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ESKO SORAKUNNAS

The Consumer Value of Nature-based Tourism

An Examination of National Park Visitors

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the consumer value of nature-based tourism. Consumer value is a central marketing concept that depicts why consumers buy and consume products and services – in the current case, why they engage in nature-based tourism. In essence, it reflects the perceived benefits of consumption. The theoretical basis of this thesis lies in the experientiality of consumption and the customer dominant logic of marketing that regards the consumers as creators of value and their consumption contexts as customer ecosystems. Within this framework, the thesis takes three complementary perspectives on the value construct: experiential, compositional and dynamic. Independent and self-serviced visits to public national parks in Finland constituted the empirical nature-based tourism context for this research that matched the experiential and consumer-dominant positioning of this thesis well.

The main research question is, how is consumer value constructed in a nature-based context that is minimally influenced and managed by tourism providers? It is elaborated on by three independent, but closely interlinked studies, each of which has been published as a separate research article. The first article uses qualitative methodology to examine the dimensions and drivers of park experiences. It discloses the context-dependence of

nature-based tourism experiences. This is theorized by modifying the bipolar company – consumer continuum of experiential drivers into an Experience Triangle that accentuates the relevance of the context. The second article scrutinizes the composition of perceived consumer value qualitatively. It reveals that social value is not exclusively instrumental impression management directed at other people as postulated by extant theories. Thus, adopting an Extended View of Social Value in Tourism is recommended that also entails self-oriented dimensions related to togetherness, inclusion and communality as well as safety and learning. This broader spectrum is portrayed by a novel three-dimensional illustration of value composition labelled the Value Cube. This spatial approach complements the prevailing value typologies, because it offers greater accuracy, flexibility and insight. Finally, the third article, using mixed-methods, connects park attributes, visitor experiences, perceived consumer value and universal values together into causal means-end chains. Combining the hierarchical construction of value with the static, compositional view is referred to as value biangulation. It advocates considering emotional value dimensions not only as ends, but also means leading eventually to the realization of more abstract universal values. In addition, the third article pilots and evaluates a new method, digitally customized and interactive Application Pattern Technique, for the quantitative investigation of consumers' means-end value structures.

The findings portray the consumer value of nature-based tourism as experiential, personal, context dependent and therefore, multifaceted. In particular, the diversity of social value as well as the instrumental role of emotional value types are highlighted. These findings offer insight and inspiration equally to managers of public national parks, providers of commercial nature-based tourism services and even beyond the tourism realm, to experiential consumption in general. Each practitioner should, however, consider the discussed features in his or her own operating environment and adapt them to its logic of value provision.

Keywords: consumer value, nature-based tourism, customer dominant logic, experiential consumption

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TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämä väitöskirja käsittelee asiakasarvon muodostumista luontomatkailussa. Asiakasarvo on keskeinen markkinoinnin käsite, joka kuvaa kuluttajien kokemuksia tuotteiden tai palveluiden heille tarjoamista hyödyistä; tämän tutkimuksen tapauksessa asiakasarvo selittää, miksi ihmiset harrastavat luontomatkailua ja mitä he siitä kokevat saavansa. Tutkimuksen teoreettisen perustan muodostaa kuluttamisen elämyksellisyys ja asiakaslähtöinen arvonmuodostuksen logiikka (consumer dominant logic), jonka mukaan kuluttajat itse luovat ja määrittelevät arvon omassa kulutusympäristössään (customer ecosystem). Arvon käsitettä ja muodostumista tarkastellaan kolmesta eri näkökulmasta: elämyksellisenä ilmiönä, moniulotteisena kokonaisuutena sekä hierarkkisena rakennelmana. Empiirinen tutkimus kohdistuu omatoimisiin kansallispuistovierailuihin, joille on leimallista yritysten palvelutarjonnan vähäisyys sekä satunnaisten ympäristötekijöiden suuri merkitys. Nämä tekijät korostavat kävijöiden itsenäistä arvonmuodostusta, mikä vastaa erittäin hyvin tutkimuksen elämyksellistä ja asiakaslähtöistä viitekehystä.

Tutkimuksen pääkysymys on, kuinka asiakasarvo muodostuu omatoimisessa luontomatkailussa, jossa matkailuyritysten vaikutus on hyvin pieni? Tätä selvitetään kolmessa toisiinsa liittyvässä tutkimuksessa, joista kukin on julkaistu erillisenä tieteellisenä artikkelina. Niistä ensimmäinen käyttää laadullisia

tutkimusmenetelmiä kansallispuistoelämysten sisällön ja siihen vaikuttavien tekijöiden selvittämiseen. Kansallispuistoelämyksissä korostuu ympäristötekijöiden suuri merkitys, mikä teoretisoidaan laajentamalla kaksinapainen yritysten ja kuluttajien välinen elämysmalli kolmikantaiseksi yritys-kuluttuja-ympäristö -malliksi (The Experience Triangle). Toinen artikkeli keskittyy asiakasarvon moniulotteiseen rakenteeseen. Päähavainto on, ettei matkailun sosiaalinen arvo rajoitu vallitsevan käsityksen mukaisesti pelkästään muihin ihmisiin kohdistuvaan statuksen tavoitteluun, vaan sen lisäksi matkailu tarjoaa yksilöön itseensä kohdistuvia sosiaalisia arvoja, kuten yhdessäoloa, osallisuutta ja yhteisöllisyyden kokemuksia. Lisäksi kanssamatkustajilta opitaan hyödyllisiä taitoja ja heidän läsnäolonsa lisää turvallisuudentunnetta. Tämä matkailun laajempi sosiaalinen arvo (Extended View of Social Value in Tourism) kuvataan uudella, kolmiulotteisella arvomallilla (The Value Cube), joka on perinteisiä arvoluokituksia tarkempi, havainnollisempi ja joustavampi. Kolmas artikkeli perustuu monimenetelmätutkimukseen, joka paljastaa matkakohteen ominaisuuksien ja kävijäkokemusten sekä niistä syntyvän asiakasarvon ja kävijöiden perusarvojen väliset syy-seuraussuhteet. Tämän hierarkkisen prosessin yhdistäminen asiakasarvon moniulotteiseen rakenteeseen osoittaa, että sekä funktionaalisia että emotionaalisia asiakasarvoja ohjaavat viimekädessä universaalit perusarvot. Näiden perimmäisten päämäärien ja niiden saavuttamiseksi käytettävien keinojen selvittämiseksi kehitetään uusi menetelmä, jossa kvantitatiivisen laddering-kyselyn interaktiivisuutta ja räätälöintiä on lisätty digitaalisesti (Digitally Customized Association Pattern Technique).

Tutkimustulokset korostavat luontomatkailun elämyksellisyyttä, sosiaalisuutta ja vaihtelevien ympäristötekijöiden merkitystä. Näistä lähtökohdista muodostuva arvokokemus on aina uniikki ja useimmiten myös moniulotteinen ja yllätyksellinen. Tulokset palvelevat sekä kansallispuistojen kehittäjiä että luontomatkailuyrityksiä korostamalla asiakasarvon monimuotoisuutta ja henkilökohtaisuutta: sitä ei voi ennalta määrittää, luoda ja tarjota, vaan sen on annettava syntyä elämyksien kautta. Keskeiset havainnot ovat yleistettävissä myös laajemmin elämykselliseen kulutukseen, kunhan niiden soveltamisessa otetaan huomioon vallitsevan toimintaympäristön arvonmuodostuslogiikka.

Avainsanat: asiakasarvo, luontomatkailu, asiakaslähtöinen arvonmuodostuksen logiikka, elämyksellinen kulutus , asiakaskokemus

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"Happiness lies in the joy of achievement and the thrill of creative effort."
Franklin D. Roosevelt

I could not agree more with the above quote; this PhD project has offered me plenty of challenges and thrills and eventually, the great joy of accomplishment. Devotion to such an extensive and long-term project was from time to time a lonely endeavor, which was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and working from a home office 600 km from the university. Hence, one could compare the process with the consumer dominant logic of marketing where an individual uses his/her own skills to independently create value – in this case knowledge and insight. Such a narrow view would, however, be flawed and unjust, because it disregards the contributions of other people. Instead, the service dominant logic, which is based on co-creation and combining operant and operand resources describes the process and its outcome better. I have received guidance, support and constructive criticism from numerous people and the time has come to thank you all.

Firstly, I address the greatest thanks to my supervisors Professor Raija Komppula and Associate Professor Henna Konu from the University of Eastern Finland; you guided me into the fascinating world of research! Your expertise, trust and encouragement were vital especially at times of setbacks and failures. Once the draft dissertation was eventually completed, I was privileged to have two tourism and value experts, Professors Nina K. Prebensen and Maria Lexhagen, conduct the pre-examination. Your helpful comments clearly improved the dissertation and moreover, contributed to the eventual acceptance of Article II. I am also grateful to Professors Juho Pesonen and Scott McCabe for your time and thought. Thank you all for providing a sound theoretical basis for this research.

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Naantali, August 2022
Esko Sorakunnas

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

> "The best memories of this trip: white-out with zero visibility, trees crowned by massive loads of snow, the tiny Montell Hut, shoveling my way to the latrine in chest-deep snow, the warmth of the hut and the friendliness of other skiers." (Excerpt from a guest book entry at Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park, 13-17 January, 2015)

The female park visitor that wrote the above quotation, admiring the beauty of the Polar Night and coping with its coldness, hardly considered herself a consumer engaged in consumption. This is understandable as consumption is commonly linked to buying and consuming products and services offered by companies, such as going to a coffee shop for a cappuccino, buying groceries at a supermarket or reading a newspaper. In the contemporary world, we are constantly consumers of something rendering consumption ubiquitous – and the list of consumables endless. The underlying driver and determinant of all consumption is the consumers' pursuit of personal benefits, gaining something from the acquisition and subsequently using the offering. The marketing concept that describes this benefit is consumer value; it depicts the value of consumption to the consumer. Initially, consumer value was conceived as a straightforward trade-off between monetary cost and benefit (Zeithaml, 1988), commonly expressed as "value for money" and "worth buying". However, consumption and the resultant value perceptions of the consumer are no longer confined to the instrumentality of the material products and concrete services as value is now also being increasingly regarded as experiential, based on the personal experience of consumption per se (Arnould et al., 2004; Holbrook, 1999; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Leroi-Werelds, 2019). The consumption of the arts, leisure and tourism are apparent examples of experiential consumption; however, almost all consumer interaction with products and services entails personal

use experiences leading to subjective value assessments (Addis & Holbrook, 2001). Moreover, consumption experiences are not exclusively confined to the marketplace as they also occur in non-commercial contexts largely beyond the influence of companies (Carú & Cova, 2003; Edgell & Hetherington, 1996). Hence, consumption experiences and consumer value are applicable to almost all human activities (Arnould et al., 2004; Woodward & Holbrook, 2013).

The theoretical basis of consumer value is grounded on the composition and construction of value. The Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991) and the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999) conceptualize the multidimensional composition of perceived value while the means-end theory (Gutman, 1982) and the Customer Value Hierarch (Woodruff, 1997; Woodruff & Gardial, 1996) explain the consumers' hierarchical construction of value by causally connecting attributes, personal consequences and universal values. These cornerstones of value research have remained despite the concept of consumer value evolving from a primarily utilitarian and company-driven phenomenon towards experientiality and subjectivity (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In fact, it would be more precise to talk about the recognition of experiential value during the past few decades as the experiential aspects of consumption and subjective value perception have existed considerably longer (if not always), but they have only recently become central in marketing. Accordingly, the critical issues that concern both value researchers and marketing practitioners comprise the actual offering, the process of value creation and the specific consumption context.

The Experience Economy, labelled as the new economic era at the end of the 1990s, emphasized the experientiality of consumer value over the technical performance of products and reliability of services (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Subsequently, the service dominant logic of marketing soon introduced the concept of value co-creation; instead of value being created by the companies for their customers, it was jointly co-created with them during consumption. This fundamental change in value creation emphasized the subjectivity of value, perceived and determined by the consumers based on personal use experiences instead of the objective features of the offering (Vargo et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The context of experiences was further expanded

by a consumer dominant logic (Anker et al., 2015; cf. Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015; Voima et al., 2011) beyond the company-consumer realm; consumer experiences are influenced by a network of actors in complex consumption ecosystems and over extended periods of time (Carú & Cova, 2015; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Voima et al., 2011). Independent value creation generated solely by the consumers in their own life worlds has surpassed co-creation with companies, thus diminishing companies to mere value facilitators lacking access to the consumers' experience. In particular in tourism, where interaction with other people is intrinsic, the tourists' independent co-creation of social and collaborative value is a current research topic. Tourists are actively engaged in customer-to-customer (C2C) co-creation of value (Campos et al., 2018; Mossberg, 2007; Phi & Dredge, 2019; Reichenberger, 2017) which includes, in equal parts of interactions with friends and family members, communicating with unknown fellow visitors as well as interfacing with entire consumer communities and collectives (Carú & Cova, 2015; Holttinen, 2010; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Rihova et al., 2015). All these relationships lie largely outside the reach of tourism operators as they occur within the tourists' own, personal realm reflecting a consumer dominant logic.

Tourism is a prime example of present-day experiential consumption where value is co-created by the consumers in multidimensional contexts that are challenging for the service providers to manage. This is particularly evident in nature-based tourism, where the natural setting and the participants' own outdoor activities constitute a complex and constantly alternating operating environment (Fredman et al., 2009, 2012; Lundmark & Müller, 2010). To further emphasize these characteristics, this dissertation examines the consumer value of visits to Finnish national parks, a nature-based tourism context where company involvement is exceptionally low as the majority of visitors organize and execute their visits by themselves (Konu et al., 2021). Hence, value creation in this self-organized and less controlled nature-based context depends solely on the visitors. National parks differ from commercial tourism destinations and staged tourism services by lacking the customers' direct interaction with the tourism providers; instead, the experiences and perceived value of park visitors are based on their interaction with the

surrounding natural context while the management's role is confined to facilitating independent visitation. This allows an examination of the authentic consumer value of nature-based tourism, unbiased by the providers presence and active engagement. Consequently, the lack of service provision may also foreground value types that are immaterial and emotional to the detriment of material and extrinsic ones.

On the practical level, Finnish national parks are more popular than ever; their visitation has quadrupled over the past two decades from less than a million to almost four million visits a year (Konu et al., 2021; Metsähallitus, 2021), which is a remarkable figure for a population of 5.5 million people. This popularity has increased the variety of visitor segments from the original, dedicated outdoor enthusiasts to the general public including families with little children as well as elderly citizens. Both the rising number of visits and the diversity of visitors require new managerial practices, infrastructures and services to provide the opportunities and outcomes desired by visitors. The well-established and robust consumer value approach holds potential for a new kind of insight which will support future visitor-oriented park management.

1.2 Justification

Tourism has been subject to extensive consumer value research due to its highly experiential nature and multiple sources of consumer experiences (Gallarza et al., 2019, p. 256). In addition, the practical relevance of providing value to tourists has motivated numerous sector-specific managerial studies and surveys. Together these two approaches provide a good overall baseline of the consumer value of tourism and also in its nature-based form. Nevertheless, the following section presents gaps that still exist in this knowledge which are addressed by this thesis. Partly these gaps are related to value co-creation in tourism in general and partly to the examined context.

1) Value research in the tourism context

The composition and construction of value are well-known in commercial tourism contexts such as Caribbean cruises (Petrick, 2002), hotel stays (e.g., Gallarza et al., 2019; Nasution & Mavondo, 2008; Wiedmann et al., 2018) and package tours (Sánchez et al., 2006). Moreover, less managed contexts, for instance, religious tourism (Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2019; Rodrigo & Turnbull, 2019), homestay visits (Jamal et al., 2011) and students' travel behavior (Gallarza & Gil, 2006) are also covered by extant research. However, the current theoretical understanding of value creation, and the customer dominant logic in particular, emphasize value creation in less managed contexts. This calls for research into value creation in customer ecosystems that lack direct company-tourist interaction and emphasize the tourists' independent creation of value. This dissertation addresses this gap by presenting authentic tourism consumption, unbiased by direct company-consumer interaction, based only on the visitors' own interests, and their self-organized immersion and spontaneous interaction with the emergent stimuli.

2) Nature-based tourism

Value research within nature-based tourism has been confined to narrowly defined segments, single destinations or specific activities both as regards the composition of perceived value (Komppula & Gartner, 2013; Pickering et al., 2020; Williams & Soutar, 2009) and its construction (Goldenberg et al., 2000; Hill et al., 2009; Ho et al., 2015; Klenosky et al., 1998; Prebensen & Xie, 2017; Weeden, 2011). By contrast, this dissertation examines unspecified nature-based tourism in a generalized national park context. The examination includes different types of national parks, different seasons, diverse visitor segments and makes no distinction regarding their activities. Its wider scope provides a pervasive outlook of the value construct in general nature-based tourism.

3) National park experiences

Research on wilderness and national park visitors has focused mainly on the visitor experience either as a general phenomenon (e.g., Dawson, 2006; Seekamp et al., 2012; Watson et al., 2007; Weber & Anderson, 2010), as a consequence of setting attributes (e.g., Cole & Hall, 2009; Pietilä & Kangas, 2015) or as something particularly extraordinary and memorable (e.g., Arnould & Price, 1993; Farber & Hall, 2007; McDonald et al., 2009). This body of research has described the visitor experience in numerous contexts and cultures, but it has not attempted to reveal the deeper personal meanings and connections of the visitors. Likewise, practical visitor monitoring in national parks largely focuses on the management of destination attributes and describing visitation in terms of demographics and psychographics. Hence, it does not aim for an in-depth understanding of the visitors. Although the first steps of acknowledging the visitors' personal outcomes are emerging, the approaches do not reach the visitors' fundamental goals and purposes. Moreover, visitors' outcomes are considered alongside the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of the parks accruing to the whole of society, which decentralizes attention (Benefits-Based Management / Outcome-Focused Management / Driver, 2008; Manning, 2014). Hence, park management is destination-oriented leaving the personal significance, the underlying "hows and whys" of visitation, largely uncovered. In contrast, this thesis applies qualitative methods to conceptualize value as perceived by park visitors and its mixed-method element delves beneath the superficial level of attributes and direct advantages to the universal values that underpin the observed behavior of visitors. The outcome is a more comprehensive insight into the visitors, seeing the parks' offerings through the visitors' eyes and an interpretation based on their values.

4) Customer-to-customer co-creation of value in tourism

Social interaction constitutes an intrinsic part of our lives. The recent recognition of consumer-to-consumer (C2C) value co-creation in tourism reflects the customer dominant logic, but the C2C approaches have thus far remained theoretical (Campos et al., 2018; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Phi & Dredge, 2019; Reichenberger, 2017; Rihova et al., 2015). This dissertation

provides empirical evidence of C2C in nature-based tourism by specifically examining the social dimensions of value. The empirical evidence concretizes our understanding of the phenomenon and its different manifestations.

This thesis applies the well-established concept of consumer value to a specific nature-based tourism context characterized by consumer independence. This discloses the central features of the customer dominant logic – experientiality, consumer-driven creation of value and its subjective determination in a customer ecosystem – considerably more comprehensively than would be obtained from a company managed tourism setting. Hence, the national parks with their self-service visitors are ideal for theoretically examining experiential value. In addition, the application of a consumer value framework to national parks offers valuable in-depth insight into visitors for managerial purposes; both for nature-based tourism practitioners in general and for park managers in particular. Those applying the findings to commercial settings should, however, bear in mind that the examined context, because it lacks service provisions, is likely to foreground immaterial and intrinsic value types. In the case of organized nature-based tourism, these are often complemented with material and extrinsic value components.

1.3 Purpose

The consumer value theory and the nature-based tourism context constitute the elements which form the basis of this research. The relationship between theory and the examined context prioritizes theoretical conclusions over direct generalizations of the contextual findings. The analytically generalized findings (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016) do, however, provide a basis for managerial implications in different experiential contexts including, but not limited to, the examined nature-based national park setting. This dissertation examines the consumer value of tourism. The main research question is: **How is consumer value constructed in a nature-based context that is minimally influenced and managed by tourism providers?** This overall question is divided into three independent, but interlinked sub-questions:

1. **What do nature-based tourists visiting Finnish national parks experience and what drives their experiences?**

   The first research question lays the foundation of this thesis by examining the experiences of domestic visitors to Finnish national parks. The focus is on the nature, composition, drivers and controllability of their park experiences. Comprehension of these factors provides the necessary context-specific baseline for the subsequent investigations concerning perceived value. This topic is covered by Article I. A more detailed description of this subsection's research themes, objectives and sub-questions is provided in Table 1.

2. **What is the nature and composition of the perceived consumer value of park visitors especially with regard to the social dimensions?**

   The second research question targets the nature and composition of perceived consumer value by examining its different, but coexistent dimensions. Thus, it moves from the actual experiences to their personal interpretation and meanings for the visitors. The outcome is a cross-section of the structure of value in nature-based tourism with a particular focus on the social dimensions. Article II answers this question (Table 1).

3. **How do park visitors construct value and which universal values underpin their preferences?**

   Finally, the third part examines how nature-based tourists construct value. It discloses their means-end chains from concrete destination attributes and personal activities to perceived consumer value and further to the highest order universal values. This hierarchical and causal perspective is examined in Article III which reports the mixed-method research of 956 visitors to nine national parks (Table 1).

As a dissertation, this research proceeds in successive stages building on knowledge gained in the previous step. The outcome is three complementary perspectives – experiential, compositional and dynamic – that together contribute to the conceptualization of consumer value in nature-based tourism.

In particular, the combination of compositional (Article II) and dynamic approaches (Article III) permits cross-checking the consumer value of nature-based tourism from two complementary angles.

Table 1. Objectives of the research articles

Article	Research objectives	Sub-questions	Research themes
Article I	To examine what nature-based tourists experience in the national park context. Given the experientiality of value, this provides a context-specific basis for the subsequent investigation of perceived consumer value.	1. What are the themes and dimensions of park visitors' experiences? 2. What is the temporal evolution of experiences from 1970 to present day? 3. What are the drivers of visitor experiences?	Experiential consumption; the composition of experiences; drivers and control of experiences
Article II	To examine the composition of park visitors' perceived consumer value in order to understand the personal meanings of the experiences.	1. What is the composition of consumer value in nature-based tourism? 2. What is the nature and structure of social value in particular?	Multidimensional composition of consumer value; nature, drivers and structure of social value
Article III	To examine how independent nature-based tourists construct value. This discloses the different means-end value chains and reveals the ultimate drivers of nature-based tourism.	1. What are the dominant means-end chains (attributes -> consumer value -> universal values)? 2. Which universal values guide the behavior of nature-based tourists? 3. How to improve the quantitative determination of tourists' means-end structures?	Means-end construction of value; universal values as determinants of tourist behavior; development of quantitative means-end methodology

Primarily, this thesis examines the consumer value construct in a setting characterized by the consumer dominant logic (Anker et al., 2015; cf. Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). It contributes to the theoretical consumer value discussion firstly by elaborating on the independent creation of value in an unmanaged customer ecosystem (Lipkin, 2016; Voima et al., 2011). Secondly, a scrutiny of the composition of perceived value and in particular its social dimensions contributes to the current discussion of customer-to-customer value co-creation in tourism (Campos et al., 2018; Phi & Dredge, 2019; Reichenberger, 2017; Rihova et al., 2015). Thirdly, and finally, the means-end chains and the universal values that guide nature-based tourists in their determination of consumer value are disclosed with a new quantitative instrument. Consequently, a number managerial implications ensue from the introduction of a robust and well-established theoretical framework in a context thus far lacking value research. Specifically, a deeper understanding of the personal meanings and goals that underpin visitors' observed behavior and preferences complements quantitative park visitor surveys. This higher-level knowledge can assist commercial providers of nature-based tourism services and the findings are also applicable to tourism and experiential consumption in general via analytic generalization.

1.4 Positioning of the study

Within the marketing domain, this dissertation represents consumer behavior research (Arnould et al., 2004; Lai, 1995). It adopts a phenomenological approach and scrutinizes experiential value from the perspective of the consumers with regard to their subjective and situation-specific sense-making. The epistemological stance is interpretivist as opposed to the positivist management view of customer experience; a view which is based on companies managing stimuli to create specific customer outcomes (Helkkula & Kelleher, 2010; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016; Palmer, 2010). In the field of tourism research, this thesis therefore represents tourism studies (Ritchie et al., 2004).

The preceding sections have outlined how the experientiality of consumer value emphasizes personal experiences and value that are subjectively determined by the consumers (Holbrook, 1999; Vargo et al., 2008). This has fundamentally influenced the marketing thought by shifting the creation and determination of value from the former goods dominant logic to a service dominant logic (Vargo et al., 2008, 2010; Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and eventually to a customer dominant logic (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). This thesis is theoretically founded on experiential consumption, the quest for personal experiences, which in turn gives rise to perceived consumer value. Despite the paradigmatic evolution of marketing thought towards a customer dominant logic, the fundamental theoretical structures of value research have remained. Therefore, this research is framed by those consumer value theories concerned with the composition (Holbrook, 1999; Sheth et al., 1991) and hierarchical means-end construction of value (Gutman, 1982; Woodruff, 1997; Woodruff & Gardial, 1996). Scrutinizing the value construct from the perspective of its structure as well as its dynamic formation renders this intravariable value research focusing on the nature and dimensions of the value construct per se (Gallarza et al., 2011; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007).

National park visits represent an example of nature-based tourism that is in accordance with the consumer dominant logic (Anker et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016). In the absence of service providers, the visits highlight value creation by empowering tourists to provide for themselves and only occasionally be facilitated by the park management; thus, direct company-consumer interaction is missing. The parks themselves are experiential contexts consisting of multiple sources of stimuli largely outside the company-consumer dyad. Accordingly, they are best characterized as immersive experiencescapes, spaces for diverse and undetermined personal experiences (O'Dell, 2005) rather than managed servicescapes for the delivery of desired customer experiences (Bitner, 1992). As such, the parks coincide with the depiction of experiential contexts in the customer dominant logic as customer ecosystems where the consumer is at the center, creating value independently by integrating resources from diverse sources according to his / her personal needs (Lipkin, 2016).

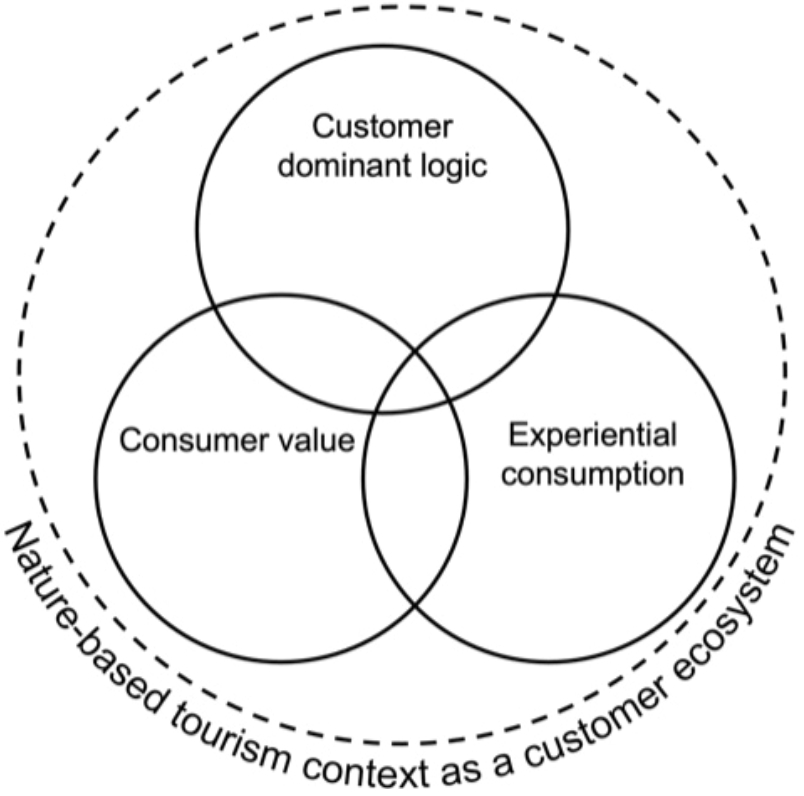

Figure 1. Positioning of the thesis.

1.5 Key concepts

The central concepts of this research are experience and value. Due to their pivotal position in modern marketing, both have been defined numerous times in literature from various angles often with different emphases and nuances. These will be discussed in the subsequent theory section, but as a provisional measure, the key concepts are briefly defined below in Table 2.

Table 2. Key concepts of the thesis. N.B. The broad definition of value also comprises customer value, consumer value, perceived value, consumption value, value for the customer and other related value concepts.

Concept	Definition
experiential consumption	"focuses on the symbolic, hedonic, and esthetic nature of consumption. This view regards the consumption experience as a phenomenon directed toward the pursuit of fantasies, feelings, and fun." (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982, p. 132)
value	"Value for the customer is any demand-side, personal perception of advantage arising out of a customer's association with an organisation's offering..." (Woodall, 2003, p. 21)
experiential value	"consumer value resides **not** in the product purchased, **not** in the brand chosen, **not** in the object possessed, but **rather** in the **consumption experience(s)** derived therefrom" (Holbrook, 1999, p. 8, emphasis as in the original)
social value of tourism	"all consumer value dimensions stemming from other people, for instance travel companions, other tourists, locals, staff members and those belonging to one's social network." (own definition in Article II / Sorakunnas, 2022, p.5)
customer dominant logic	"... a view that positions the customer in the center... instead of focusing on what companies are doing to create services that customers will prefer, we suggest that the focus should be on what customers are doing with services and service to accomplish their own goals." (Heinonen et al., 2010, p. 543)
customer ecosystem	"systems of actors related to the customer that are relevant concerning a specific service." (Voima et al., 2011, p. 1015)
nature-based tourism	"all tourism that takes place in areas rich in natural amenities as well as activities connected to nature" (Lundmark & Müller, 2010, p. 381)

1.6 Outline of the thesis

This article-based doctoral thesis comprises a theory section and three research articles. This Introduction offers an overview of the field under research from both the theoretical and empirical perspectives. It demonstrates the relevance of this thesis and justifies the selected theoretical approach. The following Theoretical framework presents the main consumer value theories and those frameworks that delineate the compositional and means-end conceptualizations of value. In accordance with the prevailing understanding, value is presented as a multidimensional and experiential construct. Moreover, the views of service and customer dominant logics concerning control, co-creation and subjective determination of value are introduced as they are central issues in experiential consumption. The theoretical framework concludes with reflections on the theory in respect of the examined empirical context. This was deemed necessary as park visits constitute an unconventional context for a consumer value investigation and understanding the idiosyncrasies involved aids the understanding of the findings and conclusions.

The third section, Research strategy, outlines the philosophical approach, constructivism; an approach that is suited to scrutinizing personal experiences and subjectively perceived value in accordance with relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology. These result in the application of qualitative methodology with an inductive approach in Articles I and II and an inductive-deductive mixed-method design in Article III. The detailed description of the materials and methods is intended to allow the readers to follow the decision-making trail step by step. The different parts of this research were conducted in the order of the articles. This thesis follows this conceptual process although the publication timetable of the articles differs from the temporal execution of this research. Section four, Discussion, presents the main findings of the research articles and discusses their theoretical implications. Finally, the Conclusions section summarizes the theoretical outcomes and provides managerial implications and is followed by an overall evaluation of the trustworthiness of the dissertation. The original research articles are reprinted in the latter part of this dissertation.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The concept of consumer value

Overall, marketing and the market economy are based on offering, assessing and experiencing value. The concept of consumer value depicts why consumers buy and consume products and services, "...what they want and believe that they get from buying and using a seller's product." (Woodruff, 1997, p. 140). Thus, value relates to obtaining personal benefits and advantage. The cited description as well as the numerous other definitions of value (cf. Gallarza et al., 2011) have been germinated from the pioneering work of Zeithaml (1988), who presented the fundamental idea of consumer value as a consumer's assessment of the usefulness of a product or service primarily in comparison to its price. Although her utilitarian trade-off view was a simplification of what nowadays is considered a complex phenomenon comprising different dimensions, temporal aspects, human factors as well as other costs in addition to price alone (Babin & James, 2010; Boksberger & Melsen, 2011; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001), it nonetheless concisely expressed the essence of consumer value. Resting on a comparison between getting something in return for giving up something else, value is a consumer's evaluative judgement of the perceived benefits and sacrifices before, during and after the consumption of an offering. Logically, for a rational consumer to engage in exchange, the perceived benefits need to exceed the incurred sacrifices of the transaction (Holbrook, 1996; Lin et al., 2005; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Woodruff & Gardial, 1996). Woodall's definition (2003, p. 21) summarizes the consumers' benefit-cost comparison: "value for the customer is any demand-side, personal perception of advantage arising out of a customer's association with an organisation's offering...the resultant of any weighed combination of sacrifice and benefit...".

Value is a central marketing element and an essential tool for strategic management (Babin & James, 2010; Gallarza & Gil, 2008; Leroi-Werelds, 2019;

Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). Its pivotal role is apparent in the American Marketing Association's definition of marketing:

> "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have **value** for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." (https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/, bolding added)

Value is considered indispensable in gaining and sustaining competitive advantage (Huber et al., 2001; Lai, 1995; Woodruff, 1997; Woodruff & Gardial, 1996; Zauner et al., 2015). In addition, the paradigmatic shift of marketing from a goods dominant logic to a service and eventually to a customer / consumer dominant logic is founded on the understanding of value creation and perception (Anker et al., 2015; Grönroos, 2006, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramaswamy, 2011; Vargo et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The relevance of value is, however, not confined to the strategic level alone; insights into value also guide operational marketing decisions regarding target market segmentation, product positioning, marketing mix composition, and the measurement of service success (Babin & James, 2010; Holbrook, 1999b). It is also a key to understanding consumer behavior, satisfaction and loyalty (Gallarza et al., 2011, 2016; Woodall, 2003). It would therefore be difficult to imagine marketing without value.

Value is a two-sided phenomenon that can be investigated either from a provider perspective, which is that of the company or a user perspective, which is that of the consumer. The company perspective focuses on the value of individual customers or groups of customers to a company, referred to as customer lifetime value and customer equity, and being closely connected to economic value (Graf & Maas, 2008; Huber et al., 2001; Woodall, 2003). The alternative consumer perspective describes individual consumers' evaluations of the perceived benefits and costs of the company's offerings in their own lifeworld contexts – extending the evaluation beyond mere economics. Naturally, these two approaches are intertwined: the consumers need to perceive value in order for the company to sustain its customer relationships and derive long-term economic value. Consumer value research represents the

consumer perspective, their evaluations of the offerings, commonly expressed in marketing literature as consumer value (Gallarza & Gil Saura, 2020; Holbrook, 1999b; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009), customer value (Gallarza et al., 2011; Holbrook, 1996; Smith & Colgate, 2007; Woodruff, 1997), consumption value (Sheth et al., 1991), perceived value (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007) and value for the customer (Woodall, 2003).

Although the terms customer and consumer value are often used interchangeably in marketing practice and literature, an explicit conceptualization reveals a difference in their meanings as regards the perspective and basis of value perceptions. Customer value represents the marketing management perspective of value. It reflects the customers' evaluations of offerings before or at the moment of purchase (Lai, 1995). Their "to buy or not to buy" decision-making is characterized by value anticipation and expectation based on the company's value propositions (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020), which ties customer value closely to the company-customer relationship (Gallarza et al., 2011; Gallarza & Gil, 2008). Consumer value, on the other hand, represents the consumer behavior approach that depicts individual consumers' evaluation of offerings after their purchase, disconnected from a direct relationship with the provider and occurring in the life of the consumer (Anker et al., 2015; Lai, 1995). Instead of value being based on expectations underpinned by marketing communication and other external sources of information, consumer value results from personal use experiences and is therefore commonly referred to as perceived value and consumption value (Gallarza et al., 2011; Gallarza & Gil, 2008). Thus, the act of buying and then consuming an object impacts the individual's basis of value perception and converts a customer into a consumer. This dissertation takes a consumer behavior approach, focusing on how individual consumers perceive value during consumption. Therefore, in the following, the concept of consumer value is systematically used whereas customer value is only applied when referring explicitly to company-driven value propositions prior to actual consumption. However, when citing customer value literature, the lexicon of the specific literature cited is consistently used regardless of its compatibility with the presented demarcation of customer and consumer value.

2.2 Theoretical value research approaches

The value construct may be examined either intervariably or intravariably (Gallarza et al., 2011; Gallarza & Gil, 2006). The intervariable approach examines the causal relationships between value and quality, value and satisfaction as well as value and loyalty. Commonly, quality is considered an antecedent to value while satisfaction and loyalty, for their part, result from consumers' value perceptions; thus, a quality-value-satisfaction-loyalty -chain is recognized (Gallarza et al., 2019; Gallarza et al., 2013; Gallarza et al., 2016; Oh & Kim, 2017; Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). The alternative, intravariable approach, investigates the value construct as such, focusing on its nature and dimensions (Gallarza et al., 2017; Gallarza et al., 2011; Gallarza & Gil, 2006). Within the intravariable approach, the unidimensional research stream represents the trade-off view regarding value as a single overall construct (cf. Zeithaml, 1988). Multiple antecedents may contribute to the unidimensional perception, but the resulting value construct is not considered to consist of distinct elements. In contrast, the alternative, multidimensional approach, considers value to consist of several inter-related components that jointly constitute the overall value perception, but can still be distinguished from one another (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). Within this multidimensional orientation, the compositional approach investigates the nature and different dimensions of value. It represents a momentary view of the structure of value, which is described using typologies (The Typology of Consumer Value, Holbrook, 1999b; The Theory of Consumption Values, Sheth et al., 1991). The other intravariable approach is dynamic. It examines the construction of value as hierarchical means-end relationships between product attributes, personal consequences of product use and the consumers' higher order values (Gutman, 1982; Vinson et al., 1977; The Customer Value Hierarchy Model, Woodruff, 1997; Woodruff & Gardial, 1996).

This thesis adheres to the intravariable approach focusing exclusively on the value construct per se, which enables a more thorough scrutiny than if investigating the entire quality-value-satisfaction-loyalty chain with several variables and their relationships. Moreover, the value construct is examined both from the compositional and dynamic perspectives to

offer complementary views and deeper understanding. The compositional approach provides a **what** perspective that identifies the overall nature of value and its different dimensions. The dynamic means-end view, for its part, explains **how** the observed dimensions emerge as well as answering the crucial question of **why** they are appreciated. This theoretical approach is illustrated in Figure 2.

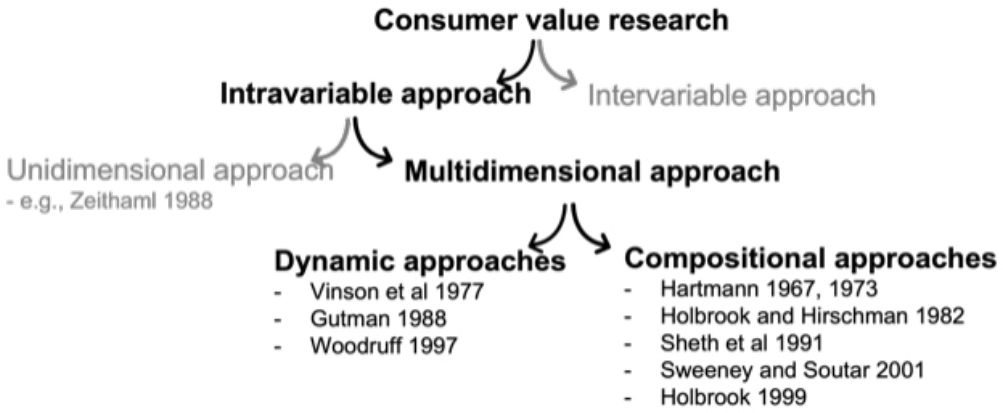

Figure 2. Different research streams utilized when studying consumer value. The path applied in this dissertation is bolded. (adapted from Gallarza et al., 2011; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007).

2.2.1 The compositional approach

Initially, value was considered utilitarian, based on consumers' perceptions of extrinsic product or service attributes that provided performance and functionality. The offerings of companies were regarded as instrumental problem solvers and the customers as rational decision-makers selecting the most appropriate tool for the task in question (Zauner et al., 2015). This utilitarian conception regarded value as a unidimensional construct resting on an analytical comparison of benefits and sacrifices (Zeithaml, 1988), the trade-off being expressed in its simplest form as "value for money" (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Babin et al., 1994; Boksberger & Melsen, 2011; C. Chang

& Dibb, 2013). The growth of intangible consumption – leisure, arts, and entertainment, for example – emphasized the experiential outcomes of consumption. The consumption experience was not considered only as an instrumental means to a desired end, but also as an intrinsic end in itself, pursued for its own sake, for pleasure, fun and enjoyment (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Complementing product functionality with experientiality introduced the consumers' subjective responses to value perception (Addis & Holbrook, 2001). Consequently, the unidimensional and utilitarian view was no longer considered sufficient to describe the complexity of perceived value and therefore, it was replaced with multidimensional conceptualizations (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011; Mathwick et al., 2001; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Accordingly, perceived value consists of interrelated utilitarian and hedonic dimensions that merge into a complex, multidimensional construct (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009; Zauner et al., 2015). The first attempts to describe the multidimensionality of consumer value distinguished extrinsic and intrinsic value dimensions related to the practical and emotional aspects of consumption plus a systemic / logical dimension that referred to the comparison of costs and benefits (Hartman, 1967, 1973; Mattsson, 1991; in Boksberger & Melsen, 2011). Similarly, both utilitarian and hedonic sides were recognized in the two-dimensional value scale developed in the context of shopping (Babin et al., 1994). However, with growing emphasis on the experientiality and emotionality of consumption, the need for more sophisticated classifications with multiple value dimensions became evident.

The Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991) distinguishes, in addition to the functional and emotional division, also social, epistemic and conditional value that are related to status seeking and impression management, novelty and situational factors. The Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b; Holbrook, 1996) provides an even more detailed division of the components of value. It is premised on three key dimensions, where the functional / emotional dichotomy is referred to as extrinsic / intrinsic. Extrinsic value refers to instrumentality whereas intrinsic value is an end in itself, pursued for its own sake. Additionally, self- / other-oriented as well as active / reactive value dimensions are identified. Self-oriented value

provides consequences to the consumer him-/herself while other-oriented value refers to consumption that derives its meaning from the influence it has on others. Active value emerges when a consumer does something to or with an object whereas reactive value requires merely passive responding (ibid.). These bipolar dimensions are compiled into a matrix of eight different value types that co-exist in varying combinations (Figure 3).

		Extrinsic	*Intrinsic*
Self-oriented	*Active*	**Efficiency**	**Play**
	Reactive	**Excellence**	**Aesthetics**
Other-oriented	*Active*	**Status**	**Ethics**
	Reactive	**Esteem**	**Spirituality**

Figure 3. The Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b)

Efficiency, which describes the active and instrumental use of an object to achieve a self-oriented purpose, is the equivalent of functionality. Its reactive form, Excellence, refers to the potential and capacity of an object for some purpose, but its realization does not entail actual use. Hence, Excellence is close to quality. Play describes hedonic value, fun and enjoyment, a self-oriented end in itself. Aesthetics is equally intrinsic, but more passive, as for example when admiring a work of art. Holbrook distinguishes two types of social value, active Status seeking and impression management as well as the more passive Esteem, based on the mere possession of objects that increases an individual's reputation (Richins, 1999; Solomon, 1999). Ethics and Spirituality concern mental states, the former being something undertaken for the benefit of others and the latter responding to an external entity

often concretized through religious relationships and feelings of universality (Holbrook, 1999b).

The Theory of Consumption Values and the Typology of Consumer Value have dominated experiential value research. Within the field of tourism, the Typology of Consumer value has been applied more often (e.g., Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Gallarza, Arteaga, et al., 2013; Gallarza et al., 2017, 2019; Gallarza & Gil, 2006; Gallarza & Gil, 2008; Komppula & Gartner, 2013; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009) than the Theory of Consumption Values (e.g., Sánchez et al., 2006; Williams & Soutar, 2009; Wong et al., 2019). This is likely a consequence of the former having a more rigorous theoretical foundation as well as comprising eight categories that depict the different facets of value more precisely. However, the Holbrook typology has also been criticized for its complexity and the author himself also recognized ambiguities between some value types, particularly Status and Esteem (Holbrook, 1999a). To resolve these problems, some value types have been excluded or integrated in the empirical examinations; for example, using only the self-oriented dimensions (Efficiency, Excellence, Play, and Aesthetics) complemented with a fifth, Social value dimension (Gallarza & Gil, 2006; M. Gallarza & Gil, 2008) or applying the self-oriented dimensions plus Social value plus Altruistic value, which comprises both Ethics and Spirituality (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009). The most simplified version of Holbrook´s typology ignores the active / reactive distinction entirely truncating value to Economic (Efficiency and Excellence), Hedonic (Play and Aesthetics), Social (Status and Esteem) and Altruistic (Ethics and Spirituality) (Holbrook, 2006).

Furthermore, the opposite solution, adding new value types in search of a more fine-grained description of reality, has been proposed; examples of such value types are relational and social benefits that result from better relationships with the service provider's staff or other customers as well as personalization and the customer's control of the service delivery process or its outcome (Leroi-Werelds, 2019). One further lack in both the Sheth and Holbrook typologies is the exclusion of costs and sacrifices. While consumers' value perception fundamentally is a trade-off of benefits versus costs (Woodruff & Gardial, 1996; Zeithaml, 1988), these typologies ignore the monetary and non-monetary costs and concentrate solely on the benefits. To overcome

this deficiency, some scholars have included costs in their studies alongside the positive value types (e.g., Gallarza & Gil, 2006, monetary price, risk, time and effort). Leroi-Werelds (2019) recently recommended complementing Holbrook´s typology with as many as ten negative value types ranging from conventional time, price and effort to physical risks, privacy and ecological costs. Despite these shortcomings, both typologies have been frequently used in experiential value research and several scholars have considered the Typology of Consumer Value the most comprehensive approach to the composition of consumer value (Gallarza et al., 2017; Gallarza et al., 2011; Leroi-Werelds, 2019; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009).

2.2.2 The dynamic approach

The value typologies offer a static view of the components of value. The consumption of products and services is, however, a process that comprises successive temporal phases; in general consumption, pre-purchase -> purchase -> the core consumption experience -> remembered consumption and nostalgia (Arnould et al., 2004; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Roederer, 2013) and in tourism in particular, anticipation -> travel to -> on-site experiences -> travel back -> recollection (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; in Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Consumers assess value continuously during the entire process with the basis and criteria for evaluation depending on the phase. This sequential value construction is examined by dynamic approaches that take a processual and causal perspective to value perception (Woodruff, 1997).

A sequential framework integrating consumers' personal values with their consumption behavior was introduced by Vinson, Scott and Lamont (1977) and formulated into a hierarchical means-end theory by Gutman (1982). It regards consumption as goal-oriented behavior where product attributes function as instruments (means) that consumers utilize to reach desired consequences and personal goals and purposes (ends); thus, constructing distinctive means-end chains. On the lowest level of abstraction, during the pre-purchase stage, consumers assess value based on concrete and objective product attributes, often manifested by the companies' value propositions. In the subsequent purchase-phase, value is perceived by comparing the expected benefits to the arising costs of making the transaction. After the

purchase, the consumer engages in consumption – technically interacts with the object acquired – to realize the sought personal consequences (Gutman, 1982; Woodruff, 1997; Woodruff & Gardial, 1996). The means-end model entails a rising level of abstraction when moving from the attribute level to the higher goals and values. Often the means-end dynamics are illustrated with upward pointing arrows describing the idea of attributes leading to consequences, which in turn lead to universal values. However, the means-end theory is bidirectional as it also explains how the universal values underpin and influence consumers' quest for specific consequences, which in turn affects their preferences for particular attributes (Figure 4).

Lai (1995) combined the consumers' value assessments during different stages of the consumption process into a Framework of Product Valuation for Consumers, which was further developed into the Customer Value Hierarchy comprising three levels: attributes, consequences and values (Woodruff, 1997; Woodruff & Gardial, 1996). Additional hierarchical levels were proposed by dividing attributes into concrete and abstract, consequences into functional and psychosocial and end values into instrumental and terminal (Olson & Reynolds, 1983). Later, the six-level model was considered too complicated and only the division of consequences into functional and psychosocial was retained (Olson & Reynolds, 2001) (Figure 4). This has also been supported by other scholars due to the pivotal position of consequences in the means-end structure (Diedericks et al., 2020; Reynolds, 2006; Reynolds & Phillips, 2009); reflecting the personal benefits of consumption, they function simultaneously as ends in attribute-consequence linkages and as means in consequence-values linkages, thereby connecting concrete product features with consumers' personal values.

In addition to the product attributes and the use-situation, consumers' value judgements also depend on their personal values and goals (Woodruff & Gardial, 1996). These refer to the highest level of the means-end hierarchy, the universal values (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988; Kim, 2020; Schwartz, 1992, 2012), also expressed as "terminal" and "end" values to emphasize their ultimate nature (Rokeach 1973). The end values are universal, because all consumers share the same end values, but simultaneously, they are very personal as each individual prioritizes these values according to his or her own value

system (Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 2012). The universal values are abstract and stable constructs that transcend single products and use situations. They provide the overall guidance and evaluative criteria for individuals' situation-specific value judgements and reveal what is important to the individual in life (Holbrook, 1999b; Kim, 2020; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). Hence, the bidirectional arrows in the means-end model. Literature commonly refers to the universal values using the plural "values" whereas the singular "value" is used as a synonym for situation-specific customer and consumer value.

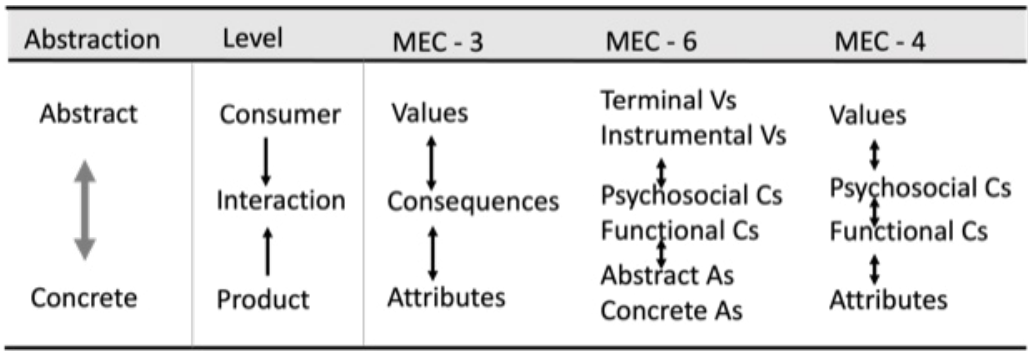

Figure 4. Three-level (Gutman, 1982), six-level (Olson & Reynolds, 1983) and four-level (Olson & Reynolds, 2001) means-end hierarchies (Sorakunnas & Konu, 2022). (V=values, C=consequences, A=attributes)

The utility of the means-end approach lies in disclosing what the products and their particular attributes mean for the customers in particular use situations, why certain features are appreciated and how they contribute to the lives of the consumers. These what-how-why means-end chains provide a more holistic comprehension of consumer behavior and decision-making than scrutinizing only the dimensions of perceived value, because the chains reveal the attribute-level origins of value perceptions as well as the overarching values (Olson & Reynolds, 2001; Parasuraman, 1997; Woodruff, 1997). This has been evidenced also in the tourism and hospitality industry,

where means-end research has disclosed the determinants of tourist behavior and facilitated the linking of destination and service attributes to tourists' universal values (McDonald et al., 2008; McIntosh & Thyne, 2005). Empirical means-end examinations have been conducted in diverse contexts ranging, for example, from business guests' perceptions of hotel accommodation (Orsingher et al., 2011) to pilgrim and religious tourists' value orientations (Kim et al., 2016; Kim & Kim, 2019; see Table 2 in Article III for the full variety of empirical contexts).

The means-end approach to value concretizes the difference between customer value and consumer value (cf. Gallarza et al., 2011). Customer value refers to the customers' anticipation and expectation of value during the pre-purchase and purchase phases influenced by the company's value propositions as well as other external sources of information outside the company, such as product reviews and word of mouth. Consequently, it occurs on the attribute level. Once the consumer has purchased the offering and uses it, experiential and subjectively determined consumer value emerges on the consequence level. Hence, from the means-end perspective, customer value is a precursor of consumer value. Other authors have made this customer / consumer value distinction using more descriptive terminology; for instance, expected value / experienced value (Komppula, 2005), acquisition and transaction value / in use value and redemption value (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000), desired value / derived value (Woodruff, 1997) as well as marketing, net and sale value / derived value (Woodall, 2003). Regardless of the wording, all these reflect the idea of first anticipating and expecting value and then personally experiencing and determining it when using the purchased object.

2.3 Experiential value

> "What people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences . . . People want products because they want the experience-bringing services which they hope the products will render." (Abbott, 1955, pp. 39–40 as cited in Ma et al., 2017)

This quotation shows that the significance of experiences in consumption had already been recognized in the 1950s. Later, in the 1980s, Holbrook and Hirschman turned their explicit attention to the experiential aspects of consumption (1982), but it was not until the end of the 1990s that the experiential view became widely recognized in marketing (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Accordingly, in the new Experience Economy, value resided in personal and memorable experiences rather than the quality of products and reliability of services (ibid.). The experiential nature of value was emphasized by new hybrid concepts merging experience and value: experiential value and experience value (Barnes et al., 2020), value in the experience (Helkkula et al., 2012), experienced value (Komppula, 2005) and value in use (Vargo et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). However, although closely related and often combined, experience and value are distinct concepts. Experiential value is based on causality where products offer services that lead to personal experiences that provide value for the consumer (Holbrook, 2006; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramaswamy, 2011). This view of personal experiences anteceding consumers' value perceptions is widely supported in marketing literature: value does not reside in the object purchased and consumed, but in the experience of consumption (Frow & Payne, 2007; Holbrook, 1999b; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), "interactions affect experience, and experience determines value emerging from the interaction" (Grönroos, 2011, p. 295), the perception of value is a summary evaluation of the experienced consequences, both positive and negative (Woodruff & Gardial, 1996; cf. Zeithaml, 1988), "it must be an experience of something that creates value for someone," (Ng et al., 2018, p. 231) and "value is created within experiences" (Heinonen et al., 2010, p. 543). Thus, the concept of experiential value is underpinned by the sequence: interaction -> experience -> value. In addition, the value is assessed as a trade-off between benefits and costs (Zeithaml, 1988).

The first conceptualizations of experiential value rested on the instrumentality of products as deliverers or sources of consumer experiences, for example, "consumer value resides not in the product purchased, not in the brand chosen, not in the object possessed, but rather in the consumption experience(s) derived therefrom" (Holbrook, 1999b, p. 8) and this product or service foundation is still present in managerial approaches to experiential

value (Varshneya et al., 2017; Yuan & Wu, 2008). However, the interaction giving rise to consumer experiences and leading to value, is not limited to tangibles. In fact, in today's increasingly more immaterial world, experiential value is intrinsic in the growing range of intangible consumption lacking physical products. It explains consumption better than regarding the mere evaluation of product features and utility and therefore, the experiential view is considered suited to almost all consumption (Addis & Holbrook, 2001).

2.3.1 Managed versus individual experiences

The declaration of the Experience Economy era (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) lifted the experientiality of consumption to the forefront of marketing. New marketing concepts emerged: experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999; Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013), customer experience monitoring (Meyer & Schwager, 2007), management of customer experiences (Berry et al., 2002; Gentile et al., 2007; Palmer, 2010; Payne et al., 2008), experiencescapes (O'Dell, 2005), co-creation of experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) and drivers of consumer experiences (Carú & Cova, 2003). The Experience economy logic also penetrated tourism (Andersson, 2007), the means of measuring this aspect in tourism were developed (Oh et al., 2007) and the 2010 scenario for tourism was titled "Experience rules" (Erdly & Kesterson-Townes, 2003). Nevertheless, what at the time appeared as a paradigmatic transformation within marketing, still regarded companies as the providers and managers of customer experiences. This was clearly expressed in the terminology used – to design, drive, stage, manage and co-create experiences (Carú & Cova, 2007b). Similarly, Pine and Gilmore's oft-cited statement "An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event." (1998, p. 98) reflected the deliberate managing of predetermined stimuli to trigger desired customer experiences (Jaakkola et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016). This managerial perspective was operationalized as service management (Jaakkola et al., 2015; Kwortnik & Thompson, 2009) and customer experience management that regarded the customer experience as a positivistic phenomenon (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Berry et al., 2002; Frow & Payne, 2007; Grewal et al., 2009; Helkkula & Kelleher, 2010; Palmer,

2010; Verhoef et al., 2009). This stance was also expressed in the tourism industry by considering the active offering and even delivery of experiences as the essence of tourism (Barnes et al., 2020; Pizam, 2010; Scott et al., 2009; Sotiriadis & Gursoy, 2016; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). In addition, theoretical frameworks for goal-oriented experience design in tourism were developed (Tussyadiah, 2014) and experience economy applications were tested (S. Chang, 2018; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Oh et al., 2007).

The consumers' or tourists' world, however, is not limited to market-based experiences provided by companies. The broader concept of consumption experience (Carú & Cova, 2003; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013; Woodward & Holbrook, 2013) also comprises non-commercial consumption experiences outside the marketplace and beyond the control of companies (Carú & Cova, 2003; Edgell & Hetherington, 1996); for example, dining at a friend's house, using public services or admiring the wonders of nature. In the most extreme interpretation, all human experiences are considered consumption experiences (Woodward & Holbrook, 2013), an argument underpinned by a broad view of consumption as "acquisition, use, and disposal of products, services, ideas, and experiences" (Arnould et al., 2004, p. 6). Hence, viewed from the perspective of the individual, consumer experiences are individually constructed in an interpretive process and a wider context, which makes them subjective and unique, thus hard to determine by the providers (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Kranzbühler et al., 2018). The role of personal interaction and interpretation leading to a myriad of experiences has also been acknowledged in tourism and the tourist experience has been considered too complex, dynamic and multifaceted to be treated simply as an objective offering (Chen et al., 2014; Ma et al., 2017; Uriely, 2005). Hence, experiences indeed rule value perception, but this occurs on the consumers' subjective terms and conditions limiting the goal-oriented management of experiences (cf. Palmer, 2010).

In addition to the rising subjectivity, the management perspective on consumer experience is also challenged by the increasing complexity of markets; the full breadth and depth of the contemporary experiential context is systemic with the consumer experience being influenced by networked actors outside the company-customer dyad (Carù & Cova, 2015; Jaakkola et al.,

2015; Lipkin, 2016), for example other customers, other companies and social media. In addition, the experiential context is considered temporally extended over the entire customer journey from pre-purchase expectations to post-purchase nostalgia (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016 / Process Model for Customer Journey and Experience). Accordingly, the initial division of experiences into either company-driven or consumer-driven (Carú & Cova, 2003, 2007b) has been reformulated to also encompass emerging experiences (Jaakkola et al., 2015), stimuli beyond company-control (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020) as well as social and external touch points (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). These reflect the view that an increasing amount of experiential influence lies beyond the control of companies and when each individual interprets and evaluates their experiences uniquely, the outcomes are bound to be subjective and diverse (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Helkkula et al., 2012; Lipkin, 2016). Consumers' value perceptions have also become intersubjective and socially constructed as a result of personal experiences being shared with others via word-of-mouth, recommendations and on-line reviews (Helkkula et al., 2012; Helkkula & Kelleher, 2010; Jaakkola et al., 2015). Consequently, the management of customer experiences has become limited to the dyadic company-customer relationship while consumers are increasingly more influenced by stimuli outside this sphere (Kranzbühler et al., 2018).

2.3.2 Co-creation and independent creation of value

The subjectivity of experiences and extended experiential contexts gave rise to a new, service dominant logic for marketing (SDL). SDL abandons the goods dominant logic (GDL) that rests on creating value beforehand and instead, regards value co-created with and determined by the consumers during consumption (Vargo et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This implies that companies can offer experiential value to their customers by making value propositions, but the creation and determination of value require active consumer participation and interaction with the company; value is created **with** the customer instead of **for** the customer (Frow & Payne, 2018; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Ng et al., 2018). Initially, value co-creation was dyadic based on company-customer interaction where the provider and user roles were distinct (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). With the

growing recognition of co-creation, this distinction has later been replaced with "actor" to stress the equality of the parties in truly joint value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2011, 2016).

Co-creation of value in SDL literally implies that consumers are personally involved and required to participate during the entire consumption process (Andrades & Dimanche, 2014); they use their own skills and knowledge to complement the resources supplied by companies. These operant resources are intangible and dynamic, internal to individual consumers, whereas the operand resources offered by companies are tangible and static in nature (Vargo et al., 2008, 2010; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In the joint value co-creation process, consumers combine their operant resources with the operand resources of companies and consequently, perceived value depends not only on the tangible offering, but also on the personal skills and knowledge of the consumer in question (Prebensen et al., 2013; Tariq et al., 2020). Operant resources have been depicted as self-efficacy, social capital and customer expertise. The two first are personal characteristics, but companies can promote the last by training and educating their customers, thereby contributing to the operant resources and their customers' overall value perceptions (Alves et al., 2016). Although operant resources are personal, their influence is not limited to consumers and business-to-consumer marketing as the phenomenon has also been identified in industrial business-to-business contexts where it has been depicted as actor competence (Waseem et al., 2018).

Although SDL emphasizes mutual co-creation of value instead of company-staged experiences, some authors still regard SDL as too provider-dominated, because it considers the co-creation of value from the perspective of companies. Rather than focusing on how companies co-create value with their customers, the proposed customer / consumer dominant logic (CDL) centers on how the potential value offered by companies and other actors is realized by the consumers in their own, unique consumption contexts (Anker et al., 2015; cf. Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). While SDL premised value to be interactively co-created by the company and customer (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), CDL regards value being solely and independently created by consumers, based on their own

sense-making and only facilitated by the company's offering (Anker et al., 2015). This difference in perspective can be concretized by considering the crossing of a river in a national park either independently using a bridge or being assisted by a tour guide. The bridge, once erected by the park management, has, despite its objective features, only potential value until a visitor uses it for crossing the river. At the moment of use, when a visitor sets foot on the bridge, he or she creates value in the form of a safe and convenient crossing. Value is independently created by the visitor and only facilitated by the initial builders of the bridge in accordance with CDL. In the alternative case, if a customer of an adventure company wades across the same river, assisted by the tour guide, value is co-created in the direct interaction between the company and its customer in accordance with SDL involving both parties simultaneously. SDL explains the non-simultaneous co-creation of value (cf. the bridge example) by emphasizing the necessity of combining operant resources with operand ones: "operand resources only become valuable in the context of active resources" (Vargo et al., 2010, p. 132). Thus, the difference between SDL and CDL lies in the highlighted role of the consumer rather than in the timing of the service provision.

Moreover, the experiential context is perceived differently in SDL and CDL. SDL represents the company's perspective to the delivery of its services. Value is co-created in company-customer interaction that is directly influenced by the company and subject to customer participation (cf. the example of the guide and customer wading hand-in-hand across the river). Interaction and resource integration are, however, not limited only to this micro-level service relationship as other actors and factors also contribute to the service outcome, and this has extended the context into a service ecosystem (Akaka et al., 2013, 2015). By contrast, CDL views the experiential context from the perspective of the consumers' subjective sense-making in their individual consumption contexts, referring to it as a customer ecosystem. The consumer is perceived at the center of this ecosystem, integrating multisource resources according to his/her personal desires (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015; Lipkin, 2016; Voima et al., 2011). Unlike in SDL, the company lacks direct access to and participation in the consumers' independent creation of value and it is diminished to a facilitator of the process alongside other actors. Hence,

SDL and CDL share an understanding of experiential value as having evolved from a positivistic, objective and company-created phenomenon towards consumers' participation in value creation, but their conceptualizations of the role of the company and scope of the context are different; as the name suggests, the consumer dominates in CDL. More recently, the SDL view has converged with CDL: "...we drastically understated the extent of value cocreation...it is neither singular nor dyadic but rather a multi-actor phenomenon, often on a massive scale, albeit with the referent beneficiary at the center..." (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, p. 9).

2.4 The empirical context

2.4.1 Nature-based tourism and national parks

Nature-based tourism has been defined from different angles and for different purposes which has lead to a multiplicity of definitions (Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010; Margaryan, 2017) based on the role of the natural setting (Valentine, 1992), the types of tourism (Newsome et al., 2013) and classifications of the activities undertaken (Fredman et al., 2012; Mehmetoglu, 2007). In the absence of a single, universally acknowledged definition, broad conceptualizations that emphasize the central role of nature as a destination and encompass a variety of activities are common; for example, "Nature-based tourism includes people's activities when they visit natural areas outside of their usual surroundings." (Fredman et al., 2009, p. 24; cf. Fredman & Margaryan, 2020) and "all tourism that takes place in areas rich in natural amenities as well as activities connected to nature" (Lundmark & Müller, 2010, p. 381). Compared to more rigorous and ideological ecotourism (Blamey, 1997, 2001; Fennell, 2008; Weaver, 2001), which is a subcategory of nature-based tourism, the broader conceptualizations make no difference between the visitors' mode of travel to and from the destination, the type of activities pursued or their ethical commitment to nature conservation. When considering visits to Finnish national parks, the all-round definitions (Fredman et al., 2009; Fredman & Margaryan, 2020; Lundmark & Müller, 2010) accommodate the full spectrum

of visitors and their non-consumptive activities instead of comprising only a specific, narrowly defined visitor segment (cf. Konu et al., 2021).

The specific nature-based context of this research encompassed Finnish national parks and their domestic visitors. National parks are large nature conservation areas that have a dual mandate – to protect endangered species and ecosystems and to offer people opportunities for nature-based tourism and outdoor recreation. The priority is clear: the parks are primarily protected areas where recreation and tourism are permitted as long as they do not harm the conservation aims (Dudley, 2008; Newsome et al., 2013). Initially, the relationship between nature and tourism in the parks was, however, the opposite. The establishment of the first parks in the US at the end of the 19th century (e.g., Yellowstone in 1872) was driven by utilitarian aims that prioritized tourism and recreation; monumental scenery and the beauty of nature were harnessed to serve as sources of recreation and national pride (Frost & Hall, 2009c, 2009b). This was underpinned by the lack of alternative economically feasible uses for the areas, such as agriculture or forestry (The worthless lands hypothesis, Hall & Frost, 2009). During the 20th century, the increasing popularity of parks challenged this human-centered approach as the growing numbers of visitors started to degrade the natural values underlying the attractiveness of national parks. Visitor management and monitoring were put in place to mitigate this conflict rendering today's national park management a balance between eco-centric and anthropocentric goals. Accordingly, the visitor-nature relationship has evolved from the original "parks for visitors" into coexistence depicted as "parks with visitors" (Weaver & Lawton, 2017). In order to achieve both aims, the parks provide recreation infrastructures that facilitate visitation as well as impose rules and regulations to control and minimize the negative impacts of visitation. This combination of high-quality natural values complemented by recreational infrastructure and services has made the national park concept popular, universally known and valued, and sometimes even compared to commercial brands (Fredman et al., 2007; Frost & Hall, 2009a; Reinius & Fredman, 2007).

2.4.2 Parks as value offering experiencescapes

Tourism in general is considered an ideal context for research into consumer value, because its highly experiential nature generates a diversity of value types (Gallarza et al., 2019; Gallarza et al., 2016). This multidimensionality is also apparent in nature-based tourism, but it may at first seem odd to investigate a central marketing concept in a natural setting where managerial elements are few and visitation is characterized by independence and self-service; most people visit the Finnish national parks on their own, without any service provision by a tour operator (Konu et al., 2021). Obviously, these self-serviced park visits include commercial elements, such as travel to and from the park, accommodation and meals outside the park and the possession and use of outdoor equipment. But ultimately, the core consumption experience, the park visit itself, rests on visitor-park interaction that is not planned, influenced or managed by service providers. Hence, the examined park visits lack direct company-customer interaction, which foregrounds the visitors' own, personal engagement and self-imposed interaction with the emergent and uncontrollable natural events (Rossman & Ellis, 2012). Hence, these unstructured and wild experiences disclose the authentic, unguided construction of value more genuinely than the consumption of structured services designed by companies to deliver predetermined experiences to their customers (Brent Ritchie et al., 2011; Duerden et al., 2015, 2018; Ellis et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2017). Examples of such goal-oriented and arranged nature-based tourism offerings are numerous; consider spotting half-tame brown bears from a comfortable hide or the staged thrill of a guided and all-inclusive river rafting tour. The lack of "structured experience frameworks" (cf. Duerden et al., 2015, p. 610) in the parks permits the ephemeral, uncontrolled and multifaceted qualities of the context to be fully realized (Fredman et al., 2012). Hence, the park visits are as far as possible from the argument "most experiences qualify as structured because almost all experiences are influenced or intentionally manipulated to some degree by an outside provider" (Duerden et al., 2015, p. 603) as this accentuates the operand resources and reflects a management approach to customer experiences. Instead, the park visits, relying more on the operant resources, correspond to the consumers' independent creation of value in accordance

with the customer dominant logic and customer ecosystem view of the experiential context (Anker et al., 2015; Grönroos, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Lipkin, 2016). Although using different terminology – ephemeral context, wild and unstructured experiences, unguided construction, authenticity, self-service, and independence – the cited literature on leisure and tourism experiences and their management correspond with the preceding theoretical discussion on the construction of experiential value. This analogy underpins the examination of experiential consumer value in the context of independent do-it-yourself visits to public national parks. However, it is necessary to keep in mind that the examined, uncontrolled context emphasizes operant resources and emotional value types. This is typical for experiential consumption in general, but more managed consumption settings including tangible operand resources also offer functional value components that were lacking in the self-serviced parks.

The concept of a tourism context has evolved from a primarily managerial approach towards a more tourist-centered view that recognizes a broader experiential context. Bitner (1992) introduced the concept of servicescape for the physical premises of service providers as well as those processes that could be developed to facilitate desired customer experiences. Her conceptualization was in line with the service dominant logic where providers and tourists interact to co-create value within the company-customer realm. Similarly, the concept of an experience environment comprised environments created by companies to facilitate company managed experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Moreover, Carú and Cova (2007a) regarded experiential contexts as company-created and managed to promote consumer experiences via immersion. Binkhorst and Dekker's (2009) wider concept of the tourism experience network recognized a network of phenomena and stakeholders, but it still emphasized the role of companies. All these approaches rest on the idea of active design and management of tourism experiences (Stienmetz et al., 2021) reflecting a fundamental aspect of the experience economy where companies intentionally script experiences for their customers (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

The national park context, lacking direct company-consumer interaction, is best depicted as an experiencescape, a landscape for diverse experiences,

entertainment and enjoyment (O'Dell, 2005). Visitors immerse themselves in the park setting and interact with all its uncontrolled stimuli both mentally and physically as well as consciously and unconsciously (Carú & Cova, 2007a; Fossgard & Fredman, 2019). In the absence of company influence, the consumers' freedom and self-determination together with situational randomness and emergent events lead to personal emotions, excitement and experiences that constitute the experiential value (cf. Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). In order to co-create consumer experiences and value, Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 9), using a health care example, argued that "What we need to create is an experience environment within which individual patients [consumers] can create their own unique personalized experience." Considering nature-based tourism, it is hard to imagine a company-created environment or service that would outperform the parks in this respect. Hence, the parks are best characterized as personal experiencescapes (O'Dell, 2005) and customer ecosystems where the providers' role is smaller and indirect compared to traditional market-based company-customer interaction (Lipkin, 2016; Voima et al., 2011).

2.4.3 Park management and visitation

The above presented view of national parks being wild and uncontrolled experiencescapes does, however, not imply that they would be completely unmanaged destinations. The increasing popularity of parks has called for systematic measures to guide visitation and at present, parks are actively managed to simultaneously protect their natural values and facilitate nature-based recreation and tourism (Newsome et al., 2013). The first management framework tailored for national parks and other recreation areas – the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) – regarded nature-based destinations as combinations of physical, biological, social, and managerial conditions that needed to be jointly managed to provide varying opportunities for visitor experiences (Clark & Stankey, 1979; Driver & Brown, 1978). Most commonly, park managers apply ROS by classifying different parts of their destinations into zones with alternative levels of biophysical setting attributes, social conditions and managerial factors (Manning, 2014). Well-equipped and popular trails with plenty of services offering easy access to nature are usually

located near the park entrance while remote, undeveloped zones with higher natural values, solitude, challenge and freedom serve more experienced visitors. Although focusing mainly on the level of setting attributes, ROS is underpinned by a means-end idea of visitors' activities in particular settings leading to personal experiences and benefits (Clark & Stankey, 1979; McCool, 2006). This perspective has been developed into Benefits-Based Management (BBM) and Outcome-Focused Management (OFM) policies for natural areas (Driver, 2008). While ROS focuses on the setting attributes and the resulting visitor activities and experiences, OFM sets the management target on the personal psychological and psychophysiological benefits. Moreover, it also considers the benefits in a wider context, not only limited to individual visitors, but also comprising the positive consequences to the society at large via local and regional economic incomes, positive social and cultural impacts as well as environmental improvements (Croy et al., 2020; Moyle et al., 2014; Moyle & Weiler, 2017; Parry et al., 2014; Torland et al., 2015). Hence, OFM aims at facilitating visitor experiences, but it does not influence the actual outcomes as determinedly as the direct management of customer experiences (Berry et al., 2002; Frow & Payne, 2007; Palmer, 2010).

Finnish national parks are managed in accordance with the "parks with people" philosophy (Weaver & Lawton, 2017) that emphasizes conservation, but permits and also even encourages visitation as long as it does not cause a deterioration of the natural values (Luonnonsuojelulaki 20.12.1996/1096 [Finnish Nature Conservation Act]). Successful visitor management requires accurate information about the visitors and their activities (Hornback & Eagles, 1999). The managing authority of Finnish national parks, Metsähallitus / Parks & Wildlife Finland, applies standardized visitor monitoring that produces comparable data across different parks and periods of time. Visitor monitoring is executed with continuous automatic counters that report the number of visitors per location while visitor surveys, conducted at intervals of five or ten years, provide information on visitor demographics, their activities, duration of visits, group composition, monetary expenditure and satisfaction (Kajala et al., 2007; cf. Naumanen, 2020, pp. 52–55 for the questionnaire). Conducted since 2000, these surveys have compiled an extensive visitation

database to underpin management decisions for individual parks and visitor segments (Konu et al., 2021).

Finnish national parks are publicly funded and open to all. The park network consists of 41 parks distributed throughout the country (Figure 5). They are classified according to their location into parks next to a tourism hub, parks close to major cities, parks close to smaller urban areas and countryside parks (Metsähallitus & Finnish Forest Research Institute, 2009). For the purposes of this dissertation, the parks were classified into two main types: "Wild parks" were large and remote wilderness parks in Northern Finland whereas small, well-equipped parks close to cities were labelled "Urban parks". The annual number of park visits has quadrupled during the past two decades from less than a million to almost four million visits in 2020. With regard to the Finnish population of 5.5 million, this indicates the popularity of parks. Understandably the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp upward peak in visitation during 2019 and 2020, but the overall trend has been upwards for much longer. Over 90% of the visits are conducted by domestic do-it-yourself visitors and the percentage of commercially arranged, guided visits is marginal (Konu et al., 2021; Metsähallitus, 2021).

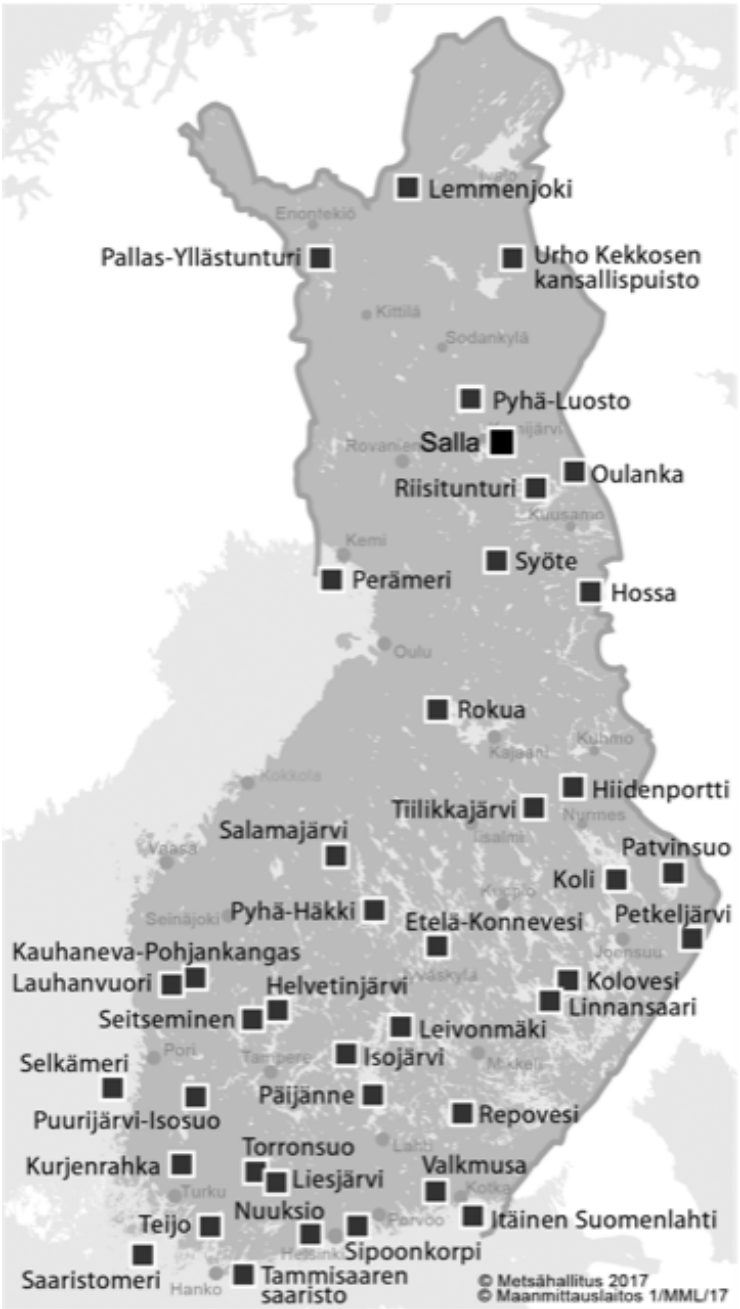

Figure 5. Map of Finland's 41 national parks (©Metsähallitus 2017 and Maanmittauslaitos / National Land Survey of Finland 2017).

While the percentage of visitors on organized and guided tours to national parks remains small (less than 1% of those visiting the parks in groups; Konu et al., 2021), commercial nature-based tourism services are offered outside of the parks. Typical examples are Northern Lights -excursions, husky safaris, reindeer adventures, kayaking and fishing trips tailored mainly to foreign visitors (Visit Finland, 2022). These align with the service dominant logic where the company and its customers jointly co-create value by combining operand and operant resources and the company has greater control over the outcome (Vargo et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The examined independent visits, for their part, represent the customer dominant logic (Anker et al., 2015) and a customer ecosystem view of the context (Akaka et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016). Independent visits were considered more appropriate for the scrutiny of consumer value in nature-based tourism, because they are not biased by the providers' operand resources.

2.4.4 The experiential value of national parks

This thesis focuses on value perceived by national park visitors during on-site visits as a result of personal immersion, interaction and experiences instead of pre-visit expectations and anticipation. Thus, this value is regarded as consumer value based on personal experiences rather than customer value characterized by value propositions and external company influence. More descriptive alternatives do exist for the concept of consumer value– for example, experienced, received, and derived value or value in the experience – however, the use of consumer value in this study is underpinned by the concept's established position in marketing literature. This concept also expresses the applied consumer behavior approach, the consumer perspective and emphasizes value formation during consumption.

As far as the streams of marketing thought are concerned, the consumer value perspective corresponds with the service and customer dominant logics that are based on value creation during consumption as well as the consumers' subjective determination of value (Grönroos, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Vargo et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Considering the service providers role either as co-creators (SDL) or facilitators (CDL) of value, the park visits comply with the customer dominant view of independent value

creation in a customer ecosystem where the consumers integrate multiple resources by applying their own skills and knowledge (Anker et al., 2015; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Voima et al., 2011). Hence, the park visitors' value creation is dominated by internal, operant resources and as far as the external, operand resources (e.g., wildlife, weather and social encounters) are concerned, they are also uncontrolled and dynamic. This consumer dominant understanding underpinned and framed the empirical examination of visitor experiences and subsequent consumer value in nature-based tourism. In the following, the research strategy and methodological choices are explained, with a subsequent discussion on the research articles' main findings in light of this theoretical framework. The issue of the dominant marketing logic of nature-based tourism will be revisited in the Conclusions.

3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Research philosophy determines the ontological and epistemological stance as well as the methodological choices to be made during the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011); that is, the philosophical position outlines how research is to be conducted in order to answer the research questions. This hierarchical structure, beginning with the paradigmatic world view and ending in the practical methods for data collection and analysis, forms a systematic framework – the research strategy (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Section 3.1 outlines the ontological, epistemological and methodological choices that laid the foundation for the operational execution of the separate research articles. The materials and methods used in the different articles are detailed and discussed in sections 3.2.1 – 3.2.3.

3.1 Scientific approach

Nature-based tourism experiences and their perceived consumer value are unique for each individual and occasion; visitors possess different internal values, motivations, and goals that underlie their evaluations of situations. The situations are similarly varied and numerous with stimuli fluctuating constantly and randomly (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Palmer, 2010). Due to this combined internal and external variation, a positivistic determination of tourist experiences and their consumer value outside the individual and the particular situation would be a futile endeavor. Therefore, the philosophical orientation of this research is non-positivistic, based on the constructivist / interpretivist paradigm that acknowledges the social construction of reality. It recognizes that each individual perceives and interprets the surrounding world uniquely and constructs his or her own subjective reality, which results in multiple, but equally valid versions of the world around us (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Eberle, 2014; Thanh et al., 2015). Hence, this research acknowledged relativist ontology and subjective

epistemology to accommodate these multiple realities and truths (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

The multifaceted, situation-specific and personal nature of tourist experiences and their consumer value favors a qualitative rather than a quantitative methodology (Becker, 2018; Palmer, 2010; Ryan, 2010). Instead of pursuing a singular truth, qualitative approaches thoroughly explore and describe different individual's unique perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). They recognize the complexity and nuances of the examined phenomenon instead of scrutinizing it quantitatively using predetermined categories. Palmer states (2010, p. 203) that "Given the difficulty of measuring customer experience in a non-linear manner and in a way that takes account of contextual differences, many researchers have argued that qualitative techniques are the only way to really understand experience from the perspective of the consumer." Regarding the participants' own perspectives, expressed freely in their own words, as data, represents an emic approach as opposed to an etic approach; in an etic approach the themes, concepts and variables are pre-determined by the researcher (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The emic standpoint, originating from linguistics and cultural anthropology, provides a situation-specific insider's perspective that recognizes the participants' own and diverse ways of perceiving the phenomenon of interest. Hence, it focuses on the particular whereas its etic counterpart is theory-driven and more universal (P. J. Buckley et al., 2014; Mostowlansky & Rota, 2020). In order to emphasize the orientation of the participants, emic research is commonly conducted on-site where the phenomenon of interest occurs naturally (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The emic perspective is captured with an inductive approach, where the collection and analysis of empirical materials precede theoretical propositions. This allows the researcher to explore and capture the participants' versatile realities in an open-minded way, unrestricted by theoretical accounts, conceptual frameworks and predefined terminology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Reichertz, 2014). Beginning with the observations and proceeding from the inductive findings to theories, i.e., from the particular to the general, permits the discovery of unexpected issues and the generation of new insights. It is therefore unlike deductive reasoning

which proceeds from existing theory via hypothesis to empirical data, often testing and confirming what is already known, and finding only what it is looking for (Reichertz, 2014; Rinehart, 2020). The inductive approach puts the researcher in a paradoxical position; he or she must enter the field as if it were a tabula rasa, ignoring all previous knowledge of the phenomenon in order to open-mindedly discover new, unknown issues. Nevertheless, a priori knowledge is required to formulate the research questions in the first place, and afterwards, to link the emerging findings to existing theory. This inevitable theoretical burden is solved by treating the literature as a source of inspiration and ideas, but giving primacy to the empirical evidence and issues arising from its unprejudiced scrutiny (Kelle, 2014; cf. Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014 on constructivist grounded theory). Theorizing the data-driven findings of inductive research stipulates abductive inference, comparing the empirical findings to already existing theory and conceptualizations (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). New, surprising observations not covered by extant theories introduce challenges and require modifications and may also give rise to new hypotheses (Kelle, 2014; Reichertz, 2014). Hence, while quantitative research aims at statistical generalization from a representative sample to an entire population, the findings of qualitative research are analytically generalized into theories (Firestone, 1993; Polit & Beck, 2010).

Within tourism research, this thesis represents tourism studies that focus on describing and understanding tourism-related social phenomena. It represents an academic approach using softer, qualitative methods and materials compared to the alternative, the perspective of the management of tourism industry which is characterized by predicting and managing the actual businesses (Ritchie et al., 2004). Notwithstanding this ideological demarcation, the theorized findings also hold practical management potential, the implications of which will be discussed in the Conclusions section. The following paragraphs describe the collection and analysis of empirical materials in different stages of this research underpinned by the above strategic approach.

3.2 Data collection and methods of analysis

This research project was planned as one entity, but executed as three interconnected studies. The research design, the collection of empirical materials and their analysis was planned and executed separately for each research article based on its specific research questions. The successive execution of the studies was initiated with the exploration of visitor experiences in order to have a solid foundation for the subsequent investigations of experiential value (Article I). Article II proceeded from the experiences (the what) to their meanings for the visitors by examining the composition of perceived consumer value (Holbrook, 1999b; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Sheth et al., 1991). Article III, building on insights from Articles I and II, applied a dynamic means-end approach to consumers' construction of value in order to answer the how and why questions underlying their assessments of value (Gutman, 1982; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Woodruff, 1997). The first two research articles were strictly qualitative whereas the third represented a mixed-method approach. The following sub-sections discuss each study's materials and methods.

Table 3. Summary of the research articles

Article	I	II	III
Title	Dimensions and drivers of national park experiences: A longitudinal study of independent visitors	'It's more than just status!' An extended view of social value in tourism	Digitally customized and interactive laddering: A new way for examining tourists' value structures
Authors	Esko Sorakunnas	Esko Sorakunnas	Esko Sorakunnas and Henna Konu
Journal	Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism	Tourism Recreation Research	Journal of Travel Research
Year	2020	2022	2022
Topic	Dimensions and drivers of experiences	Composition of consumer value	Construction of consumer value
Approach	Qualitative	Qualitative	Mixed-method
Empirical material	Naturally occurring narratives (N=200)	In-depth laddering interviews (N=49)	In-depth laddering interviews (N=49) and hard laddering (N=956)

3.2.1 Article I - Analysis of narratives

> "The weather has been epic! Yesterday I took awesome photos of the sunset. And in the night, the greatest Northern Lights I have ever seen and then, I slept under the open sky! After a fabulous, laughter-filled evening with people I'd just met here in the wilderness ♥♥♥ A night to remember!" (Guest book entry, Nammalakuru hut, 14-15 March, 2015, written by a female visitor)

Guest books in wilderness huts have a long tradition in Finland. Originally, they served as a safety measure to help rescuers locate lost visitors, but over the years, people started adding short entries about their day resulting in personal records of the most memorable experiences. These collective narratives (Carú & Cova, 2007a; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016) constituted an

interesting source of empirical material, co-produced by numerous people on-site at a specific location and preserved in a chronological order. When analyzed, they revealed an authentic window into the minds of visitors and therefore, were well-suited to a naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The guest book entries represented naturally occurring material (synonymous with secondary data) that exists independently of the researcher's activities (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016; Silverman, 2011, 2017; Speer, 2002). Such material is found in the research process as opposed to being made during the process (Coffey, 2014) and thus, exists regardless of the researcher (Potter, 2002; the dead social scientist's test). Compared to researcher-designed primary data, for example by interviews or surveys, the guest books provided naturally expressed visitor experiences without disturbing and influencing the informants with questions or a research setting (Becker, 2018; Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2011; Potter, 2002; Ryan, 2010). In addition to being emic and unobtrusive, the guest books offered real-time documentation of the experiences in their natural context (Cutler, Doherty, & Carmichael, 2018). The ephemeral and fluctuating nature of experiences emphasizes the importance of timing in documentation to minimize the effects of memory decay and distortion (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Palmer, 2010). Methodologically, the guest book entries represented the Experience Sampling Method (ESM) developed to capture ephemeral experiences and mitigate reminiscence (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1998; Larson & Csikzentmihalyi, 2014). While modern digital tracking technology and dedicated mobile applications allow random determination of the precise moment or location of a response (e.g., Birenboim, 2016; Cutler et al., 2018; Shoval et al., 2018), the guest book entries written at the end of each day summarized the most impressive experiences. Cutler and colleagues (2018) claim that the diary method may not be as accurate as signal-based ESM, because it requires the reconstruction of past events and emotions. This may be true, but simultaneously, the guest books´ unsolicited and voluntarily generated contents foregrounded the most impressive experiences (Becker, 2018), not a listing of random occurrences determined by a beeper. In addition, and despite being posterior verbalizations, the narratives were written on the same day as the experience, which minimized reminiscing and

reconstruction, but still allowed the visitors time for internal reflexive work to process their experiences (Carú & Cova, 2008). In addition, the guest books permitted reaching back in time to the momentary experiences of previous hiker generations that would otherwise have been inaccessible.

Narrative research applies phenomenological epistemology that acknowledges the use of subjective views and experiences as data (Bold, 2012; Helkkula et al., 2012; Squire et al., 2013). This study took an experience-centered approach to narratives: rather than the factual event itself (cf. Labovian event-centered approach), it focused on the feelings and thoughts expressed in the narratives aiming to understand the participants' subjective experiences (Patterson, 2013; Squire, 2013). A clear distinction was made between the actual event, the subsequent experience and its documentation and sharing. Events may be considered objective, for instance, silvery moonlight illuminating fresh snow on a cold winter night, but individual experiences differ due to internal factors; what appears as mundane for person A may be extraordinary for persons B and C. Moreover, when documenting their experiences, B and C are also likely to produce different narratives based on different personal interpretations of their experience. Hence, instead of being objective accounts and reconstructions of reality, narratives represent the narrator's subjective reality (Bold, 2012). The narratives preserved the visitors' internal experiences and gave them an external expression, they objectified the subjective experiences. Phenomenologically, the actual lived experience represents the pre-predicative level accessible only to the individual in question. Once written down – when converting the experience into a narrative – it enters the predicative level and becomes accessible to others. However, no matter how verbally skilled the narrator is, the narrative is always a reduction of reality as language is incapable of rendering the experience entirely (Eberle, 2014); personal realities with all nuances and meanings cannot be fully narrated to reproduce the personal experience. Further interpretation occurs when the recipient reads the narrative, because we understand the experiences of others based on our own previous experiences of similar events (Eberle, 2014; Patterson, 2013). Hence, the guest book entries, being narratives of lived experience, were subject to a

double rendition, the first of which took place when they were written down and the second when they were read.

The Pallas-Yllästunturi national park was selected as the case study site, because it has a long history (established 1938) which is necessary for a longitudinal analysis. In addition, it is the most popular park with over half a million visits a year (Metsähallitus, 2022) and the third largest park (1020 km^2). The park has close to 30 wilderness huts, of these three located along the popular Hetta-Pallas trekking route were chosen as the study sites. These three huts were frequently used for overnighting and thus, visitors had more time to write longer and richer entries in their guest books than at places visited only briefly. The guest books had been archived by Metsähallitus / Parks and Wildlife Finland as well as the National Archives of Finland permitting the construction of a continuous time series spanning from the year 1970 to present day. The analyzed narratives were selected systematically for three reasons: 1) to cover the entire timeline equally, 2) to offer as many visitor experiences as possible for analysis, and 3) to minimize researcher influence on the selection of the units of analysis. Accordingly, the mid-most year of each decade was chosen to represent that period of time and the 40 longest narratives of that year were included in the analysis. This resulted in a total of 200 narratives covering five decades of national park experiences.

Qualitative content analysis provided an organized yet flexible method to objectively map the manifest and latent experiences documented in the narratives (Bengtsson, 2016; Elo et al., 2014; Schreier, 2012). Data-driven open coding that retained the informants' voices and views was used to reduce, summarize and abstract the material. Each narrative constituted a separate unit of analysis while the experiences included constituted the units of coding. The coding frame was constructed by trial coding 25% of the entire material, i.e., 10 narratives per decade. This resulted in 25 experience dimensions that were grouped into five higher order themes following the principles of unidimensionality, mutual exclusiveness and exhaustiveness (Schreier, 2012, 2014). The coding process followed the Gioia approach to illustrate the data-driven process step by step (Gioia et al., 2013). First, the emic units of coding were extracted and listed verbatim, as expressed by the narrators. Next, they were arranged into etic categories and finally, condensed into five

highest order themes. In addition to being a logical and stepwise process for organizing the units of coding into coherent categories, the Gioia method also presents transparently the coding and abstraction process, the resulting data structure as well as the main categories (Reay et al., 2019).

The 200 examined narratives seemed honest and authentic reports ranging from pragmatic and laconic to experiential as well as very emotional accounts. As to the truthfulness of the narratives, it is unlikely that they would systematically have been written for a certain purpose, for instance to impress others (cf. Coffey, 2014), because the narrators were anonymous and the stories were written for an unfamiliar audience. Presumably the documentation was motivated simply by conserving and sharing experiences with others resembling the present use of social media; "An experience is never really complete if it has not been expressed, i.e., as long as it is not been communicated in linguistic or other forms." (Carú & Cova, 2007a, p. 44). It is, of course, possible that all park experiences were not documented and shared; intimate relationships and deliberate legal offences, such as poaching, could be such cases. Despite the possibility that single experiences may be lacking, the analyzed 200 narratives nevertheless provided a reliable overview of visitor experiences evidenced by saturation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).

The ethics of narrative research rests on respect and responsibility towards the participants. Whether investigating naturally occurring or deliberately constructed narratives, the guiding principle is to protect the participants from any harmful consequences (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012). The ethical principles of voluntary participation and informed consent (Marzano, 2012) were not possible due to the retrospective nature of the study and unavailable contact information. However, this was not considered to impose ethical problems, since these stories were public from the moment of writing, intended for sharing experiences with strangers (Gready, 2013). To sustain anonymity, all personal details including nicknames and initials were removed ensuring that single narratives and experiences could not be linked back to a recognizable person (Bold 2012). Moreover, the research fulfilled the requirement of beneficence (Marzano, 2012) by improving visitor insight.

3.2.2 Article II - Soft laddering interviews

Building on insights from Article I on visitor experiences, Article II examined the dimensions of perceived consumer value (Holbrook, 1999b; Holbrook, 1996; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). The collection of empirical material was designed to serve two purposes: to provide at first hand an in-depth understanding of the composition of perceived consumer value and later to function as a pre-study for the subsequent examination of the hierarchical construction of value in Article III. The following section outlines the interview method of qualitative laddering used to accomplish these aims.

Interviews are goal-oriented conversations conducted in order to gather information (Jennings, 2005; Wang & Yan, 2012). The interviews, which focused on park visitors' subjective experiences and value perceptions, were based on the phenomenological paradigm that prioritizes the lived experiences of individuals over theoretical presumptions and typologies (Becker, 2018; Brinkman, 2013; Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). This inductive research approach demanded the interview design to be unstructured in order to flexibly adapt to emergent themes (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Moreover, the aim of the interviews was that they would be guided by the informants with as little as possible direction being provided by the interviewer (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012; Lillrank, 2012; Wang & Yan, 2012). Qualitative interviewing fulfilled these requirements and soft laddering was considered the most appropriate method (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Soft laddering is a recall-based technique where the topics and preferences are freely determined by the respondents. These emic issues are then elaborated on using unguiding how and why questions to evoke deeper meanings (Reynolds & Phillips, 2009). This process disclosed the composition of perceived value as well as the reasons, associations and values underlying the different dimensions (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2010; Grunert & Grunert, 1995; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). The concrete reasons for visiting were noted with an opening question, "What made you come to this park today?". The reasons given by the respondents were then discussed, one at a time, using neutral elicitation questions, such as "What does it mean to you?" or "Why do you

think it is important for you?" to encourage introspection, elaboration and associations with higher abstraction levels (Wang & Yan, 2012).

Technically, the opening question represented receptive interviewing characterized by freedom and flexibility whereas the elicitation process resembled assertive interviewing where the interviewer encouraged the participants' self-reflexivity (Brinkman, 2013). Throughout the interview, the interviewer was an active listener, responding to the interviewee's free speech only when needed and as little as possible (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012; Lillrank, 2012). The interviews shared similarities with phenomenological interviewing that also uses elicitation to apprehend contextualized lived experiences (Bevan, 2014). However, phenomenological interviews are limited to descriptions of experiences and explicitly avoid the why-questions (Becker, 2018), whereas introspective rationalization, which constituted the backbone of these laddering interviews, allowed the dimensions of consumer value to be revealed. Moreover, the introspection of the interviewees disclosed the origins of the value dimensions as well as their underpinnings by the universal values, thus providing an integrated view instead of a mere classification.

All interviews were executed between September – October 2019 in two national parks. One was a small, well-equipped park close to major cities and the other was a large, remote wilderness park. The interviews were conducted on-site during actual visitations in order to guarantee contextuality. The visitor profile was first determined by observation and the interviewees were then purposively selected in terms of gender, age and group composition. The purposive selection of two distinct park types and different types of visitors within them enabled the capturing of diverse means-end chains and value dimensions. Hence, instead of the sample being representative in quantitative terms, it was designed to fulfill the qualitative aim of this research (Elo et al., 2014). In total, 49 interviews were conducted before reaching saturation; the same themes and topics started to be repeated and no new issues emerged (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016; Jennings, 2005). Naturally, the concept of saturation and theoretical sampling are relative instead of absolute; additional interviews might have further contributed to nuances, but for the purpose of this research and from the input-output point of view, the richness of collected empirical material was considered

adequate. The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis taking into account both manifest and latent meanings (Schreier, 2014) and the data-driven coding was executed using the Gioia approach described in the preceding section on narratives (Gioia et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2019). Coding consistency and reliability were ensured by using two coders (Schreier, 2012, p. 167 intersubjectivity). Once the value dimensions had been inductively determined, they were theorized by juxtaposing them with the current understanding of consumer value composition theorized by the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b) and the Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991). This abductive analysis (Rinehart, 2020; Tavory & Timmermans, 2014) contributed to theory construction and our perception of the structure of consumer value. In accordance with the qualitative approach, generalization was analytic and conceptual, from the findings to the theory, instead of statistical and quantitative, from the examined sample to the entire population of national park visitors (Firestone, 1993)

Empirical research concerning people and their personal experiences has to comply with ethical principles (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). In the current case, the interviews were based on informed consent; before the interviews, the potential participants were informed of the purpose of this research, its execution and benefits. Participation was voluntary and the participants' right to withdraw at any point was emphasized. The empirical material was treated confidentially and the interviews were fully anonymous lacking any information that could disclose the respondent's identity and link the material back to them. Comparing the non-existent risk of harm to the benefits of increased visitor insight, the principle of beneficence was fulfilled (Johnson & Rowlands, 2012; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Marzano, 2012).

3.2.3 Article III – Hard laddering using digitally customized Association Pattern Technique

Laddering techniques have been developed for the identification of consumers' means-end chains and deeper personal meanings (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988); metaphorically, laddering refers to climbing up the ladders of abstraction from concrete product or service or destination attributes via consumer value to the universal values. Initially, laddering was a qualitative in-depth

interview method, but quantitative and structured laddering techniques have been developed to complement it (Borgardt, 2020; Grunert & Grunert, 1995). The latter have, however, been criticized for disregarding the fundamental laddering assumptions (Phillips & Reynolds, 2009). In particular, this concerns the lack of free, inductive item determination by the respondents as well as careful introspection in establishing the inter-element ladders, shared meanings, sample relevance, contextual data collection and completion of all hierarchical levels (Grunert & Grunert, 1995; Phillips & Reynolds, 2009; Reynolds, 2006; Reynolds & Phillips, 2009). These justifiable concerns were addressed in Article III with a two-phase sequential exploratory mixed-method strategy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which combined the benefits of qualitative and quantitative laddering for increased methodological robustness (Borgardt, 2020; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The qualitative soft laddering pre-study explored and conceptualized the topic inductively by interviewing 49 park visitors (3.2.2). This familiarized the author with the emic terminology, provided an understanding of the relevant elements and elucidated their causal relationships (Vriens & Hofstede, 2000). This insight was then used to design and construct a laddering survey to quantify the inductively determined means-end elements and their relationships. The confirmatory quantitative phase allowed capitalizing on the advantages of a larger sample size (N=956) and generalizability, avoidance of interviewer bias and the anonymous disclosure of personal information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Grunert & Grunert, 1995; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

The fixed-format quantitative Association Pattern Technique (APT) was modified by means of digital customization to improve its methodological compliance. Diedericks and colleagues (2020) have recommended this improvement recently, but this was the first time digitally customized APT was developed and actually piloted in empirical research. APT is suitable for digital customization for three reasons: 1) it is premised on the conditional independence of attribute-consequence and consequence-value linkages, which permit their collection with separate matrices (Hofstede et al. 1998; Vriens and Hofstede 2000), 2) the matrix structure allows forking, the indication of several associations per item (Russell et al., 2004) and 3) it is well-established in value research and has frequently been applied in tourism

research (see Table 2 in Article III). In practice, the digital customization meant automatically adjusting the laddering matrices based on individual respondents' preceding selections, thereby excluding redundant alternatives from confusing the laddering task. This customization is elaborated in detail in the original article.

The digitalized APT successfully responded to the methodological deficiencies mentioned with hard laddering, thereby moving the digitalized APT one step into the direction of personal laddering interviews while still retaining its quantitative character. The core of the modification lay in the interactive customization of a thus far standardized survey method. This reduced the complexity of the laddering tasks and any misunderstandings, emphasized contextualized data collection and provided complete means-end chains. The customization of the laddering task was piloted utilizing a digital web-based survey and reporting tool (https://webropol.co.uk), the matrix functions of which permitted interactive customization. A link to the digital survey was posted via Facebook to visitors to nine case parks. This conduct represented online river sampling, a non-probability method suited to recruiting members of a specific sub-population for exploratory purposes (Lehdonvirta et al., 2021). The purposive sampling of respondents was justified by the need to specifically reach those people who were familiar with the topic and considered it personally meaningful, which contributed to sample relevance. The case parks, three remote wilderness parks and six nearby urban parks, were also purposively selected to represent both of the typical Finnish national park types and provide a diversity of means-end chains. In addition to interactivity, the following three methodological features distinguished the digitally customized APT from its conventional form.

Elaboration of consequence-consequence linkages

Association Pattern Technique commonly uses two matrices – attributes-consequences and consequences-values – which, in the analysis, are combined into a three-level hierarchy (Hofstede et al., 1998). In the current investigation, an extra consequence-consequence matrix was added to reveal the intra-level linkages between functional and psychosocial consequences. This

emphasized the intermediating role of consequences between the product-level attributes and the person-level values and provided a more detailed understanding of how visitors perceive and construct value (cf. Diedericks et al., 2020; Olson & Reynolds, 2001; Reynolds, 2006). Consequently, four-level means end chains were generated.

Calculation of the level-specific Explanatory Power Index

The collected means-end data was summarized in numeric form in Implication Matrices, the cells of which displayed the number of connections between different items (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). The column and row sums of the Implication Matrices, called in- and out-degrees, indicated how many times an item was the target or a source of a connection (Pieters et al., 1995). Thus, they revealed the importance of each item in the means-end structure. Based on these frequencies, centrality and prestige indices are commonly calculated to indicate the importance of each element in relation to all items in the means-end structure (ibid.). However, instead of these, the Explanatory Power Index (Schauerte, 2009) was used to reflect the importance of each element on its respective level. This was considered truthful to the hierarchical means-end logic and more descriptive of the individual relevance of elements. In addition, the index was unaffected by the varying frequencies of connections between different levels. The explanatory power was determined as the sum of the in- and out-degrees of an element over the sum of all the elements' in- and out-degrees at the same hierarchical level. For example, the explanatory power of functional consequences X was

$$\text{Explanatory power } CF_X = \frac{CF_X\,((\text{in}-\text{degree})+(\text{out}-\text{degree}))}{\Sigma\,CF\,((\text{in}-\text{degree})+(\text{out}-\text{degree}))}$$

Top-down cut-off procedure

The means-end data was illustrated using Hierarchical Value Maps (Gengler et al., 1995). The conversion of the numeric Implication Matrix data into these visual maps required reducing data by means of a cut-off procedure to highlight the most important means-end chains and elements (Grunert & Grunert, 1995; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). The cut-off determines a threshold level, the minimum number of times a connection needs to a appear in the

Implication Matrix in order to be included in the Hierarchical Value Maps as linkages below the determined level are literally cut off (Leppard et al., 2004; cf. Russell et al., 2004). In the absence of theoretical or statistical criteria for the selection of a justifiable cut-off level, a common procedure is to heuristically determine a single threshold value for the entire means-end structure. A widely applied rule of thumb is to include roughly two-thirds of all connections (Grunert & Grunert, 1995; Phillips & Reynolds, 2009; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988) or to account for "a large percentage of the total number of goal connections made by the respondents with a small number of distinct relations between goals." (Pieters et al., 1995, p. 238) or to choose a level that seems informative and suitable (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Such liberty introduces subjectivity and risk for researcher bias. Therefore, a systematic top-down cut-off procedure where the determination of the threshold level was data-driven and dynamic was applied instead (Leppard et al., 2004). The inter-level connections were ranked in a descending order, from the most frequent to the least frequent and only those exceeding the chosen threshold were included in further analysis (ibid.); for example, a Top5 cut-off level would include the five most frequent connections between each hierarchical level regardless of their numeric values. This top-down approach was considered more rigorous, objective and transparent for data reduction than its alternative, the heuristic determination a single cut-off value for the entire data.

Paradigmatic deliberation

The mixed-method strategy applied in Article III consisted of a qualitative pre-study followed by a quantitative survey. Quantitative research is commonly linked to the positivist or postpositivist paradigm, because it is characterized by numeric data, statistical inference and generalization as well as seeking causalities to verify theories (Creswell 2018, Eriksson and Kovalainen 2016). Therefore, Article III entailed paradigmatic incoherence; the qualitative interviews were clearly constructivist whereas the quantitative survey featured positivism. On the whole, however, the investigation adhered to the constructivist paradigm. Its research design was based on an inductive determination of items to be laddered (Vriens & Hofstede, 2000), which

rendered the qualitative pre-study interviews crucial. Moreover, the overall aim of the investigation was to develop quantitative laddering one step into the direction of its qualitative roots, i.e., to modify the survey in a more interview-like manner. Admittedly, the hard laddering survey contained features that would also suit the postpositivist paradigm: it was quantitative (N=956), included numeric data and disclosed causalities between different items. However, the survey was confirmatory to the soft-laddering interviews; the items and main means-end chains were already identified in the interviews and the survey merely verified and quantified these inductive findings in a larger population. Consequently, the overall nature of the investigation was constructivist. As far as the analysis of numeric data is concerned, the quantitative part did not contain statistical analyses and inferences. Instead, the calculations of in- and out-degrees, cut-off levels and explanatory powers served to disclose the main means-end chains.

4 RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter first presents the main findings from the three research articles (4.1 – 4.3) and then discusses their theoretical contribution (4.4). Managerial implications are briefly discussed in the Conclusions.

4.1 Article I: Dimensions and drivers of national park experiences: A longitudinal study of independent visitors

Given the increasingly experiential nature of perceived consumer value, the first article examined national park visitors' experiences to provide a solid starting point for the subsequent investigations of perceived value. Although prior research on national park and outdoor experiences exists (e.g., Arnould & Price, 1993; Cole & Hall, 2009; M. G. McDonald et al., 2009; Seekamp et al., 2012; Weber & Anderson, 2010), a mere literature review was considered insufficient due to differences in the Finnish context compared to parks outside the Nordic countries. In particular, the independent and unfacilitated nature of the visits as well as the Finnish tradition of Common Access, which also allows the experiencing of nature outside park boundaries (Sandell & Fredman, 2010; Tuunanen et al., 2012), stipulated the need to examine national park experiences in this particular context before delving deeper into the visitors' perceptions of experiential consumer value.

The study provided a general view of park experiences covering their nature, dimensions, drivers and evolution. The park visits were regarded as experiential consumption (Carú & Cova, 2003; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) and the parks as experiential contexts (Carú & Cova, 2007a) that offered opportunities for personal experiences. In the absence of companies and any services being staged by them, visitor experiences were assumed to arise from the visitors' spontaneous interaction with the context, which foregrounded both authenticity and unbiased personal outcomes. Guest books from one case park's wilderness huts from 1970 to 2016 provided naturally occurring

empirical material for this qualitative investigation (Silverman, 2017). The content of a total of 200 narratives were analyzed revealing 465 visitor experiences that were inductively grouped into 25 dimensions and further arranged into five higher order experiential themes. The first finding was concordant with the literature: the park experiences were diverse and multidimensional with different interrelated dimensions coexisting. The most common experiential theme was Nature itself followed by the visitors' own Physical accomplishments as well as experiences belonging to the Personal Sphere, such as cooking a delicious meal or experiencing self-renewal and freedom. The less frequent dimensions included park Infrastructure and Social interaction with other visitors. The observed structure of experiences was similar to previous studies despite contextual differences (Arnould & Price, 1993; Cole & Hall, 2009; M. G. McDonald et al., 2009; Seekamp et al., 2012; Weber & Anderson, 2010). The longitudinal design of this examination distinguished it from the mainstream nature-based tourism studies on experiences; rather than short periods, the park experiences from five successive decades were analyzed. This evolutionary perspective revealed the temporal stability of the experiences; the composition of experiential themes has remained practically unchanged with Nature, Physical accomplishments and the Personal sphere dominating decade after decade, from one visitor generation to the next, despite major societal, economic and technological changes.

Natural-based tourism is known to feature unpredictability and lack of control (R. Buckley & Coghlan, 2012; Fredman et al., 2012). The combination of a wild nature-based setting with do-it-yourself visitors further emphasized the emergent and context-dependent nature of experiences; visitors could anticipate certain types of experiences, but their ability to precisely predict and actively contribute to the desired outcome was limited. In the park setting, they were of at the mercy of Mother Nature either as a direct source of experiences or a strong contributor to the experience (Fossgard & Fredman, 2019). This context-dependence was not fully covered by considering only companies and consumers to be the creators and drivers of experiences (Carú & Cova, 2003, 2007b). In actual fact, the observed greater role of the context was more aptly portrayed by broader classifications that also recognized

stimuli and experiences outside this dyadic sphere (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). The issue of control will be discussed in section 4.4.1.

The last finding was methodological: the naturally occurring guest book material was well-suited to a phenomenological examination of visitor experiences. It represented authentic and multifaceted material that opened an inductive window to visitor experiences unbiased by the researcher. Compared to momentary experience sampling methods (ESM) (Birenboim, 2016; Cutler et al., 2018; Shoval et al., 2018), the guest books provided the personal highlights of a particular day. The selective documentation of the most impressive experiences and omission of mundane occurrences (that would also have been captured by random, beeper-based ESM) served the aim of this investigation well. An additional benefit of the diary method was being able to reach back in time, access the experiences of previous visitor generations that had been documented years or even decades ago. The result was a rich, chronologically stratified archive of authentic experiences, preserved immediately after the events took place, thus unaffected by memory decay and reminiscence.

4.2 Article II: 'It's more than just status!' An extended view of social value in tourism

> "The tourism industry is full of experiences of a social nature, in which people with similar interests, motivations and goals meet together and interact." (Rihova et al., 2015, p. 362)

The ubiquity of inter-personal relationships in tourism and their centrality in the construction of value underscored the relevance of the second article. It explored the nature and composition of social value open-mindedly, irrespective of predetermined value typologies (cf. Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991). In order to allow the scrutinizing of all value dimensions emerging from or influenced by interaction with other people, a broad working definition was formulated:

> "the concept of social value in tourism refers to all consumer value dimensions stemming from other people, for instance travel companions, other tourists, locals, staff members and those belonging to one's social network."

The nature-based setting suited the examination of this topic, because it was consumer- and context-driven, and unbiased by company-managed socializing activities. This authenticity foregrounded the visitors' self-imposed interaction with other people. The qualitative inquiry consisted of 49 unstructured and inductive in-depth interviews with visitors to two national parks. All emergent value dimensions were equally mapped and focus was directed towards social value only after all the material had been collected (See 3.2.2). The empirical material underwent data-driven coding to retain the diversity of the interviewees' views, and ensure they were unaffected by predetermined concepts and categories. The resulting emic perspective was then abductively compared to the current understanding of social value (Holbrook, 1996, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991).

The first finding regarded the composition of visitors' perceived value as a whole. It was multidimensional consisting of six aggregate value types: Natural values, Physical exertion, Freedom, Peace of mind, Social value and Setting attributes. Because the focus was on the social value dimensions, the other value types were excluded from further analysis. As far as the social value of tourism was concerned, the findings extended our understanding beyond the prevailing conceptualization of merely Status and Esteem (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991). In addition to instrumentally seeking admiration and acceptance from others, the visitors also perceived self-oriented social value as being derived from interacting with other visitors. This finding was concordant with the concept of visitor-to-visitor co-creation of value (Campos et al., 2018; Phi & Dredge, 2019; Reichenberger, 2017; Rihova et al., 2015). Self-oriented social value was both intrinsic, enjoying the company of other people, as well as extrinsic and instrumental. Intrinsic self-oriented social value occurred as Togetherness, intimate in-group interaction with friends and family members, and coincides with Rihova's (2015) social bubble. The other form of intrinsic self-oriented social value was out-group Communality,

a sense of belonging to a larger community of like-minded people. It occurred both as a passive feeling of inclusion and active socializing with unknown fellow visitors. Rihova (2015) referred to this out-group interaction as communitas, although the founders of communitas (Arnould & Price, 1993) made no distinction between interaction with familiar people and strangers. In addition, extrinsic self-oriented social value was also observed in the forms of Learning and Safety; practical tips were received from friends and members of the community and the presence of other people contributed to safety in the wilderness.

Similar self-oriented social values have also been detected in outdoor, national park, and wilderness studies in the Unites States, Alaska and Australia (Arnould & Price, 1993; Cole & Hall, 2009; Dawson, 2006; Farber & Hall, 2007; Weber & Anderson, 2010; Wolf et al., 2015). Within the Finnish nature-based context, the frequencies of self-oriented social value clearly outweighed the prevalence of other-oriented types. Hence, an Extended View of Social Value in Tourism was proposed to accommodate the full range of social value dimensions. In order to conform these new dimensions with the established typologies, the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b) was illustrated three dimensionally as a Value Cube instead of a conventional matrix. This allowed the richness of social value to be presented in an integrated and intelligible way according to the foundational dimensions of Holbrook´s typology; thus, incorporating the new insight into the existing understanding of social value composition.

4.3 Article III: Digitally customized and interactive laddering: A new way for examining tourists' value structures

While the second article examined the static structure of perceived value and in particular, focused on its social dimension, the third article examined value from the alternative, dynamic perspective. Resting on the means-end theory (Gutman, 1982) and the Customer Value Hierarchy Model (Woodruff, 1997), it examined how park visitors construct value. The aims of the investigation were two-fold: firstly, to develop, pilot and evaluate a new method for

the quantitative examination of means-end relationships in tourism, and secondly, to examine national park visitors' construction of value using the new method.

Thus far means-end studies in nature-based tourism have applied qualitative, soft laddering approaches within specific activities: ropes courses (Goldenberg et al., 2000), the use of interpretive services in parks (Klenosky et al., 1998), hiking during one season in one destination (Hill et al., 2009) and the motivations of responsible tourists (Weeden, 2011). Article III, in contrast, applied a mixed-method design comprising both soft and hard laddering. Moreover, it was conducted in a general nature-based context consisting of different types of national parks and various activities within them. Therefore, the observed chains were more diverse and quantitatively expressed. In particular, the park visitors' universal values that usually remain unidentified in empirical examinations, were revealed in a quantitative and comprehensible order of importance. This shifted attention from discrete elements to the entire process of value perception, from the destination attributes to their personal meanings and to the underlying universal values that guide the tourists' decision-making and behavior (Gutman, 1982; Vriens & Hofstede, 2000).

The dominant means-end chain of visitors was Recreation, a bundle of primarily emotional relationships between intangible attributes and their affective consequences and eventually, happiness, pleasure and inner peace on the level of universal values. The second most prominent chain, Accomplishment, was related to challenges and achievements, thereby displaying hedonism. The less prevalent chains, Convenience and Togetherness, depicted appreciation of easy access and social interaction. The dominant chains were naturally reflected in the frequencies of park visitors' universal values with the end values of Recreation – happiness, pleasure, inner peace and freedom – occupying the four top positions. These were followed by accomplishment, self-respect and excitement expressed in the Accomplishment-chain and finally, friendship and safety. Thus, this means-end approach to value disclosed the attributes that gave rise to the experiences observed in Article I and moreover, revealed how the consumer value dimensions of Article II were underpinned by the higher order universal

values of visitors. This provided a comprehensive picture of the visitors' value formation – not only the what, but also the how and why.

Despite the useful practical findings, the primary scientific merit of Article III was methodological. The initial plan was to modify the hard laddering Association Pattern Technique (APT) (Hofstede et al., 1998) in order to explore the visitors' construction of value on a larger scale. What was intended in the beginning as a means, however, transpired to be an end in itself. The methodological aim was to bridge the gap between the two types of means-end research: the qualitative, one-on-one soft laddering interviews and quantitative hard laddering surveys that offer economies of scale and larger sample sizes. For this purpose, the fully standardized, hard laddering APT was digitalized to allow interactive customization of the survey based on individual respondents' preceding selections. Accordingly, the new procedure was termed digitally customized APT. The empirical pilot (N=956) revealed the visitors' construction of value in nine national parks and yielded material for the methodological and managerial evaluation of the new method. Technically, the investigation followed a two-phase sequential exploratory mixed-method strategy (Creswell and Creswell 2018). The soft laddering interview data collected for Article II served as the qualitative pre-study that disclosed the relevant elements and their tentative relationships. This inductive insight and terminology were used to construct a valid quantitative digital APT instrument. A top-down cut-off strategy (Leppard et al., 2004) was applied to elicit the dominant chains, because its objectivity and systematic nature were better suited to quantitative laddering than the more common heuristic cut-off procedures (Grunert & Grunert, 1995; Pieters et al., 1995; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Instead of the traditional prestige and centrality indices to indicate the importance of individual elements in relation to all elements (Pieters et al., 1995), explanatory power indices were calculated to reveal the relevance of each element on its respective level (Schauerte, 2009).

4.4 Discussion of the key findings

4.4.1 Drivers of context-dependent experiences

Based on the findings of Article I, it is argued that nature-based tourism experiences are context-dependent, strongly influenced by emergent factors that often outweigh the personal influence of the consumers and the managerial capability of the companies. This was especially apparent in the examined national park context where stimuli and experiences arising from the unmanaged physical, natural and social context exceeded the control over the outcomes of the visitors and park management. From the perspective of marketing and the co-creation of experiential value, managing and controlling the external stimuli that give rise to consumer's personal responses is a key issue (Jain et al., 2017; Lipkin, 2016). The managerial outlook on experiential consumption has focused on company-determined actions to generate desired customer responses – in practice, to persuade the customer to make a purchase and become a patron (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Kranzbühler et al., 2018). The same logic underpins the Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) as well as experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999) and customer experience management (e.g., Grewal et al., 2009; Palmer, 2010; Verhoef et al., 2009) that all rest on the idea of companies designing and guiding consumer experiences. The growing recognition of consumer subjectivity and wider experiential contexts with multiple actors, however, challenge the power of companies as direct providers of experiential stimuli, because stimuli also lie outside company control (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020). For the providers, this means reduced control and growing uncertainty over the ultimate consumer experience (Addis & Holbrook, 2001; Verhoef et al., 2009).

The experience continuum model (Carú & Cova, 2003, 2007b) reflects a bipolar view of stimuli and experiences being driven by companies and consumers. It is concordant with the service dominant logic's view of value co-creation between these two parties (Vargo et al., 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). More recently, this dichotomic understanding has been extended by also acknowledging organically emerging experiences (Jaakkola et al., 2015), all stimuli outside company-control (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020) and social /

external touchpoints (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) that reflect the customer dominant logic within wider customer ecosystems (Anker et al., 2015; Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015). Hence, in light of the present, broader conceptualization of the experiential context, the bipolar continuum model of Carú and Cova (2003, 2007b) does not include all relevant drivers of experiences, which was particularly evident in the examined nature-based context with little managerial influence. Therefore, the company-consumer model just mentioned was complemented with a third driver of experiences – the context. This converted the linear continuum into an Experience Triangle (Figure 6, left image), the points of which represent the proposed three experiential drivers: the consumer, the company and the context. Experiences co-driven by two complementary forces are located along the respective sides (dashed line) with the position on the line indicating the relative powers of the two drivers (Figure 6, center image). The cases of triple co-creation – company + consumer + context simultaneously – are located inside the triangle with the location denoting the relative significance of the different drivers (Figure 6, right image).

The model illustrates how the different drivers jointly influence the consumer experience and how their relative powers shift. It rests on a zero-sum logic, where the growing influence of one driver respectively diminishes the roles of the other two. Furthermore, in the total absence of one driver, the consumer experience results from the combination of the remaining two parties. For example, the nonexistent company involvement rendered the park experiences mainly driven by the visitors themselves and the context (Figure 6, center image). In the hypothetical case of an arranged nature tour, the organizer's power would be reflected in a lower context- and consumer-dependence and a more company-controlled outcome (Figure 6, right image). The dashed mid-section of the base of the triangle illustrates the service dominant logic of value co-creation jointly by consumers and companies. The consumer dominant logic, where the consumers integrate diverse resources in their own, personal consumption contexts (i.e., consumer ecosystems) (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015) would be inside the triangle with the exact location depending on the types of inputs selected by the consumer.

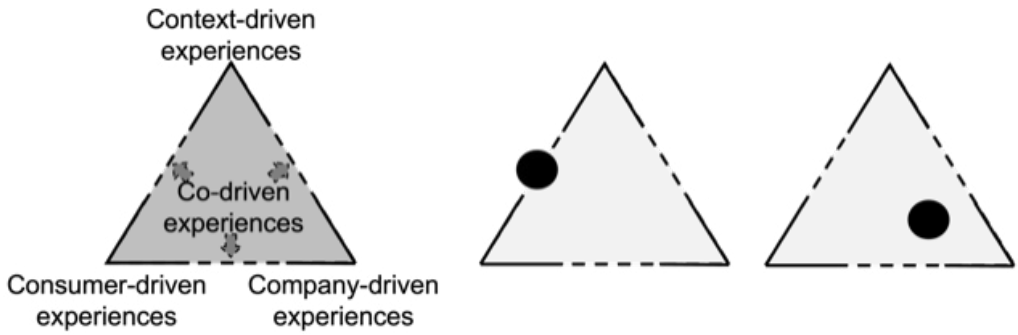

Figure 6. The Experience Triangle Model (Sorakunnas, 2020). The theoretical model is on the left, in the middle is an example of a consumer-context co-driven experience and on the right is an example of company-dominated triple co-creation.

The triangle, compared to the bipolar company-consumer model (Carú & Cova, 2003, 2007b), emphasizes the relevance of a gamut of cultural, social, legal, technological and natural factors and actors that influence consumption experiences. Whether the context should be recognized as a fully-fledged third driver of experiences or merely a strong external influencer of more or less company- or consumer-driven consumption experiences, is of secondary importance. The main point is that a considerable amount of experiential influence resides outside company control and although consumption experiences are regarded as subjective, resting on the sense-making of individual consumers (Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Helkkula et al., 2012; Lipkin, 2016), this does not either automatically imply that the consumers could always determine the desired outcomes. The customer dominant logic emphasizes the customer's active role in value creation; for example, "The customer is the value creator." (Grönroos & Voima, 2013, p. 145) and "experiences are something that customers orchestrate themselves and that arise within their own activities." (Heinonen et al., 2010, p. 541). Such arguments suggest value to be created by the consumers themselves, selecting and integrating resources within their own consumption ecosystems to reach their goals (cf. Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015; Lipkin, 2016). Hence, despite acknowledging a broader experiential context and placing the consumer at

its center, the customer dominant logic still reflects the bipolar conception of experiential drivers by postulating that the decreasing company influence results in increasing consumer dominance. In the examined nature-based context, however, the visitors' self-determination was also reduced due to the power of emergent contextual events. This concurrent decrease of both consumer and company influence was envisaged by Voima and colleagues (2011, p. 1023) at the onset of the consumer dominant logic as "a situation where the customer dominates without having deliberate control, since the customer ecosystem is dynamic". Admittedly, the consumers' value creation is more independent in customer than service dominant logic dominant logic, but it is nevertheless subject to emergent, context-driven factors as this examination showed. Therefore, it is argued that the extension of the experiential context from a company-consumer dyad to a customer ecosystem does not automatically shift control of the consumer experience from the companies to the consumers. Instead, it may elude both parties and develop into an uncontrolled contextual factor. Understandably, the increase of uncertainty is less evident in settings where company and/or consumer control is greater, but even so, the role of the ecosystemic context should not be underestimated in experiential consumption.

The use of the concepts of customer and consumer in connection to CDL is somewhat inconsistent. CDL was initially referred to as a customer dominant logic (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015; Voima et al., 2011) although it is based on value-in-use that arises when consumers use products and services in their own consumption contexts and are only indirectly in contact with companies. Therefore, in business-to-consumer marketing, it would be more pertinent to call CDL a consumer dominant logic, because the personal use of products and services converts individuals from customers of a companies to consumers of purchases (See 2.1); "Conceptually, the term 'customer' is logically linked to a provider or seller…In contrast, the term 'consumer' implies some sort of engagement with entities supplied by providers" (Anker et al., 2015, p. 534). The same illogicality concerns denominating the context a customer ecosystem (cf. Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2015; Lipkin, 2016; Voima et al., 2011), because it refers to the consumers' own consumption

contexts disconnected from direct company-consumer interaction. Consumer ecosystem would better reflect the fundament meaning of CDL in business-to-consumer contexts.

4.4.2 The nature and composition of social value in tourism

Article II extended our understanding of the social value of tourism by also disclosing intrinsic and self-oriented value dimensions in addition to the established extrinsic and other-oriented Status and Esteem (cf. Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991). The outcome was an Extended View of Social Value, which is highly relevant as tourism is typically a social activity where the tourists' immersion, active participation, social interaction, and shared experiences contribute to their value perceptions (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Mossberg, 2007; Walls et al., 2011). In particular, the relevance of visitor-to-visitor interaction as a source of social value is topical in tourism research (Campos et al., 2018; Phi & Dredge, 2019; Reichenberger, 2017). This social and cooperative practice is referred to as customer-to-customer (C2C) co-creation of value. It equally includes the interaction with friends and family members, interaction among unknown fellow visitors (Holttinen, 2010; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Rihova et al., 2015) as well as contact with entire consumer communities and collectives (Carú & Cova, 2015; Jaakkola et al., 2015). Together these constitute the interactive driver of tourist experiences (Chen et al., 2014). The broader view of C2C value co-creation is concordant with the customer ecosystem view of experiential contexts comprising multiple interconnected and self-contained actors (Frow & Payne, 2018; Lipkin, 2016; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). By contrast, the narrower company-customer co-creation of social value has long been acknowledged in tourism and hospitality. It represents a service dominant logic with a focus on the providers deliberate activities; interaction between staff members and customers is an everyday example of how the providers influence the social experiences of their customers. This view is, however, insufficient as tourists' value perceptions are also influenced by interaction with other actors outside company-staged service encounters reflecting a more customer dominant logic (Pandey & Kumar, 2020; Reichenberger, 2017; Rihova et al., 2015).

Article II contributed to the current C2C-discussion by concretizing social value; while the above studies have identified and conceptualized the phenomenon, this empirical investigation provided augmentation by disclosing the different components of social value in nature-based tourism (Togetherness, Communality, Safety and Learning in addition to Status and Esteem). When unfacilitated visits to public national parks – basically hiking in the wilderness – featured such a variety of social value dimensions, the phenomenon is likely to also occur in other tourism contexts. Therefore, it is argued that experiential approaches to value composition in the tourism and hospitality industry should adopt a broader conceptualization of social value. When considering such experiences as a beach holiday with your family or dining out with your partner or travelling to a rock concert with thousands of other fans – it can be understood that social value can be much more than just impressing others and seeking their acceptance. Therefore, its self-oriented dimensions also deserve recognition in order access the full potential of social value in tourism.

The established value typologies (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991) depict the social value dimension exclusively as an instrumental pursuit of status and esteem from other people. This other-oriented view suits utilitarian consumption (e.g., buying an expensive car to impress the neighbors), but the growing experientiality of consumption has challenged this perspective. Within tourism, a strictly other-oriented view of social value contradicts travel motivation theories that also acknowledge self-oriented social dimensions (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Fodness, 1994; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Pearce & Lee, 2005). Similarly, the scales for measuring leisure motivations include self-oriented social aspects (Leisure Motivation Scale / Beard & Ragheb, 1983; The Recreation Experience Preference -scale / Driver, 1983). Socializing and positive intra-group dynamics in tourism have also been detected empirically (e.g., Arnould & Price, 1993; Foley, 2017; Komppula & Gartner, 2013; H. Lin et al., 2019; Sorakunnas, 2020; Torres, 2016; White & White, 2008). These findings are theoretically underpinned by our basic human needs where self-oriented social feelings precede status and recognition from others (Maslow, 1943). Moreover, the universal values that guide our behavior as human beings and consumers include both of

self- and other-oriented social elements (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992, 2012). Given the interlinked means-end nature of motivation, consumer value and the higher goals and purposes in life (Gutman, 1982; Woodruff, 1997), it seems confusing that on the intermediate level of consumer value, the social dimension is considered exclusively other-oriented (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991). The question therefore is: What links self-oriented social motivations, such as enhancement of kinship relationships (Crompton, 1979) and seeking interpersonal rewards (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987) to the highest order social values of warm relationships with others and a sense of belonging (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988) and friendship (Rokeach, 1973) if the intermediating level regards social value exclusively as other-oriented and instrumental impression management? The answer is: the self-oriented and intrinsic social value dimensions disclosed in Article II.

4.4.3 Consumer value as a three-dimensional construct

Self-oriented dimensions have been underrated in value research framed by Holbrook's and Sheth's other-oriented conceptualizations of social value. In tourism research, a rigorous application of their value frameworks has led to identifying only other-oriented social value and disregarding the self-oriented forms (See e.g., Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Gallarza et al., 2017; Gallarza & Gil, 2008). Self-oriented social value dimensions have also been misleadingly placed into the other-oriented and extrinsic category; for instance, "feelings of belonging" and "relationships with other tourists / residents" have been placed under Holbrook´s other-oriented Social value (Gallarza, Gil Saura, et al., 2013, p. 10) and "being familiar with employees" and developing "good friendship with employees" under Esteem (Gallarza et al., 2019, p. 262). Both ignorance and misleading placement have hidden the diversity of self-oriented social value. The same suppression results from categorizing self-oriented social value into other value categories; for example, Togetherness and Communality could be classified as Emotional value with a "capacity to arouse feelings or affective states" (Sheth et al., 1991, p. 161). Likewise, they both match Holbrook´s (1999b, p. 20) definition of Aesthetic value "enjoyed purely for its own sake" or, in the case of more active engagement, Play, which is characterized as having fun. The extrinsic Safety and Learning could be

categorized either as Excellence or Efficiency depending on the situation or as Functional and Epistemic value in the Sheth typology. Hence, technically the typologies can accommodate diverse social value dimensions, but the explicit and precise identification of all social value dimensions in tourism is becoming important with the growing emphasis on interactive and social customer-to-customer value co-creation (Campos et al., 2018; Reichenberger, 2017).

Describing the observed richness of social value with a combination of value types, for example Status, Play, Aesthetics, Efficiency and Excellence (Holbrook, 1999b) or Social, Functional, Emotional and Epistemic value (Sheth et al., 1991) is technically correct, but not the most informative solution. A more realistic illustration is achieved by presenting the Typology of Consumer Value three-dimensionally based on its key dimensions: self-/other-oriented, active / reactive and extrinsic / intrinsic (Figure 7, left image). As Holbrook himself stated, instead of treating these as either-or dichotomies, "each should more properly be regarded as a continuum of possibilities from one extreme to the other." (1999a, p. 188). This converts his well-known 2x2x2 matrix with discrete value types (2.2.1) into a Value Cube. Figure 7 illustrates this three-dimensional value space that integrates Holbrook´s key dimensions with the eight value types. Hence, the distinct value types located in the corners of the cube represent extreme manifestations of the key dimensions, but in addition, value can be located anywhere inside the cube as an intermediate combination of the three key dimensions. The right-hand image illustrates the observed dimensions of the Extended View of Social Value. As they were predominantly self-oriented, the graphic occupies the bottom of the cube, whereas the few other-oriented occurrences of status are indicated by a sharp upward peak.

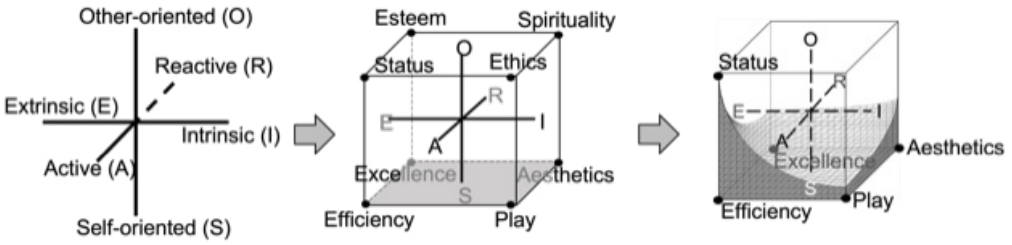

Figure 7. The Value Cube illustrates the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b) three-dimensionally (left and center images). The image on the right depicts the empirically observed composition of social value in nature-based tourism. (Sorakunnas, 2022)

The cube realizes the fundamental logic of the Typology of Consumer Value, which has been overshadowed by the explicit value types invented to concretize dimensionality. By prioritizing the fundamental key dimensions over predetermined value archetypes, this illustration contributes to a holistic understanding of value composition. The cube also demonstrates the flexibility and robustness of Holbrook´s framework when basing the analysis on its underlying key dimensions. While typologies are practical instruments for labelling and grouping value into manageable units that can then be operationalized or conceptualized empirically, the downside is the debatable match between reality and the model. In addition, following predetermined categories slavishly can bias the investigation by steering the researcher; a good example of this is the common categorization of all social dimensions under other-oriented Status and Esteem. Moreover, forcing diverse themes into a single bundle excludes valuable nuances. The spatial approach overcomes these limitations by presenting qualitative findings more precisely than the traditional matrix by also expressing gradations. As far as quantitative research is concerned, separate value types may be easier to operationalize, but understanding their three-dimensional roots facilitates constructing a valid research instrument as well as aids in the assessment of problematic borderline cases between value types. Furthermore, coupling

numeric results with modern 3-D graphics opens new opportunities for insight and illustration.

Axiologists had already suggested the presentation of value as a multidimensional space in the 1950s (Holbrook, 1999a) and Holbrook himself strongly argued for the arising benefits:

> "In such a space, particular examples of experience-based value would occupy positions determined by the degrees to which they exemplified extrinsic versus intrinsic, self- versus other-oriented, and active versus reactive components. Clearly, many illustrative cases would occupy intermediate positions at the interior of such a space. These would constitute instances for which no simple dichotomy could capture the fuzzy, blurred, or gray areas of interest." (Holbrook, 1999a, p. 188).

Despite this, the matrix form with discrete value types has systematically been applied in value research and to the author's knowledge, Article II is the first time the envisaged value space has been constructed and used in empirical research.

4.4.4 Value biangulation – combining the two approaches to consumer value

Article II of this thesis identified the different dimensions of consumer value whereas Article III depicted the stepwise process of value construction from the concrete grass roots to the abstract values. The combination of these two approaches, referred to as value biangulation (cf. triangulation, Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016), offered a more comprehensive understanding of the value construct than either approach alone could have achieved. The compositional and dynamic approaches are commonly presented as two alternatives to researching the multidimensionality of value (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). Focus is either on the static cross-section of value that decomposes it into different, but compresent dimensions (cf. Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991) or alternatively on the construction of value linking the concrete product level, personal consequences and the abstract end values together (Gutman, 1982; Woodruff, 1997). However, as

the approaches portray the same phenomenon from different angles, they complement each other.

Biangulation of value revealed a conceptual intersection and overlap of the two approaches (Figure 8). The vertical approach and means-end theory (Gutman, 1982; Woodruff, 1997) refer to the intersecting level as personal consequences of consumption. The value typologies (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991), on the other hand, depict the same level with different consumer value dimensions, but omit the preceding and subsequent hierarchical levels. Fundamentally, both approaches represent the same phenomenon – perceived consumer value – from their respective angles. Hence, the concept of consumer value, by depicting the personal benefits of consumption, is synonymous with consequences in the means-end lexicon. Moreover, the means-end logic explicates the earlier presented demarcation between customer and consumer value; customer value belongs to the pre-purchase level of desired attributes and value expectations, whereas consumer value is characterized by personal experiences, the consequences of consumption.

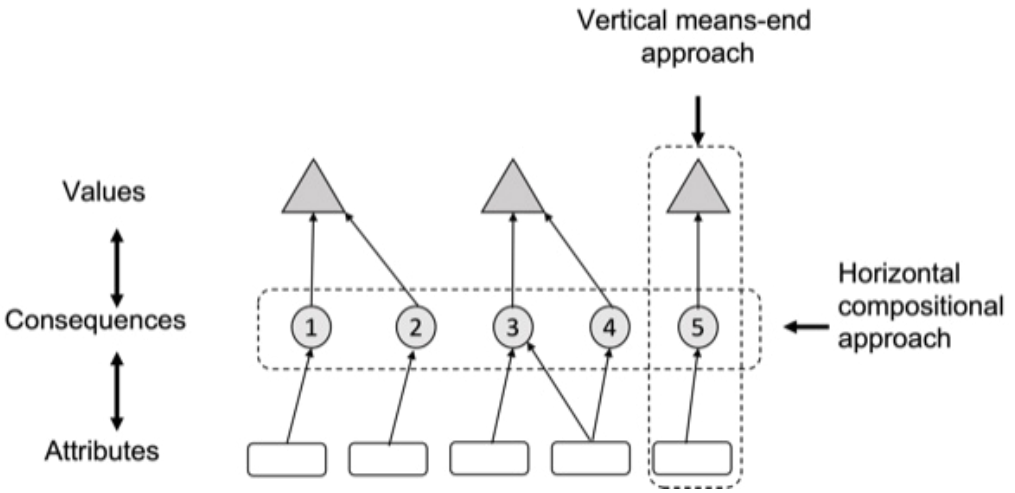

Figure 8. Value biangulation, the combination of the compositional and means-end approaches in the examination of consumer value.

In addition to providing a more comprehensive picture of consumer value, biangulation also increased our understanding of the role of emotional value dimensions. The classification of value into functional and emotional dimensions was already emblematic in the first typologies (Hartman, 1967, 1973; Mattsson, 1991 in Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007) and it has remained foundational in the conceptualization of value (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991). Functional value refers to consumers' utilitarian benefits; consumption is considered an instrumental solver of the consumer's specific problem (Sheth et al., 1991). The opposite, emotional value, is regarded as an intrinsic, a self-justifying end in itself, appreciated merely for its own sake (Holbrook, 1999b) and underpinned by the experiential aspects of consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). This extrinsic – intrinsic divide characterizes the compositional perspective to consumer value. By contrast, the hierarchical means-end approach posits that all consumer value dimensions – also the autotelic ones – are extrinsic: they simultaneously function as ends in attribute-consequence linkages and as means to realizing the universal values (Woodruff, 1997). The means-end theory premises that consumers engage in consumption to attain desired ends, but their ultimate goals and purposes may be subconscious; for example, a national park visitor may overtly appreciate recreation as an end in itself, but ultimately, his / her behavior is driven by the universal values that in this case could be the pursuit of happiness, pleasure and inner peace although they do not surface instantly. The potential of means-end value research resides in not settling for the intrinsic value dimensions, but delving deeper to disclose their ultimate drivers, the universal values. These abstract ends represent the utmost reasons for consumption, underpin the consumers' preferences, set criteria for their decision-making as well as guide observed behavior (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992, 2012). Revealing these profound meanings of emotional value dimensions is particularly relevant in examining experiential consumption, such as tourism, dominated by affective and hedonic aspects.

4.4.5 Digitally customized Association Pattern Technique

Digital customization of the hard laddering Association Pattern Technique (APT) (Hofstede et al., 1998) introduced interactivity to this thus far standardized method, which brought it a step closer its qualitative and unstructured roots, thus fulfilling the methodological laddering assumptions (Grunert & Grunert, 1995; Phillips & Reynolds, 2009; Reynolds, 2006; Reynolds & Phillips, 2009) better than fully structured quantitative laddering. The pilot investigation demonstrated the potential of digitally customized APT in improving the quality of data and execution of the survey (Table 4). These advancements open new possibilities for means-end research in tourism with regard to the emotional and social value dimensions as well as the universal values that are often hard to disclose, but are decisive for the tourists' decision-making and behavior. Therefore, the adoption of digitally customized APT in quantitative means-end value research is recommended (cf. Diedericks et al., 2020). Its wider application would, however, require a tailor-made software application. This pilot was executed on a standard web-based survey tool (https://www.webropol.co.uk), which performed well in the construction of the survey and collection of data, but demanded a considerable amount of manual labor in data analysis and reporting.

Table 4. The methodological and practical benefits of digitally customized Association Pattern Technique

Methodological benefits	**Practical benefits (R=researcher, P=participant)**
reduced complexity of the laddering task	survey construction, piloting and distribution (R)
focus on personally relevant issues	real-time follow-up of execution (R)
greater consideration and introspection	lower respondent fatigue and drop-out rates (R)
shared meanings and increased validity	greater sample homogeneity and relevance (R)
emphasized contextuality	decreased possibilities for human errors (R)
construction of complete chains	easy participation regardless of time and place (P)
	effortless return of the survey (P)
	sharing the survey with peers, cf. snowball sampling (P)

Despite increased interactivity, digital APT remains a recognition-based method that relies on elements predefined and arranged into hierarchical levels by the researcher. This deductive nature of hard laddering constitutes a risk for validity as the respondents are only allowed to select between items presented to them (Reynolds & Phillips, 2009). Therefore, digital APT has to be based on a thorough, recall-based and inductive pre-study (Hofstede et al., 1998; Vriens & Hofstede, 2000). An alternative computerized laddering method, Causal Network Elicitation Technique (CNET), has also been piloted. Unlike digitally customized APT, it is fully inductive and recall-based. Respondents to a CNET-survey link attributes to benefits in an unstructured and open manner that requires large databases and string recognition algorithms to automatically interpret and categorize their answers (Dellaert et al., 2014, 2017; Horeni et al., 2014). Due to this complexity, CNET has not been widely utilized in empirical value research. The new digitally customized version of APT, by contrast, offers a methodologically sound and technically feasible way to construct complete, four-level means-end chains. Software permitting,

future researchers might be able to freely elaborate on all elements from the respondents utilizing open answers and their computerized classification as has been demonstrated with the CNET experiment. Such a computerized and inductive process would, however, not represent the association of predetermined elements according to APT principles, but rather, it would approach soft laddering. Future developments in programming may one day allow fully unprompted digital laddering, which would blur the distinction between soft and hard laddering. However, whatever the case, empirical research based on computerized soft laddering interviews would be technically far more challenging than conducting conventional soft laddering pre-study interviews followed by digitally customized APT using standard survey software. Moreover, computerizing the interviews would circumvent the important stage of the personal involvement of the researcher in familiarizing him-/herself with the topic, terminology and tentative elements. For these reasons, the use of a two-phase sequential exploratory mixed-method strategy (Creswell and Creswell 2018) is advocated when conducting digitally customized APT in examining tourists' means-end value structures.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The main research question of this thesis was "How is consumer value constructed in a nature-based context that is minimally influenced and managed by tourism providers?" The answer is: It is constructed in accordance with the consumer dominant logic as the tourists independently construct experiential value in a broad customer ecosystem context. Their value construction is only indirectly facilitated by park management, which emphasizes the relevance of contextual, social and emotional factors. The following section summarizes the theoretical contribution of this thesis and elaborates on the managerial implications for park managers, nature-based tourism operators and experiential consumption in general.

5.1 Theoretical contribution

1) The context-dependence of experiences

Lack of control and uncertainty over the outcome characterize independent nature-based tourism. This coincides with the broad customer ecosystem view of the experiential context, but contests the service and customer dominant logic's baseline of experiences and value being orchestrated exclusively by companies and/or consumers. In emergent and less managed settings, both parties' goal-oriented influence decreases emphasizing the context-dependence and randomness of the outcome.

2) The extended view of social value in tourism

This thesis discloses new, self-oriented and intrinsic dimensions of social value. The findings broaden the conceptualization of social value beyond the prevailing view of other-oriented and extrinsic status seeking and impression management. This extension complements the compositional value typologies and provides the pertinent connection between self-oriented social motivations and universal values in means-end value examinations.

The discovered self-oriented social value dimensions are particularly relevant in tourism characterized by consumer-to-consumer co-creation of value.

3) Three-dimensional depiction of consumer value

Depicting the diversity of social value three-dimensionally, as a continuous aggregate instead of discrete value archetypes, represents a new and illustrative approach in compositional value research. The spatial perspective portrays intermediary and hybrid value dimensions more precisely than a traditional matrix or a list of fixed value types. Hence, it manifests the fundamental logic of Holbrook´s Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b).

4) The instrumentality of emotional value

The simultaneous examination of consumer value both from the compositional and dynamic perspectives revealed the instrumental role of emotional value dimensions. Instead of being simply self-justified ends in themselves (the prevailing view), they function as means to achieving the higher goals and purposes in the consumers' lives in the same manner as functional value dimensions. Hence, the emotional value dimensions are also underpinned by our universal values. Recognizing and disclosing these ultimate drivers of tourists' decision-making and behavior offers profound consumer insight.

5.2 Managerial implications

The managerial implications concern practitioners on three levels. Firstly, due to the examined context, the empirical findings directly benefit managers of public national parks. Secondly, this research provides sector-specific consumer insight to commercial tour operators who offer nature-based tourism services. Thirdly, the theorized findings are not confined only to nature-based tourism or even to tourism in general, but apply to the entire field of experiential consumption. The examined idiosyncratic empirical setting, independent visits in a wild natural environment, highlighted certain aspects of consumer value that may be less apparent in commercial contexts, but

are nevertheless worth attention. The following paragraphs are not intended to provide a handbook-type exhaustive account of how to create consumer value in nature-based tourism and other fields of experiential consumption. They highlight the main findings from a managerial perspective in order to inspire park managers, nature-based tourism operators and other actors to consider the topics from their own perspectives, and adapt them to their specific business environment and their own logic of value provision.

The context-dependence of experiences

The observed context-dependence of nature-based tourism experiences appears in a different light for park managers and commercial tour operators due to their different roles in experiential consumption. Park management has an administrative and facilitative role as a supporter of visitors' independent creation of experiences. The management-visitor relationship is distant and impersonal, confined to providing park infrastructure and basic services. Consequently, it resembles the consumer dominant logic with broad customer ecosystems and the consumers' independent value creation within them. Managerial focus is on developing parks as destinations instead of managing visitor experiences (Note: park management literature uses the term visitor instead of customer). As a consequence, the context-dependence and uncertainty of experiences discussed in this thesis constitute no immediate concern for park managers, who may relate to them is as an integral part of visiting national parks and something the visitors have to face and deal with independently. Which indeed, the visitors do; many of the most memorable park experiences emerged from surprising and extraordinary events where the visitors were mere recipients of context-driven experiences. In the contemporary, organized and customized world where controllability and predictability are emblematic of our lives and behavior as consumers, context-driven experiences offer a welcome variation and were therefore valued by park visitors.

The issue of uncertainty is more imminent to commercial nature-based tourism operators. Their primary objective is to design and offer satisfactory customers experiences, which necessitates greater awareness and anticipation of the contextual factors. Figuratively, this means moving from the

context-dominated top of the Experience Triangle towards its company-driven vertex. Increased control over the customer experience requires outlining the company's managerial limits in the experiential context and recognizing the context-driven incidences outside this sphere. As they cannot always be controlled, the advice is to proact rather than react and in the latter case, have Plans B and C ready. From the provider perspective, the unpredictability of consumer value in nature-based contexts may at first appear as a threat, but above all, it should be considered an opportunity, the true substance of nature-based tourism. Tour operators should regard the randomness and even occasional unexpectedness of nature-based events as their key asset, an irreplaceable resource and the foundation of their business. Nature should be harnessed only to the extent necessary for the consumers' satisfaction with the technical service delivery. Hence, commercial customers also need to sense and experience the multiple and wild dimensions of nature. If these are too effectively honed away, the prefix "nature-based" is also diminished. Therefore, in order to successfully balance between the desired level of wildness versus convenience, the operators need to know their customers' expectations and preferences. The same context-dependence of consumer experiences applies to experiential consumption in general. In commercially staged contexts, the companies have greater opportunities for harnessing uncertainty in favor of desired consumer experiences, but nevertheless, also in these better controlled settings, the companies need to be aware of the influence of the context. Unpredictability is an intrinsic part of experiential consumption.

Self-oriented social value

The conventional view regards nature-based tourism to be based on nature as an attraction and an arena for outdoor activities, but in addition, nature also constitutes a social context. The tourists derive social value from interacting with other tourists (customer-to-customer co-creation of value). The explicit recognition of these self-oriented social value dimensions affects park managers and tour operators equally. The visitors' intimate interaction with their own travel company as well as the feeling of inclusion in a larger community of similar people are understandably beyond the direct influence

of park management. The different types of social interaction need to be taken into account when developing park infrastructure and providing recreational services. If park management still imagines the standard park visitor to be the lone wolf solo hiker who appreciates only his/her own company, now is the time to recognize the full spectrum of the social value dimensions of park visitors.

Commercial tour providers usually interact directly with their clients and also witness customer-to-customer interaction in their daily business. Therefore, they are more likely to recognize the potential that resides in the co-creation of social value as well as the risks of failure. Staff-customer relationships can be designed and organized accordingly whereas the operators' role in customer-to-customer interaction is mainly facilitative via segmentation and active management of group dynamics. Although the new social value dimensions were discovered in nature-based tourism, other tourism and experiential contexts presumably also display them. As simply hiking in the wilderness included a variety of self-oriented social value dimensions, it would be surprising if these did not also occur in more social activities. The social value of a romantic holiday or taking the children to an amusement park or attending a sports event with thousands of other spectators can hardly be limited to just making an impression on others and lacking any self-oriented dimensions.

Universal values ultimately determine tourist preferences and behavior

It is tempting for tourism practitioners to focus on individual, concrete service elements as they are easy to recognize and influence and thus, appear as attractive means of contributing to consumer value. However, instead of viewing perceived value as a set of detached elements, attention should be directed to the causal means-end relationships of the tourists, because their behavior is ultimately guided by the underlying universal values. For park managers and tour operators alike, true insight comes from comprehending the meanings of attributes and activities for the visitors and customers – the "what" should be complemented with the "how" and "why". Value biangulation revealed that even intrinsic value dimensions function instrumentally. What superficially may seem and be treated as an end in itself, is ultimately driven by

more abstract values that transcend the particular situation. This observation is particularly relevant in nature-based tourism and experiential consumption where the emotional experience is pivotal. Disclosing the causalities and the ultimate determinants of behavior allows a response to the deeper needs of the consumers, which should be in the interest of all those involved in offering experiential services or products. Software development permitting, the digitalized APT method developed in this thesis offers a convenient way of tapping into the means-end world of value.

The dominant logics of nature-based tourism

The examined independent, do-it-yourself visits to national parks clearly represented the consumer dominant logic. They were characterized by the visitors' independent value creation which was only distantly facilitated by park management that lacked direct contacts with the visitors and their world. The experiential park context corresponded to a complex customer ecosystem that randomly influenced the visitor experiences. This resulted in the perceived consumer value being experiential, subjective and although independently created, largely dependent on random external stimuli. This represented an extreme case of nature-based tourism. Had the visitors been on a guided tour instead of adventuring in the park on their own, their visit would have been more inclined to the service dominant logic resting on company-customer interaction; a tour operator would have planned, prepared and staged experiential services for its customers, mutually co-creating value with them. Focus would have been on a narrower experiential context, the company-customer dyad, within which the company would have tried to control the nature-based stimuli to the best of its ability. But even so, nature-based tourism – as the name suggests – is always dependent on contextual factors that are more or less random and spontaneous, penetrating also into the company's realm. It is this that expressly makes nature-based tourism so fascinating for the participants and practitioners.

5.3 Evaluation of the study

The classic evaluation criteria – validity, reliability and generalizability – are not applicable to constructivist research resting on relativist ontology, subjectivist epistemology and value-laden axiology (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Instead, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria – credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability – was applied during each step of this thesis. The below evaluation of trustworthiness underlines the truth value of this research and allows the readers to judge the consistency, neutrality and relevance of this dissertation (Decrop, 2004; Elo et al., 2014). In addition to the four trustworthiness criteria, also triangulation and reflexivity are discussed.

Credibility

The recognition of multiple truths instead of a single and objective reality with straightforward cause and effect relationships is intrinsic to qualitative research approaches. The correctness and plausibility of the current research rested on the researcher's familiarity with the topic and active self-reflection, purposive sampling of relevant participants as well as sufficient and saturated collection of empirical material. Furthermore, inductive and data-driven coding was used to organize the material into representative higher order categories (Schreier, 2012, 2014). These ensured that the findings credibly and truthfully represented the multiplicity of the examined nature-based context (Decrop, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Qualitative research is context-bound and therefore replicability in the quantitative meaning is not practical. Instead, focus is on how well the empirical material collected represents the examined phenomenon in the particular situation (Decrop, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To indicate dependability, the research process was reported in detail, logically and traceably to permit others to follow the decision-making trail step-by-step (Elo et al., 2014; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The thorough methods sections of the articles as well as Chapter 3 of this thesis allow others to assess for themselves

the decisions made and ultimately even replicate this research. However, in the case of replication, the expected results would not be identical due to ontological and epistemological reasons.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the linking of the findings to previous knowledge as well as other contexts, thereby corresponding to the external validity of quantitative research (Elo et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The findings of Article I complemented existing theory by extending the bipolar Experience Continuum Model (Carú & Cova, 2007a) into an Experience Triangle and Article 2 proposed new social value dimensions to the well-established Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b). These analytic generalizations enable the application of the findings to other contexts (Firestone, 1993; Polit & Beck, 2010). However, the primary responsibility for such transferability lies with other researchers and how they apply the findings to their own research settings (i.e., the receiving context) (Lincoln et al., 2011; Polit & Beck, 2010). In order to permit this evaluation, the empirical context and the characteristics of the research participants of this research (i.e., the sending context) were described in detail.

Confirmability

Despite strong researcher involvement and the subsequent subjectivity, the analysis of empirical materials was conducted neutrally by linking the data, its interpretations, the findings and conclusions together into a consistent whole (Decrop, 2004; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The goal was the objectivity of the data itself, not that of the investigator (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data objectivity was reinforced in the collection by using naturally occurring empirical material (Article I / guest book narratives) and an open interview format (Articles II and III / laddering interviews), demonstrating intercoder reliability (Schreier, 2012) and applying the Gioia approach to transparently illustrate the stepwise, inductive coding of empirical materials (Gioia et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2019). Finally, in the reporting phase, direct quotations were provided to support and exemplify the claims.

Triangulation

Triangulation, investigating a phenomenon using different theoretical approaches, data sources, methods and investigators, is based on the idea that multiple perspectives increase trustworthiness (Decrop, 2004). However, the idea of conducting several qualitative inquiries on a specific phenomenon contradicts the constructivist view of multiple realities and unless done simultaneously, the context also inescapably changes between the investigations (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016; Silverman, 2011). Therefore, triangulation was only partial: longitudinal triangulation in Article I (guest book narratives covering half a century of park experiences), investigator triangulation in Articles I and II (using a second coder) and informant triangulation in Article II (conducting a relatively large number of in-depth interviews). In addition, the investigation of consumer value both from the experiential (Article I), compositional (Article II) and dynamic perspectives (Article III) represented theoretical triangulation (Decrop, 2004).

Reflexivity

Every researcher is socially bound, a member of the surrounding world he or she investigates. Moreover, qualitative researchers have a central position in designing their research as well as collecting, analyzing and interpreting the empirical material and reporting the outcome (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The social role together with this intimate relationship renders qualitative researchers as bricoleurs – makers of patchworks – who both possess and gain understanding and collate the pieces accordingly. Inescapably, this process is influenced by the researchers own insight and therefore, the constructivist approach is axiologically value-laden compared to the value-free ideal of positivistic research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln et al., 2011). As a consequence, the work of other researchers with different backgrounds could result in divergent interpretations of the same empirical material; that is to say, they could place the same patches in a different order.

Personally, I was familiar with my topic and the context before engagement in this research project. As an outdoor enthusiast, I had collected national park experiences of my own for several decades. In addition, I had been working for Metsähallitus / Parks and Wildlife Finland in developing nature-based

tourism in Finnish national parks. This dualistic user-provider background with established personal networks constituted a solid base for this thesis. Instead of stigmatizing personal history, preconceptions and member status, they are beneficial assets in qualitative research as long as they are recognized and controlled (Bengtsson, 2016; Johnson & Rowlands, 2012; Lincoln et al., 2011). I achieved this control by being reflexive, consciously aware of my preconceptions and constantly evaluating their possible influences on the ongoing production of knowledge both before, during and at the end of the process (Bold, 2012; May & Perry, 2014). Being totally ignorant of what one knows in advance is impossible, but I forced personal views and theoretical propositions into the background in order to be open to the participants' views (Kelle, 2014). This deliberate naivete (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) was most efficiently achieved by using naturally occurring data (Article I) and open interviews (Article II), which minimized my own preconceptions from infiltrating into the collection of empirical material. Moreover, the coding was inductive and data-driven to retain the participants' views and the abduction into theoretical frameworks was done as the last stage of analysis.

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ARTICLES

ARTICLE I

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ARTICLE III

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Dimensions and drivers of national park experiences: A longitudinal study of independent visitors

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the dimensions and drivers of national park experiences from the 1970s to the 2010s. It uncovered the multidimensional structure of the park experiences of independent visitors and investigated the evolution of these experiences in a changing world.

Park visits were examined through the lens of experiential consumption considering parks as experiential contexts. This qualitative investigation was conducted in one Finnish national park using its guest books to provide the study's empirical material. The sampled 200 narratives revealed 25 dimensions of experience that formed five distinct groups: Nature, Physical accomplishments, Personal sphere, Infrastructure and Social interaction. These themes and their dimensions highlighted the contextual nature of experiences as well as the subjectivity of visitors' responses. The longitudinal investigation indicated that experiences have retained their core composition from the 1970s to the present day despite considerable material, societal and technological developments.

Due to the emergent and context-dependent nature of park experiences, Carú and Cova's bipolar experience continuum model (2007b) was developed into an Experience Triangle Model by also including the context as a driver of experiences. This new triangular model is compatible with experiential contexts that are neither consumer- nor company-driven. For park visitors, this context-dependence entails that visitors may anticipate experiences on a general level, but their ability to predict and actively contribute to precise experiences is limited. Likewise, context-driven settings limit companies' ability to design and manage customer experiences.

Management implications:

- This experiential approach provides new insights and impetus for park management by shifting focus from the setting attributes, the visitors' activities, and socio-economics to the personal experiences of visitors
- Awareness of the multidimensionality of park experiences facilitates catering to diverse visitor segments
- Understanding the context-driven nature of park experiences emphasizes conservation of the natural environment
- Temporal stability of visitor experiences recommends caution in park development
- Proof of the feasibility of guest books and their potential for visitor-oriented park management

1. Introduction

National parks have a dual mandate: to conserve exceptional natural and cultural values and simultaneously to offer people recreation opportunities (Dudley, 2008). This has made them prime travel destinations for nature-based tourists with as many as eight billion (8×10^9) annual visits (Balmford et al., 2015). Consequently, much of the research on nature-based tourism has focused on national parks and similar areas designated for outdoor recreation. This study extends that body of research by examining the experiences of independent visitors to a large, wilderness-like national park in Finland from the 1970s to the present day.

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People visit national parks and other protected areas to attain memorable experiences (McCool & Priskin, 2006). These visitor experiences have been investigated from three perspectives: 1) what visitors' experience, 2) factors influencing the nature and quality of their experiences and 3) how park management can sustain and facilitate visitor experiences (Cole, 2012). The first viewpoint is related to the composition and nature of experiences (e.g. Arnould & Price, 1993; Borrie & Birzell, 2000; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Patterson, Watson, Williams, & Roggenbuck, 1998; Seekamp, Troy, & Cole, 2012). Influencing factors include environmental attributes, visitor behavior and issues such as crowding (Cole & Hall, 2009; Fix, Carroll, & Harrington, 2013; Pietilä & Kangas, 2015; Stewart & Cole, 1999). Finally, the facilitation perspective is related to visitor management (Cole, 2004; Pickering, Rossi, Hernando, & Barros, 2018) as it is associated with experience quality and satisfaction (Pearce & Dowling, 2019).

This study combined the first and second viewpoints and scrutinizes park experiences as experiential consumption (Addis & Holbrook, 2001) based on Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) pioneering work on the relevance of aesthetics, emotions, and hedonism in consumption. Traditionally, national parks have been regarded as recreation settings comprised of natural, managerial, and social attributes (Brown, Driver, & McConnell, 1978; Clark & Stankey, 1979) whereas regarding them as experiential contexts into which visitors immerse themselves, depicts parks as entities that provide opportunities for personal experiences (Carú & Cova, 2007a). This interactive approach shifts the attention from concrete attributes to visitors' experiential outcomes with an array of dimensions from sensorial and emotional to cognitive, social, and pragmatic (Gentile, Noci, & Spiller, 2007; Schmitt, 1999). The aim of this study was to uncover these dimensions and their drivers by investigating the park experiences of independent visitors.

Furthermore, current knowledge on national park and outdoor recreation experiences is based on short-term studies, typically a day or one excursion (Arnould & Price, 1993; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Hull, Michael, Walker, & Roggenbuck, 1996). These studies provide momentary snapshots of experiences, but long-term investigations of changes in experience composition are lacking. Considering the remarkable societal, material and technological development during past decades, this is surprising. Aiming to cover this gap, this study also investigated the evolution of national park experiences from the 1970s to the present day in a single park. The managerial implications of increased insight into the dimensions, drivers, and evolution of park experiences are discussed in the Conclusions.

2. The nature of national park experiences

2.1. Experiential view of consumption

Few hikers sweating on a national park trail and occasionally enjoying the surrounding scenery would consider themselves consumers currently engaged in the act of consumption. However, conceptually consumption is "*acquisition, use, and disposal of products, services, ideas, and experiences*" (Arnould, Price, & Zinkhan, 2004, p. 6), which comprises also outdoor recreation in parks. Traditionally, consumption was considered a rational process of purchasing and using physical products with objective features (Arnould et al., 2004). This utilitarian view of consumption was challenged in the 1980s by Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) experiential view highlighting the relevance of consumers' subjective responses. Proposing a shift of attention from functional benefits to personal emotions, their approach emphasized symbolic meanings, aesthetics and hedonism in consumption. It had a fundamental impact on economics and marketing culminating in Pine and Gilmore's (1998) declaration of a new experience economy era where experiences are distinct economic offerings *per se*. This paradigmatic transition gave rise to new marketing concepts, such as experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999), experiential consumption (Addis & Holbrook, 2001), experiential context (Carú & Cova, 2007a) and customer experience management (Berry, Carbone, & Haeckel, 2002). Furthermore, the experiential view was also considered applicable to physical products and services of a utilitarian nature (Addis & Holbrook, 2001). Abbott's argument made in 1955 that "*What people really desire are not products but satisfying experiences.*" (Abbott, as cited in Holbrook, 2006, p. 715), coincides with our current understanding of experiences' role in consumption.

National park visits clearly represent experiential consumption (Carú & Cova, 2003) since experiences constitute the core of a park's offering; they are the reason for the visit and the aim of the activity (McCool, 2006; McCool & Priskin, 2006). Examining national park visits – theoretically the consumption of parks – through the lens of experiential consumption focuses on the visitor experience and renders the setting attributes of parks as well as the activities undertaken by visitors as the precursors and instrumental facilitators of the experience. Ultimately, the attained experiences lead to the desired psychological and psychophysiological benefits for the visitors (Driver, 2008; McCool, 2006). This recreation demand hierarchy approach is concordant with the means-end theory (Gutman, 1982) and the hierarchical construction of customer value (Woodruff, 1997) that view activities and attributes as means that provide desired consequences that are linked to personal ends.

2.2. Visitor – park interaction

Consumption experiences result from interaction between an individual and an object of consumption in a particular situation (Punj & Stewart, 1983). In the case of national parks, the object and situation jointly constitute an experiential context into which visitors immerse themselves physically and mentally (Carú & Cova, 2007a; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). This immersion is described as 'encountering' (Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011), 'being engaged in' (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), 'going through' (Carú & Cova, 2007a), 'observing or participating in' events (Schmitt, 2008). Hence, personal involvement is necessary, and the arising park experiences depend on both the context and the visitor's personal values (Rokeach, 1973), motivations and attitudes (Bright, 2008; Kim, Lee, Uysal, Kim, & Ahn, 2015; Xu & Chan, 2016).

Commercial experiential contexts, such as amusements parks and tourism destinations, are enclaved and managed settings that provide guests with opportunities for pleasurable experiences (Carú & Cova, 2007a). The concepts of experience environments (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) and experiencescapes (O'Dell, 2005) have been used to describe such attractions. Since creating memorable experiences is vital for the tourism and hospitality industry (Pizam, 2010), its experiential contexts have been modelled by several authors. Cutler and Carmichael (2010) name the object of tourism consumption an 'influential realm', a combination of physical and social factors as well as products and services. Mossberg (2007) further divides social aspects into personnel and other tourists. Walls and colleagues' framework groups influencing factors into physical elements, human interaction and situational factors including also "*… people's encounters with products, services, and businesses …*" (Walls et al., 2011). Hence, tourism contexts are framed as experiencescapes, but also as servicescapes with products and services (Fossgard & Fredman, 2019; Mossberg, 2007)

Products and services play a minor role for independent visitors to non-commercial national parks. Instead, these parks' experiential contexts comprise physical, biological, managerial and social attributes (Brown et al., 1978; Clark & Stankey, 1979, pp. 1–32). The natural setting attributes, or the "nature", constitutes the foundation, the baseline for the park experiences and thus delineates the kinds of experiences that are generally possible at a given destination (Fredman, Wall-Reinius, & Grundén, 2012; Puustinen, Pouta, Marjo Neuvonen, & Tuija Sievänen, 2009). Managerial, man-made setting attributes, such as recreation infrastructure and services, mainly facilitates attaining those experiences, but occasionally may also limit them with rules and

regulations. Social factors, the third group of setting attributes, relates to interaction within one's own social group as well as with other visitors (McCool, 2006) and may intensify or inhibit experiences.

Although setting attributes constitute the experiential framework of parks, actual experiences are formed individually in the minds of visitors interacting with the context. Cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions represented the original levels of interaction (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), but this view has been expanded to comprise also sensorial, social and lifestyle levels (Gentile et al., 2007; Schmitt, 1999). Hence, visitors receive different kinds of stimuli and react subjectively and selectively to them (Arnould et al., 2004; Lee & Schafer, 2002; Roederer, 2013). This underlines the role of experiential contexts in experience formation: neither the contexts nor the companies managing them offer experiences *per se*. Instead the contexts offer people opportunities for attaining the desired personal experiences (Carú & Cova, 2007a). This logic is fundamental to understanding the multidimensionality and personal nature of experiences.

Park experiences arising from the visitor - setting interactions vary due to fluctuating setting attributes and the individual's subjective responses to them (Lee & Schafer, 2002; Stewart & Cole, 1999). Constant variation makes recreation experiences dynamic with distinctive phases (Arnould & Price, 1993; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001) analogous with general consumption processes (Arnould et al., 2004; Knutson & Beck, 2004; Roederer, 2013). The experiential nature of these phases ranges from pre-experience anticipation to the actual experience followed by recollection afterwards (Roederer, 2013). Within this multiphasic structure, the on-site recreation experience is also a dynamic and evolving process as situational and individual variation causes experiences to fluctuate back and forth continuously (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Hull et al., 1996; McIntyre & Roggenbuck, 1998). This momentary variation includes positive and negative emotions (Arnould & Price, 1993) as well as experiences of different intensity (Carú & Cova, 2003). Ordinary experiences are common everyday occurrences that pass by with little influence on us whereas extraordinary experiences represent the "*Big Times of our lives*" (Abrahams, 1981, p. 63), also referred to as peak (Maslow, 1964), flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014), memorable (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), and transformational experiences (Arnould et al., 2004). In tourism, a distinction is also made between daily routine experiences, peak touristic experiences and supporting consumer experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004; Volo, 2009). Thus, the ultimate experience is a consolidated sum of numerous variable experiences that support, intensify and even counteract one another.

2.3. Multidimensional park experiences

Consumption experiences are composed of several dimensions (Gentile et al., 2007; Schmitt, 1999) that have been identified, for example, in studies regarding conceptions of pleasure (Dubé & Le Bel, 2003), brand experiences (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantello, 2009) and experience structures in different product categories (Gentile et al., 2007). Experiential dimensions represent micro-experiences that merge in the mind of an individual into a complex, multidimensional experience. Conscious and sub-conscious, cognitive and emotional dimensions intertwine so closely that it becomes difficult to distinguish between them afterwards (Gentile et al., 2007). Hence, they form a Gestalt (Schmitt, 1999) or an experiential hybrid (Schmitt, 2008), commonly referred to as a consumption experience. It may consist of a single dimension, but in a world of multiple stimuli, most experiences are multidimensional with the weights of different dimensions varying depending on the individual and the situation.

The dimensions of park and recreation experiences have been investigated in different environmental, social and managerial contexts (Table 1). The approaches and concepts in these studies vary, but the nature dimension was detected in all the studies either in general or via specific foci, particularly scenery and wildlife. The studies also indicated that nature was the source of feelings of solitude, freedom, remoteness

Table 1
Experiential dimensions of national park and outdoors experiences in selected studies.

Authors	Location	Methodology/ duration	Experiential dimensions
Arnould and Price (1993)	USA/Colorado	mixed-method: surveys, interviews, observation, focus group, written protocols/18 months	Communion with nature, connecting to others and self-renewal
Patterson et al. (1998)	USA/Ocala National Forest	qualitative: group interviews/8 days	Challenge, closeness to nature, decisions not faced in everyday environments, stories of nature
Borrie and Roggenbuck (2001)	USA/Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge	quantitative: survey/23 days	A combined oneness/ primitiveness/ humility variable, timelessness, solitude and care
Dawson (2006)	USA/New York, New Hampshire and Maine	mixed-method: focus group, interview, survey/3 years	Personal and social experiences, solitude, connection with nature, exploration and remoteness, connection with other people, physical activity, remote travel skills, natural environments plus four managerial conditions
Farber and Hall (2007)	Alaska/Dalton Highway	mixed-method: survey, narratives/51 days	Scenery, wildlife, recreational activities, social interaction, novelty
Watson et al. (2007)	Canada/Auyuittuq National Parks	quantitative: survey/3 months	Taste of the Arctic, connection with nature, challenge & accomplishment, isolation in nature and learning & appreciation
Cole and Hall (2009)	USA/Alpine Lakes Wilderness, and Three Sisters Wilderness	quantitative: survey/2 months	Solitude and silence, scenery, lack of human development, challenge and self-sufficiency, escape, wildlife, social interactions
McDonald, Wearing, and Pointing (2009)	Australia/The Little Desert, Croajingolong, and Wilson's Promontory National Parks	qualitative: narratives/2 months	Aesthetic qualities, escape, natural environments, self-renewal, spiritual expressions
Weber and Anderson (2010)	Australia/Belair, Jells, Innes, and Wilsons Promontory National Parks	quantitative: interview & survey	Nature (scenery, smells and sounds), escape, social interaction, learning, temperature
Seekamp et al. (2012)	USA/Mt Jefferson, Alpine Lakes and Eagle Cap Wildernesses	qualitative: semi-structured interviews/45 days	Remoteness, solitude, escape, naturalness, lack of development
Pietilä and Kangas (2015)	Finland/Oulanka National Park	quantitative: survey /3 months	Scenery, soundscape and facilities, wildlife and plants, social settings

and connection. In addition, social interaction and physical challenges were mentioned in half of the cases. Personal issues related to learning, novelty and self-renewal occurred occasionally. Thus, emotional, physical and social dimensions seem to predominate park experiences.

2.4. Experiences driven by companies and consumers

Ultimately, all experiences are composed in the minds of individuals as personal responses to the surrounding environment. However, the drivers of experiences are considered to originate either from companies, consumers or simultaneously both (Carú & Cova, 2007b, experience continuum model). Proponents of experience economy argue that experiences occur when a company practices experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999), intentionally engages its customers with staged experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) and actively manages these experiences (Berry et al., 2002). The resulting company-driven experiences are thoroughly planned and professionally managed to provide foreseeable outcomes for customers (Carú & Cova, 2007b; Duerden, Ward, & Freeman, 2015). They occur in carefully designed experiential contexts (Carú & Cova, 2007a) that guide the formation of desired customer experiences based on market exchanges (Edgell & Hetherington, 1996).

As far as independent park visits are concerned, company contribution is limited to managerial setting attributes, leaving all natural and social factors outside company influence. In the absence of active company engagement, visitors interact with the context on their own terms creating consumer-driven consumption experiences (Carú & Cova, 2003; Edgell & Hetherington, 1996) characterized by consumer initiation, freedom of choice and self-determination. Consumer-driven experiences are more uncontrolled, variable and unpredictable (Scott, Laws, & Boksberger, 2009) than structured (Duerden et al., 2015) and staged (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) company-driven experiences. In real life, the distinction between company- and consumer-driven experiences is not clear-cut; most consumption experiences are located along a continuum from unambiguously company-driven experiences to solely consumer-driven. These intermediate experiences require input and involvement from both parties and therefore, they are labelled as co-driven (Carú & Cova, 2007b) or co-created experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

3. Case description

This study was conducted in Pallas-Yllästunturi national park in Northern Finland. Established in 1938 as one of the first five Finnish national parks, it is today the third largest (1020 km^2) and the most popular park with 550 000 visits a year (Kyostilä, Erkkonen, Sulkava, & Lohiniva, 2010; Metsähallitus, 2019). This large and remote park resembles a wilderness area (Dudley, 2008) with limited infrastructures demanding personal skills and self-sufficiency. The vast majority of visitors are domestic independent travelers on non-facilitated excursions whereas the number of commercial tour clients remains marginal (Kuusisto, Erkkonen, & Ylläsjärvi, 2017). The study was conducted along the park's most popular hiking trail.

An important feature of the Pallas-Yllästunturi park is its location within a culture of extensive common access; practically all Finnish land and water areas outside park boundaries are also available for outdoor recreation (Tuunanen, Tarasti, & Rautiainen, 2012). The value of unrestricted access is further emphasized by the ubiquity of nature in Finland. From the recreationists' perspective, national parks, however, are unparalleled destinations due to their exceptional natural values and recreation infrastructure. This prompted the current study of visitor experiences specifically within a national park boundary rather than focusing on outdoor experiences in general.

4. Material and methods

This study applied an emergent experience approach that examines recreation experiences as dynamic, context-dependent phenomena and acknowledges their unexpected, emergent character (Fix, Brooks, & Harrington, 2018; Patterson et al., 1998). It is therefore particularly suitable for investigating fluctuating and multidimensional outdoor experiences. Qualitative methodology, based on the phenomenological paradigm, was used to explore the experiences on-site in their natural setting. In accordance with Mannell and Iso-Ahola's (1987) immediate conscious experience approach, the focus was on the nature and meaning of experiences taking into account experiences that were positive and negative, profound and ordinary, as well as active and reactive.

The guest books in the wilderness huts represented naturally occurring empirical material for this study. These guest books have a long tradition in Finnish outdoor culture and their popularity persists; park visitors write their experiences down voluntarily without any research arrangements. Thus, these guest books allowed an unobtrusive emic investigation from the perspective of visitors expressing their points of view irrespective of any predetermined conceptual categories (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). These personal narratives were studied using an experience-centered approach (Squire, 2017) that regarded the narratives as representations of events visitors have experienced (Bold, 2012).

Guest books were available from 15 wilderness huts in the case park. Three of these sites, located on a popular multi-day trekking route (Fig. 1), were included in the study, because their books contained longer and richer stories due to visitors staying overnight there. Narratives from 1970 to 2016 were collected to allow a longitudinal analysis. The midmost year of each decade was selected as the best representative of that sub-period of time and to distribute the sampled years evenly on the entire timeline. Based on the number of words, the narratives were rank ordered per year and study site. All narratives exceeding 30 words were considered eligible and the 40 longest ones for each selected year were included in the analysis. The sample for 1975 comprised only 28 eligible narratives and therefore, it was supplemented by the 12 longest narratives from 1976. The 2015 guest book for Site 1: Tappuri had been lost and it was replaced by 2016. Table 2 presents the distribution of the narratives between periods and sites as well as their average lengths.

The selected narratives were photographed and literally transcribed, resulting in a chronologically stratified sample of 200 units of analysis. In accordance with the emic research approach, all mentions of living through events - both manifest and latent - were considered park experiences regardless of their intensity, source or nature. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the material systematically. Coding was inductive and data-driven to guarantee validity (Bold, 2012; Schreier, 2012). The coding frame was constructed by trial coding ten narratives per decade totaling 50 narratives/25% of the material. This process yielded 25 experience dimensions that were grouped into five higher order themes (Fig. 2).

Reliability and coding consistency were ensured by a double-coding procedure where a second researcher coded the 50 narratives after they had been segmented into units of coding (comparison across persons/intersubjectivity, Schreier, 2012, p. 167). The percentage of agreement was 95,5% for the higher order themes and 94,8% for the dimensions; thus, leading only to minor adjustments of category descriptions. Then, the entire material was coded with the final coding frame. The analysis was conducted with an Excel data matrix and ATLAS.ti software. Different decades were analysed separately.

Voluntary participation and informed consent were not possible in this retrospective study of narratives lacking contact information. However, this was not considered an ethical problem, since the stories were originally public statements written to be shared and often signed only by initials or first names. To guarantee anonymity, all personal details were removed before analysis (Bold, 2012).

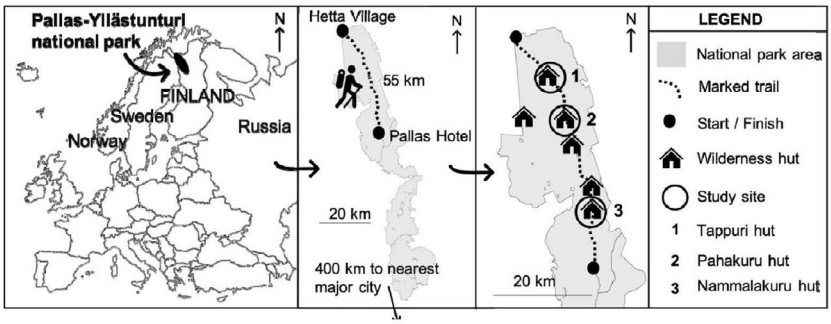

Fig. 1. Location of the Pallas-Yllästunturi national park, the popular Hetta – Pallas trekking route and the study sites.

Table 2
Number of analysed narratives per site and per period and the average number of words per narrative (in italics).

	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s	Total
Site 1: Tappuri hut	11	9	7	10	15	52
Site 2: Pahakuru hut	13	9	10	18	7	57
Site 3: Nammalakuru hut	16	22	23	12	18	91
Total narratives	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**40**	**200**
Words/narrative	*58*	*56*	*85*	*67*	*70*	*67*

5. Findings

5.1. Experience dimensions and themes

The analysed narratives contained in total 465 experiences evenly distributed between all four seasons from the 1970s to the present day. All narratives were written by Finnish visitors on independent multi-day excursions and on average, they included two to three experiences. The total number of identified experience dimensions was 25 and these were grouped into five higher order experiential themes. The most frequent themes were Nature, Physical accomplishments and Personal sphere that accounted for over three quarters of all experiences. The remaining

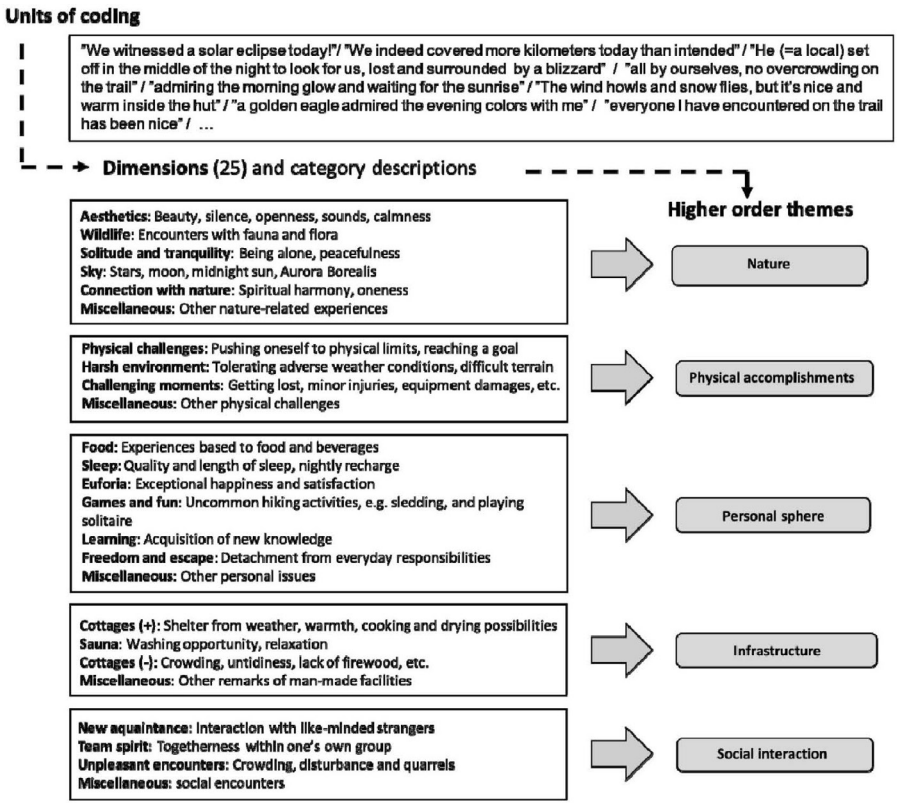

Fig. 2. Inductive coding process and data structure.

quarter was represented by Social interaction and Infrastructure for recreation. Fig. 3 presents the frequencies of the themes and dimensions.

The most frequent theme, Nature, accounted for a third of all experiences. Its main dimensions were aesthetics, wildlife encounters and solitude while explicit expressions of spiritual connections with nature were only occasional.

> *"The view behind the windowpane – the 'eye' senses some kind of perfection in it. It is the creativity that addresses one's innermost feelings. Untouched by human hands. Its architecture and artistic touch overwhelm any human skills."* (30 June 1975 / Site 3)

> *"The views are breathtaking into every direction, at least for a first-timer. The nature is absolutely authentic and beautiful here …"* (26 Feb 1985 / Site 2)

Nature was predominantly a sensorial and emotional component (Gentile et al., 2007; Schmitt, 1999) dominated by visual stimuli, but also sounds (especially their total absence!) as well as smells and touch contributed to the experience. Cognitive feelings of solitude and tranquillity were manifested while a connection with nature in most cases appeared implicitly as sub-conscious admiration and humble feelings of togetherness.

The Physical accomplishments' dimensions were the harsh conditions, demanding moments and physical challenges; these accounted for a quarter of all experiences. They were usually caused by adverse weather, such as strong winds and poor visibility, that posed challenging situations and pushed visitors to their limits. Although initially clearly sensorial and physical dimensions, they resulted in affective feelings of self-esteem, mastery, and accomplishment as the following excerpts demonstrate.

> *"What a tough trip, but we did it! YIPPEEEE! We hiked for 27 km today - ONLY."* (25 August 1995 / Site 3)

> *"On the second day, we summited the Pyhäkero Fell. It was demanding, but once on the top, the feeling was great."* (7 September 2016 / Site 1)

The Personal sphere included dimensions based on visitors' own activities and internal state of mind *per se*. The most frequent dimensions were good food and quality of sleep, but also playing games and having fun were often mentioned. These dimensions were expressed with a certain pride and they could be described as self-made experiences. More intangible dimensions of self-renewal and euphoria appeared both as manifest and latent content. Usually they were general mental states caused by diverse contextual stimuli instead of a direct causation.

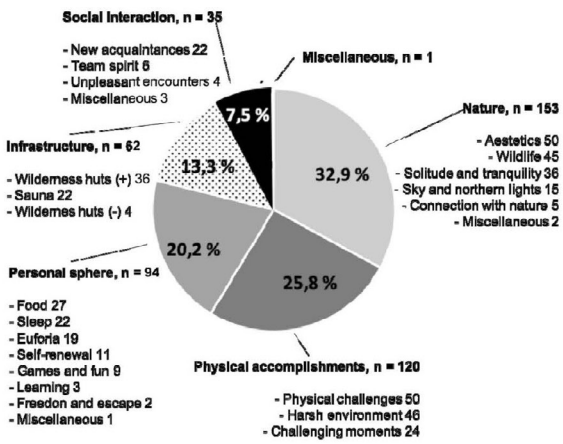

Fig. 3. Frequencies of experience themes (in bold) and their dimensions in Pallas-Yllästunturi national park from 1970s to 2010s (N = 465).

> *"Out there in the vast wilderness, one's own tiny worries and sorrows become negligible. Remember to enjoy your limited hiking days."* (25 June 1976 / Site 3)

> *"Everyone else in the hut is asleep (and snoring), but I can't catch any sleep because I'm simply just so happy."* (5 June 2015 / Site 3)

The most frequent Social interaction dimension was meeting like-minded people and enjoying their company. Good team spirit was also mentioned in a few narratives. Negative experiences of crowding and unpleasant encounters were so infrequent that they did not alter this theme's overall positive character. Impressive social moments were often expressed explicitly as in the following excerpt:

> *"We have bumped only into unbelievably nice fellow hikers. Really enjoyable conversations in the evenings by the camp fire."* (11–12 September 2015 / Site 2)

Experiential mentions of Infrastructure and facilities were limited to wilderness huts and one lakeside sauna. These were initially intended to facilitate visits by satisfying basic needs for shelter and hygiene, but under certain circumstances, they turned into peak experiences themselves. Often this meant preceding adverse conditions and overcoming challenges, even feelings of survival. A few negative experiences were caused by huts left untidy by previous visitors.

> *"A strong southerly wind is raging outside … Temperature + 9 C and it's drizzling occasionally. Sure is nice to be half-naked in this warm cottage drying clothes."* (26 September 2005 / Site 2)

Although the only sauna was located several kilometers from the nearest study site, it was frequently mentioned in the material demonstrating its significance.

> *"We left our heavy backpacks here and walked to Hannukuru for a sauna. The experience was epic for both of us!"* (30–31 August 2005 / Site 2)

5.2. Evolution of experiences

Finland, like other Nordic and European countries, has undergone considerable societal, material and technological development since the 1970s. A chronological investigation of experiential themes per decade revealed that these advancements have not affected park experiences notably; Nature, Physical accomplishments and Personal sphere were the most important themes during each period except the 2000s when Infrastructure momentarily exceeded Personal sphere and equaled Physical accomplishments (Fig. 4).

Although this was a qualitative investigation, some trends could be traced within the themes, at the level of single dimensions. Aesthetic

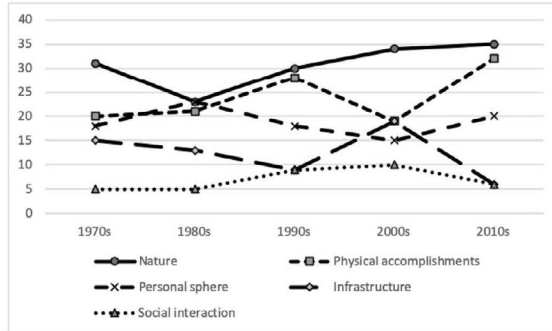

Fig. 4. Frequencies of experiential themes from 1970s to 2010s.

nature experiences, harsh environmental conditions and new acquaintances indicated an upward trend towards the present day (Fig. 5). Other dimensions showed negligible temporal change or fluctuated randomly.

6. Discussion

Most of the studied narratives were straightforward reports of events encountered and activities undertaken with only occasional introspection and emotionality. An emphasis on cognitive issues has been noted in unguided and immediate self-reporting (Borrie, Roggenbuck, & Hull, 1998) concealing latent meanings and sub-conscious affective experiences (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). The same tendency is also distinctive in on-line travel blogs (Volo, 2010). Despite their pragmatism, the studied guest books covered a wide spectrum of park experiences. This rich and multifaceted material revealed the multidimensionality and drivers of park experiences and allowed an evolutionary perspective to be taken.

6.1. Dimensionality and evolution

Park experiences were multidimensional comprising different combinations of Nature, Physical accomplishments, Personal sphere, Social interaction and Infrastructure themes. This finding was coherent with previous national park studies conducted in different locations (Table 1). The analogy also stretched to the level of individual subcategories, but differences in methodologies and methods as well as conceptual diversity rendered detailed comparisons unfeasible. Nature, Social interaction and Infrastructure themes corresponded to the setting attributes within the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (Clark & Stankey, 1979). They were mostly objective and cognitive attributes that led to subjective and emotional outcomes in accordance with the means-end theory (Gutman, 1982). For example, harsh environmental conditions often caused challenging moments followed by physical accomplishments that built team spirit and contributed to euphoria. Likewise, emotional dimensions were interrelated and intensified each other, such as aesthetics, wildlife, and solitude. Hence, the dimensions were interdependent and formed experiential sequences that eventually constituted memorable experiences.

Grouping clearly person-related dimensions into a Personal sphere highlighted visitors' contribution to the formation of experiences and the subjectivity of outcomes. This was in line with the interactionist model (Punj & Stewart, 1983) and visitors' own role in tourism experiences (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010), which emphasize co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Physical accomplishments, the second largest experiential theme in this study, had also been detected in previous research (Cole & Hall, 2009; Dawson, 2006; Farber & Hall, 2007; Patterson et al., 1998; Watson et al., 2007). Since the park experiences required total immersion in an unpredictable natural environment and unfacilitated movement from start to finish, physical challenges, personal accomplishments and even feelings of survival were understandably integral parts of the experience.

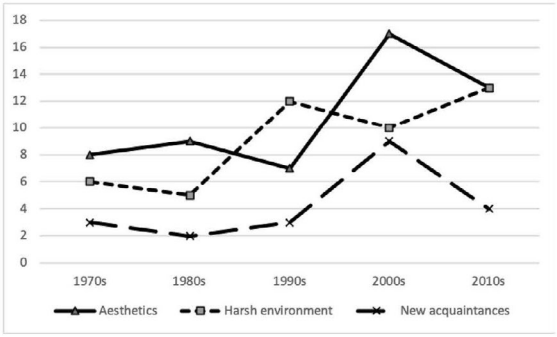

Fig. 5. Frequencies of those dimensions that indicated systematic changes.

The transformation of daily routines and supporting services into peak experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004) was particularly prominent with regard to Infrastructure and Personal sphere. This conversion of initially pragmatic issues into emotional peak experiences was highly dependent on preceding situational factors and the mental state of visitors. For instance, daily routines of eating and sleeping typically turned into peak experiences after physical challenges, modest accommodation facilities became experiential under harsh environmental conditions and a simple sauna provided almost ecstatic experiences.

On the level of themes, the composition of the experiences proved temporally stable between the 1970s and 2010s, implying that future visitors are likely to pursue similar experiences unless the context or individuals' values change drastically. The temporal stability of experiences was underlined by the total absence of technology even in recent narratives. Technology has revolutionized our daily and working lives and also penetrated into leisure activities. It has so far, however, remained instrumental and not become experiential for park visitors. Within this relatively stable thematic structure, emerging trends in some dimensions indicated that over time there has been a growing appreciation of aesthetic nature experiences, environmental conditions have more frequently been experienced as harsh and meeting of likeminded people has become more significant. Despite the qualitative nature of this study, these subtle observations may point toward visitors who are more sentimental and social and slightly more distanced from outdoor conditions in comparison to their predecessors.

6.2. Context-driven experiences

Most park experiences were driven by the random and unpredictable context; visitors either simply responded to stimuli from the surrounding environment or participated in the co-creation of primarily context-dependent experiences. According to the experience continuum model (Carú & Cova, 2007b; Cova & Rémy, 2007), such experiences should be classified as consumer-driven since they occurred without company involvement. This would, however, disregard their main driver, the context. Therefore, a bipolar model seems insufficient to conceptualize experiences driven by a factor other than the company or consumer. This study's findings advocate including context as a third driver of experiences in environments where company control is marginal and consumers' own influence is overwhelmed by contextual factors. This new Experience Triangle Model and its compatibility with this study's findings are visualized in Fig. 6.

Including the context as an explicit driver of park experiences emphasizes the visitor - park interaction (Punj & Stewart, 1983), visitors' total immersion (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), lack of company involvement (Cova & Rémy, 2007) and the emergent and unpredictable nature of natural contexts (Fredman et al., 2012). It is also concordant with tourism models that include the physical environment as an integral element of interaction (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Mossberg, 2007; Walls et al., 2011). By contrast, applying the Carú and Cova bipolar consumer - company model to natural environments leads to omitting the impact of the context (Lebrun, Su, Lhéraud, Marsac, & Bouchet, 2017), or regarding wild and unstructured events as something that can be manipulated by companies to provide structured and managed experiences to their customers (Duerden et al., 2015; Scott et al., 2009).

In the present study, the context-dependence of park experiences was obvious. The Nature dimensions directly accounted for a third of all experiences and also the Physical accomplishments and Social interaction themes relied more on contextual factors than consumer contributions (Fig. 6). Together these context-driven themes accounted directly for two thirds of all park experiences and also indirectly contributed to the Personal sphere theme. The significance of context was highlighted by the case park's type: a vast wilderness-like area with little managerial

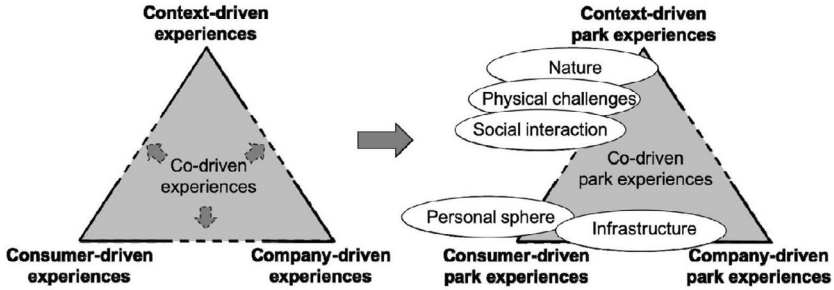

Fig. 6. The Experience Triangle Model distinguishes three types of drivers of experiences as well as their coexistences. The basic model on the left and its application to this study's experiential themes on the right.

guidance and lack of commercial services. Hence, independent visitors were totally immersed in the uncontrolled natural context and fully exposed to emergent events that often overpowered their means of self-determination.

Dimensions belonging to the Personal sphere represented typical consumer-driven experiences and occurred in situations where the visitor's own influence was powerful enough to contribute to the desired outcome. The cases of emotional mental states, such as euphoria and self-renewal, already involved co-creation with the context. Consumer – company co-driven experiences were limited to Infrastructure. Although park management in these cases provided opportunities for experiences, their eventual realization depended on the visitor; for instance, a neat pile of wood at a camp site did not create an experience unless a hiker passing by decided to make a fire. Likewise, the management's limited control was apparent on occasions of misconduct by other guests leading to untidy facilities. Hence, Infrastructure would be best described as a 'self-servicescape'. Exclusively company-driven as well as company–context co-driven experiences were lacking due to the absence of companies.

6.3. *Nature and feasibility of empirical material*

The guest books offered contextualized and rich material on park experiences, because immediate on-site documentation minimized memory decay, preserved minor incidents and reduced reminiscence bias. The examined narratives corresponded to experience sampling methods, where also diaries can be used to capture experiences instantly (Borrie et al., 1998; Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Stewart & Cole, 1999). However, while standard experience sampling methods collect experiences at predetermined or random intervals, the guest books summarized personal highlights of the day at a convenient moment selected by the informant. Furthermore, they were collective diaries written by innumerable people in a single location over several decades. These qualities made them particularly suitable for this investigation.

The guest books represented naturally occurring (Silverman, 2011, p.274–275) or secondary data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016, p.82) that was originally not produced for any research purpose. They indeed provided an emic perspective by viewing experiences through visitors' eyes documented in their own words. Even so, the entries were considered retrospective reconstructions influenced by subjectivity and possibly even creative narration. In addition to potentially selective documenting, each reader interprets and understands stories based on personal knowledge and previous experiences (Bold, 2012). Despite reconstruction in writing and rendition in interpretation, these narratives provided an authentic, valid and credible perspective on visitors' experiences.

7. Conclusions

This study confirmed that national park experiences are multidimensional and share similar components across different contexts. A longitudinal investigation of experience evolution from the 1970s to the present day revealed temporal stability: the same experiential themes were dominant despite major societal, material and technological developments. Nuances of changes within the themes were related to dimensions of aesthetics, physical accomplishments and new acquaintances, all of which indicated an upward trend.

Most park experiences were diverse and uncontrolled, and beyond any company control or consumer influence. To conceptualize this, a new Experience Triangle Model was proposed that also encompasses context-driven experiences. Based on the Carú and Cova experience continuum model (Carú & Cova, 2003; Carú & Cova, 2007b), this new triangular model would also be suited to contexts that are neither consumer- nor company-driven. In parks, this context-dependence implied that independent visitors may anticipate certain kinds of experiences at the general level of themes, but their ability to actively contribute to precise outcomes is limited due to the emergent nature of events. Likewise, a company's ability to design and manage desired experiences would be limited in a strongly context-driven environment. While park visitors were practically at the mercy of nature, similar uncontrollable conditions can also be found elsewhere suggesting that context should be considered as a driver in cases where its influence exceeds that of consumers and companies.

The context-dependent nature of park experiences was detected by studying independent visitors on multi-day excursions in a remote, large, wilderness-like national park, which accentuated the role of the context. Investigating day-visitors in better equipped parks that are closer to habitation and have more commercial services could result in a higher proportion of mainly consumer- and company-driven experiences. Nevertheless, it is assumed that contextual factors retain a significant role even in those cases. In the future, it would also be fruitful to proceed from the composition of park experiences to the personal benefits they provide.

Managerially, this study reached beyond the settings, activities and socio-demographics to outline the composition, nature, and drivers of visitors' experiences. Applying a marketing framework, it revealed a diversity of experiential dimensions and highlighted the context's essential role as a driver. Since the natural environment constitutes the foundation of park experiences, management's fundamental responsibility lies in protecting these natural values to guarantee future experiences. In light of this longitudinal investigation, it seems very likely that park visitors are going to pursue similar experiences in the years to come. Finally, this study demonstrated the feasibility of guest books for investigating visitor experiences and emotions. On-line travel blogs and the parks' social media platforms represent modern sources of similar naturally occurring material.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Esko Sorakunnas: Formal analysis.

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'It's more than just status!' An extended view of social value in tourism

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the composition and nature of the social value of tourism. The empirical data consists of 49 in-depth interviews with nature-based tourists. The inductive findings complement the current conception of social value presented by consumer value typologies, measured by value scales and evidenced in consumer value-framed tourism research. Hence, in addition to other-oriented and instrumental status and esteem dimensions, the social value of tourism also includes self-oriented components that are both intrinsic and extrinsic. This finding demands a broader conceptualisation – *an extended view of social value* – in tourism research and management. It captures the diverse manifestations that range from status and esteem to enjoying the company of others and feeling inclusion in a community of like-minded people as well as learning and safety. This extended view is illustrated with a novel, three-dimensional approach to the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b), which provides an integrated and intelligible understanding of the richness of social value in tourism.

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Typology of Consumer Value; social value; experiential consumption; togetherness; communality

Introduction

This investigation adheres to the consumer dominant logic of marketing, which is based on the consumers' independent creation of value in their own consumption contexts (Anker et al., 2015). In particular, this study contributes to the current discussion concerning customer-to-customer co-creation of value in tourism (Campos et al., 2018; Phi & Dredge, 2019; Rihova et al., 2015). The established consumer value theories regard social value as instrumental and directed at other people through impression management and acceptance seeking (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991). This other-oriented view has emphasised the status and esteem dimensions of travelling (e.g. Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Gallarza et al., 2017; Wiedmann et al., 2018). In contrast, travel motivation theories (e.g. Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Fodness, 1994) and leisure motivation scales (Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Driver, 1983) are based on a broader social view also comprising self-oriented elements such as enjoying the company of other people. These elements have also been detected in experiential approaches to consumption in general (Gentile et al., 2007; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) and nature-based tourism in particular (e.g. Arnould & Price, 1993; Lindberg et al., 2014). Moreover, this wider conceptualisation is theoretically underpinned by basic human needs (Maslow, 1943) and universal values (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992) that include both other- and self-oriented social elements. Therefore, it is perplexing that consumer value frameworks that are fundamental constructs in marketing and consumer behaviour research (Holbrook, 1999b; Woodruff, 1997), ignore self-oriented dimensions and regard social value only as other-oriented impression management. This dissonance between the narrow consumer value understanding of social value compared to the broader conceptualisations of motivation theories and scales, experiential approaches, basic human needs and universal values constitutes the basis of this research. The objective is to scrutinise the social dimensions of consumer value in tourism from a wider perspective encompassing both other-oriented and self-oriented as well as extrinsic and intrinsic types. Therefore, a broad working definition is applied: social value encompasses all value dimensions stemming from other people.

Tourism has been considered 'a paradigmatic realm for researching value' due to its predominantly experiential and highly multidimensional nature (Gallarza et al., 2019, p. 256). Of particular significance for the current investigation is the social nature of tourism, which underlines the significance of understanding the composition of social value comprehensively. Independent

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and unfacilitated visits to public national parks were selected as the specific tourism context, because this nature-based and consumer-driven setting is unbiased by company interventions that could influence the visitors' perceptions of social value. Hence, the study foregrounded the visitors' own, self-imposed value creation. The parks represented experiential consumer ecosystems, characteristic of the consumer dominant logic, where the consumers themselves create value by integrating available resources according to their needs (Anker et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016).

This qualitative inquiry combines unstructured in-depth interviews with open coding to inductively explore the social value dimensions irrespective of predetermined concepts and categories (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The resulting emic perspective – social value seen through the eyes of tourists and described in their own words – is then abductively compared to the current understanding of social value in tourism provided by the established consumer value typologies (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991). The findings extend our understanding of the phenomenon and abridge the gap between the consumer value conception vis-á-vis other approaches. To accommodate this convergence, Holbrook's typology is presented three-dimensionally to illustrate the diversity of social value independently of the distinct value types. The managerial implications are summarised in the Conclusions section to increase practitioners' awareness of the new, hitherto largely obscured dimensions of consumer value.

Theoretical framework

Consumer value and its social dimension in tourism

Value drives marketing and consumer behaviour by describing why consumers purchase and consume products, '… what they want and believe that they get from buying and using a seller's product' (Woodruff, 1997). Hence, it depicts both the expected and realised benefits of consumption. In the current case, it describes why consumers engage in nature-based tourism and what they perceive as the resultant benefits. Marketing thought has evolved from the former goods and service dominant logics (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Vargo et al., 2008) towards a more consumer dominant logic (Anker et al., 2015). Accordingly, consumers interact with the consumption context, create value by integrating its resources and personally determine the outcome.

Marketing literature commonly refers to value as customer value (Gallarza et al., 2011; Komppula, 2005; Woodruff, 1997) or consumer value (Gallarza & Gil Saura, 2020; Holbrook, 1999b) or consumption value (Sheth et al., 1991) to emphasise its consumer-orientation. Initially, value conceptualisation was unidimensional and based on a trade-off view comparing the benefits and costs of a transaction (Zeithaml, 1988). Value was regarded primarily as utilitarian, residing in objective product features that were evaluated by consumers cognitively and economically (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). However, perceiving consumption also as a personal experience added emotions, hedonism and aesthetics to the strictly utilitarian view (Gentile et al., 2007; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). This lead to considering value as a multidimensional construct comprising several compresent dimensions (Holbrook, 1999b; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007).

Originally, the multidimensionality of consumer value was depicted as a combination of extrinsic / utilitarian and intrinsic / emotional dimensions complemented by a systemic dimension regarding the comparison of sacrifices versus benefits (Hartman, 1967; in Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). More sophisticated theories, the Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991) and the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b), provide finer differentiations. Sheth and colleagues (1991), in addition to functional and emotional value, also distinguish social, epistemic and conditional value related to status, novelty and situational factors. The Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b) refers to the functional / emotional dichotomy as extrinsic / intrinsic, and additionally, proposes self- / other-oriented and active / reactive value dimensions. Extrinsic value refers to instrumentality, a means to an end -relationship whereas intrinsic value is an end in itself. Self-oriented value is appreciated for the consequences to the consumer him-/herself whereas other-oriented value occurs when a consumption experience derives its value from the effect it has on other people. Active value is based on the consumer doing something to or with an object whereas reactive value requires merely responding. Holbrook

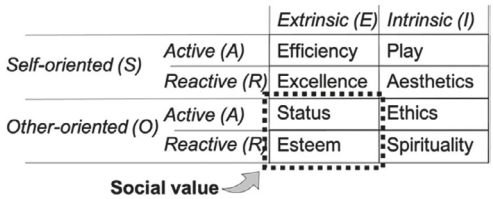

Figure 1. The typology of consumer value (adapted from Holbrook, 1999b, p. 12; 2006, p. 715).

demonstrates these bipolar value dimensions with a matrix displaying eight different value types that co-exist (Figure 1).

Both of these theories regard the social dimension of consumer value directed at other people; the consumption of products and services aims to impress other people and associate the consumer with desired social groups (Sheth et al., 1991). Thus, 'what the product communicates to others constitutes value to its consumer' (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001, p. 216). Similarly, Holbrook considers social value as other-oriented and instrumental for attaining a desired position in society and communicating this to others (Holbrook, 1999b; Solomon, 1999). The demarcation between active Status and reactive Esteem has been considered 'fuzzy' from the beginning (Holbrook, 1999b, p. 16) with Esteem being based on the mere possession of an object juxtaposing it to materialism and prestige (Richins, 1999). Due to this subtle distinction, empirical studies have often combined Holbrook's Status and Esteem into a single, other-oriented 'social value' dimension (e.g. Gallarza et al., 2017; Holbrook, 2006) (Figure 1) paralleling the Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991). The presumption of social value being other-oriented is also reflected in different value scales; the Experiential Value Scale (Mathwick et al., 2001), the PERVAL-scale (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001) and the SERV-PERVAL scale (Petrick, 2002) as well as the GLOVAL-scale (Sánchez et al., 2006) all consider social value as other-oriented signalling (Table 1).

The consumer value theories' other-oriented and extrinsic baseline is also evident in empirical tourism research, which commonly describes social value as acceptance, approval, status, and respect (Table 1 / Eid & El-Gohary, 2015; Gallarza et al., 2017; Petrick, 2002; Sánchez et al., 2006; Wiedmann et al., 2018). Despite this dominant outlook, self-oriented and intrinsic social dimensions have also been reported in studies drawing their items from literature and qualitative pre-studies (Table 1 / Jamal et al., 2011; Wong et al., 2019). Moreover, investigations deductively applying Holbrook's or Sheth's other-oriented frameworks have also reported self-oriented social elements such as friendship, meeting new people, and feeling belonging under status and esteem (Table 1 / Gallarza et al., 2013, 2019; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2009). Komppula and Gartner (2013) argued other-oriented social value to be extrinsic (Esteem) as well as intrinsic (Togetherness), the latter depicting direct social interaction (Table 1). Thus, self-oriented dimensions have been detected in consumer value investigations, but they have been categorised as other-oriented. While capturing a broader spectrum of dimensions, this conduct does not coincide with the typologies' definition of social value as a means to impress others. Rather, social interaction, personal relationships and feelings of belonging are self-justifying ends in themselves, valued for the direct effect they have on the consumer him-/herself.

Alternative perspectives to the social dimension of tourism

Perceived consumer value represents a marketing approach to the social dimension of tourism. Tourism motivation, experiences and social interaction provide alternative views while basic human needs and universal values provide more abstract insight. Tourism motivation comprises factors that induce consumers to travel and influence their decision-making (Uysal et al., 2008). Hence, it corresponds to expected value (Komppula, 2005) and desired value (Woodruff, 1997). Travel motivation theories recognise both other- and self-oriented social dimensions: ego-enhancement and anomie (Dann, 1977), prestige, enhancement of kinship relationships and social interaction (Crompton, 1979), seeking interpersonal rewards (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987), value-expressive and social functions (Fodness, 1994) as well as recognition and relationships (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Consequently, the scales developed for measuring leisure motivations (Beard & Ragheb, 1983; Driver, 1983) also include both other- and self-oriented social dimensions (Table 2).

During actual tourism consumption, tourists are immersed in the travel context and personally involved in its events rendering tourism a model example of experiential consumption, the value of which resides in the personal experience rather than the object of consumption (Carú & Cova, 2007; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The experiences of national park visitors are predominantly related to escapism, aesthetics, recreation as well as challenge and accomplishment, but also social dimensions have been detected (Sorakunnas, 2020). In their seminal paper on extraordinary experiences, Arnould and Price (1993) reported communitas, a feeling of communion with other people, as a major experiential theme. Moreover, interaction with other people is included in general models of consumer experiences in hospitality and tourism (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Mossberg, 2007; Walls et al., 2011). On the highest abstraction level, social elements maintain a central position in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of basic human needs; this hierarchy positions self-oriented love and affectionate relationships immediately after basic physiological and safety needs and before status and recognition from others. Moreover, the universal values that represent the ultimate goals in human life and provide the criteria for

Table 1. Social value dimensions detected in tourism value research by applying extant typologies and scales.

Author(s)	Methodology	Item generation	Context	Types of social value detected
Eid and El-Gohary, (2015)	Quantitative	Literature, TCV, PERVAL	Islamic travel	*Acceptance, social approval, improved image*
Wiedmann et al. (2018)	Quantitative	Literature and expert interviews	Luxury hotels	*Social approval, acceptance, symbol for social status, respect*
Petrick (2002)	Quantitative	SERV-PERVAL	Caribbean cruise	*Status, respect*
Sánchez et al. (2006)	Quantitative	Literature + focus groups, GLOVAL	Package tour and travel agency	*Association, impression, social approval, level and style*
Gallarza et al. (2017)	Quantitative	TCV	Hotel	*Prestigious, status symbol, impression management, sense of self-worth, achievement and pride*
Jamal et al. (2011)	Quantitative	Literature and pre-study interviews	Community-based homestay visits	**Host-guest interaction, good relationships, friendliness**
Wong et al. (2019)	Quantitative	Literature including PERVAL	Event tourism	*Impression management*, **socialisation opportunities, interaction with other people**
Gallarza et al. (2013)	Quantitative	TCV	Volunteering in a religious event	*Social recognition*, **meeting new people, relationships with other people, shared interests**
Gallarza et al. (2019)	Quantitative	TCV	Hotel	*Impression management and recognition*, **friendship and familiarity with employees**
Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2009)	Quantitative	TCV	Vegetarian restaurant	*Social level, self-esteem and status*, **relationships and social cohesion**
Komppula and Gartner (2013)	Qualitative	TCV	Hunting tourism	*Esteem*, *togetherness*

TCV = Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b), SHETH = Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991).
Other-oriented dimensions in italics and **self-oriented bolded**.

the consumers' situation-specific judgement of value, include equally self- and other-oriented social elements (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992) (Table 2).

The aforementioned approaches are closely interlinked when consumers construct and perceive value. The Means-End Theory (Gutman, 1982) and the Customer Value Hierarchy Model (Woodruff, 1997) explain how consumers' motivations, value experienced during consumption and the all-encompassing universal values are connected. Motivations represent consumers' pre-purchase needs and wants; they reflect the value expectations to be realised by means of acquiring and consuming the object. Once consumed, consumer value represents the experiential benefits gained expressed as value-in-use (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Vargo et al., 2008), experienced value (Komppula, 2005) and derived value (Woodall, 2003). In the wider context of consumers lives, the consumer value construct is linked to the universal values (Rokeach, 1973); thus, consumer value is a means of achieving higher order personal goals and purposes. On the other hand, the universal values also provide the criteria for judging value in individual use situations as well as influence the pre-purchase motivations. Therefore, it seems confusing that on the initial motivation level as well as on the highest level of universal values both other- and self-oriented social dimensions are recognised, while on the intermediate consumer value level connecting the two, the social dimension is considered exclusively other-oriented (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991) (Table 2).

Conceptualisation of social value in nature-based tourism

In sum, the prevailing marketing and consumer value perception of the social value of tourism seems narrower

Table 2. Different approaches' conceptions of the nature of social value.

	Types of social value recognised	
Approaches	Self-oriented	Other-oriented
Travel motivation theories (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Fodness, 1994; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Pearce & Lee, 2005)	Yes	Yes
Models on tourism and hospitality experiences (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Mossberg, 2007; Walls et al., 2011)	Yes	Yes
Recreation Experience Preference-scale (Driver, 1983) and Leisure Motivation Scale (Beard & Ragheb, 1983)	Yes	Yes
Basic human needs (Maslow, 1943)	Yes	Yes
Universal values (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992)	Yes	Yes
Consumer value typologies (Holbrook, 1999a; Sheth et al., 1991)	No	Yes

than those of motivational, experiential and universal values-based approaches. This contradiction is investigated by examining the social dimension of consumer value irrespective of predetermined categories. Consequently, a wider working definition will be applied:

> *social value in tourism* refers to all consumer value dimensions stemming from other people, for instance travel companions, other tourists, locals, staff members and those belonging to one's social network

This definition needs to be explicitly distinguished from related social value concepts with different meanings. The *value of social tourism* is associated with the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups in tourism for societal reasons (Minnaert et al., 2011). *Social value* has also been used to describe the value of a meaningful place to the local community (Parga Dans & Alonso González, 2019). Furthermore, *social values* in plural refers to the persistent beliefs held by individuals as regards the proper modes of societal conduct and desired end states of the society (Blamey & Braithwaite, 1997). Social interaction has also been considered internally oriented, occurring within an individual as *self-reflection with the inner me* (Holbrook, 1999b; Lindberg et al., 2014), but this investigation focuses exclusively on interaction with other people. Social value is scrutinised from the consumer value perspective, which distinguishes it from *social capital* that depicts cooperation within tourism (e.g. Dickinson et al., 2017).

The wider working definition is underpinned by the topical discussion on the collaborative co-creation of value in tourism (Campos et al., 2018; Phi & Dredge, 2019; Rihova et al., 2015). The service dominant logic considers value to be co-created by a company and its customers during consumption (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Vargo et al., 2008), but the current view of co-creation in tourism emphasises the role of tourists as active participants in a social context, constantly interacting with each other (Phi & Dredge, 2019). Hence, value is considered socially constructed in consumer-to-consumer interactions that lie largely beyond the control of companies (Campos et al., 2018; Reichenberger, 2017). This independent creation of value in the tourists' own consumption contexts concurs with the consumer dominant logic (Anker et al., 2015; Lipkin, 2016) and underpins the current exploration of social value dimensions.

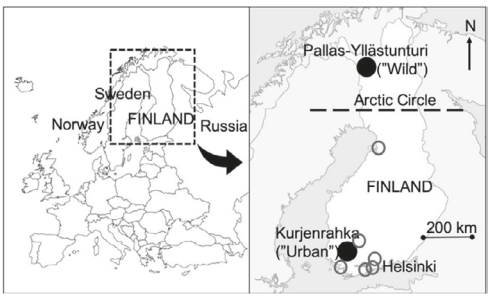

Figure 2. Locations of the 'Wild' and 'Urban' case parks in relation to Finland's six largest cities (open circles).

The empirical context: visits to public national parks

Finnish national parks can be classified into two main types: remote and large wilderness parks versus small and well-equipped urban parks. The first study site, Pallas-Yllästunturi, is a large (1020 km^2) national park far away from major cities (Figure 2) with hundreds of kilometres of marked trails and accommodation possibilities inside the park and, therefore, visitors make multi-day excursions or several subsequent day-visits (Kuusisto et al., 2017). This park will be referred to as the 'Wild'. The second study site, Kurjenrahka, represents the opposite type; it is a small (29 km^2) park in the vicinity of major cities (Figure 2), and thus labelled 'Urban'. Its short trails and campfire areas are well-suited for short visits (Salonen, 2014). These two parks, one 'Wild' and one 'Urban', were purposively selected for this study to ascertain as many value dimensions as possible.

Independent visits to public national parks represent experiential consumption where suppliers and market exchanges are absent; parks are experiencescapes (O'Dell, 2005), environments for personal experiences, characterised by immersion, self-service and uncontrollability of the outcome. Therefore, social interaction lacking any tour operators' premeditated socialisation activities is assumed to be particularly unbiased and authentic, reflecting the tourists' endogenous perceptions. Visits to this non-commercial leisure context, however, represent tourism and experiential consumption in terms of the acquisition of memorable experiences that potentially feature all the foundational characteristics of consumer value (cf. Leroi-Werelds, 2019). This dualistic character renders national parks an ideal context for this conceptual examination.

Material and methods

This qualitative investigation rests on constructionism and subjective epistemology that acknowledge the social nature of reality (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016); park visitors interact with the context and perceive their visits individually, which results in multiple realities. To explore these emic views, the empirical investigation was inductive and unstructured, independent of

predetermined conceptual and theoretical accounts that characterise the opposite, deductive approach that provides an etic perspective (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The material was collected through conversation-like in-depth laddering interviews where the participants first identified personally relevant topics and then elaborated on them by linking concrete attributes to received benefits and to the underlying universal end values (Gutman, 1982; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). The interviews were initiated by asking 'What made you come to this park today?' followed by an elicitation of personally relevant topics by questions such as: 'What does it mean … ?' and 'How does that make you feel … ?' to facilitate deeper introspection (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988; Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2006). Hence, this informant-based process allowed the participants to freely select personally meaningful topics and discuss them in their own words not guided by predetermined categories or preconceptions of the researcher (Grunert & Grunert, 1995). Therefore, the interviews dealt with all aspects of the visits, not only those related to social value.

In total, 49 interviews were conducted in the two purposively selected parks. The interviews were conducted on-site during actual visits to maximise contextuality and minimise errors caused by recollection (Veludo-de-Oliveira et al., 2006). The visitor profile was first determined on-site by observation and the participants were then purposively selected to represent different visitor types in order to provide multiple views on consumer value (Table 3). All interviews were made in September–October 2019 and recorded and transcribed verbatim by the author. Participation was voluntary, anonymous and based on informed consent (Brinkman, 2013).

The transcripts underwent qualitative content analysis to systematically and flexibly analyse their manifest and latent contents (Schreier, 2012). The coding framework was built by trial coding all transcripts, which required iterating between emic and condensed meanings, themes, and aggregate value types until reaching a satisfactory representation. Reliability and coding consistency were ensured by a double-coding procedure where another researcher coded the units related to social aspects (comparison across persons / intersubjectivity, Schreier, 2012, p. 167). The percentage of agreement was 95%. Technically, the analysis was done with ATLAS.ti software.

Table 3. Participant profiles, the characteristics of 'Urban' and 'Wild' parks described in section 3.

	'Wild' park	'Urban' park
Number of participants	27	22
Male/female participants	11/16	10/12
Age distribution/mean age	21–78/44 years	20–75/47 years
Accompanied/solo	24/3	15/7
On multiday/one-day visits	27/0	1/21
Average distance from home	945 km	70 km
Average duration of interviews	19 minutes	16 minutes

The entire coding process was open and data-driven to generate multifaceted material retaining the participants' voices. It followed a four-step Gioia approach for increased rigour and transparency (Gioia et al., 2013). Step 1: the units of coding were identified and marked. Step 2: they were paraphrased into emic, first order condensed meanings. Step 3: etic themes were derived from the condensed meanings. Step 4: the themes were aggregated to the highest order types conceptualising the interviewees' perceived consumer value. The data structure, the inductive coding process and the coding frame are illustrated in Figure 3. All value types were coded, but only those concerning social aspects were analysed in this study.

In order to warrant an unprejudiced, exploratory investigation independent of predetermined theoretical accounts, the social value dimensions were defined inductively. Subsequently, the findings were theorised by abductive analysis (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014) that compared them to the current conceptualisation of consumer value in tourism (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991).

Findings and discussion

Social value, according to this study's broad definition provided in *Conceptualisation of social value in nature-based tourism* section, was mentioned by the majority of interviewees in the Wild park (21/27) and almost half of the interviewees in the Urban park (9/22). It also included, in addition to the conventional status, self-centred and intrinsic components, enjoying the company and the presence of other people. This finding complements and extends the established, other-oriented view of social value in tourism (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991). Moreover, the frequency of self-centred dimensions outweighed the other-oriented dimensions underlining the significance of the finding.

Other-oriented social value

The social dimension portrayed by the consumer value typologies – instrumental pursuit of respect and acceptance from others – occurred occasionally in the interviews (6/49). Only one respondent expressed the use of impression management and acceptance seeking overtly:

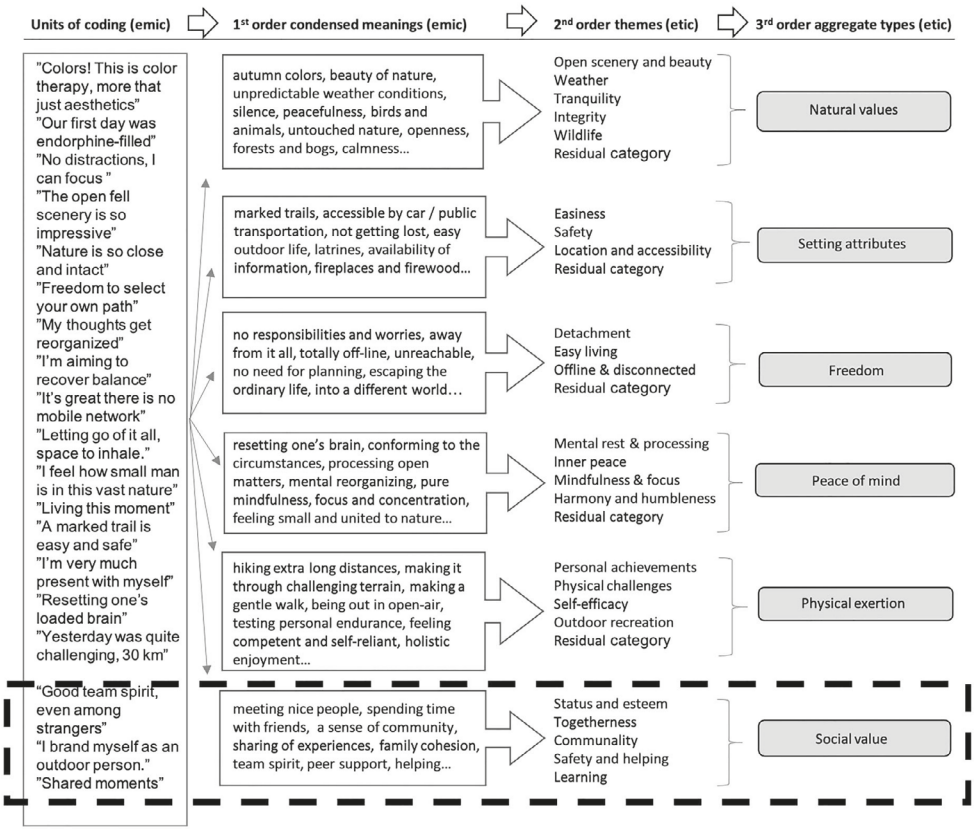

Figure 3. Data structure and the inductive coding process. The presented units of coding are random examples and the lists of condensed meanings are indicative.

> Sharing my accomplishment with others is also important. I brand myself as an outdoors person … I want to belong to a certain gang, be part of a tribe. It's nice when people from around the world like my posts. (Woman, 45 years, alone, Urban park)

Another female solo hiker, despite being more internally oriented, also acknowledged the other-oriented dimension of her excursion:

> I know that people have had their doubts of me as a woman and a mother of five would actually do this on my own … It has surprised many. Yes. respect and admiration. (Woman, 31 years, alone, Wild park)

Others mentioning status expressed it more discreetly and some even considered status seeking inappropriate and stressed self-centred values instead:

> We'll most likely make a social media post, not to show off, but it's nice to let others know that we did something special on our holiday. (Man, 26 years, with spouse, Wild park)

> We don't share this visit; we don't pursue appreciation. Being here has meaning only to us. (Man 59 years, with spouse, Urban park)

Hence, other-oriented status existed only in a few interviews. The low frequency was assumed to result from two factors: the visitors' mindset and the nature of the context. Downplaying of status and esteem is typical of Finns, many of whom regard modesty a virtue and prefer to keep things to themselves. In light of this national character, status may play a greater role in visitors' value formation than indicated by the interviews – especially with regard to the younger generation actively sharing their experiences on social media. Furthermore, hiking in domestic, public national parks *per se* represents tourism that has a lower status than adventuring in far-off, exotic destinations like the Galapagos Islands. Li and colleagues (2021), despite studying ecotourists to a famous ecotourism destination in Western Australia, the Pinnacles, came to a similar

conclusion: social approval was not a prominent contributor to perceived value. The few cases of status that surfaced in the current study were related to active sharing of experiences whereas reactive esteem was not detected; either the respondents did not recognise the latter or they were not willing to admit its personal relevance. The distinction between the two may also be empirically too challenging as noted in previous research (e.g. Gallarza et al., 2017; Holbrook, 2006).

Self-oriented social value

Self-oriented social value was mentioned in more than half of the interviews (29/49) rendering it more common than status and esteem. It occurred within an individual's own social group as enjoying the company of friends and family members as well as in relation to strangers met on the trail, which provided mental inclusion in a community of like-minded people. The former was conceptualised as Togetherness to emphasise its intimacy and in-group orientation whereas the latter was labelled Communality to reflect its out-group nature, a mental connection to unfamiliar fellow tourists.

Togetherness

Togetherness was expressed by two thirds of the accompanied visitors to the Wild park and over half of those to the Urban park.

> We go way back. Here I'm more sensitive to my friend's moods than in everyday life. It's paradoxical that we're actually not doing anything, but at the same time, we are very much present. (Man, 30 years, with a friend, Urban park)

> We get to spend time together. We have two small children at home, but this gives us an opportunity to be just by ourselves without the usual hassle. (Man, 25 years, with spouse, Wild park)

> It's only our family, away from everything; we are very much present with each other. I enjoy observing my children's different characters and mutual dynamics. (Woman, 40 years, with husband and two daughters aged 8 and 11, Wild park)

Nature provided a setting for intimate in-group interaction. Being away from everyday life, facing challenges and sharing experiences resulted in feeling conscious presence and fellowship. These self-oriented findings are underpinned by our basic needs (Maslow, 1943) and universal human values (Kahle & Kennedy, 1988; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992) as well as previous research on national park experiences (Sorakunnas, 2020) and tourism in general (Lindberg et al., 2014). Furthermore, self-oriented dimensions are acknowledged in the motivational approaches to tourism (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Fodness, 1994; Pearce & Lee, 2005) as well as tourism models (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Mossberg, 2007; Walls et al., 2011) and experiential consumption in general (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The salience of Togetherness was also evidenced in the case parks' visitor surveys: most visitors came in groups (88% in the Urban and 93% in the Wild park) and rated the relevance of the accompanying people high (Kuusisto et al., 2017; Salonen, 2014). Given the empirical evidence and the support of the self-centred social dimensions in the literature, it is confusing that consumer value frameworks depict social value unilaterally.

The term of Togetherness has been adopted from Komppula and Gartner (2013) who considered it an intrinsic, but other-oriented social value dimension, either as actively offering and sharing experiences to and with others or reactively accepting such an offer. Togetherness, being based on direct social interaction, clearly has these two sides – giving and getting – but the interviewees expressed it predominantly from their own perspective, reacting positively to the presence of friends and family. As group members, they were most likely to be simultaneous sources of Togetherness for others, but this perspective was not expressed.

Communality

Self-oriented social value was also out-group oriented; the presence of other visitors and encounters with them provided a feeling of inclusion in a community of like-minded people:

> I like the sense of community. People greet each other, constantly. You don't do that in the street … In a way, we are on the same track. I feel I belong to the gang. (Woman, retired, with two peers, Wild park)

> I enjoy meeting similar people. Like yesterday evening, there were really nice people at the campfire, I felt that we are here as one group. (Woman, 60 years, alone, Wild park)

> The highlight of this tour was sitting outside the hut last night in a big group, hoping for the Northern Lights to show up. (Man 20 years, accompanied by mother, Wild park)

This type of a social connection was defined by Arnould and Price as communitas, 'connecting to others' (1993, p. 35), underpinned by being in the same experiential context, facing similar challenges and sharing experiences. It has been described as friendship and a sense of community (Foley, 2017), collective action (Carú & Cova, 2007) as well as tourist-to-tourist

interaction and cohesion (Lin et al., 2019). Initially, communitas equally concerned family members, friends, guides and other tourists whereas the current investigation makes a clear distinction between in-group Togetherness with people we know and out-group Communality with strangers we encounter, because they are based on fundamentally different social structures. Communality appeared in the parks as easy and friendly interaction with strangers. Encounters were based on anonymity and a disregard for social standing, occupation and other items that often label our ordinary interaction with new acquaintances. This equality and freedom of attachment was evident in the interviews:

> People are more spontaneous, easier to approach, they take others into consideration. (Man, 39 years, with spouse, Wild park)

> You meet unfamiliar fellow hikers and exchange a few words with them. You don't have similar encounters in the city. I believe shared experiences lower the normal threshold to interact. (Woman, 21 years, with father, Wild park)

> It feels that people here are different … nicer, soulmates. You meet people of different ages, small transient encounters … Even adults are less restricted and chat with each other readily. (Man, 60 years, with wife, Wild park)

Finns are often characterised as reserved people, whose spontaneous interaction with strangers is not commonplace. However – or perhaps, therefore – the interviewees enjoyed the ease of connecting anonymously while simultaneously maintaining a safe social distance. Communality seemed a welcomed surprise, not the initial aim of the visit; the park visits were place-oriented rather than people-oriented (Crompton, 1979). Communality was appreciated in the Wild park by half of the interviewees including both accompanied and solo visitors, while it was totally absent in the Urban park, where visitors pursued quick escapes from their everyday lives and interaction with strangers was irrelevant, even undesirable. Conversely, visitors to the Wild park pursued longer excursions in a demanding environment and encountered others only occasionally en route. Thus, their mindsets and the social setting were fundamentally different, which influenced their stance towards others. Additionally, longer visits to the remote and primitive wilderness park may have facilitated letting go of the normal Finnish social code that often restrains interaction with strangers. Overall, Communality was distinctive in the Wild park and its absence in the Urban park was equally striking.

The co-existence of in-group Togetherness and out-group Communality portrayed the Wild park as a two-layered social system with numerous intimate groups forming one community while the Urban park's social structure consisted of detached groups lacking connections. The dual social structure observed in the Wild park is also commonplace in other forms of experiential consumption – consider, for example, a group of friends watching a football game at a stadium or participating in a live rock concert. They are together as an intimate group, but simultaneously belong to a larger community. This higher level has been described as collective action that involves 'communitarian-flavored connections within an experiential context' (Carú & Cova, 2007, p. 44). On the other hand, groups dining at different tables in a restaurant or people at movies form less coherent and connected communities resembling the case of visitors to the Urban park.

Safety and learning: extrinsic self-oriented value

Although intrinsic self-oriented social value dominated, the presence of other people also provided instrumentality in the forms of Safety and Learning.

> We look after each other. I prefer not to be out here alone in case something happens. (Man, 48 years, with son and two friends, Wild park)

> I selected this destination, because I know the area from previous visits and I know that there are also other people here. In case something happens to me, sooner or later someone will come to help. (Woman, 60 years, alone, Wild park)

The first quotation underlines in-group Safety while the second, uttered by a female solo hiker, manifests out-group Safety resting on the sense of communality. The safety aspect surfaced in the Wild park as a means of minimising risks in demanding conditions, but it was absent in the Urban park where the conditions were easy and communality was lacking. Safety emerged as self-oriented – feeling secure in the presence of others and relying on help from them when needed – but simultaneously, the respondents themselves may have provided the same value to other in- and out-group members although this other-oriented dimension was not mentioned. Safety and help have earlier been identified by Pearce (2005), who considered other tourists as active 'helpers and safety guards'. The sense of mutual care and responsibility among caravan park visitors has also been expressed as 'people looking after each other' (Foley, 2017, p. 16).

Learning, as a cognitive benefit derived from observing more experienced peers, was mentioned once in the Wild park:

> I have learned many things related to equipment by observing others. Next time I know what to take into

Table 4. The social value dimensions detected in this study, their nature, and the corresponding value types in the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b) and the Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991).

Social value findings	Nature of social value findings	Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b)	Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991)
Status	Other-oriented/extrinsic/active	Social value/Status	Social value
Togetherness	Self-oriented/intrinsic/reactive (active)	Aesthetics (Play)	Emotional value
Communality	Self-oriented/intrinsic/reactive (active)	Aesthetics (Play)	Emotional value
Safety	Self-oriented/extrinsic/reactive (active)	Excellence (Efficiency)	Functional value
Learning	Self-oriented/extrinsic/reactive	Excellence	Epistemic value

account. (Woman, 58 years, with adult daughter, Wild park)

Although this was mentioned only once, Learning deserves to be noted as it refers to cognitive social benefits that may play a greater role in other circumstances (Carú & Cova, 2007). Its active side, teaching, was not mentioned.

Abduction to current value typologies

The established value typologies (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991) that frame consumer value research in tourism have led to an extrinsic and other-oriented view of social value (see section *Consumer value and its social dimension in tourism*). The few observed cases of other-oriented social value in this study matched this conceptualisation, but the discovered prominence of self-oriented social value is theoretically far more interesting. Until now, consumer value research within tourism has either disregarded self-oriented social value or misleadingly placed it into the other-oriented and extrinsic category (See Table 1). Furthermore, social value dimensions may implicitly have been concealed in other categories; for example, it is also possible to place Togetherness and Communality into Emotional value due to their 'capacity to arouse feelings or affective states' (Sheth et al., 1991, p. 161). These terms also match the definition of Aesthetic value, 'enjoyed purely for its own sake' (Holbrook, 1999b, p. 20), equally well or, in the case of active engagement, Play, characterised as 'having fun'. Safety and Learning concur with Excellence – and Efficiency, when actively receiving help and advice from others – or Sheth's Functional and Epistemic value (Table 4).

This study's findings advocate taking explicitly into account the thus far hidden and underrated self-oriented dimensions of social value. Trying to describe the richness of social value with a combination of Status, Aesthetics, Play, Excellence and Efficiency or alternatively, Social, Functional, Emotional and Epistemic value is neither informative nor descriptive (Table 4); a more realistic depiction is achieved with *an extended view of social value*. The three value dimensions underlying Holbrook's typology (self- / other-oriented, active /reactive and extrinsic / intrinsic) offer a sound theoretical basis for this extension. Figure 4 presents a three-dimensional illustration integrating these dimensions and the eight prominent value types of Holbrook's matrix, which corresponds to his view that instead of treating the key dimensions as dichotomies, '… each should more properly be regarded as a continuum of possibilities …' (1999a, p. 188). Consequently, the verbalised value types in the corners should be understood as extreme manifestations of the key dimensions, not an exhaustive representation of the diversity of consumer value since perceived value may also be positioned anywhere inside the cube as intermediate types. This fundamental logic of Holbrook's typology, which has been overshadowed by the explicit value types intended to concretise dimensionality, is perfectly suited to conceptualising the proposed *extended view of social value*.

Typologies are practical tools for grouping value into manageable archetypes to be conceptualised and/or operationalised in empirical research. The drawback of such value type-driven research is its dependence on the match between the value types and reality. Moreover, predetermined value types may undermine an unbiased investigation by prematurely suggesting what to look for and bundling diverse themes into a single category obscures valuable nuance (Figure 5, left image). A more precise description is reached by

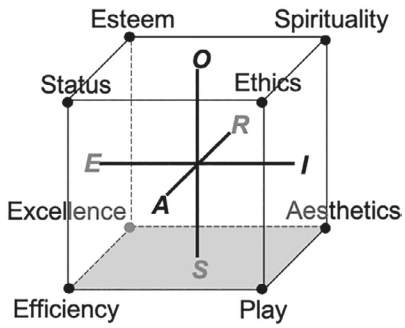

Figure 4. Three-dimensional conceptualisation of Holbrook's typology (for abbreviations, see the matrix in Figure 5).

combining the nature of value with the individual types as demonstrated by the cubic illustration of Holbrook's typology in Figure 4. This presents the current study's social value findings primarily as self-oriented, covering the entire lower part of the cube and also portraying intermediate value types that lie between the archetypes located in the corners. The few other-oriented social dimensions are represented by a sharp peak towards the active and extrinsic corner (Status) while the remaining other-oriented types are lacking (Figure 5, right image).

While depicting the social dimension intelligibly and transparently, the cubic approach also demonstrates the robustness and flexibility of Holbrook's framework and offers an alternative to adding new value types whenever new dimensions are detected (cf. Leroi-Werelds, 2019). A spatial approach is especially suitable for conceptual studies where it can present rich qualitative findings more precisely than predefined categories and also express gradations allowing closer compatibility with reality. In quantitative research, discrete value types may be easier to operationalise, but recognising their fundamental three-dimensional roots contributes to compiling a valid research instrument, classifying results and judging borderline cases.

Conclusions

Theoretical contribution

This qualitative investigation indicates that the social value of tourism, defined in terms of consumer value dimensions stemming from other people, is more diverse than an individual's mere impression management and acceptance seeking as outlined by the established consumer value typologies (Holbrook, 1999b; Sheth et al., 1991). In addition to instrumental and other-oriented status and esteem, tourists also perceive self-oriented social value that arises from the company and presence of other people. The existence of intrinsic Togetherness and Communality as well as extrinsic Safety and Learning alongside Status advocates for employing a broader conceptualisation – *an extended view of social value* – in tourism research and management. The relevance of this finding is underpinned by the social construction of value in tourism by the tourists themselves in person-to-person interactions (Campos et al., 2018; Phi & Dredge, 2019; Rihova et al., 2015). The disclosure of new social value dimensions also reflects the shift from material and instrumental consumption towards more experiential consumption with intrinsic benefits.

The established consumer value typologies recognise other-oriented social value, but disregard self-oriented social dimensions. Instead of adding new value categories, this study depicts the diversity of social value by using the three key value dimensions of the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999b). The proposed three-dimensional illustration describes the facets of social value more flexibly and intelligibly than predetermined value types alone. In the examined nature-based setting, it highlights the predominance of self-oriented dimensions and illustrates the self- and other-oriented as well as intrinsic and extrinsic nature of social value (Figure 5). Building on Holbrook's fundamental logic, this spatial view complements his typology and offers a more profound understanding of consumer value and the relations between different value types.

Managerial implications

The proposed *extended view of social value* contributes to tourism management by adding new elements to the potential pool of perceived consumer value. Naturally, the management of self-oriented social value is limited, because it rests mostly on visitor-visitor interaction that lies largely outside company control. Indirect ways of facilitating socialisation among tourists include destination profiling, customer segmentation and

		Extrinsic (E)	*Intrinsic (I)*
Self-oriented (S)	*Active (A)*	Efficiency	Play
	Reactive (R)	Excellence	Aesthetics
Other-oriented (O)	*Active (A)*	Status	Ethics
	Reactive (R)	Esteem	Spirituality

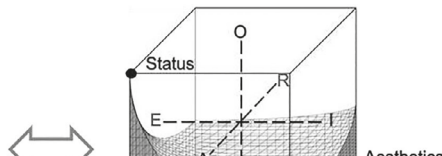

Figure 5. A three-dimensional illustration of the social value dimensions detected in the study compared with the traditional matrix presentation.

active management of group dynamics. Park management and outdoor recreation literature has traditionally coupled the social interaction between visitors with negative crowding that decreases visitors' experiences and satisfaction (e.g. Manning, 2014). Unquestionably, exceeding the social carrying capacity of a destination or having a mismatching clientele may have negative consequences. The current findings, however, imply that intimate Togetherness and Communality among strangers are also notable sources of consumer value in nature-based tourism; a viewpoint particularly relevant in the Outcome-Focused Management of parks and destinations (Driver, 2008). Hence, this research extends the potential value base of nature-based tourism beyond the prevailing conception comprising natural resources and outdoor activities (e.g. Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010). In commercial tourism contexts with both company- and consumer-driven components, the proposed *extended view of social value* opens new opportunities for the co-creation of value.

Limitations and future research

This exploratory investigation focused on domestic tourists independently visiting public national parks in Finland. This setting was selected to reveal the social value of tourism in an authentic setting, unbiased by commercial services and socialisation activities. It is certainly not the most glamorous form of tourism, which may have emphasised the self-oriented social values to the detriment of status from others. Moreover, the preference for being considered modest in the Finnish mentality may have further downplayed the relevance of status and esteem. Nevertheless, the findings clearly demonstrate the existence of self-oriented social value. It was repeatedly mentioned in the material implying saturation, but naturally, further interviews might have contributed to the nuances. However, the present evidence already strongly argues for extending the consumer value conceptualisation of social value in tourism.

The empirical findings are confined to similar nature-based settings whereas the theoretical contribution – *the extended view of social value* – is transferable to other tourism contexts and beyond them, to experiential consumption in general. In essence, consumers are human beings characterised by social interaction. This study demonstrated that the social value of tourism is not only exclusively showing off to others, but also involves socialising and enjoying the company of other people, which creates value. When families visit an amusement park, when friends go to a concert – these are situations where the in-group company and out-group presence of others contributes to the perception of social value. Further empirical value research is welcomed to validate these exploratory findings in diverse tourism and experiential contexts.

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ARTICLE III

Sorakunnas, E., & Konu, H. (2022). Digitally Customized and Interactive Laddering: A New Way for Examining Tourists' Value Structures. Journal of Travel Research, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875221077976

Empirical Research Article

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Abstract

Insight into consumer value forms the basis for successful tourism management. The means-end structures of consumer value in tourism are mainly investigated by qualitative, in-depth laddering interviews while structured, quantitative laddering is less common. This study develops quantitative laddering by digitalizing the Association Pattern Technique (APT) in order to increase its interactive customization. The feasibility of digitally customized APT is piloted by investigating 956 nature-based tourists visiting Finnish national parks. The evaluation of the method is based on epistemological laddering criteria and usability. The results demonstrate greater contextuality, increased sample relevance, delivery of complete chains, and decreased risks of misunderstandings compared to conventional APT. Hence, digitalized APT holds potential for examining the structure of consumer value and its larger sample size also reveals less apparent means-end chains and universal values. However, its wider adoption into managerial processes would benefit from the development of specific software.

Keywords

means-end theory, digitally customized laddering, Association Pattern Technique, consumer value structure, universal values, nature-based tourism

Introduction

This study develops a new, digitally customized quantitative laddering instrument for means-end value research, pilots it in a nature-based tourism context and evaluates its potential for tourism research and management. Consumer value drives marketing and consumer behavior by describing why consumers purchase products, ". . .what they want and believe that they get from buying and using a seller's product" (Woodruff 1997, 140)—in the case of tourism, the true value comes from what tourists pursue and appreciate when traveling. Consumers construct value hierarchically in a means-end way by connecting concrete product and service attributes to desired personal consequences and, ultimately, to their universal values (Gutman 1982; Woodruff and Gardial 1996). Understanding this dynamic process where product attributes function as means to achieving the higher order personal ends of consumers provides deeper consumer insight than discretely scrutinizing individual elements or groups of elements. This has been substantiated in tourism by means-end investigations, for example, on destination choice (Pike 2012), religious tourism (Kim and Kim 2019; Kim, Kim, and King 2016), travel motivation (Ho, Lin, and Huang 2014; Jiang, Scott, and Ding 2015), indigenous tourism (Wu et al. 2020), health tourism (Boga and Weiermair 2011), and hotel business (Orsingher, Marzocchi, and Valentini 2011).

Means-end chains are examined by laddering. This is a sequential data collection method initiated by the identification of personally relevant attributes ("what") followed by an elaboration on an understanding of their meanings ("how") and a connection to the all-encompassing universal values ("why") (Reynolds and Phillips 2009). The mainstream method, qualitative laddering interviews, is characterized by induction, an unstructured format and interactivity which are used to achieve an in-depth elicitation of emergent topics. In contrast, quantitative laddering is deductive and uses structured questionnaires (Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda, and Campomar 2006). These methodological differences have raised concerns regarding the validity and quality of quantitative laddering (Diedericks, Erasmus, and Donoghue 2020; Phillips and Reynolds 2009). The aim of the current research was to narrow the gap between labor-intensive laddering interviews and more economic and large-scale laddering surveys by developing the latter. This has been achieved by incorporating customization into Hofstede's

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Association Pattern Technique, APT (Hofstede et al. 1998); a technique that has hitherto been a structured quantitative laddering method. This new, dynamic process is defined as digitally customized APT. Its development and piloting contribute methodologically to quantitative means-end value research in tourism by customizing APT laddering while still retaining its economies of scale. The new instrument is evaluated by considering both the epistemological laddering criteria and its managerial applicability and potential.

Traditionally, most means-end value studies in tourism have applied qualitative laddering interviews, however, during the 2010s, quantitative laddering surveys have also started to emerge. Nevertheless, this is the first time, to the authors' knowledge, that quantitative APT has been applied in an interactive and customized format instead of as a standard, non-customized survey. Hence, the current research directly addresses the proposal of Diedericks and colleagues (2020), titled "Now is the time to embrace interactive electronic applications of Association Pattern Technique", to improve the APT method. The usefulness and potential of customized APT is empirically tested in nature-based tourism, a sector that has previously been subject only to qualitative means-end investigations (Goldenberg et al. 2000; Hill et al. 2009; Ho et al. 2015; Klenosky et al. 1998; Weeden 2011). Tourism in general has been considered "a paradigmatic realm for researching value" (Gallarza, Arteaga, and Gil-Saura 2019, 256) due to its experiential character that generates a variety of value types and means-end chains. This idiosyncrasy is particularly apparent in the examined nature-based context comprised of independent, unfacilitated visits to Finnish national parks. The empirical investigation represents a two-phase sequential exploratory mixed-method strategy (Creswell and Creswell 2018) that consists of a qualitative laddering pre-study followed by a quantitative laddering survey applying digitally customized APT.

Theoretical Background

Consumer Value and the Means-End Theory

Consumer value describes why consumers purchase products and services or acquire new experiences by depicting their situation-specific judgments (Vinson, Scott, and Lamont 1977; Woodruff 1997; Woodruff and Gardial 1996). Initially, consumer value represented consumers' utilitarian perceptions of the benefits of consumption compared to the resulting costs (Zeithaml 1988), but increased emphasis on experientiality has added emotions to the rational "get versus give" view; in addition to serving utilitarian purposes, consumption is increasingly considered a quest for personal experiences and enjoyment (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Pine and Gilmore 1998; Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo 2007). This experientiality of consumption is particularly evident in tourism, an industry that is based on seeking memorable experiences (e.g., Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung 2007; Sotiriadis and Gursoy 2016). The specific nature-based context of this study, consisting of independent visits to public national parks, is concordant with that statement: personal experiences constitute the foundation of its perceived consumer value (Sorakunnas 2020).

While consumer value in the singular refers to consumers' situation-specific evaluations of individual objects of consumption (Woodruff 1997), values in plural is more abstract. It represents consumers' enduring beliefs and desired end-states that guide their behavior by providing the overall criteria and standards for decision-making (Kim 2020; Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 1992). Being more stable motivational constructs, values transcend single use-situations and depict what is important for the individual in life, thus providing deeper insight into their motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior (Kamakura and Novak 1992). Values are universal in the sense that all consumers share the same values, but simultaneously, they are deeply personal as each individual prioritizes values according to his or her own, unique value system (Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 2012). Values-based tourism research has applied the Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach 1973), the List of Values (Kahle and Kennedy 1988), and the Schwartz Value Survey (1992, 2012) (Kim 2020), but due to the universality of values, these classifications are very similar with only minor disparities in the titles and numbers of categories. To distinguish the plural and singular forms of value, the former will hereafter be referred to as universal values and the latter as consumer value or briefly as value.

A hierarchical framework integrating deeply held universal values with the situation-specific evaluation of product attributes was initially envisaged by Vinson, Scott, and Lamont (1977). Gutman (1982) formulated this framework into a means-end chain theory that describes the routes from concrete product attributes via personal consequences to universal values. These routes are called means-end chains as the objects consumed represent the means to realizing consumers' desired ends. The theory postulates that universal values guide consumers' choices; all actions have consequences and consumers are capable of associating their actions with the expected consequences. Hence, consumer behavior is goal-oriented (Gutman 1982). Examining means-end chains from the bottom-up discloses the meanings of individual attributes whereas top-down approaches reveal the roles of universal values (Olson and Reynolds 1983, 2001; Woodruff and Gardial 1996). Although the chains are hierarchical constructs, their horizontal scrutiny also determines the relative importance of elements on each hierarchical level. Thus, the means-end theory provides a feasible framework for examining the construction of consumer value in tourism. Olson and Reynolds (1983) extended Gutman's model in order to distinguish finer gradations by dividing attributes into concrete and abstract, consequences into functional and psychosocial, and values into instrumental and terminal. Later they considered this six-level hierarchy too complicated and instead, proposed a four-level

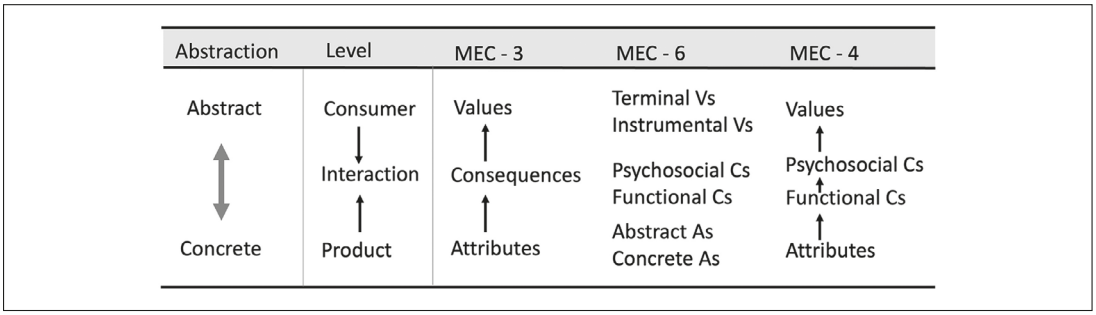


Figure 1. Three-level (Gutman 1982), six-level (Olson and Reynolds 1983), and four-level (Olson and Reynolds 2001) means-end hierarchies.

hierarchy with a distinction between functional and psychosocial consequences as a standard (Olson and Reynolds 2001) (Figure 1).

Attributes are concrete and observable characteristics of products and services (Gutman 1982). In the case of national parks, attributes are the destination-specific pull factors (Uysal, Li, and Sirakaya-Turk 2009) that consist of the natural, managerial, and social context of the parks as well as visitors' own activities within them (Clark and Stankey 1979; Driver and Brown 1978). These attributes represent the lowest hierarchical level that offers the means to achieving visitors' desired ends. On the attribute-level, consumers' perceived value is based on anticipation and expectations that arise from available beforehand information or previous personal consumption experiences. This pre-consumption value is conceptualized as desired value (Woodruff 1997), expected value (Komppula 2005), marketing value (Woodall 2003), and customer value (Gallarza, Gil-Saura, and Holbrook 2011).

Consequences result from the actual use of products that involves person–product interaction. The relationship between positive consequences and attributes is clear: ". . . people receive benefits whereas products have attributes." (Gutman 1982, 60). This juxtaposes consequences with consumer value (Gallarza, Gil-Saura, and Holbrook 2011), which is also referred to as received value (Woodruff 1997), experienced value (Komppula 2005), and derived value (Woodall 2003) with the aim of emphasizing that personal consequences result from the consumption of an offering. In the case of national parks, a suspension bridge made of cable and wooden planks (tangible attributes) offers an easy and safe crossing of a river (consequence) or the unbroken silence available (an intangible attribute) can induce calm in stressed minds (consequence). However, in order for the consequences to be realized, consumers need to interact with the attributes. Hence, received/experienced/derived consumer value is only potential until an offering is actually consumed; one has to use the bridge to cross the river and appreciate the silence to convert expectations into experiences. This dynamic and interactionist perspective (Holbrook 1999) shifts the focus from the objects to the process, from products to their consumption, and from attributes to personal consequences and goals.

In means-end hierarchies, consequences have an intermediate role by functioning as ends in attribute—consequence linkages, but simultaneously also as means in consequence—universal values linkages (Woodruff and Gardial 1996). Due to this dual role, a further distinction between functional and psychosocial consequences has been recommended to offer a more detailed understanding of how consumers construct value (Diedericks, Erasmus, and Donoghue 2020; Olson and Reynolds 1983, 2001; Reynolds and Phillips 2009; Figure 1, right column). However, three-level hierarchies still dominate means-end research while very few four-level frameworks can be found (e.g., Kwon, Cha, and Lee 2015 as well as Schauerte 2009 represent the latter).

On the highest level of abstraction, universal values represent consumers' ultimate reasons for consumption; reasons that transcend single use-situations (Gutman 1982; Vriens and Hofstede 2000) and refer to their desired end-states of existence (Rokeach 1973). The synonymous terms "goals" and "purposes" (Olson and Reynolds 2001; Woodruff 1997) as well as "terminal" or "end" values (Rokeach 1973) emphasize the nature of these reasons. Referring to the previous example, the universal values endorsing the use of the suspension bridge would reflect security whereas a person choosing to wade across would prioritize stimulation and achievement (cf. Schwartz 2012).

Laddering to Examine Tourists' Means-End Chains

Tourists' means-end chains are investigated by laddering (Reynolds and Phillips 2009; Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda, and Campomar 2006). This initially qualitative, in-depth and unstructured interview technique reveals consumers' cognitive structures by associating product attributes with personal consequences—that is, perceived consumer value—and universal values (Reynolds and Gutman 1988). The laddering

Table 1. Comparison of Soft and Hard Laddering Methods (Grunert and Grunert 1995; Phillips and Reynolds 2009; Russell et al. 2004; Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda, and Campomar 2006).

	Soft laddering	Hard laddering
Methodology	Qualitative	Quantitative
Approach	Emic and inductive	Etic and deductive
Aim	Explore and conceptualize	Quantify and explain
Orientation	Motivational	Cognitive structures
Method	1-on-1 in-depth interview	Structured interview or survey
Data collection	Labor-intensive	Cost and time efficient
Sample	Small, non-random	Large, random or non-random
Respondents' cognitive effort	Active recollection	Passive recognition
Type of data collected	Rich and diverse	Standardized

interview is a bottom-up research method that begins by inductive identification of the relevant attributes (e.g., "What were the most important factors you considered when selecting this holiday destination?") and then connects the emerging attributes one by one to higher abstraction levels by elicitation questions that encourage introspection (e.g., "How does that make you feel?" or "Why is that important you?") (Reynolds and Phillips 2009; Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda, and Campomar 2006). Hence, the topics to be laddered are freely chosen by the respondents and therefore, laddering interviewers require considerable skill in order to successfully manage the evolving process (Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda, and Campomar 2006) and to facilitate the interviewees' progression. They need to be encouraged to ascend, rung by rung, the ladder of abstraction until finally reaching the universal values. In addition to interviews, soft laddering paper-and-pencil surveys have been piloted, where the determination of items as well as their coupling is unprompted (Goldenberg et al. 2000).

Originally, laddering was strictly a qualitative method, but Grunert and Grunert (1995) introduced the concepts of soft and hard laddering to distinguish the emerging quantitative laddering from the mainstream qualitative method. Quantitative, hard laddering is conducted using either structured interviews or self-administered questionnaires. It offers the advantages of standardized data and the generalizability of results, and, when conducted as a survey, also larger sample sizes, avoidance of interviewer bias, and savings in time and costs. At the same time, however, the respondents are forced to make connections between predetermined alternatives that do not necessarily correspond to their own views. This restricts the respondents' freedom of expression, decreases personal involvement, and cognitive effort and increases the risk of misunderstandings. Thus, hard laddering threatens the fundamental laddering assumption regarding inductivity (Phillips and Reynolds 2009) and therefore, the determination of elements should be based on a meticulous review of the literature or a qualitative pre-study (Hofstede et al. 1998; Vriens and Hofstede 2000). Moreover, the survey design should promote considered and contextual responses (Grunert and Grunert 1995; Phillips and Reynolds 2009). The characteristics of both laddering methods are presented in Table 1. At present, the majority of laddering studies are still qualitative with approximately one in five studies applying quantitative laddering (Borgardt 2020; Reynolds and Phillips 2009).

The feasibility of means-end laddering research in revealing tourists' thinking, preferences and decision-making has been acknowledged (McDonald, Thyne, and McMorland 2008; McIntosh and Thyne 2005). Most tourism studies have applied soft laddering, but during the past decade, hard laddering approaches have also started to emerge (Table 2). The sample sizes of soft laddering have remained low reflecting their qualitative nature, but also most of the quantitative laddering investigations have been relatively small-scale compared to the potential of hard laddering.

The common method for inductive item generation in qualitative laddering is to ask each respondent to name the most meaningful attributes or reasons or motives (e.g., Ho, Lin, and Huang 2014; Wu et al. 2020). In triadic sorting, the respondent selects one alternative from a list of three and then supplies the reasons for this selection (Klenosky et al. 1998; Reynolds and Gutman 1988). Additionally, triadic sorting of photographs has been used for item identification (e.g., Bapiri, Esfandiar, and Seyfi 2021; Lin, Morgan, and Coble 2013) as well as grouping of photographs (Naoi et al. 2006). Conversely, quantitative laddering, being deductive, depends on the literature and/or a pre-study to provide the items to be laddered. The validity of laddering rests on six epistemological conditions: (1) respondents engage in careful consideration and introspection during the elicitation process, (2) the emic concepts are understood similarly by the researcher and respondents (shared meanings), (3) all hierarchical steps are completed, (4) the data collection is contextual, (5) respondents are familiar with the topic and find it personally meaningful (sample relevance), and (6) the topics to be laddered are freely determined by the respondents (Grunert and Grunert 1995; Phillips and Reynolds 2009; Reynolds 2006; Reynolds and Phillips 2009).

Table 2. Soft and Hard Laddering Investigations in Tourism Research (*Nature-Based Studies in Italics and Bolded*).

Author(s)	Context	Method (sample size)	Item generation
Klenosky et al. (1998)	***Interpretive services***	***Soft laddering (47)***	***Inductive/triadic sorting***
Goldenberg et al. (2000)	***Ropes course experiences***	***Soft laddering (125)***	***Inductive***
Jewell and Crotts (2002)	Heritage tourism	Soft laddering (30)	Inductive
Klenosky (2002)	Destination choice	Soft laddering (53)	Inductive
Naoi et al. (2006)	Visitors' evaluation of a historical district	Soft laddering (20)	Inductive/photo probes
Wu, Xu, and Erdogan (2009)	Destination choice/push and pull motivation	Soft laddering (51)	Inductive
Hill et al. (2009)	***Hiking***	***Soft laddering (50)***	***Inductive***
Watkins and Gnoth (2011)	Japanese tourists travel choices in New Zealand	Soft laddering (14)	Inductive
Weeden (2011)	***Holiday choices of ethical consumers***	***Soft laddering (24)***	***Inductive***
Pike (2012)	Destination choice/positioning	Soft laddering (20)	Inductive
Lin, Morgan, and Coble (2013)	Heritage tourism	Soft laddering (71)	Inductive/photo probes
Ho, Lin, and Huang (2014)	Working holiday-makers motivation	Soft laddering (60)	Inductive
Jiang, Scott, and Ding (2015)	Travel motivation	Soft laddering (34)	Inductive
Ho et al. (2015)	***Leisure cycling***	***Soft laddering (60)***	***Inductive***
Wassenberg, Goldenberg, and Soule (2015)	Botanical garden	Soft laddering (83)	Inductive
Bapiri, Esfandiar, and Seyfi (2021)	Cultural heritage site experience	Soft laddering (50)	Inductive/photo probes
Wu et al. (2020)	Tourist experiences at indigenous sites	Soft laddering (58)	Inductive
Liu and Li (2021)	Sharing travel experiences on social media	Soft laddering (30)	Inductive
Boga and Weiermair (2011)	Health tourism/new services	Hard laddering survey (491)	Literature
López-Mosquera and Sánchez (2011)	Valuation of peri-urban green spaces	Hard laddering APT (110)	Literature and qualitative pre-study
Orsingher, Marzocchi, and Valentini (2011)	Hotel/business guests	Hard laddering APT (200)	Qualitative pre-study
Kim, Kim, and King (2016)	Pilgrim tourism	Hard laddering APT (90)	Literature and qualitative pre-study
Kim and Kim (2019)	Religious tourism	Hard laddering APT (102)	Literature and qualitative pre-study

Most authors listed in Table 2 considered the main limitation of soft laddering to be its small sample size leading to a lack of generalizability (e.g., Ho et al. 2015; Pike 2012; Wu et al. 2020). Therefore, the soft approach was recommended as an initial, exploratory research step to identify relevant concepts and develop quantitative instruments (Ho, Lin, and Huang 2014; Jiang, Scott, and Ding 2015). In turn, the hard laddering limitations mentioned were sample biases and exclusion of relevant segments (Boga and Weiermair 2011; López-Mosquera and Sánchez 2011; Orsingher, Marzocchi, and Valentini 2011) as well as a lack of contextuality (Kim, Kim, and King 2016), but the authors did not reflect on the central issue of the validity of hard laddering.

The "hardest" of hard laddering approaches is the Association Pattern Technique (APT) (Phillips and Reynolds 2009). It is premised on the conditional independence of attribute—consequence and consequence—values linkages, which permits their separate collection (Hofstede et al. 1998; Vriens and Hofstede 2000). In APT laddering, the respondents indicate connections by checking the appropriate boxes in attribute—consequence and consequence—values matrices, which, when combined, result in three-level means-end chains (Diedericks, Erasmus, and Donoghue 2020; Phillips and Reynolds 2009). The method is suitable for investigating the construction of consumer value, developing marketing strategies and new products as well as gaining insight into consumers' motivational structures (Diedericks, Erasmus, and Donoghue 2020). In particular, APT's ability to identify consumer—product relationships within large samples is considered useful in market segmentation and product positioning (Hofstede, Steenkamp, and Wedel 1999; Reynolds 2006). In tourism research, APT has been applied to reveal tourists' construction of value (Kim, Kim, and King 2016; Kim and Kim 2019; López-Mosquera and Sánchez 2011) as well as their satisfaction (Orsingher, Marzocchi, and Valentini 2011).

The conventional Association Pattern Technique is fully standardized: respondents indicate their inter-element linkages on non-customized matrices that display all items included in the study to all respondents (Hofstede et al. 1998;

Vriens and Hofstede 2000). Initially, APT surveys were administered on paper and completed with a pencil or pen, but the development of computers has introduced computerized laddering where the respondents execute the non-customized laddering task on a computer screen (Langbroek and De Beuckelaer 2007; Russell et al. 2004). In this study, APT was selected as the quantitative laddering technique to be digitally customized for three reasons: its established position in means-end research, the independence of its matrices that allows their interactive customization and its suitability for forking, which means the indication of more than one association per item (Russell et al. 2004). Additionally, considering the rigid and standardized nature of conventional APT ("Among the 'hardest' of 'hard' laddering approaches," Phillips and Reynolds 2009, 87), the introduction of interactive customization offers considerable promise as regards survey responsiveness and user-friendliness. These factors support customizing quantitative APT in order to take it a step closer to qualitative laddering interviews while still retaining its economies of scale and the generalizability of results.

Material and Methods

Study Design and Context

Considering that laddering is originally a qualitative, unstructured and in-depth interview technique, standardized, quantitative laddering understandably raises concerns regarding the fundamental laddering assumptions (Phillips and Reynolds 2009). These concerns were addressed with a two-phase sequential exploratory mixed-method strategy (Creswell and Creswell 2018) that provided a robust basis for the development, piloting and evaluation of digitally customized APT. The qualitative laddering pre-study explored and conceptualized the topic, familiarized the researchers with the layman lexicon and guided the construction of a valid hard laddering instrument. The subsequent quantitative phase operationalized and quantified the inductively determined elements capitalizing on the advantages of a larger sample size and generalizability, avoidance of interviewer bias and the anonymous disclosure of personal information. The novelty of this research—the digital customization of APT—was pursued in order to improve the method so as to better meet the methodological laddering assumptions. This was evaluated based on the methodological criteria presented in Table 3. In addition, the practicality and potential of digital APT were assessed from the managerial perspective. Finally, digitally customized APT was compared to conventional, non-customized APT, both paper and pencil and computerized.

Until now, the means-end research of nature-based tourism has been limited to certain activities or services (cf. Table 2; Goldenberg et al. 2000; Hill et al. 2009; Ho et al. 2015; Klenosky et al. 1998; Weeden 2011) whereas this study focuses on general nature-based tourism. Independent and unfacilitated visits to public national parks were selected as the empirical context, because this consumer- and context-driven setting is unbiased by commercial offerings; the natural surroundings foreground the visitors' personal involvement and self-imposed interaction with park attributes. This, consequently, discloses their own, unguided construction of value (Sorakunnas 2020); the setting portrays their "what-how-why" means-end chains more genuinely than consuming planned and staged company offerings focusing on predetermined elements, such as the scenery, the wildlife, or specific thrill. Thus, the context was expected to give rise to a broader spectrum of means-end chains than examining a narrowly defined range of activities or pre-arranged services.

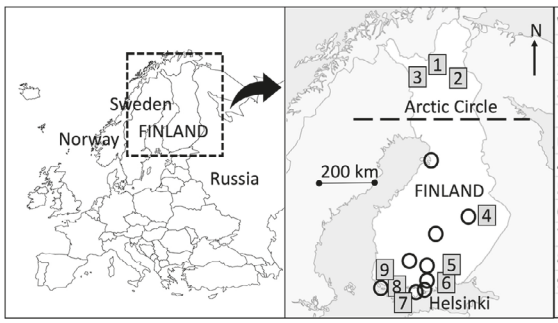
Table 3. Methodological Evaluation Criteria for Digital APT (Adapted From Grunert and Grunert 1995; Phillips and Reynolds 2009; Reynolds 2006; Reynolds and Phillips 2009).

Methodological criteria
Consideration and introspection (laddering assumption 1)
Shared meanings (2)
Construction of complete chains (3)
Contextual data collection (4)
Sample relevance: the topic is familiar and meaningful (5)
Inductive item determination (6)

Nine of Finland's 40 national parks were purposively selected to represent the two main types of parks. Large wilderness parks north of the Arctic Circle, far away from major cities were labeled "Wild." Their remote location, large size, relatively low visitor density, long trails, and within park accommodation possibilities make them ideal for multiday excursions. In contrast, the "Urban" parks were small and popular parks located in the vicinity of cities. They offer short trails and campfire facilities, but no accommodation apart from camping and are therefore favored by day visitors resulting in a high number of visits in comparison to the park size (Figure 2). Both park types (six "Urban" parks and three "Wild" parks) were examined to capture the diversity of visitors' means-end chains.

Laddering the Means-End Structures

Soft laddering pre-study. The inductive pre-study conceptualized the topic by identifying the relevant elements and tentative means-end structures for the quantitative survey as well as familiarized the authors with the layman terminology (Vriens and Hofstede 2000; cf. Ho, Lin, and Huang 2014; Jiang, Scott, and Ding 2015). The pre-study was conducted in two purposively selected parks in September-October 2019; one was a remote, large wilderness park (Figure 2, number 3) and the other a small, better-equipped urban park (Figure 2, number 9). Domestic visitors constituted the target population. Their visitor profiles were first determined on-site by observation



Wild parks	Size, km²	Visits/year	Pre-s., N	Survey, N
1 - Lemmenjoki	2 860	18 300	-	65
2 - Urho Kekkonen	2 550	367 000	-	200
3 - Pallas-Ylläs	1 020	561 200	27	186
Urban parks	**Size, km²**	**Visits/year**	**Pre-s.**	**Survey**
4 - Koli	30	201 800	-	109
5 - Repovesi	15	126 600	-	125
6 - Sipoonkorpi	19	110 000	-	67
7 - Nuuksio	55	330 600	-	45
8 - Teijo	34	108 400	-	59
9 - Kurjenrahka	29	86 200	22	100
			49	**956**

Figure 2. Locations and the types of case parks. The open circles indicate Finland's nine largest cities (population >100,000) (Metsähallitus 2020).

Table 4. Participant Profiles.

	Pre-study (*N* = 49)		Survey (*N* = 956)	
	Wild park	Urban park	Wild parks	Urban parks
Participants (*N*)	27	22	451	505
Male/Female/Other (*N*)	11/16/0	10/12/0	136/314/1	125/376/4
Age, years (Distribution/mean)	21–78/44	20–75/47	20–70 + /40–49	20–70 + /40–49
Accompanied/alone (*N*)	23/4	15/7	367/84	386/119
Multiday/One-day visit (*N*)	26/1	1/21	307/144	131/374
Distance from home (avg., km)	945	70	500–1000	50–100
Duration of interviews (avg., minutes)	19	16	—	—

and the interviewees were then purposively selected to represent different genders, group compositions, and ages so as to capture a variety of means-end chains (Table 4). When assessed in reference to the Finnish national park monitoring study (Konu et al. 2021), the data provides a good representation of national park visitors well in terms of gender distribution and mean age. Moreover, the national monitoring study shows that the urban parks are mainly visited on day trips and have a higher percentage of unaccompanied visits. The interviews were initiated by asking "What made you come to this park today?" to inductively determine the relevant attributes. Each of these was then elaborated by open questions such as: "How does that make you feel?" or "What does it mean to you to. . .?" to facilitate deeper introspection that associated the attributes to higher abstraction levels (Reynolds and Gutman 1988; Veludo-de-Oliveira, Ikeda, and Campomar 2006).

A total of 49 unstructured laddering interviews were conducted until saturation was reached; the same topics were repeated in different interviews and no additional aspects surfaced (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2016). Participation was voluntary, anonymous and based on informed consent (Brinkman 2013). All interviews were conducted, transcribed, and content analyzed by the first author. In the analysis, the items were first categorized into attributes, functional and psychosocial consequences, and universal values based on their character and sequence. The coding was open and data-driven grouping similar concepts together taking into account both manifest and latent meanings (Schreier 2012) (Table 5). Thirteen transcripts underwent double-coding by another researcher reaching a 95% level of agreement (intersubjectivity, Schreier 2012, 167).

Survey piloting the digitally customized Association Pattern Technique. The novelty of the current research lies in replacing traditional, non-customized APT with a digital solution that interactively customized the rows of the matrices according to the respondents' preceding selections. It was executed using a standard web-based survey and reporting tool designed for general online surveys (https://webropol.co.uk). Hence, its use did not require any programming or database solutions. Although the software lacked specific APT-functions, its matrix queries were usable for the laddering task as they allowed customization. This novel, digital, and dynamic process will hereinafter be referred to as digitally customized APT to distinguish it from non-customized APT. First, the respondents were asked to select the three most important attributes from a randomized list of 11 attributes determined in the inductive pre-study (Table 5 and Figure 3/Step 1).

Table 5. Summary of Content Codes Categorized into Attributes, Functional and Psychosocial Consequences, and Universal Values; Learning* Added From Literature.

	Hierarchical level/Codes	Description
A	***Attributes***	
A1	Beauty of nature	Esthetic joy, visual pleasure
A2	Open scenery	Unobstructed views, seeing great distances
A3	Naturalness	Lack of human impact, untouched nature
A4	Wildlife	Presence and possibility of seeing animal and plant species
A5	Recreation infra and services	Duckboards, campfire facilities, marked trails, latrines, etc.
A6	Accessibility	Park location, public transportation, parking spaces
A7	Outdoor activities	Variety of possible outdoor activities
A8	Travel company	Group composition, friends, and family traveling with you
A9	Sights	Natural and cultural sights
A10	Silence and tranquility	Lack of hustle and bustle, paucity/absence of other people
A11	Terrain	Topography, variability, interestingness
CF	***Consequences—functional***	
CF12	Convenience	Easy access to nature
CF13	Challenges	Facing challenging situations, challenging oneself
CF14	Escape	Detachment from the ordinary life
CF15	Solitude	Being by oneself, isolated from others
CF16	Novelty and fun	Enjoyment; seeing, and doing new things
CF17	Togetherness	Spending time with family and friends
CF18	Encounters	Meeting other visitors and interacting with them
CF19	Experiencing nature	Multisensorial nature experiences
CP	***Consequences—psychosocial***	
CP20	Well-being	Psychological health benefits, vitality, "feeling good"
CP21	Learning*	Increased awareness, knowledge, and personal skills
CP22	Cohesion	Family bonds and friendship; inclusion, sense of community
CP23	Adventure	Combined novelty, excitement, and pleasure
CP24	Free flow of thoughts	Mental rest and reset, processing of open issues
CP25	Admiration of life	Awareness of and admiration for the surrounding world
CP27	Recreation	Self-renewal, unwinding, and relaxing
CV	***Values***	
V28	Accomplishment	Personal success, reaching set goals
V29	Friendship	Social inclusion, true friendship
V30	Freedom	Independence, ability to make own choices
V31	Self-respect	Self-esteem, being proud of one's self
V32	Inner peace and harmony	Connection to the self/nature
V33	Pleasure	Fun and enjoyment
V34	Safety	Risk minimization and danger avoidance
V35	Excitement	Adventure, novelty, and challenge
V36	Status	Being respected by others, social recognition
V37	Happiness	Eudemonic joy, subjective well-being

Only these selected attributes were displayed in the subsequent matrix of attributes—functional consequences (Step 2, shaded cells). In Step 2 the respondents were asked to connect each of the attributes to 1–3 functional consequences. They then connected each of the selected functional consequences in turn to 1–3 psychosocial consequences in the following consequence-consequence matrix (Step 3, shaded cells). Finally, the respondents connected each of the selected psychosocial consequences to one universal end value (Step 4, shaded cells). Hence, they proceeded from personally relevant attributes step by step to the higher, more abstract levels. Screen shots of the actual laddering task are presented as a Supplemental Appendix 1. An alternative laddering procedure would have been to select one attribute at a time and complete its means-end chain through Steps 2–4 before proceeding to the next attribute. This was, however, considered too repetitive for the respondents and likely to increase their fatigue. To facilitate shared meanings, each attribute and consequence in the matrices was equipped with a description, either directly after each attribute or as an on-demand pop-up window for the consequences and values (Supplemental Appendix 1). The list of attributes included a "None

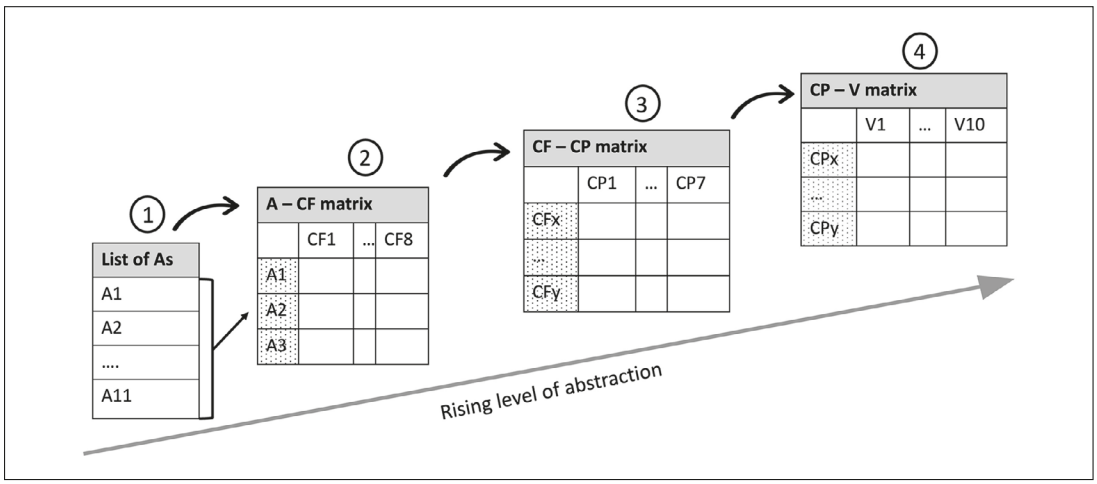


Figure 3. Digitalized and interactive Association Pattern Technique. Dotted cells indicate the customized elements.
Note: A = attributes; CF = functional consequences; CP = psychosocial consequences; V = universal values.

of these" option followed by a "What, then" open field to avoid forced selection of irrelevant attributes (Diedericks, Erasmus, and Donoghue 2020; Reynolds 2006). Equally, each matrix included a "None of these" alternative for the consequences and values.

To emphasize contextuality, the respondents selected one national park and were asked to recollect their most recent visit throughout the survey. After the laddering task, the respondents provided background information on frequency of visits, basic socio-demographic variables as well as group composition, visit duration, and time of year. The instrument was tested with a convenience sample of 28 domestic national park visitors. As a result of the feedback received, the survey structure was retained, but pop-up descriptions were added to all elements to improve their consistent comprehension. In addition, the matrix structure was technically refined to display all columns simultaneously on different screen types (See Supplemental Appendix 1). The final version underwent two additional pilot tests with 10 and 12 respondents before large-scale administration. No new elements emerged in the open fields during the testing phases. The total response time varied from 10 to 15 minutes, which the test group participants did not consider too burdensome.

The accessible target population consisted of people registered in the Facebook groups of individual parks, which are maintained by the official park management authority (Metsähallitus/Parks and Wildlife Finland) in order to inform visitors about current park-specific issues. It was assumed that those actively following a particular park on social media would also have visited it physically. This was verified at the beginning of the survey by a screening question and those who had not visited the park in question were omitted. The targeted social media administration of the survey was conducted by posting a survey link on the Facebook pages of nine case parks in September 2020 and a reminder ten days later. Technically this represented non-probability online river sampling, the recruiting of respondents in social media by inviting them to follow a survey link. The method is suitable for reaching a specific, non-demographic subpopulation for exploratory research (Lehdonvirta et al. 2021). The maximum number of responses was limited to 100, 150, or 200 per park depending on its annual visitation (<100,000, 100,000–200,000, and >200,000) (Figure 2). Participation was anonymous, but those willing to provided their e-mails in a separate database to take part in a small incentive lottery.

All the connections from all the responses were summarized in the Implication Matrices (Supplemental Appendix 2), which displayed how many times each element led to another element (Reynolds and Gutman 1988). APT is premised on the conditional independence of the elements (Hofstede et al. 1998) and therefore the Implication Matrices included only direct connections between adjacent levels. The row sums indicated how many times each element was the source of a connection (out-degrees) and the column sums indicated their relevance as targets (in-degrees). Based on these, centrality and prestige indices are often calculated to reflect the importance of individual elements in the entire means-end structure (Pieters, Baumgartner, and Allen 1995). However, to emphasize a level-specific scrutiny, the current study used the explanatory power index instead (Schauerte 2009). This depicts an element's relative importance on its respective level, not in comparison to all the elements in the four-level structure; for example, the explanatory power of functional consequence X is calculated by dividing the sum

of its in- and out-degrees by the total sum of the in- and out-degrees of all the functional consequences.

$$\text{Explanatory power } CF_x = \frac{CF_x((\text{in}-\text{degree})+(\text{out}-\text{degree}))}{\sum \text{CF}((\text{in}-\text{degree})+(\text{out}-\text{degree}))}$$

The presentation of the dominant means-end chains with Hierarchical Value Maps (HVM) requires data reduction to highlight the most important connections. This is achieved with a cut-off procedure that determines the minimum number of times a connection needs to appear in the Implication Matrix in order to be represented on the HVM (Pieters, Baumgartner, and Allen 1995). The cut-off level, being a threshold value, is crucial in the analysis of means-end data and therefore, a top-down cut-off strategy was applied (Leppard, Russell, and Cox 2004). The strategy is based on ranking the connections between two adjacent hierarchical levels in a descending order of frequency and including only those exceeding the chosen cut-off level in the analysis; for instance, a Top5 cut-off would include only the five most frequent connections between the attributes, functional consequences, psychosocial consequences, and end values. The determination of the cut-off level depends on the aim of the research, and thus data may be added stepwise by lowering the cut-off level until a desired representation is achieved. Correspondingly, data may be reduced by raising the cut-off level. This dynamic, data-driven procedure was considered more systematic, objective, and transparent than its alternative, the heuristic determination a single cut-off value for the entire data. The heuristic method is better suited to small, qualitative data sets with recommendations to include roughly two-thirds of all connections in the HVM (Grunert and Grunert 1995; Reynolds and Gutman 1988) and "accounting for a large percentage of the total number of goal connections made by the respondents with a small number of distinct relations between goals." (Pieters, Baumgartner, and Allen 1995, 239). Hence, it entails a considerable degree of subjectivity and risk of investigator bias that are avoided with the top-down cut-off procedure.

Results

Soft Laddering Interviews

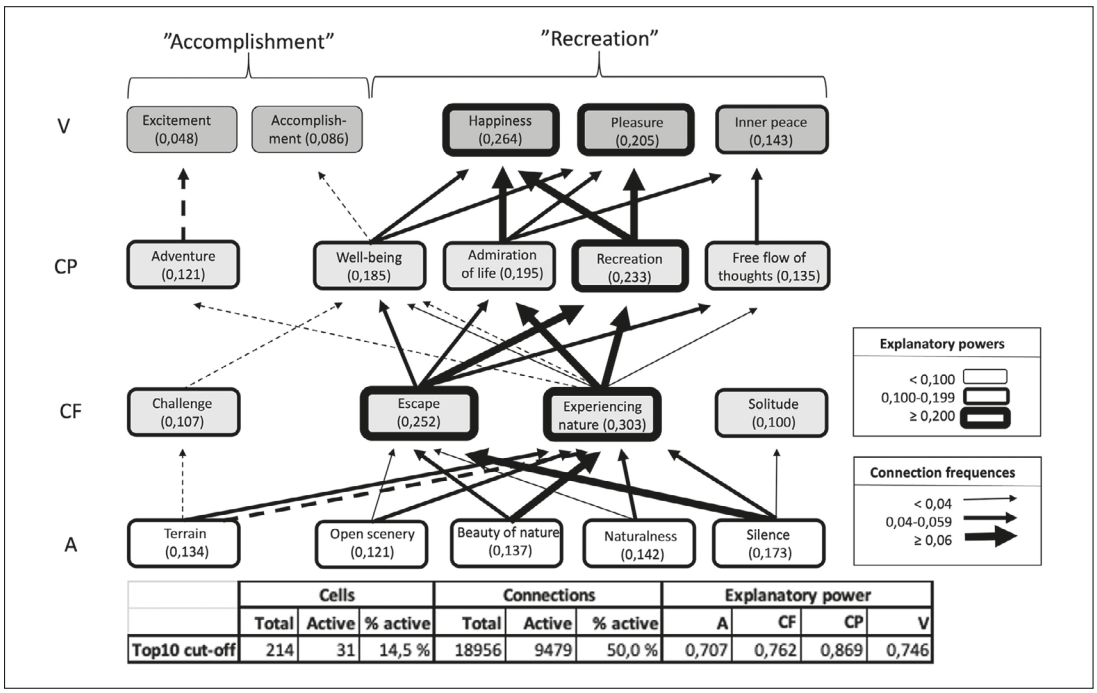
The inductive soft laddering interviews identified 11 attributes, 8 functional consequences, 7 psychosocial consequences, and 10 universal values that are presented in Table 5. These findings were concordant with previous means-end research on nature-based tourism (Goldenberg et al. 2000; Hill et al. 2009; Ho et al. 2015; Klenosky et al. 1998; Weeden 2011) and only one consequence, learning (Klenosky et al. 1998), was added from the literature. Some interviewees expressed end values implicitly, which is typical for soft laddering (Diedericks, Erasmus, and Donoghue 2020; McDonald, Thyne, and McMorland 2008) and therefore, eliciting questions and interpretation underpinned by established classifications (Kahle and Kennedy 1988; Rokeach 1973; Schwartz 2012) were required to reach the highest level of abstraction. The aim of the pre-study was to identify the relevant elements and to outline their relationships for the construction of a valid survey instrument; thus, no further qualitative analysis was made on this material.

Digitally Customized APT Survey

Respondents to the APT survey selected, in total, 2,833 national park attributes from the list generated in the pre-study. They established 6,325 connections from attributes to functional consequences, and a further 8,429 connections to psychosocial consequences as well as 4,202 to universal values; this produced a total of 18,956 inter-element ladders. Applying the Top10 cut-off level, that is, including the 10 most frequent connections between each level in the analysis, revealed the most prominent means-end chain, Recreation (Figure 4, solid arrows). Recreation was a network of emotional relationships between intangible park attributes and their emotional consequences leading to happiness, pleasure and inner peace. It dominated value formation with a level-specific explanatory power of 0.612–0.748. The other chain detected in the Top10 cut-off level rested on challenges and achievements, and was thus labeled Accomplishment (Figure 4, dashed arrows). This hedonic chain, initiated by the terrain attribute, was distinct from the eudemonic Recreation chain despite sharing some elements (terrain, experiencing nature, and well-being). The explanatory power of Accomplishment was considerably lower, from 0.134 to 0.410 per hierarchical level including overlaps with Recreation.

Lowering the cut-off level to Top15—that is, including the next five most frequent inter-level connections—revealed two less prominent means-end chains, Togetherness and Convenience. Togetherness describes spending time with friends and family and its explanatory powers were 0.039–0.097. Convenience characterizes easy access to the destination as well as its infrastructure and services that facilitate the visits. It constituted an incomplete utilitarian chain that merged into Recreation at the level of psychosocial consequences. Its explanatory power was 0.122 on the attribute level and 0.087 on the functional consequences level. In summary, the combined explanatory power of these four chains comprising the 15 most frequent inter-level connections was 0.881 for the attributes, 0.947/0.938 for the consequences and 0.978 for universal values (Figure 5).

The order of universal values was identical in both destination types at the Top15 cut-off level. The four most important universal values—happiness, pleasure, inner peace, and freedom—represented the Recreation chain and jointly accounted for 0.710 (Wild parks) and 0.743 (Urban parks) of the explanatory power. The following three values were accomplishment, self-respect and excitement, the end values of the Accomplishment chain. Their combined explanatory powers were 0.230 (Wild) and 0.196 (Urban) while



	Cells			Connections			Explanatory power			
	Total	Active	% active	Total	Active	% active	A	CF	CP	V
Top10 cut-off	214	31	14,5 %	18956	9479	50,0 %	0,707	0,762	0,869	0,746

Figure 4. Top10 Hierarchical Value Map of the two most dominant main means-end chains, Recreation (solid arrows) and Accomplishment (dashed arrows). Explanatory powers of the elements in brackets.
Note: A = attributes; CF = functional consequences; CP = psychosocial consequences; V = universal values.

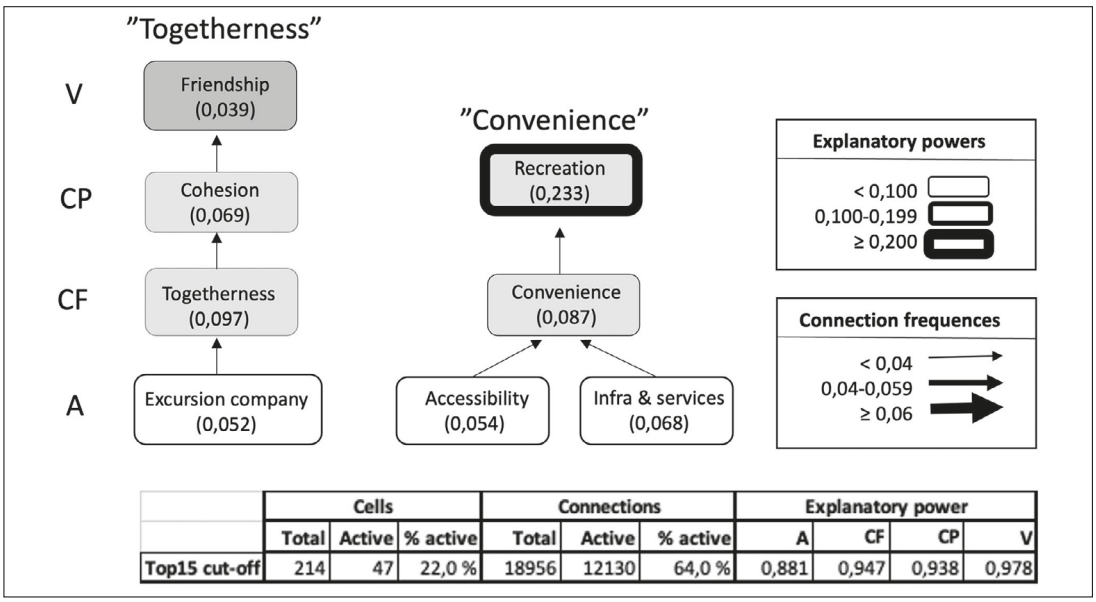
Friendship represented 0.039 (Wild) and 0.040 (Urban). The Convenience chain did not reach the level of end values as it merged into Recreation at the level of psychosocial consequences and status was marginal (Figure 6). The detected universal values matched the listing of Schwartz (2012), which was complemented with happiness from Rokeach's (1973) terminal values.

Discussion

This study developed a new, digitally customized APT instrument for quantitative laddering and piloted it in a nature-based tourism context. The evaluation of the new instrument is conducted based on the methodological laddering assumptions as well as its managerial potential and practicality (Table 3).

Methodological evaluation. The main difference between digitalized versus standard APT is the interactive customization of the APT process, which excluded redundant alternatives from the laddering task. This reduced the complexity of the laddering task and focused the survey only on personally relevant elements. The increased clarity and consistency promoted greater consideration as regards the responses and decreased human errors when establishing the connections (laddering assumption 1; Reynolds and Phillips 2009). It was also reflected in low respondent fatigue with only 22.2% interrupting the survey despite the inclusion of a third "functional consequence – psychosocial consequence" matrix and allowing forking, the selection of up to three consequences per element, both of which increased the number of chains to be completed. The measured dropout rate was lower than the average for general invitation web surveys (30%) despite the use of matrix questions that are known to increase respondent burden and the risk of premature terminations (Crawford, Couper, and Lamias 2001; Galesic 2006).

The pop-up descriptions added to each element permitted instant elaboration of concepts when necessary, thus contributing to shared meanings and validity (laddering assumption 2; Grunert and Grunert 1995). Unlike written descriptions, the on-demand pop-ups did not add text to the matrices, which would have decreased their readability (Supplemental Appendix 1). The digital matrices were constructed to prompt respondents not to skip levels, which promoted introspection and resulted in complete, four-level chains (laddering assumption 3; Phillips and Reynolds 2009). Interactivity



	Cells			Connections			Explanatory power			
	Total	Active	% active	Total	Active	% active	A	CF	CP	V
Top15 cut-off	214	47	22,0 %	18956	12130	64,0 %	0,881	0,947	0,938	0,978

Figure 5. Additional Togetherness and Convenience means-end chains at the Top15 cut-off level. Abbreviations explained in Figure 4.

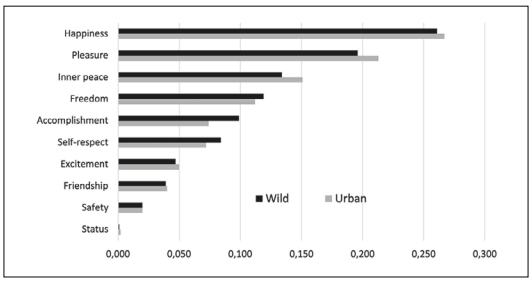


Figure 6. Visitors' universal values in the order of importance in Wild and Urban parks and their explanatory powers (Top15 cut-off level).

was also utilized to emphasize contextuality (laddering assumption 4; Grunert and Grunert 1995; Reynolds 2006) by automatically supplying every second laddering question with the name of the park selected by the respondent at the beginning of the survey (e.g., "Which factors did you appreciate the most on your previous visit to National Park X?," Supplemental Appendix 1). These reminders contributed to answering on the basis of a single park and the most recent visit to it, which was important, because the respondents made several park visits per year (54% made 1–5 visits and 39% six or more). The electronic administration of the survey via social media contributed to sample relevance by reaching respondents who were active national park visitors familiar with park attributes and their personal consequences. This personal knowledge constitutes a prerequisite for conducting laddering tasks (laddering assumption 5; Phillips and Reynolds 2009). The sample relevance was further ensured with a screening question that automatically excluded those respondents, who had not visited any of the case parks (13 respondents/1.34%).

On the whole, these advancements improved the capability of digitally customized APT to fulfill the laddering assumptions, but nevertheless, the method was still based on recognition instead of active recollection; the respondents had to operate with predefined and hierarchically arranged elements. This fundamental feature of APT emphasizes the inductive pre-study's significance in capturing the relevant elements and their reciprocal relations to be quantitatively laddered (laddering assumption 6; Hofstede et al. 1998; Vriens and Hofstede 2000). The validity of customized APT, its success in encompassing the relevant elements, was evidenced by the low percentage of "None of these" selections in the survey (between 0.4% and 1.9% per level). Moreover, two thirds of the open responses (22/35 responses) to the subsequent "What, then" question regarding the attributes were covered by extant categories. The remaining one third (13 responses) were random items with only one attribute—low radiation from telecom access points—being repeated several times.

Managerial applicability. The practical feasibility of digitally customized APT was assessed on the grounds of the usefulness

of data, access to the target population, operational properties, respondent friendliness, and software requirements. The empirical trial proved the capability of digitalized APT in disclosing tourists' construction of value. Examining national park visitors, it revealed the attribute-level origins of the commonly known benefits of escape, challenge, social interaction, and experiencing nature (Sorakunnas 2020) and connected these to visitors' higher order goals and universal values. The prominent means-end chains included similar elements to the previous qualitative means-end research in nature-based tourism (Goldenberg et al. 2000; Hill et al. 2009; Ho et al. 2015; Klenosky et al. 1998; Weeden 2011), but due to this study's more generalized scope and considerably larger sample size, its attributes, consequences and values were more diverse and quantitatively expressed. Moreover, this investigation revealed the often hidden universal values in a quantified and comprehensible order of importance (Figure 6), which is particularly useful for managerial purposes as values guide tourists' decision-making and explain the reasons underlying their observable behavior (McIntosh and Thyne 2005). The richness of generated means-end data would have permitted more detailed analyses disclosing fine-grained relationships, but these were beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, the dominant chains and identified universal values already advocate for a shift in attention from separate elements to their actual meaning for the visitors; knowledge of key attributes, the "what," is a good starting point for successful tourism management. However, an integrated understanding also comprising of the "how" and "why" levels offers much more managerial potential (cf. the interactionist perspective to value construction; Holbrook 1999). Digitally customized APT is a promising instrument for mapping these causalities and gaining insight into tourists' construction of value that lays the foundation for successful customer segmentation, destination positioning, service development, and external marketing communication.

On the operational level, the targeted social media administration of the survey and online river sampling facilitated obtaining a sufficiently large sample of the desired subpopulation (Lehdonvirta et al. 2021); 956 national park visitors from across Finland responded within a two-week period, but the survey could just as easily have been administered globally. As a non-probability method, online river sampling is prone to a topical self-selection bias caused by people responding because they are interested in and familiar with the topic (Lehdonvirta et al. 2021). Moreover, although not evidenced in this study (Table 4), the digital laddering task may appeal more to the digitally proficient generation than those less familiar with modern technology. Given the exploratory nature of this investigation, the possibility of the sampling biases mentioned did not threaten the methodological aim of this study, that is, developing and testing digitally customized APT. On the other hand, however, the topical self-selection did support reaching the right people familiar with the topic. Nevertheless, the rising popularity of on-line surveys is challenging respondent motivation; despite this survey's distribution being linked to over 100,000 registered national park enthusiasts together with one reminder and a small lottery incentive, the response rate remained low (0.9%).

In addition to reaching the right subpopulation, digitality allowed for an easy adjustment of the instrument during its testing phases and real-time follow-up of the survey execution. If, for example, the response rate for a given park had lagged behind, it would have been possible to send a targeted reminder to its visitors. The automatic entry of the survey results provided a considerable saving as regards both time and costs as well as eliminated manual errors. The format would also allow complementing verbal descriptions in the laddering tasks with pictures, sounds, or videos. From the respondents' perspective, the digital execution offered easy participation independent of place and time as well as an effortless return of the survey. The increased respondent-friendliness facilitates higher response rates. In addition, sharing of the survey with peers via social media and e-mail would be easy, a feature useful in snowball sampling, for example.

In the absence of software specifically designed for digital APT, this survey was conducted by customizing the matrix functions of a standard web-based survey and reporting tool. This performed well in the data collection, but was laborious in the analysis phase necessitating the following: The Implication Matrices had to be constructed manually on Excel, the in- and out-degrees, explanatory powers as well as cut-off levels had to be calculated manually, and the Hierarchical Value Maps had to be drawn individually with PowerPoint. Nevertheless, this pilot demonstrated the capability of even a standard web-based survey tool to execute digitally customized APT laddering, thereby lowering the threshold for similar future research undertakings. The wider implementation of digitally customized APT in tourism research and management would, however, benefit from the development of tailor-made software. The software would contribute to a more flexible instrument construction by automatically organizing the entered attributes, consequences and values into matrices, allowing the adding of item descriptions and files for further information. In particular, the automated calculation of the Implication Matrices and key figures as well as the possibility of experimenting with different cut-off levels and subsets of the data would facilitate data analysis. System-generated Hierarchical Value Maps would be welcomed for illustration and reporting as well as viewing the data exclusively from the perspective of a single element or means-end chain. Modern graphic tools could even convert the thus far static HVMs into dynamic means-end presentations based on modifications of the cut-off level to highlight the dominant chains and elements as well as their respective significance.

Digitally Customized APT Compared to Other Laddering Techniques

The comparison of digitally customized APT with non-customized forms revealed methodological benefits; the customization of the laddering process improves the quality of data,

thus arguing for the replacement of conventional APT with customized APT whenever possible. Moreover, the digital survey format contributed to several operational benefits for the researcher as well as provided practical benefits for the respondents; both of which provide strong support for replacing paper and pencil APT with computerized, albeit non-customized laddering. In surveys, especially with large samples, the printing and mailing of questionnaires as well as the manual entry of responses become burdensome and hamper the use of quantitative APT laddering to its full potential.

Despite this study being the first endeavor to digitally customize the APT process, a somewhat similar experiment has been made with mapping tourists' mental representations in choice situations using the online Causal Network Elicitation Technique (CNET). This is also a computerized laddering method, but there are fundamental differences between CNET and digitally customized APT. Firstly, CNET is fully inductive, it uses an open format and relies entirely on the spontaneous and unaided recall of items. The CNET survey tool automatically interprets and categorizes the respondents' open answers, which requires sophisticated programming using string recognition algorithms and extensive databases (Dellaert, Arentze, and Horeni 2014; Dellaert et al. 2017; Horeni et al. 2014). By contrast, recognition-based APT is from the programming point of view less demanding as the elements to be laddered are presented to the respondents, not construed by the software. Secondly, CNET elicits only "attribute – benefit connections" omitting the highest level of universal values as well as the "functional consequences-psychosocial consequences" connections that provide a more elaborate understanding of visitors' value structures (Diedericks, Erasmus, and Donoghue 2020; Reynolds 2006; Reynolds and Phillips 2009). Understandably, the mapping of four-level means-end hierarchies with CNET would be an even more challenging task for the automatic text recognition algorithms and databases (cf. Horeni et al. 2014). Hence, resting on recognition instead of recall, digitally customized APT not only offers a straightforward tool to uncovering the means-end chains but also generates a more fine-grained and complete hierarchical value structure than CNET.

The "None of these" –> "What, then" option in the digitally customized APT process overlapped with the inductive CNET logic, but due to software limitations, further laddering from these newly emerged elements was not possible. Once such technology becomes available and reliable, it might be possible to freely elicit the attributes, consequences, and values from the respondents using open field answering as has been experimented with CNET (Horeni et al. 2014). However, such a process would no longer represent APT, which is a recognition-based association of designated elements. Instead, it would methodologically approach soft laddering and CNET, both of which are characterized by induction. Therefore, for this study's purpose—to develop and test digitally customized APT—the current implementation where digital means were used to introduce customization into the hard laddering task while still maintaining its quantitative character, was appropriate. However, future software developments of unprompted digital laddering may open new research possibilities that blur the boundaries between soft and hard laddering. It should, however, be emphasized that such alternatives are technically far more challenging, because the algorithms and databases need to be tailored to each case separately whereas digitally customized APT is relatively easy to conduct with existing survey tools.

Conclusions

This research developed, tested, and evaluated a new, digital, and interactively customized version of the Association Pattern Technique (Hofstede et al. 1998) for quantitative means-end research in tourism. The pilot investigation comprising 956 visitors to nine Finnish national parks indicated that the digital customization of laddering matrices offers methodological benefits compared to non-customized APT while the electronic format per se yields practical benefits both for the researcher and the respondents. The empirical results demonstrated the instrument's feasibility and potential for tourism research and management by disclosing the construction of consumer value as well as the universal values of the examined nature-based tourists. Hence, this methodological study offers insight and impetus for future laddering research.

Interactively customized APT fulfilled several methodological laddering assumptions better than traditional APT with fixed matrices (Grunert and Grunert 1995; Phillips and Reynolds 2009; Reynolds and Phillips 2009); it contributed to producing considered responses and a reduction in misunderstandings, as well as delivering complete means-end chains while also supporting a more contextualized data collection and a relevant sample composition. In addition, the electronic survey execution, when compared to traditional paper and pencil APT, provided practical benefits related to survey construction and administration as well as participation. Therefore, the authors argue for an upgrading of non-customized APT to a digital and interactive form as envisaged by Diedericks, Erasmus, and Donoghue (2020). Furthermore, the practical advantages of digital laddering support the replacing of paper and pencil surveys with computerized, albeit non-customized APT whenever possible.

Despite several methodological advantages, customized APT is still based on passive recognition of items instead of their active recollection. Consequently, its validity relies on the inductive or otherwise well-justified and thorough a priori determination of the elements to be laddered (Hofstede et al. 1998). Future software developments may allow an unprompted determination of all elements throughout the laddering task, thereby blurring the boundary between digitally customized APT and inductive soft laddering; this would inevitably change the nature of APT laddering and even risk its original benefits. Thus, mixed-method approaches consisting of a qualitative laddering pre-study or a thorough literature review followed by

quantitative, digitalized APT are still recommended (cf. Vriens and Hofstede 2000).

The new instrument proved effective in examining the clientele's construction of value in tourism. In the examined nature-based context, it concretely disclosed the visitors' prominent means-end chains as well as the relationships between individual elements. Of particular managerial significance is the disclosure of the universal values, which often remain concealed, but guide tourists' behavior and decision-making. These end values, together with insight into tourists' stepwise construction of value, help to lay the foundation for efficient tourism management, for example customer segmentation, destination positioning, service development, and external marketing communication—regardless of the tourism sector or type.

The empirical results are confined to similar, independent and unfacilitated nature-based settings, but they should inspire all nature-based tourism researchers and practitioners to consider consumer value as an integrated construct with several "attribute – consequence – values" avenues that can be examined with digitally customized APT. Due to its theoretical means-end foundation, this upgraded version of APT is transferable to other tourism contexts and also beyond them to virtually any consumption setting. While demonstrating the potential of customized APT, this study has simultaneously attempted to indicate the benefits of tailor-made APT software in facilitating future research projects. Once such software becomes available, digitally customized APT should be validated in relation to non-customized APT—both paper & pencil and computerized—in the same manner as non-customized APT has been validated with soft laddering interviews (Langbroek and De Beuckelaer 2007; Russell et al. 2004). Finally, when conducting actual empirical research using online river sampling, the non-probability nature of the sample needs to be taken into account.

COVID-19 Statement

This means-end research focused on the general construction of consumer value in nature-based tourism aiming to make a methodological contribution to quantitative laddering. The new instrument was tested on domestic visitors to Finnish national parks, whose access was unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, to the contrary, the COVID-induced restrictions on foreign travel as well as indoor activities resulted in the popularity of Finnish national parks reaching a record high in 2020 and 2021. The authors state that this increase did not affect the methodological contribution nor managerial implications discussed.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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ESKO SORAKUNNAS

This dissertation scrutinizes the consumer value of nature-based tourism in Finnish national parks from three perspectives: experiential, compositional and dynamic. The findings portray the perceived value as experiential, personal, context-dependent and multidimensional. This corresponds to the consumer dominant logic of marketing and the broad ecosystem view of the context. The theorized findings are applicable beyond nature-based settings to tourism and experiential consumption in general.

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