation for V.O.S. is to integrate sustainable development in their values. As mentioned, there is currently five values; leadership, commitment, teamwork, passion and innovation. The company should not add an extra value as it would lessen the importance of all, but rather review which one is less significant and change it.

Moreover, V.O.S. should define guiding principles supporting their sustainable development value. Through my research I have demonstrated the importance of respecting society and environment, however there are a multitude of other principles. V.O.S. management team should plan a meeting to discuss what they want to focus on and following this, they should elaborate a plan on how to update their current tours.

5.1.2. Training - Educating

This recommendation focuses on internal and external training and education. The first phase is on an internal level, where V.O.S. ensures that all employees have information on sustainable tourism development. Interviews with key employees demonstrated that there is a lack of knowledge on the topic, thus providing courses and organizing workshops would be relevant. Moreover, encouraging the team to participate in designing new tours, with a focus on sustainable practices, would be valuable.

The second phase, which could not be achieved before sustainable tourism development is an integrated part of V.O.S.'s DNA, is to train and educate customers. Raising awareness of tourists is crucial as they will be the ones in direct contact with natives and the environment. Tour operating companies underestimate the power they have on tourist behaviour. Travellers should be reminded how to behave, what is socially acceptable and limits that should not be crossed. Additionally, V.O.S. can create awareness on specific issues such as waste management in Ilulissat.

Finally, according to the UN Economic and Social Council (1999) the intensity of socio-cultural impacts is related to specific factors. A tour operating company like V.O.S. has an influence on: *The type of visitor and his/her knowledge and behaviour*. Thus, proving the importance of this recommendation as well as the following.

5.1.3. Targeting customers

Natural barriers such as difficulty to access the destination, high prices, limited resources and arctic climate, already creates segmentation of tourists, however I recommend V.O.S. to target their customers according to various criteria, in order to send the most suitable travellers to Ilulissat.

Firstly, considering the destination's limited capacity and high prices, V.O.S. should concentrate their marketing towards tourists that are willing to use more money, rather than budget tourists. Bringing wealthy tourists who have financial capacity to purchase local art or add excursions, will enhance local economic benefits. This approach is aligned with Greenlandic stakeholders' vision for tourism development. Indeed, during *Towards More Tourism* conference held in Nuuk in 2018, stakeholders concluded that it was preferable to have tourists that pay more, rather than a high quantity of tourists (Appendix 5, p. 29). Therefore, V.O.S. should not aim to send a high quantity of tourist over the next years, but rather make higher revenues on fewer trips sold. Nonetheless, it is not solely about tourist expenditure, but also about types of tourists.

Secondly, I also recommend V.O.S. to target customers whose values fit with the unique physical and human characteristics of Ilulissat. For instance, travellers whom are conscious of the importance of nature and culture preservation. Respect, openness, flexibility are other essential values to have for responsible travellers.

Thirdly, it is important that V.O.S. is aware of their customers' purpose of travel and expectations. For example, nature-based tourism will be able to appreciate Greenland the way it genuinely is as it is much more aligned than luxury seeking tourists. Thus, V.O.S. should target travellers with the right purpose, by marketing their trips accordingly. In case of

unrealistic expectations, such as locals speaking fluent French, V.O.S. is responsible to inform tourists of local realities. Moreover, V.O.S. should aim to attract individuals that have a desire to learn about Greenlandic culture, history, modern challenges and so on. These individuals will most likely seek for valuable encounters instead of collecting photographs of locals.

5.1.4. Group size

My last recommendation is regarding group size. Unlike in other destinations V.O.S. operates in, Ilulissat is not adapted to host large groups. Moreover, as demonstrated in the analysis, smaller groups are better for both hosts and guests. Tourists will be able to discover culture in a more authentic manner and have more opportunities to experience local traditions like kaffemik. While locals will feel less disturbed by the presence of visitors and they will be able to continue with their daily life. Thus, small groups a benefit for both hosts and guests.

More specifically, V.O.S. should have a strict limit of 12 people per group. If the company evaluates that it is not profitable enough, two groups of 12 could also be formed. In this manner, group A and B would rotate daily programs, which would prevent to pressure local suppliers, while bringing them customers. One main, multilingual guide, could coordinate both groups, thus diminishing expenses for V.O.S.

5.2. Challenges and Opportunities as Researchers

By reflecting upon this project, I realize how challenging it was to include the three targets. As I wanted to integrate the three sustainable pillars, my research became very complex and due to time and page number constraints, I took the decision to bypass the analysis of *Improvement of transportation infrastructure*. My research could have been solely on one target due to the complexities, however I wanted to offer V.O.S. integrated recommendations. I believe that further research and analysis of Target Three would be relevant, as all stakeholders will feel the effects of the new airport. Moreover, analyzing and comparing other case studies, such as Iceland, would provide knowledge on possible scenarios of tourism growth effects in small communities.

I have discovered how to collect and extract relevant data without being in the context studied, in order to answer my research question. To achieve this, I had to adapt my research and focus on specific methods. I have strengthened my knowledge on how to combine theoretical grounds, with empirical data. I have overcome the challenge of individual work as my previous experiences had always been in groups. These are a few examples of my achievements.

Finally, I hope that V.O.S. will reflect upon their impacts in the destinations they operate in, and that the recommendations will guide them to take more sustainable decisions. By being aware of their positive and negatives effects, the company will hopefully become more responsible. I also hope that this research can inspire the other informants who participated in my study, as I will share it with them and be available for discussions.

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