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Benchmarking of Outdoor Activity Facilities

An analysis of German hiking facilities and its implications to Finland

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ABSTRACT
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The health effects of regular physical activity play an integral part in the promotion of outdoor participation. Well-maintained and marketed outdoor facilities encourage in this regard people to be more active outside of their homes.

The aim of this study is to analyse popular German outdoor facilities in order to identify good working practices in Germany that can potentially be applied in Finland with the purpose of encouraging Finnish people to go outdoors more often. The study was conducted in cooperation between the University of Jyväskylä and Suomen Latu. The main research questions was: What knowledge can Suomen Latu gain from the administration of popular German hiking facilities in order to encourage Finnish people to go outdoors more often?

Six semi-structured interviews with German and Finnish outdoor experts were conducted to explore the environmental differences in which nature participation takes place in both countries. Furthermore, authorities of German outdoor facilities, such as national parks and distinct travel regions/trails were interviewed to discover successful practices that attract German people to go outdoors. The Atlas.ti programme was utilised to organise and partly analyse the collected interview data. Finally, content analysis of webpages of the respective examined German outdoor facilities provided additional information to complete the case studies.

The results suggest that there is no coherent way-marking system in Finland. Nevertheless, outdoor participation remains to be heavily supported by local municipalities and other governmental institutions in Finland, such as Metsähällitus. Finnish people are increasingly interested in day trips. Appropriate outdoor facilities that are easily accessible and do not demand long travels would respond well to the contemporary trend to be active on a regular base outdoors. Popular examples of well-administrated and marketed German outdoor facilities may build an appropriate base to develop similar facilities in Finland, such as tree-top trails, E-paths and roller skating tracks.

When drawing a comparison to Finland, it should not be forgotten that the outdoor culture in Germany bases on different historical and cultural circumstances. In other words, facilities that work well in Germany, do not necessarily find a successful application in Finland.

Keywords
outdoor facilities, benchmarking, hiking, outdoor management, Germany

CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

Being outdoors offers a vast variety of possibilities to participate in recreational leisure activities, such as hiking, cycling, canoeing and skiing. For this reason, the outdoors is recognised as an environment that offers potential to meet the increasing demand for people to be physically active outside of their homes. Finland, with its thousands of lakes and its large forest areas, offers a surrounding for everybody to enjoy nature. However, it is not certain to what extent Fins are satisfied with the pure existence of lakes and forests. For some people, there might be need for special outdoor facilities and over-night opportunities in order to encourage them to enjoy the Finnish nature.

The North of Finland demonstrates how successfully implemented outdoor facilities, alongside accommodation possibilities, attract people in large numbers to go outdoors. The South of Finland, by contrast, still remains to be a place where people mostly enjoy their leisure privately in summer cottages. (Pouta et al. 2006) Considering that most Finnish people live in the Southern part of the country, the potential to attract people to go outdoors more often via the implementation of attractive outdoor facilities is certainly possible. For this reason, municipal spent services have to consider what type of facilities may be established in the future in order to get people more often out of their homes and cottages, and into the nature. Pursuing this ambition can have various positive effects, such as better health among Finnish people through increased outdoor participation and also strengthened local economies that benefit from, for example, increased over-night stay expenditures.

Suomen Latu (2012a), the Central Association for Recreational Sports and Outdoor Activities in Finland, is the main organisation that is in charge of recreational outdoor sport in Finland. Seemingly, the non-governmental organisation, with approximately 70.000 members, recognised the need to promote outdoor activity participation via the implementation of outdoor facilities. In 2012, Suomen Latu sought to identify successful international facilities that encourage people to go outdoors. In the course of this process, the organisation started looking around the world for facilities that encourage people to go outdoors (Suomen Latu 2014b). With the gathered knowledge, the outdoor body hopes to promote the establishment of new outdoor facilities also in Finland and, therefore, inspire people to enjoy the great Finnish outdoors more often. In this regard, Germany was alsanalo recognised to become a part of the benchmarking project. Ultimately, the present study seeks to present and analyse

selected German outdoor facilities in order to increase the knowledge-base for Suomen Latu's research.

The topic of the present study originated from my professor Dr. Hanna Vehmas. Suomen Latu contacted her and suggested offering students from the University of Jyväskylä research that is part of one of the organisation's projects. Since I have a close relationship with nature myself and like to be outdoors, I was keen to be involved in the research and also, because I was asked to conduct research about hiking facilities that are located in my home country Germany. As already implied, the study is part of Suomen Latu's project "Benchmarking of Outdoor Activities Facilities". Therefore, the research process of the present study was closely linked to the organisation's objective, which is to encourage Finnish people to move more extensively outdoors. (Suomen Latu 2012b)

Well-organised and attractive hiking trails offer a distinct opportunity to inspire people to be active in nature. For this reason, the current study is located in the field of recreational outdoor activity and, partly, health promotion as outdoor facilities generally seek to promote healthy outdoor activity participation. In order to accomplish the purpose of the study, it was important to identify possible improvements with regard to the outdoor scenery in Finland. To approach this issue, a semi-structured interview with a Finnish outdoor expert was conducted. Similar to this, the same type of interview was completed with a German outdoor expert. The interview data was meant to provide knowledge concerning the general outdoor scenery in Germany as this would help to identify basic differences between Finland and Germany. Finally, semi-structured interviews with authorities of German hiking facilities seek to provide a broad understanding to provide Suomen Latu with ideas about how to improve allocation and establishment of hiking facilities in Finland. Case studies have been constructed around each examined German hiking facility.

The particular hiking trail authorities were approached for interviews in June and July 2013. An initial interview took place in January 2013 and the majority of the interviews were held in October 2013. The last interview was finally conducted in April 2014. The autumn term 2013 was reserved to collected the majority of the data and, moreover, to make the data accessible to Suomen Latu. Finally, autumn and spring of 2014 and 2015 were dedicated to finalize the study in its whole.

The present study contributes knowledge about outdoor facilities to provide Suomen Latu with ideas that encourage them in their future promotion to establish new outdoor facilities in Finland, or to endorse the improvement of existing facilities. Moreover, the study highlights limits in the development of outdoor facilities. The Finnish Everyman's right, in this regard, allows Finns to explore almost the entire Finnish nature. At the first glance, this seems to be a unique opportunity for people when going outdoors as there are basically no boundaries. However, the right may interfere with the development of at least commercially-oriented outdoor facilities. The relevance of this assumption is sought to be proven in the course of this study. Finally, the term "outdoor participation" refers to a variety of physical activities that take place in the nature. For this study, "hiking" was selected to be the most relevant outdoor activity that correlates with outdoor participation.

2 BENCHMARKING AS A WAY TO DETECT BEST PRACTICES

According to Lucertini, Nicolò and Telmon (1995, 59), the concept of benchmarking describes organisations' aims to evaluate and, especially, to improve their performances. In this sense, one key objective of benchmarking is to carry out the best practices of other organisations. The good working practices found can subsequently be modified and, finally, utilised in one's own organisational structure, with the purpose of achieving improvement of the contemporary existing processes.

Even though benchmarking ensures the utilisation of best practices from other organisations, Radnor and Robinson (2000, 3) recognise that a certain amount of innovation is essential in order to guarantee a process of development within the organisation that is benchmarking. This aspect needs to be considered since especially innovations attract the attention of the customers who are ultimately paying for products or services. Dattakumar and Jagadeesh (2003, 192) support the approach of improving the quality of processes, services and products within an organisation by stating at the same time, however, that resources have to be allocated carefully when applying benchmarking measures. Organisations have to deal with the limited capital that is available for their purposes.

Benchmarking as a technique is intended to identify best practices. This task of observation is not only time consuming, but also requires a certain amount of financial resources. In order to guarantee best practices that are not just identically adopted from another entity, it is important for organisations to realize that they also have to invest time and resources in the development of the adopted best practices to modify them in a way that make them unique and suitable for the own business practices and goals. Bhutta and Huq (1999) raise this concept to another level by stating that benchmarking should not be mistaken with "spying, espionage or stealing". The authors claim that benchmarking is actually a way to break with old habits that should be adjusted in order to foster strategic and operational performance.

The Global Benchmarking Network (2014, 22-23) distinguishes two distinct types of benchmarking. Informal benchmarking, on one hand, is a process with indefinite starting and ending points. It seeks to draw a comparison between one's own and others' performances and activities. In particular, this approach seeks to guarantee a continuous learning process as comparisons are drawn constantly. Formal benchmarking, on the other hand, is a much more

systematic approach and is particularly assigned by various organisations. Moreover, formal benchmarking can be categorised in two different types. Performance benchmarking refers to the assessment of the procedures or methods that are similar to each another. This technique is often conducted to reveal potential for further development. Best practice benchmarking, on the contrary, draws comparisons between similar procedures and methods in order to reveal, modify and apply the learned knowledge.

Zairi and Ahmed (1999) support the idea of the best practice benchmarking. Searching for the best processes and activities available is considered a key element in the best practice approach. Moreover, it is also necessary to evaluate and validate the gained data in order to identify to what extent the new knowledge can benefit the own performance. In this regard, revealing best practices is considered important. However, knowing how to modify and implement the new practices is the centre of this approach. However, the benchmarking process is not finished by purely adopting best practices. The authors state the importance of routinizing newly internalised processes and behaviour, as only this displays successful knowledge transfer. In order to finalise the benchmarking process and generate actual benefit from the new routines, the management should emphasise reviewing the adopted procedures. This way guarantees a valuable base for the creation of further expertise, which can eventually result in competitive advantages.

According to Freytag and Hollensen (2001, 31), implementing the changes based on the previous comparison will only be as good as the people who implement the changes. For this reason, it is important to convince everybody within the organisation about the changes that lie ahead. An organisation's culture develops over many years. Hence, it is challenging to make people pursue other routines within the organisation, based on the benchmarking outcome. For this reason, an organisation has not just to consider how changes can be implemented, but more importantly, how the modifications have to be communicated to the employees, as their actions and performances influence significantly the success of the benchmarking measures. Finally, implementing the benchmarking results takes time and as Freytag and Hollensen (2001, 31-32) advice, will be a process that has very often no fixed ending point. For this reason, organisations have to be cautious when evaluating the benchmarking outcome since this will only present a snapshot of the gained experience and quality.

Benchmarking has to be seen as a process that not only requires the adoption of best practice, but also demands everybody in the organisation to adopt according to the changes. Only in this way benchmarking does not remain a method of simply copying someone else's thoughts, but an approach that lives from innovation. Anderson and McAdam (2004, 478) even specify the need for innovation when applying benchmarking measures. The authors consider "lead benchmarking" as a concept that is not just focused on looking at others' best practice that is a result of the past, but they state that an organisation has to focus on the future while applying benchmarking measures in order to meet the demands of a rapidly changing and competitive environment. In this sense, an organisation will only gain best possible benchmarking results, when it is willing to adopt in every area that promises long-term success.

Despite the benefits benchmarking offers to organisations, limitations that come alongside this concept cannot be ignored. Bhutta and Huq (1999) explain that only the transfer and internalisation of knowledge ensures a successful benchmarking approach. Purely identifying best practices does not ultimately lead to a competitive advantage or success. Moreover, while internalising new practices or behaviour, organisations often neglect involving their employees in the benchmarking approach. Staff members that are not aware of the ongoing changes might become frustrated or overwhelmed concerning the new challenges in their daily routine. This can potentially slow down the process of internalisation of best practice and ultimately endanger the entire benchmarking process. Furthermore, benchmarking is often rather costly. In fact, time is considered to be the biggest resource that has to be contributed to a successful benchmarking approach, time that cannot be spent otherwise instead. Finally, Freytag and Hollensen (2001, 32) argue that benchmarking does not promise success. Ultimately, the analysed and applied best practice may cause only a short-term advantage

When discussing the issue of "benchmarking" in this study, it is not the intention to claim that German hiking trails build a particular benchmark for other countries, especially for Finland. Even though Germany offers a big variety of popular hiking trails and, therefore, offers well-working practices that come along with these trails, it is not certain that those practices are the very best that are available. However, benchmarking refers to a concept that seeks to identify what is beneficial for an organisation in order to improve its own processes, products and services. In this sense, Germany offers great potential that can be also applied in a modified form by Finland with regard to outdoor facilities that are available and the services offered

alongside such facilities. Therefore, this study seeks to identify good-working differences in Germany that can build a platform from which Suomen Latu can gain ideas for prospective development and promotion processes of outdoor participation in Finland.

3 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES AS A DRIVER OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND CONTRIBUTER TO HEALTH

The *World Health Organization* (2014) describes health to be a resource of everyday life and life in general. For this reason, health needs to be maintained, improved or restored in order to achieve well-being. Physical activity in this regard is a way for people to achieve physical, social and mental health. In particular and as described in Table 1, physical activity increases life expectancy, independence in later years and psychological well-being. On the contrary, an absence of regular physical activity increases the risk of various illnesses such as hypertension, coronary heart disease and cancers (Swiss Federal Office of Sports 2006, 8).

Table 1. Health impact of physical activity (Swiss Federal Office of Sports 2006, 8)

Health impact of physical activity			
Cardiovascular disease	⇩	Life expectancy	⇧
Stroke	⇩	Independence in old age	⇧
Type 2 diabetes	⇩	Psychological well-being	⇧
Obesity	⇩		
Colon cancer	⇩		
Breast cancer	⇩		
Osteoporosis	⇩		
Falls in elderly people	⇩		
Depression	⇩		
Decrease in the risk for this disease	⇩	Improvement in this aspect of health	⇧

Moreover, health in general is not a final stage of being but rather a process that changes with every situation in life. Health promotion delivers in this sense approaches of action for more health of individuals, demographic groups and entire societies (Altgeld and Kickbusch 2012, 187). In particular, "health promotion is a process of enabling people to increase control over the determinants of health and thereby improve their health" (World Health Organization 1998). This approach of promoting health can be linked to the idea of social marketing since health promotion messages can be conveyed via various marketing channels, as presented in the following subchapters.

Since contemporary decision-making related to the establishment of new outdoor facilities has to be underpinned by strong and supportive evidence, it is crucial to be aware of the health

benefits of being active outdoors. Public health is increasingly acknowledged by international, national and municipal institutions as an area that is worthy of attention and investment. In this regard, outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing and canoeing can contribute to a healthy lifestyle that is driven by physical activity. Consequently, outdoor authorities can utilise this relation between being physically active outdoors and health for the promotion of their ideas for developing new outdoor facilities. Grounded on this thought, the following subchapters present knowledge on which Suomen Latu can base their work in order to promote the establishment and utilisation of various outdoor facilities.

3.1 Social marketing and health promotion to foster establishment and usage of outdoor facilities

According to Grier and Bryant (2005), social marketing as a planned process is closely related to the business-orientated idea of marketing. It is planned and its measures aim to change people's behaviour on a voluntarily basis. At its centre is a target group that has been detected to address its marketing techniques. Those marketing tools might also be similar in its core to commercial marketing tools. For example, the so-called "marketing mix", consumer segmentation, competition analysis et cetera might be techniques that are applied within the social marketing approach. Lefebvre and Flora (1988) claim that the difference between traditional and social marketing lies often within the source of action. Commercial marketing focuses primarily on concrete products and services, whereas social marketing seeks to promote conceptual products, such as ideas, attitudes and lifestyle changes. However, traditional marketing and social marketing are not always easy to distinguish since their actions are based on similar techniques.

Social marketing should not be mistaken with health care marketing, as argued by Birkinshaw (1989, 5). Health care marketing aims to promote the consumption of health care products and services with the ultimate goal to gain profit for its providers. Andreasen (2002, 7) believes that social marketing does not seek to exploit people but rather to improve the welfare of the individuals of the entire society. Moreover, Gordon et al. (2006) state that social marketing focuses not only on voluntary behaviour change but also on the idea of exchange, which refers to the thought that people have to realize that they need to contribute something in order to evoke a change that is beneficial for them.

Social marketing can be addressed to a variety of people, including individuals but also health professionals, organisations and politicians (Gordon et al. 2006). For this reason, this marketing approach offers a great opportunity not only to reach a broad audience but also to affect their thinking and eventually their behaviour. However, social marketers have to be aware of their target group. Grier and Bryant (2005) recommend that audience segmentation helps to identify a group of individuals according to perceptions, lifestyles and behaviour. As a result, customized marketing messages find easier recognition among those subgroups as messages with non-individualized content.

Not only the content of the marketing message is important but also with what this message has to compete once it has been received by the respective respondent. Traditional marketers have to compete with products and services of other organisations within the same market. Social marketers, instead, have to deal with competitive behavioural options. This means in effect that individuals have a set of already existing options that compete eventually with the messages that health promoters provide. For this reason, social marketing has to offer beneficial features that make the healthy choices the more attractive ones. Only this marketing approach will result in a competitive advantage because it displays greater attractiveness for individuals that receive the marketing message and, finally, adopt their behaviour accordingly. (Grier and Bryant 2005)

As explained by Grier and Bryant (2005), the marketing mix, including its "four P" approach, is another theoretical subject that social marketers utilise and that supports the planning and implementation process of the respective marketing model. The first "P" refers to *product* and eventually to the set of benefits which the product promises to its consumers. Kotler et al. (2002, 34) divide the product into its core, which offers the consumer a certain benefit that results from the performance of the behaviour, and into the actual product which displays only the desired behaviour. Grier and Bryant (2005) argue that a product has to offer an answer to people's question or problems as this offers real value to consumers. The *price* of the product displays the costs a consumer has to carry in order to acquire the benefits that come alongside the product. Furthermore, the price describes the value of the product for customers. Since health promoters, however, commonly do not aim to make profit via selling products or services but rather encouraging people to live healthier, incentives, such as prizes, are often offered to encourage people to undertake a behaviour change (Lefebvre and Flora 1988). *Place* characterises the distribution channel and the point of sales of a product. In social

marketing, however, place refers to the point where the action takes place, namely where the target market acquires relevant information that helps them to change their behaviour. Lastly, *promotion* displays all communicational activities that are intended to convey the product's benefits to the customer. The variety of activities that are related to promotion is broad. Special promotional events, social media and print media display only a brief set of options that social marketers can consider to present their marketing messages. (Grier and Bryant 2005) As in regard of public health and health promotion, the marketing mix offers health professionals, who take advantage of social marketing, a tool that allows them to bring the benefits of their health programmes close to the relevant audience in order to convince them to adopt their attitudes.

Since marketing seeks to change changing people's behaviour, it is an important tool for health promoters as behaviour change towards a healthier lifestyle is the core of their work. In fact, social marketing and health promotion have crucial common features, as described by Griffiths et al (2008). As already approached, both social marketing and health promotion mean to influence people's behaviour. They not only use similar methods to achieve their objectives but they also complement each other. For example, health education offers both social marketing and health promotion a basis to convince people in pursuing a healthier lifestyle. Moreover, social marketing heavily focuses its actions towards distinct customer groups. Health promoters often adopt this approach of strong customer orientation. Target-specific messages promise them as a result an effective way to convey their idea of making healthy life choices.

As health promotion professionals seek to explore the nature of unhealthy lifestyles and, thus, acquire a real understanding of people's contemporary behaviour, social marketers can take advantage from this experience by customising their marketing messages according to the behaviour of specific customer groups. Moreover, the theoretical background of health promotion offers social marketers a comprehensive base of knowledge that can be utilised when constructing marketing strategies. In contrast, the analytical nature of social marketing (market research, marketing mix, competitor analysis, strategy development, et cetera) helps health promoters to bring their knowledge tailored to relevant target groups and individuals. For this reason, social marketing and health promotion can be considered as a complementary approach, as shown in Figure 1. This idea allows addressing health programmes not only to individuals but also to policy makers. (Griffiths et al. 2008)
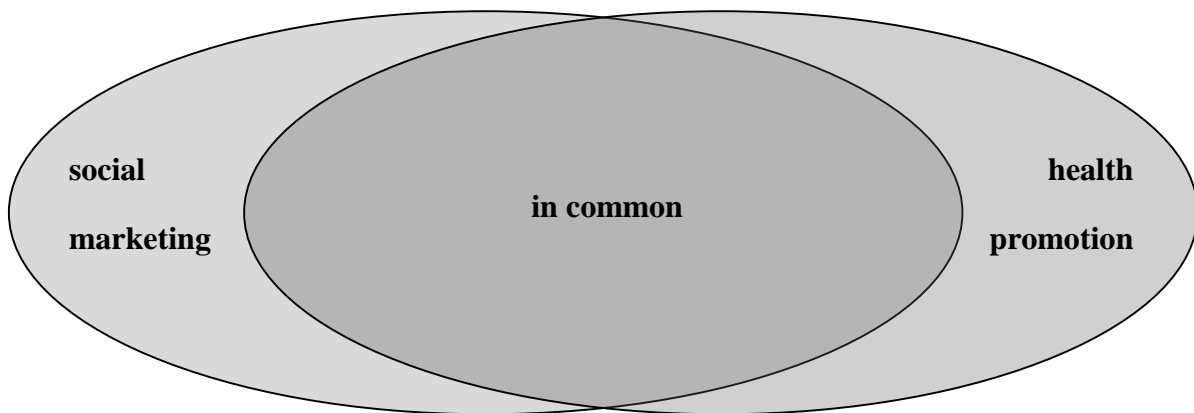
Figure 1. A common core to both social marketing and health promotion, but with areas that
are separate and distinct (Griffiths et al. 2008)

Grier and Bryant (2005) argue that health programmes that are meant to be promoted via social marketing measures have to focus on customers' needs, demands and desires. Consequently, consumer-orientated market research should be conducted in order to establish health programmes that display a high understanding of the respective target group. Only such an approach ensures an effective way to convey health-relevant content that ultimately benefits the health of consumers. In particular, strong scientific evidence should build an integral aspect when developing health programmes. Such an approach not only promises the best possible results once the programmes are launched but also enhances the reliability of social marketers when promoting those programmes. In fact, the pure intention to provide helpful and satisfying information is the base upon which to build long-lasting and successful consumer relationships.

Besides the benefits social marketing promises to have for health promoters, it has also limitations as stated by Lefebvre and Flora (1988). Not do individuals need to be open for behaviour change but also policy makers have to be driven to provide new attitudes with the space they need by establishing a supportive environment. Moreover, unethical and non-evidence based marketing practices are in the long-term counterproductive as customer relationships need a trustworthy basis in order to grow. Social marketing should also be careful in claiming the contemporary behaviour of individuals is wrong as this might irritate consumers and, as a result, make them less enthusiastic towards social marketing messages.

Furthermore, Grier and Bryant (2005) state that formative research and evaluation measures are two key challenges of social marketing. Only comprehensive research and a subsequent evaluation of the influence that a product has on consumers, guarantees a reliable marketing programme that is free of manipulation and has always room for further improvement.

Social marketing applications can be successful drivers to deliver health promotion messages. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1999) categorises outdoor activities, such as casual walking and fishing as light physical activity, brisk walking and hiking as moderate physical activity, and jogging/running and mountain climbing as vigorous physical activity. As a result, the dose of physical activity is considered an indicator for the health-related benefits of an activity, according to the assumption: the higher the dose, the higher the health-related outcomes (Rankinen and Bouchard 2002). The Swiss Federal Office of Sports (2006, 10) specifies this approach by stating that the added health benefits decrease with an increasing training level and that contemporarily lower trained people can expect the greatest added health benefits, as shown in Figure 2. These effects of outdoor activities on health should be remembered by outdoor authorities as they can help them to promote outdoor activities among people and also assist them to convince responsible investors to maintain outdoor facilities or even establish new ones.
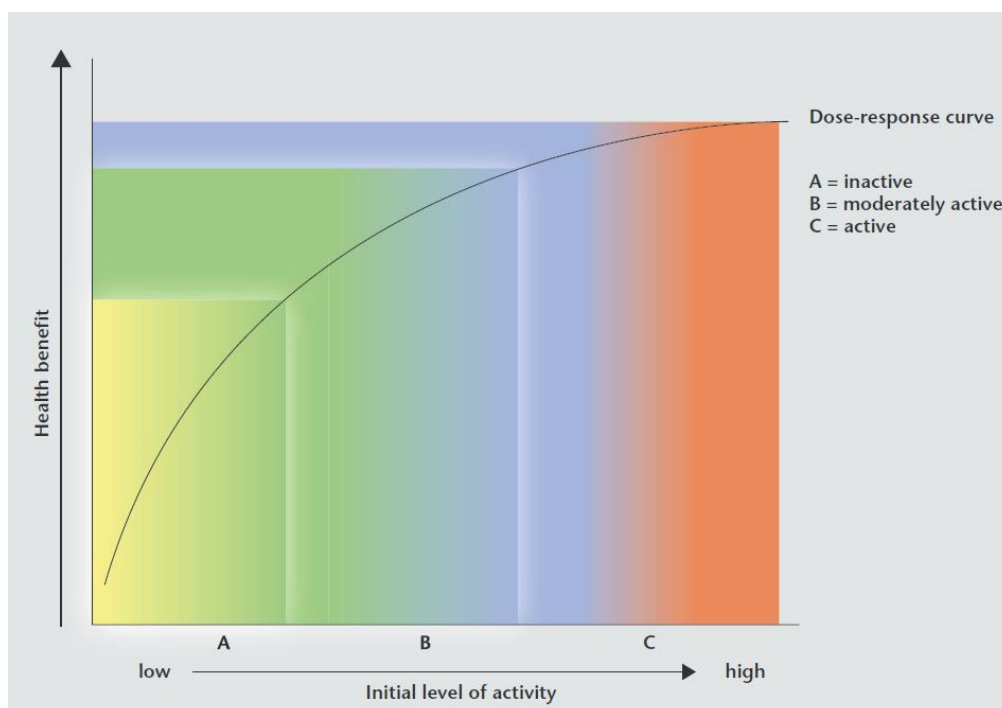

Figure 2. Dose-response relationship by Swiss Federal Office of Sports (2006, 10)

3.2 Physical activity from the perspective of an ecological framework

Suomen Latu's goal is to make Finnish people more interested in exercising outdoors. In particular, the organisation strives to promote the establishment of new outdoor facilities. The concept of approaching physical activity from an ecological perspective provides in this sense an understanding about the drivers of individual behaviour. This link between factors that influence one's actions has to be recognised in order to increase provision and demand of outdoor activities. If it is ultimately possible to activate people to be more active outdoors or to simply win more individuals for outdoor activities, it might be, as a result, also easier to convince governmental and non-governmental institutions to invest in the maintenance and establishment of new outdoor facilities as they eventually would be more regularly used.

According to Biddle and Mutrie (2007, 22), people's behaviour to be physically active is influenced not only by individual factors but also by various social and environmental determinants. In particular, Sallis et al. (2008, 466) consider intrapersonal, interpersonal, organisational and physical environmental factors, community and public policy vital for affecting people's physical activity behaviour. Moreover, McLeroy et al. claimed in 1988 that behaviour is influenced by the above-mentioned factors, not approaching physical environmental factors however, and labelling institutional factors instead as organisational factors, but which refers to the same meaning. Sallis et al. McLeroy et al. (1988) state that one's knowledge, attitudes and skills can be considered as intrapersonal factors and also they specify that all aspects are from great importance in regard of their power to influence people's behaviour. Ultimately, all of these factors can be influenced by various intervention possibilities, such as education, incentives and the media. However, not only intrapersonal processes should be determined for an ecological health behaviour approach but also interpersonal factors as they play a crucial part in one's own health behaviour. People's relationships with one another such as between family members, friends and co-workers, influence one's individual behaviour. Therefore, it is important that personal relationships promote healthy behaviour in the course of interpersonal behaviour interventions. For example, it is important not to encourage smoking among friends or family members as this would contribute to the failure of possible implemented health measures.

Institutional or organisational factors represent a third category according to McLeroy et al. (1988). Social institutions that have more or less formal rules and, therefore, obtain

organisational aspects, affect this health influencing factor. Almost every person has experience with organisational institutions, such as day care or kindergarten, school and later work-life. Since those environments play an important role in people's development, they swap order a vital part in people's health behaviour. In particular, the various institutions should be set to promote a healthy life-style via particular health promotion measures, such as healthy food and anti-smoking policies in schools. Related to organisational factors, community factors influence health behaviour as well. According to McLeroy et al. (1988), community has to fulfil three criteria: it refers to groups that people belong to, it refers to relationships within a certain geographical range and it refers to certain power structures within the group. Based on these criteria, a community displays a central part in an individual's life as the community as a whole strongly affects one's own life choices and, therefore, health-related behaviour. A community is naturally based on the relationships between its members. Therefore, community interventions that seek to foster healthy behaviour among the community's members have to consider the relationships between all members as central to any proposed action. Finally, public policy focuses on the health of a population rather than that of a single person. Governmental efforts, such as anti-drug measurements or alcohol advertising restrictions, are considered effective to foster public health. Nevertheless, public policy towards health promotion does not solely aim to restrict and prohibit certain substances or behaviour, but it also seeks to educate people on how to lead a healthier life-style. (McLeroy et al. 1988)

Sallis et al. (2008, 466) point out that every person interacts with the environment at different levels. Therefore, the strength of an ecological model in the field of health promotion can be seen as being an approach that promotes multi-level interventions that seek to change people's physical activity actions in order to improve their health behaviour. Spence and Lee (2003) specify this concept by stating that the environment has a direct and indirect influence on people's health behaviour. For example, the outdoor climate is considered to be an indirect influence over people's health behaviour as heat and coldness affect the decision whether to go outdoors for a walk or not. A direct stimulus may be an alcohol-ban in stadiums as it restricts people to drink alcoholic beverages.

Furthermore, four principles of the ecological model are introduced by Sallis et al. (2008, 270) that explain the concept in its whole. First, and as already mentioned earlier, the researchers explain that many different levels or environments affect people's health

behaviour. Second, the distinct environments that influence people's behaviour also interact among one another. For example, the present public policy environment often also affects the community environment of a person, since public decision-making does not just affect single individuals but often also the entire community. Third, interventions that seek to enhance people's health behaviour should not focus on one single level. Multi-level interventions are instead claimed to be more effective in developing long-term changes. Finally, ecological interventions are claimed to be most effective when they are tailored to specific behaviour. In this regard, it is important to identify the determinants for certain behaviour before it can be changed.

4   MANAGEMENT OF OUTDOOR APPLICATIONS IN FINLAND AND GERMANY

As stated by Tyrväinen et al. (2002), nature tourism displays an increasingly growing sector of the tourism industry in Europe. Especially rural areas are claimed to be places for future developments in this area. This ongoing change leads to a shift in the usage of natural habitats, such as forests. From the economic perspective, forests used to only serve as a provider of timber to various industries. With people's growing demand for recreational outdoor activities, forests are now also considered to be a base for economic growth in the tourism industry. Bell et.al (2007) underline the rising importance of outdoor activities by referring to changes in people's consumption behaviour and life-style and to the availability of more time for leisure activities.

Due to the growth of nature-related holidays and activities for individuals, authorities from the outdoor sector face new challenges in meeting the new demand. The following subchapters describes how new trends in the outdoor market require the attention of outdoor planners and organisations from both the private and public sector and how they have to cope with changing customer patterns and preferences. Furthermore, the outdoor sceneries in Finland and Germany are presented in the following subchapters as they build the centre of the present study. It is important to consider features, conditions and ongoing trends in both countries in order to understand how future changes can benefit the development of outdoor facilities to meet the demand of customers, especially in Finland. The concept of recreational outdoor management that is presented in the following is also sought to contribute relevant insights to Suomen Latu's approach in promoting outdoor participation.

4.1   Outdoor recreation management to meet the new demand

In the present section, outdoor recreation management is discussed as an approach that seeks to cope with the growing interest in outdoor activities. This study seeks to investigate outdoor facilities, in part from the view-point of their administration. Therefore, this concept is important as it provides an understanding of the importance of recreational outdoor facilities for the welfare of local communities and public health in general. In particular, economic effects that result from intentional engagements in nature habitats are discussed. Moreover, trends that characterise contemporary and future challenges for recreational outdoor planners

are presented. Finally, the health aspect that recreational outdoor facilities offer are explained in more detail as they build a profound base on which outdoor authorities can ground potential intervention decisions. Since mental and physical health is very often associated with a relaxing environment that offers physical activity (Ulrich et.al 1991), recreational outdoor facilities offer a great chance to foster public health.

Bell et.al (2007) discuss the importance of outdoor recreation management in order to meet the increasing demand of nature tourism and outdoor participation. According to the authors (2007, 6), the term *outdoor recreation* refers to "activities that people undertake out of doors in places where they can access nature or green areas, mainly as part of their daily or weekend routines". Moreover, the International Ecotourism Society (2014) defines *nature tourism* or *ecotourism* as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people".

Simpson et.al (2008, 4) consider natural habitats, such as forests, an important environment for people's leisure. Therefore, the public and private sector have the potential to develop opportunities that encourage people to go outdoors more often and, as a result, create value for people and ultimately themselves. As ecotourism is increasingly popular, outdoor recreation planners have to find ways to channel people's interest in outdoor activities that are interesting and exciting to them. This means that more chances that offer an active participation in natural environments, such as in forests and lake areas, should be created. Subsequently, natural habitats no longer only serve as a base for industry, but rather as recreational environments for outdoor activities, such as walking, hiking and canoeing.

According to Tisdell (2003), nature tourism can cause negative effects, for instance environmental pollution, disturbance of wildlife and unnecessary construction. However, ecotourism offers also economic opportunities when implemented carefully and in a sustainable manner. Nature tourism can foster local employment and it can create opportunities for entrepreneurs to establish profitable businesses that seek to bring local nature closer to domestic and international visitors and tourists that are willing to pay for offered products and services. Wells (1997) shares these thoughts, claiming, however, that the development of especially local ecotourism is often restricted by a deficiency of practical expertise and the non-availability of financial resources. Moreover, local outdoor facilities

often face challenges in competing with well-developed facilities that attract large numbers of visitors.

Eagles (2003) defines major trends that refer to the increased need of outdoor facilities and to the necessity of outdoor recreation management. The Internet offers people a medium to obtain and share information very quickly. This allows them to access information about respective outdoor facilities at all times. Moreover, making the decision to visit a certain national park or trail is done in short order. On the one hand, this trend of information accessibility offers benefits to distinct outdoor facilities as people get to know about them without facing any obstacles. On the other hand, this also brings along challenges for recreational outdoor managers who have to deal with increasingly well-informed and educated people that are caring about the environment. Consequently, outdoor authorities have to meet people's growing expectations of an exciting outdoor adventure.

Another trend described by Eagles (2003) argues that businesses have to deal increasingly with an aging and well-informed society which has both a higher income and increased leisure time and that those people will be a key customer group of outdoor facilities. People that fit this pattern will not only visit nature sights more often but they also display potential to be involved in voluntary work related to recreational outdoor facilities. In an aging society, however, developing an infrastructure that ensures easy access to facilities and that offers an appropriate network of over-night stay possibilities is a key objective when promoting outdoor activity participation.

Bell et.al (2007) describe a trend that refers to the rising importance of physical activity and health for people. The authors argue that recreational outdoor activities represent a surrounding in which one can be active and increase one's health. Especially since people live increasingly in urban areas, natural habitats demonstrate a growing opportunity to reconnect with nature through the pursuit of outdoor activity. Being outdoors helps to restore energy deficits caused from daily stress and exhaustion. Moreover, the nature offers people with various disabilities or people with special needs a setting in which they can regain strength and energy.

Although Bell et.al (2007) claim that the green outdoors does not automatically make people more active, they argue that natural environments build a platform that allows them to be

active. As physical activity is often connected to health, Morris (2003) discusses that outdoor activities such as walking, hiking and cycling are key drivers of people's physical and mental health. Especially since exploring natural habitats by foot is not related to any constraints in regards of the need for special equipment or pre-knowledge, walking and hiking are seen to be effective ways to maintain, restore or improve health. As this activity can easily be undertaken with peers or in groups, the social aspect of walking and hiking together with the relaxing nature scenery is considered to be a key driver of mental health. Other outdoor activities, such as canoeing and skiing, are associated with similar benefits.

4.2   Hiking in Finland and Germany

People perceive hiking very differently, depending on one's own perceptions towards it. Therefore, it is difficult to define hiking in a manner that covers its meaning to all associated with it. For some, hiking refers only to a little walk through the nature, whereas to others, it may refer to a longer walk that is clearly more demanding than just a little walk in the woods. Irrespective, it is important to approach hiking in the following subchapters as this concept builds the core area of the present study. In particular hiking in Germany is relevant to be discussed in order to explain how German hiking facilities function and, moreover, to get an understanding of the importance of German hiking authorities. Hiking in Finland is discussed too in order to provide an overview of the contemporary outdoor scenery in Finland.

The term hiking is utilised in various ways. For example, the tourism sector often describes hiking as a leisure activity that is combined with other activities, such as Nordic-walking and trekking. However, all of these activities have one feature in common, covering a large area at a different pace. Whether it is done by foot, bicycle, horse or ski, hiking is supposed to be a nature experience that is healthy and, moreover, fosters social and cultural interaction. (Leder 2007, 321, as stated in Deutsches Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie 2010, 20)

In Germany, hiking is commonly associated with going for a casual walk. However, hiking often refers to a more intensive style of walking and to something that is well-planned in advance. The *German Tourism Association* (Deutscher Tourismusverband) and *German Hiking Association* (Deutscher Wanderverband) developed guidelines that help to separate hiking from walking, as presented in table 2 (2002, 11). However, the displayed characteristics might seem quite odd for a person from Finland or even from Germany, as he

or she may not have ever considered if there is an actual distinction between hiking and walking. Table 2, in this sense, is meant to highlight the professional approach that the German Hiking and Tourism Associations pursue when dealing with such concepts.

Table 2. Hiking vs. Walking by the German Tourism Association and German Hiking Association (Deutscher Tourismusverband und Deutscher Wanderverband 2002, 11)

Feature	Hiking	Walking
Length	½ day	+/- 1 hour
Pace	+/- 13 km	a few km
Preparation	moderate to rapidly	leisurely/gently
Equipment	all-weather clothing, baggage, provisions	umbrella, coat
Motive	experience of nature, physical challenge	stretching legs, to get some fresh air
Location	mainly elsewhere	mainly locally

Despite the clear distinction between hiking and walking by the German Tourism Association and German Hiking Association, the transition from walking to hiking is rather smooth, as described by Brämer (2008). Even though hiking and walking are very often still distinguished purely by speed and length variables, Brämer claims that individual condition, motivation and perception of hiking and walking define whether someone is walking or hiking. Moreover, he mentions simple pleasure to be a distinct motive that drives people to go outdoors. The focus of today's hikers is rather being surrounded by nature than the pursuit of walking or hiking itself. Moreover, instead of hiking as many kilometres as possible, people seek to have an experience that gives them comfort and relaxation. For this reason, Brämer (2008) describes hiking as an activity that increasingly has a certain wellness factor for people. Our contemporary leisure market is full of activities that require new technologies that offer action and entertainment. Hiking, on the contrary, offers people an escape from this trend. Exactly this feature is the temptation for modern hikers, since hiking allows people to move slower and to take some time off from their daily routines. Moreover, due to the nature experience, they can explore the feeling to rely entirely on their capabilities and senses again when being outdoors. For this reason, hiking can be seen as an activity that allows people not only to find back to their routes again but also to find harmony between their body and mind.

According to Vaara and Matero (2011, 269), inhabitants of industrial countries, such as Finland and Germany, display an increasing amount of time for leisure, which is a result of a decreased amount of hours spent at work. Moreover, people progressively tend to settle in urban areas, while pursuing a relatively high living standard. This process brings up a feature of modern societies where people become increasingly alienated from nature. However, due to the possessed time that can be used for leisure activities, people show a growing interest in recreation that can be spent outdoors in nature. Hiking, however, represents only one type of activity that can be promoted via governments, health organisations and outdoor authorities. Therefore, various institutions, whether they operate in the governmental, non-governmental or, in particular, private sector, respond to the trend of an increased interest in outdoor recreation in general and, as a result, provide various outdoor services and products to people. (Vaara and Matero 2011, 269)

4.2.1 Outdoors in Finland

Vaara and Matero (2011, 269-272) argue that 97 % of all Finnish inhabitants participate at least once in a year in recreational outdoor activities. Two out of three Finns are active outdoors even once a week on average (Sievänen 2001, 195). It is claimed that this trend is quite stable. The Natural Resources Institute Finland (2015) argues in this regard that in 2010, the participation rate to go outdoors within the last two month accounted approximately 96 %. However, the regularity and intensity of participation in these types of activities varies significantly among people. An average Finn is able to dedicate approximately 27 % of his or her time for leisure. This time-budget includes, however, all kinds of free time activities. Only 10 % of leisure time is utilised for outdoor recreational activities.

Hallikainen (1998, 141-142) suggests that many Finns seek to go in the wilderness because of motives related "beautiful scenery", "peace and silence", "physical activity", "togetherness" and to "get prey". Moreover, "picking berries or mushrooms", "observing wild animals or plants", "hunting or fishing" and "hiking and trekking" belong to the most popular activities when being outdoors. According to Tyrväinen (2004), approximately 40 % of all Finnish people participate in nature trips that involve at least one overnight stay. Moreover, Finnish people spend an average of nine journeys per year that are related to nature tourism. In 2004, 4,9 million international tourists visited Finland, from which 25 % participated in recreational

outdoor activities. For this reason, Finnish nature is considered to be a main driver that makes foreigners choose Finland as their holiday destination

There are 38 national parks in Finland and also many state-owned recreation areas. Since they are funded by the state, they are freely available for everyone in the country. It is estimated that every year about two million people visit these areas in order to spend their leisure there. (Huhtala 2004, 3) Moreover, the Everyman's right guarantees Finnish people access to land and waterways that are not possessed by the government. For example, mushrooms and berries can be picked everywhere, irrespective of who owns the land and where they grow. The right however stipulates that the land and waterways must not be damaged or disturbed by those who benefit from the right. (Ympäristö 2012). In Finland, berry and mushroom picking is also very popular among the entire population (Wuolio 2006, 20). Since this activity is also considered to be a form of outdoor leisure, it can be seen as a significant motive that makes the Finnish mass keen to go outdoors.

The Finnish Tourist Board (2012a) underlines that the trend of Finns who undertake trips in their own country is increasing. One of the most popular travel destinations inside the country is Lapland, thus demonstrating the significance of nature recreation for Finnish people (Finnish Tourist Board 2012a). Moreover, the statistics from the Finnish Tourist Board (2012b) show that the number of foreign visitors in Finland has been rising 17 % in 2010-2011. Even though many Russians come for short leisure trips to Finnish cities, it can be suggested that the increase of tourism also raises the amount of trips to the Finnish countryside. For example, the most famous area for foreign tourists is North Lapland (Finnish Tourist Board 2012c). However, other areas are interesting for domestic and international tourists. The Finnish Tourist Board (2014) divides Finland into four distinct travel destinations: Lapland in the North, the Lakeland in South-eastern Finland, Helsinki as the capital in the South and the coastal areas and archipelago on the South and West coast of the country. Hiking can take place in all of these areas and in various forms, whether it is, for example, by foot or by boat.

Since the state-owned organisation, *Metsähallitus*, takes care of many trails in Lapland, well-maintained hiking areas and trails are available for outdoor lovers, especially in the Northern part of the country (Metsähallitus 2014a). In addition, other organisations and local authorities contribute their share in maintaining trails and other hiking facilities as well (Metsähallitus

2014b). In this regard, Finnish municipalities contribute outdoor participation in Finland by administrating and maintaining the biggest share of outdoor recreation facilities (The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities 2015). However, some of the summer hiking, nature, wheelchair and walking trails and also biking, skiing, fitness and boating routes lack connection to one another. They are allocated in a well-maintained manner more in the Northern part of the country, especially from the network that belongs to the responsibility of Metsähallitus, as shown in Figure 4 (Metsähallitus 2014c).

Figure 4. Finnish hiking trails administrated by Metsähallitus (2014c)

The most popular everyday outdoor activities in Finland are walking, cycling and jogging. Nordic walking has also emerged as a new trend. The most practiced winter activities are cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, snowmobiling and long distance ice-skating. Ultimately, tourism in the own country has increased in popularity as Finns increasingly

allocate more days for their leisure trips outdoors. (Sievänen et al. 2010). Approximately one third of all nature trips take place in the North of Finland. The nature-related tourism industry is well developed in the North in relation to professional marketed recreational opportunities, as nature offers people a fascinating landscape that is full of lakes, rivers, forests and mountains. However, the largest amount of nature trips still takes place in the Southern part of the country, even though this type of tourism happens on a much smaller scale. One reason for this might be the limited recreational opportunities that are available due to the scattered land-ownership, as land in the South is often in the hand of private persons, unlike in the North, where a great share of the land is in public ownership. Many Finns also consider visiting a vacation home during their nature holidays to be a crucial part of their outdoor experience. Especially summer cottages serve as a place for recreation for many Finnish families when having time off. (Pouta et al. 2006)

Finally, the region in the South of Finland offers a great potential for nature-related tourism, as most outdoor trips take place there. Nonetheless, this development process also faces its limitations due to scattered land-ownership. Especially employees that obtain higher positions and people with higher education display an increased interest in visiting state-protected nature areas (Pouta et al. 2004). This circumstance is assumed to result from the different cultural and economic capital those groups obtain. Some of the national parks, for example, are located in the North of Finland and, therefore, require high costs to cover the expenses to travel to those places. Moreover, with increasing family size, the probability to spend money for nature-related trips to state-owned areas decreases. People with lower income and big families remain to be groups that are less likely to visit governmental recreation areas. This offers, however, potential to involve these groups in future nature-participation development processes. (Pouta et al. 2006) In general, pursuing outdoor activities in Finland remains to be fairly easy, as this domain is greatly supported by the Finnish government and respectively Finnish municipalities. Outdoor facilities that are free of charge certainly display a strong attraction force to go outdoors.

4.2.2 Outdoors in Germany

Germany has a long hiking tradition, and the hiking sector itself displays an increasing popularity among the Germans, which can be justified by the positive trend in the German hiking tourism. Currently, the German Hiking Association seeks to acquire monetary

resources that support various development programmes throughout the whole country. In Germany, hiking areas and hiking tourism are financed through the respective federal states. However, local communities usually have to apply for financial resources that are obtained by the federal states. Moreover, hiking areas in Germany are often supported by sponsors and various foundations. (Deutscher Tourismusverband und Deutscher Wanderverband 2002, 31-34)

In Germany, 56 % of the population describe themselves as active hikers who go hiking more or less frequently. Moreover, hiking is popular among all Germans, but in particular among the 65 to 74 years old people. The intensity of hiking activities varies slightly among the respective federal states and shows, above all, a South-North divide. Generally, Germans seem to like hiking especially in the low mountain range. However, many hikers prefer the shores in the North of the country and the Alpine foothills in the South of Germany. Half of the Germans, despite the area where they go hiking, prefer moderate difficult hiking trips and, moreover, favour hiking in the summer months from May to September. (Deutsches Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie 2010, 24-27)

As Suomen Latu in Finland, the German Hiking Association promotes outdoor activities, such as hiking, in Germany. The non-governmental umbrella association has approximately 600.000 active hikers and 57 member clubs. Germany has approximately 200.000 kilometres of maintained and mostly connected hiking trails (Figure 5), which are mainly preserved by volunteers of the respective hiking clubs, as shown in Figure 6. The German Hiking Association ensures quality of hiking by frequently releasing guidelines concerning how the trails have to be marked or how hiking coaches have to be trained. About two million German citizens participate annually outdoors in guided hiking tours, which reflects the significance of hiking professionals who are well educated. Moreover, the hiking association works closely together with the German Tourism Association, since hiking in Germany is not only popular amongst Germans, but also among many foreigners who visit the country (Deutscher Wanderverband 2012).

Figure 5. 200.000 km maintained hiking
trails in Germany (Deutscher
Tourismusverband und
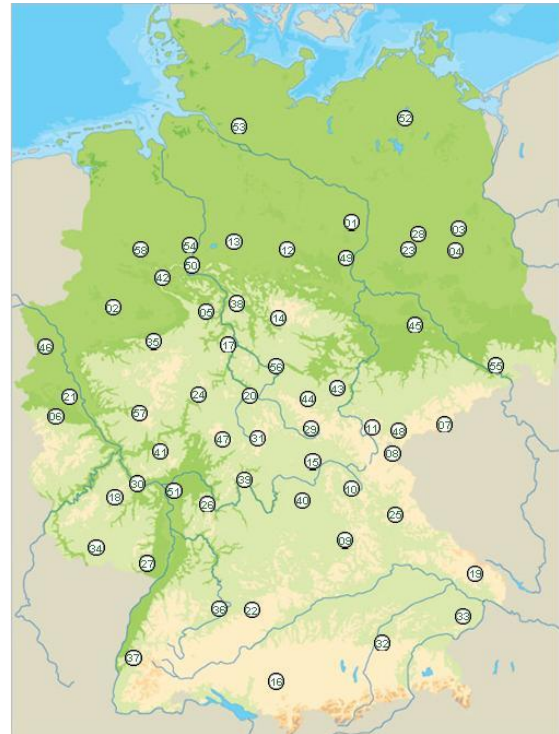Deutscher Wanderverband
2002, 5)

Figure 6. The 57 member clubs of the
German hiking association
(Deutscher Wanderverband
2014a)

According to the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (Deutsches Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie 2010, 32), the image of hiking in Germany is not just steadily increasing, but also covered with new positive features, such as modernity, healthiness and youth. Hiking occupies its own market in the country, which is driven by various parties, such as outdoor associations, private outdoor companies and hiking experts. Due to the image change hiking underwent in Germany, its status in the society is higher than ever. In particular, there are three major motives that drive people to hike. First of all, people want to enjoy an active outdoor experience. Secondly, they want to exercise while regenerating. Thirdly, they seek to gain and enhance social relationships while hiking. (Deutsches Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie 2010, 32-38)

The older the people, the more regularly they go hiking, however, only until the point where health related reasons hold them back from doing it. About 56 % of the people who frequently go hiking are already at the age where they receive their pensions. Moreover, education seems to be closely related to hiking, especially with regard to the intensity and frequency. The higher the level of people's education is, the higher their hiking intensity and frequency.

(Deutsches Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie 2010, 40-41) Of the almost 40 million hikers in Germany, approximately 12 million in 2008 went on a hiking break or holiday where they also went hiking. Half of these people chose to stay in Germany for their trip. The far most popular hiking destination for German hikers in the country is Bavaria with 46 %. It is followed by Baden-Wuerttemberg with 17 % of hikers. However, these areas are only most popular among all German tourists. Other federal states appeal to their inhabitants to spend their leisure actively in their hiking areas. (Deutsches Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie 2010, 53-54)

The German hiking trail system is categorized into different levels that somewhat represent a hierarchy. On top are the European long-distance paths (E-paths). The length of these nine tracks in Germany is approximately 9.700 kilometres. On the next hierarchical level are the trans-regional tracks that are often crossing borders between the federal states. Finally, the hiking tracks of the member clubs of the German Hiking Association build the infrastructural basis for hiking in Germany. In addition, Germany, in international comparison, has well maintained hiking trails. Those are mainly maintained by trail keepers who are assigned from local hiking clubs. In some other federal states, the communities are primarily responsible for preserving the trail network. The trend reveals that the hiking trail system in Germany will not be significantly extended, since it already is sufficiently long in order to meet the demands of the hikers. However, the aim of the German Hiking Association and its member clubs is to enhance constantly the quality of hiking trails in the country. (Deutsches Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Technologie 2010, 73-76)

E-paths are a distinct part of the German hiking landscape. The entire length of these trails is approximately 52.000 kilometres. However, only approximately 9.700 kilometres of these trails lead through Germany. (Deutscher Wanderverband 2013) According to Schlinzig (2008, 143), the E-paths offer potential, which is so far insufficiently used, by the *European Ramblers Association* (EWV) as well as to domestic and international tourist organisations. Schlinzig states that the marking of E-paths could be clearer and more regular in many hiking destinations. Moreover, he claims that there is a need for a database that lists accommodation possibilities alongside the trails which is accessible to the public. In addition, he suggests that the implementation and maintenance of such a database could be part of new cooperation between the EWV and various tourist organisations. Finally, the German Hiking Association concludes that the E-paths offer an unique opportunity for hikers to explore and get to know

the various European regions while hiking along the European long-distance paths (Deutscher Wanderverband 2013).

Brämer (2011) points to the high-quality hiking scenery in Germany that is a part of many well-maintained paths, such as *Rothaarsteig* or *Rennsteig*. Moreover, he claims that the development of quality certificates, such as "Deutsches Wandersiegel" or "Wanderbares Deutschland" contribute their share to an enhanced image of hiking in the country. These quality awards are not only a product of German hiking organisations but they also display how close marketing cooperation has been developed by tourist organisations. Alongside this cooperation, various hiking travel agencies that seek to promote hiking among domestic and international tourists have emerged. A tool of the tourist sector to promote distinct paths is, for example, certain rankings and the awards that categorize popular German hiking paths.

An important driver of the positive image of hiking in Germany is the media. Increased coverage concerning hiking on radio, TV and the Internet significantly raises awareness about hiking and respective hiking destinations among Germans. In addition, new internet portals build a platform through which people that are interested in hiking can share information about their leisure activity. Hiking today is even considered an important matter for trade fairs, which is another indicator that hiking itself occupies its own market. (Brämer 2011)

Despite the enhanced image of hiking in Germany, Brämer (2014) claims that there is no hiking boom in Germany. In 2010, 54 % of the Germans went more or less frequently hiking, while in 2014 only 49 % participated. These numbers reflect a slowly decreasing enthusiasm for hiking in Germany. However, Brämer (2013) refers to the trend that Germans increasingly mix between going for a walk and hiking. In general, ten times as many people go for a walk than for a hike and hikers seem to be the most ambitious people when it comes to walking. Approximately 25 % of all people who walk in nature claim to have an affinity towards hiking. Brämer (2013) states that 63 % of all Germans participate in the combination that is between going for a walk and hiking, a group that is significantly bigger than the hiker group itself in Germany. Moreover, it seems that despite its size, this group is relatively unexplored and, in addition, rather unexploited by the tourism sector currently.

In summary, hiking in Germany is a significant leisure activity that attracts many Germans to go outdoors. As described by PROJECT M GmbH (2014), the supply of hiking related

activities and locations is far bigger than the demand. However, the future bodes well given the success and expansion of the hiking market in Germany. Currently, elderly people go hiking in Germany but also increasingly young people enjoy this outdoor activity. Therefore, the hiking tourism seeks progressively to attract a new generation with hiking-related activities. Speed hiking, for example, is a more vigorous form of hiking that attracts younger people to put their hiking shoes on (Tourismus GmbH Bayrische Rhön 2014). In general, challenges such as increasing the creation of value out of the existing demand towards hiking but also of value out of new demand after day trips and overnight stays that includes finding new customer segments are on the agenda of organisations and companies that are relying on the hiking sector in Germany. They build the main corner stones for its future development. (PROJECT M GmbH, 2014)

5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to investigate German outdoor activity facilities and in particular German hiking trails in order to develop suggestions that would help Suomen Latu make Finnish people more passionate to go outdoors. The study focuses on the administration, way-marking and marketing of German outdoor facilities. The following chapters present the research questions, study design and data collection and analysis methods.

5.1 The research questions

What knowledge can Suomen Latu gain from the administration of popular German hiking facilities in order to encourage Finnish people to go outdoors more often?

The following sub-research questions support the main question:

A) What is the broader framework[1] that determines hiking in Germany?
B) What factors and facilities enthuse people in Germany to go outdoors?
C) Where is the room for potential improvements/developments[2] in Finland in regard of domestic outdoor participation (Identification of aspects that could be improved related to the administration, way-marking and marketing of Finnish outdoor facilities)?
D) How are popular German hiking facilities administrated, way-marked and promoted?

5.2 A case-study constructed research design

The present study seeks to follow the in chapter 2 introduced benchmarking stages. This methodology fits best to Suomen Latu's aim to conduct a benchmarking study. Following Radnor's and Robinson's (2000, 3) remarks about benchmarking to recognize potentials for improvement, Suomen Latu delivered with the assignment of this study a reason to detect best practices outside of Finland (Dattakumar and Jagadeesh 2003, 192). Germany was chosen to be one target country of Suomen Latu's benchmarking study. As introduced by the Global

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[1] Framework refers to the environment, the setting, in which hiking takes place in Finland
[2] Potential for improvements/developments refers to possibilities to promote hiking in Finland more efficiently and among an increased number of people who are willing to go outdoors

Benchmarking Network (2014, 22-23), benchmarking itself is a long-lasting learning process. For this reason, the interviews and qualitative analysis of records that were conducted for this benchmarking research refer to a method to collect data about detected best practices in the course of a longer period (Zairi and Ahmed (1999). Ultimately, Suomen Latu's responsibility lays in adopting and communicating the revealed best practices in order to complete the benchmarking process (Freytag and Hollensen (2001, 31-32).

Qualitative research methods were chosen in the form of semi-structured interviews and qualitative content analysis of particular web pages. According to de Ruyter and Scholl (2004), qualitative research does not require big samples that serve as the source of data. This aspect is important to consider as the present study gained its data via six interviews alongside the web content analysis of the respective cases. Even though the sample size of this research remains to be small, qualitative research offers the opportunity to conduct in-depth research due to its variety of research methods. In this case, interviews and qualitative content analysis were considered to serve as appropriate research methods in order to cover the investigated study topic in a comprehensive manner. Due to the explorative insights this study provides, it was possible to develop pre/assumptions, in particular, implication suggestions for Suomen Latu. Naturally this was possible by collecting data that was based on meaningful information that is grounded on experts' knowledge, thoughts and perceptions. (De Ruyter and Scholl 2004)

A case study design was chosen to display the data from the conducted interviews and web content analysis. According to Dooley (2002, 335), case study research is suitable in order to examine and understand a broad subject that is based on a complex framework and that has multiple relationships and various sources of data. In particular, Flyvbjerg (2011, 314) sees the strength of case study research in its ability to get deep into a topic while displaying a high degree of validity. This ensures the understanding of various phenomena and, finally, promotes also the emergence of new research questions that make the research more comprehensive and relevant. Furthermore, Dooley (2002, 335) states that case studies often include already investigated and approved data, which is necessary to be utilised within the cases in order to form them to diverse constructs that are intended to reflect insights about reasons, processes and results of distinct phenomena.

The presented case studies in this study are partly based on data and information that is already published and widely acknowledged, since the cases will be to a certain extent grounded in the analysis of textual sources, in particular web pages. However, as identified by Darke et al. (1998, 275), case studies can compromise data from various data collection methods, such as interviews. As a result, the case study approach has been chosen for this study because the present research is based on semi-structured expert interviews. The involvement of various sources of data and also data collection measures, in particular, expert interviews and textual data, ensured the design of descriptive cases that explore the nature of the various types of the examined hiking facilities. This approach seeks to provide Suomen Latu with a variety of data and insights, which can be utilized to develop strategies in Finland for outdoor participation promotion.

In order to answer the research questions, it was important to identify popular hiking trail facilities in Germany. Since the study seeks to investigate different types of popular facilities from different German areas, various measures were used in order to detect popular hiking trails areas and national parks, which contained an existing trail network. First of all, the German hiking umbrella association rewards regularly selected hiking trails with the award "Qualitätsweg Wanderbares Deutschland" (quality trails in Germany). The award is based on 9 core criteria and 23 optional criteria that are used to carefully analyse hiking trails in entire Germany (Deutscher Wanderverband 2014b). In addition to this award for particular traditional hiking trails, Internet research was conducted in order to detect other types of hiking trails, such as national parks, long-distance trails and special trails.

Once the popular hiking trails were detected, it was necessary to discover the nature of the chosen hiking facilities and what makes them so popular. For this reason, hiking trail authorities were interviewed. Moreover, a qualitative analysis of records, in particular an analysis of the web pages of the selected hiking facilities, was conducted to contribute additional data to the gained information from the interviews. Specifically, web content analysis of each hiking destination introduced each case to the reader in a comprehensive manner. The interviewees mostly required to be well prepared about the nature of the hiking destinations they are in charge of, already before the interview took place. As a result, interview questions that would have been asked to acquire general information about the respective hiking facilities were left out during the interview. The web content analysis of the particular hiking facility replaced in this regard the interview questions that would have been

meant to collect general data about the hiking facilities, such as age and type of the facility, location and special features/sights, as this information was easily found on the respective web pages. The found information was later on utilised in order to introduce each case of this study and to add important data to the cases that could not been gained during the actual interviews.

5.3   Interview and web page driven data collection

The data for the current study was collected via semi-structured expert interviews and via web page records. Firstly, authorities who are in charge of managing the detected hiking facilities in Germany were approached in order to schedule interviews. These authorities were most likely to be able to provide valuable information about marketing and administration, infrastructure, accessibility for hikers, historical developments and other crucial aspects of the respective hiking facility. Secondly, an observation of the particular hiking facilities' web pages helped to complete the case studies. Finally, two semi-structured interviews with representatives of the hiking domain from Germany and Finland built the base for a comprehensive overview of the hiking scenery in both countries. This approach generates understanding concerning what extent the suggestions provided by the German expert interviewees are applicable.

Patton (2002, 341) describes the uniqueness of interviews to be a data collection method that allows the examination of personal perceptions. More precisely, interviews are beneficial when exploring and investigating meaningful thoughts of a person that have been carefully chosen for the interviews. As a result, the individual insights gained from the interviews help to understand, and, finally, explain phenomena from an insider's point of view. The current study seeks to investigate well-working hiking facilities from Germany. For this reason, expert interviews were seen to be most beneficial for this research purpose, since experts, in particular, authorities who undertake administrative work for the distinct outdoor facilities, are considered to have the most valuable insight knowledge within the field of hiking.

According to Dorussen et al. (2003, 403), expert interviews provide researchers with a meaningful source that reflects the reasons and the process of policy-making of a particular subject. Furthermore, even though researchers have to be cautious when only using a single source as a base of their investigations, experts are considered to be reliable sources that

display valuable insights into distinct areas. Nevertheless, experts have to be selected carefully for interviews, because the reliability, validity and relevance for the research topic must be guaranteed. Before selecting authorities that are in charge of different types of hiking trails in Germany, German and Finnish experts who are working as leaders within the outdoor industry, in particular the German Hiking Association and the Finnish Tourist Board, were approached in order to gain a comprehensive overview about the hiking/outdoor domain in both countries. The interviews with those hiking-field representatives were semi-structured and included open-ended questions, because this strategy allowed, due to its flexibility, the opportunity to collect data in a comprehensive manner and the possibility for the interviewees to develop their own thoughts and perceptions (Di Cicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, 315). It was possible to approach the interviewees also with questions that were established during the course of the interview process.

Once the hiking experts were selected and interviewed and, moreover, the selection process of experts of the different types of hiking trails was completed, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to acquire the data for the respective case studies. Similar to the interviews with the German and Finnish hiking representatives, semi-structured interviews with German hiking trail and national park authorities were conducted, as they were likely to benefit the explorative nature of the study due to the great level of flexibility these types of interviews allow. Due to different locations of the respective interviewees in Germany and Finland, phone interviews were considered to be an efficient way to collect the research data. Every participant of the research was informed beforehand via email about the nature and content of the present study and, moreover, about the main questions that were about to be asked during the prospective interview. For this reason, the interviewees were generally well-prepared for the interview and were able to comprehensively answer most of the asked questions.

Finally, figure 7 represents the correlation of the conducted data. In the course of the first interview, which took place with a representative of the German Hiking Association, particular German outdoor facilities that would serve as a valuable base for the case studies could be identified. As a result, interviews with authorities of the national parks Harz and Hainich, the E-paths in Gemany and the travel region Fläming were launched. A subsequent interview with an expert of the Finnish outdoor sector was conducted in order to provide justification about the existence of crucial differences in comparison to the outdoor scenery in Germany. All interview data is accompanied with data from the respective cases' web pages. This allowed revealing information that was not obtained via the interviews.
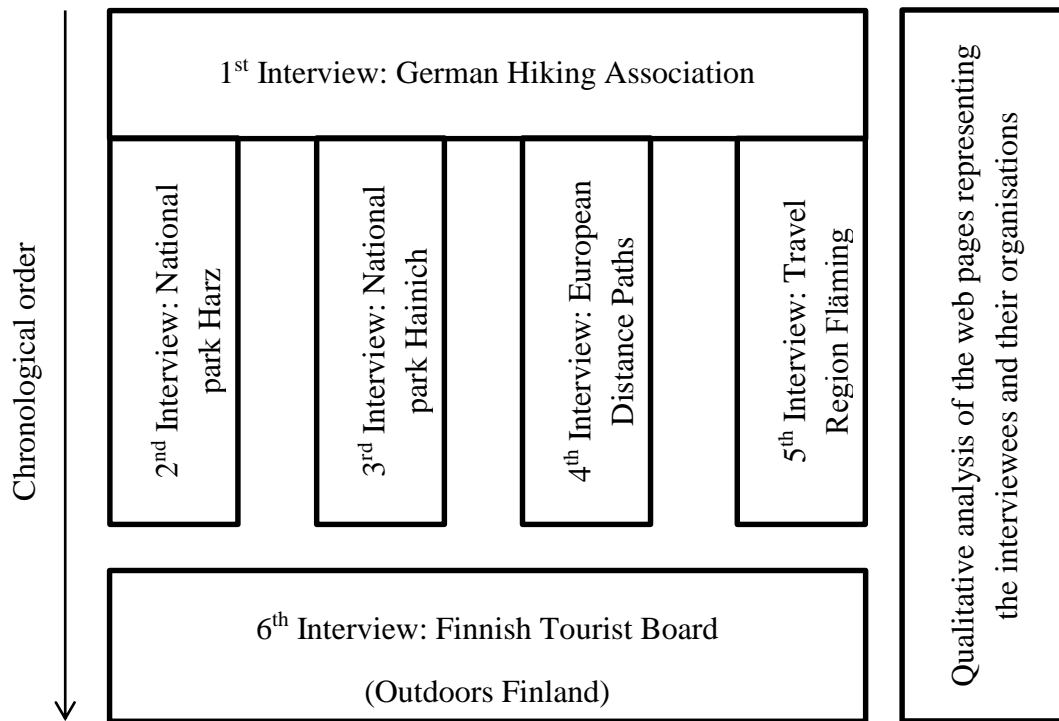
Figure 7. Concept mapping of data collection

5.4 Interview participants

Altogether six interviews were conducted, which vary in length from approximately 20 up to 60 minutes. The data collection process began with an interview with an expert of the German Hiking Association already in January 2013 and was continued with the four case interviews in October 2013 and, finally completed, with one remaining interview with an expert of the Finnish Tourist Board in April 2014. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. Regretfully, one audio line lacked the quality to be transcribed. The notes that were taken in each interview, also during the one when a subsequent transcription was not possible, serve in this study as the source of data, but only for the particular interview with Traugott Heinemann-Grüder, now former Managing Director of the Tourist Association Fläming. Direct quotes could not be used in this case.

In general, all the interviews were transcribed in the language the respective interview was held in. Besides one interview that was held in English, with Heli Saari, Project Manager

Outdoors Finland of the Finnish Tourist Board, all other interviews were conducted in German language. The German transcriptions were not translated into English. However, direct quotes from the German participants were straight translated into English and serve as a source of data in this study. Consequently, only quotes from Heli Saari were utilised without translation as the interview was held in English. Furthermore, all participants orally agreed to record the interviews and utilise their name and position within the respective organisation. The latter transcription process took place in March and April 2014. Table 3 displays all interview participants of the present study.

Table 3. The interview participants of the research

Name	Organisation	Position (when the interview was held)	Purpose of interview
Erik Neumeyer	German Hiking Association	Deputy Managing Director	to obtain understanding of the hiking sector in Germany
Heli Saari	Finnish Tourist Board	Project Manager, Outdoors Finland	to obtain understanding of the hiking sector in Finland
Manfred Großmann	National Park Hainich	National Park Manager	interview for case study
Dr. Friedhart Knolle	National Park Harz	Media, Marketing, Regional Development National Park Harz	interview for case study
Frank Schlinzig	Hiking Association Northern Germany	former Managing Director: Trail Commission, European Ramblers Association	interview for case study
Traugott Heinemann-Grüder	Tourist Association Fläming	Managing Director	interview for case study

5.5   Data analysis

The following sub-chapters present the data analysing methods that were utilized in the present study. Qualitative analysis of records were introduced in order to get an understanding of each outdoor facility case that is presented in this study and to develop initial ideas related to the development of thematic frames that would lead the actual data analysis. Furthermore, thematic analysis of the interviews was implemented to construct the final themes that correspond to the aim of this study.

5.5.1 Qualitative analysis of records

A vast amount of information and data is conveyed and stored via textual documents in electronic form. As a consequence, written material can be utilised for qualitative research (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori 2011, 530). The analysis of textual data was applied in the present study in order to complete the case studies that are mainly based on expert interviews. Specifically the web pages of the investigated hiking trails were analysed in order to gather additional data that helped to introduce each case and to complement missing or important data that could not be acquired from the study's participants.

Carlrey (2003) mentions content analysis to be suitable method to cope with information in written texts. Elo and Kyngäs (2007) support this idea, highlighting the benefits of content analysis, which origin in revealing and understanding data that support the qualitative analysis process. The purpose of this approach is to describe a particular phenomenon. In the present thesis, content analysis has been utilized to enrich the respective case studies with meaningful information that could not be retrieved via the launched interviews.

Bryman (2004) argues that documents or records refer to a wide range of sources that can be analysed for qualitative research. In particular, virtual sources from the Internet represent due to increasing accessibility an important source for qualitative research. However, the matter of reliability and authenticity always needs to be taken into account when analysing web pages since anyone can produce content that is found on the Internet. In this study, however, mainly the web pages of the respective German hiking facilities and closely related web pages and online documents have been utilised to gain additional data to construct the case studies. The content of the distinct web pages was primarily considered to be a source of acquiring

additional data. For example, questions about the type, location and special features or sights of the respective outdoor facility were left out as web content analysis could easily provide answers to these questions.

Based on the analysis of the web pages of the respective outdoor facility cases, it was possible to develop an initial concept about how to label the themes that would lead the subsequent data analysis process. The particular theme-development process is described in the following chapter.

5.4.2 Thematic analysis of the interviews

Thematic analysis is the method of data analysis that has been applied in the present study. The procedure helps to organise and categorise big samples of data in order to display it in a suitable manner for further analysis. In particular, Daly et al. (1997) suggest thematic analysis to be a proper method to identify themes that describe a particular phenomenon. Rice and Ezzy (1999, 258) support this argument by highlighting the importance of a thoughtful reading process of the data. This approach is meant to foster the development of particular themes. This data-driven analysis is described to be an "inductive approach". Naturally, a "deductive" coding process of the data helped to correspond to the explorative nature of the research framework. (Fereday 2006)

Firstly, quotes from the transcribed interviews were given codes as those represent the meaning of the distinct text passages. Secondly, added memos supported the coding process by providing personal reasoning why a certain interview text section has been given a particular code. Thirdly, adding themes simplified the latter analysis of data as the themes represent groups of codes that are similar in meaning to one another. In particular, a subsequent retrieval of data was much more efficient when the requested themes showed to one another connected codes alongside their memos. The connection of codes and themes was finally displayed in the networks. In this way, data from different research participants could be compared very easily, which allowed to reveal certain patterns, which then supported the development of implication suggestions for Finnish hiking authorities for their future actions, as this was aim of the present study.

The computer program *ATLAS.ti* was used to organise and analyse the qualitative data from the interviews. In particular, ATLAS.ti is a tool that assists the user when coding text. As a result, significant and iterative text information from the interviews could be uncovered and better visualised via networks. Those networks foster the exposure of relationships, similarities and differences between the individual cases of the study which, helped to identify well-working practices that are applied by German hiking facilities. (ATLAS.ti, 2013)

Once the recorded interviews had been transcribed via *MS Word*, the textual documents were processed with ATLAS.ti. As a first step, the entire document was read at once to get an understanding of the described content and its correlations. Subsequently, those text passages that were considered crucial to benefit the aim of the study were highlighted.

Alongside the procedure of highlighting relevant data, each marked text segment was given a distinct code that would best capture the meaning of the selected data. Walliman (2006, 133) argues that a coding system not only helps to cope with a big sample of data, but it also contributes toward developing certain classifications that ultimately benefit identifying sections of meanings that are related to one another. This aspect was considered to be essential for the data analysing process of the present study. The procedure of coding provides comprehensive overviews about how certain aspects in the administration of German hiking facilities are handled and, in addition, how they correlate with other aspects. For example, a quote alongside its codes "treetop trail" and "visitors", that states that the biggest share of annual visitors of the national park Hainich eventually come to see the treetop trail, relates also to the quote and its code "visitors", which describes the overall number of visitors of the national park. Table 4 displays the technique that was implemented to create codes from interview quotes.

Table 4. Code-memo assignment to quotes – Example: National Park Hainich

Quote	Code (*NP = national park*)
„We currently have 25 forest workers that are assigned as Rangers. […] Solely they are in charge of the trail maintenance"	NP_employees
"We mark our trails according to the EUROPARC Germany guidelines. This is unique in Thuringia."	NP_way-marking
"It was essential that the treetop trail is not located directly in the national park"	NP_treetop trail

Quotes, presented in the first column, refer to those segments that were labelled with a code.

Codes, presented in the second column, refer to the labels that reflect the meaning of the quotes.

After all quotes were coded, they were categorised into predetermined themes. The themes were developed to serve the aim of the study. The three themes "administration", "trails/way-marking" and "marketing" were identified as the key aspects that would provide an answer to the research question: "What knowledge can Suomen Latu from the administration of popular German hiking facilities gain in order to encourage Finnish people to go outdoors more often?". Table 5 demonstrates examples of how codes related to one another were given themes.

Table 5. Theme assignment to codes – Example: National Parks Hainich and Harz

Code (*NP = national park*)	Theme
NP_volunteers NP_ownweship NP_finances NP_safety NP_emplyees NP_purpose NP_ecology	Administration
NP_treetop trail NP_trail marking NP_multipurpose usage	Trails/Way-marking
NP_visitors NP_cooperations NP_marketing	Marketing

Codes, presented in the first column, refer to the labels that reflect the meaning of the quotes.

Themes, presented in the second column, refer to group of codes that are related to one another due to the content of their quotes.

The results of the expert interviews with the Finnish and German hiking experts and the case studies that are based on the interviews with the German outdoor authorities are presented in detail in Chapter 6. In particular, each case study is divided into the categories of "administration", "trails/way-marking" and "marketing" in order to provide an overview about significant management activities that display how German outdoor authorities create environments that attract people to go outdoors.

6 RESULTS

For this study, hiking experts from leading outdoor organisations from Germany and Finland, namely the German Hiking Association and the Finnish Tourist Board (Section: Outdoors Finland), were interviewed in order to obtain an understanding of the hiking situation in both countries. Furthermore, authorities of particular German hiking facilities were interviewed to acquire information about the reasons for their success. The following subchapters present the interviews' results that were raised by the Finnish and German hiking experts. Finally, case studies present the information that was given by the authorities of the German hiking facilities. All data is presented according to the identified themes "administration", "trails/way-marking" and "marketing".

6.1 Hiking as a driver for outdoor participation

The following two subchapters present the insights of experts from the hiking domain of Finland and Germany. The data presents under which broader framework hiking takes place in Germany and it uncovers potential room for improvements/developments in Finland (see sub research question A to C in chapter 5.1).

6.1.1 Conditions for outdoor participation in Germany

In order to approach the research question about the preconditions for hiking and the key success factors that determine hiking in Germany, Eric Neumeyer, Deputy Managing Director of the German Hiking Association, was interviewed. He provided valuable insights concerning the nature and organisation of hiking in Germany, which is presented in the following.

Administration

Eric Neumeyer describes the German Hiking Association as the umbrella organisation for all 52 hiking clubs in the country. The association is not responsible for particular hiking trails but rather seeks to promote hiking in Germany by giving advice, awarding qualifications and coordinating the respective hiking clubs and its members. In particular, the hiking clubs and touristic organisations are in charge of local hiking trails. Especially popular trails are the

result of successful collaborations between local hiking clubs and tourist institutions. Less popular hiking areas and trails, however, are not always easily assignable to one or two particular responsible authorities as they are often maintained by various parties that cannot be assigned to one particular institution.

"Altogether there are 200.000 kilometres hiking trails that are maintained by voluntary workers and that are part of German hiking clubs. This means that they do not receive any financial support. Only Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg appoint financial aid to their hiking clubs in order for them to foster the local hiking trails."

(Eric Neumeyer)

Eric Neumeyer suggests that most of the trail maintenance in Germany is based on a strong voluntary core and that is implemented within the distinct hiking clubs. Approximately 350.000 voluntary working hours are spent annually developing and preserving German trails. Covering this solely with subsidies would be nearly impossible. Moreover, especially financial aid that is project-based helps developing the hiking trails in Germany. In particular, areas that are attractive for tourists are likely to receive financial support, especially from the respective federal state as the matter of tourism finances lies typically within their responsibility. However, financial support may also be intended to develop more rural areas, at least for a particular period agreed beforehand. Finally, EU subsidies contribute more or less regularly their share in financing German hiking areas and trails.

"The financing system varies from federal state to federal state. It usually supports very well certain flagship projects. In general, however, the financial situation is rather bad developed. Clubs usually receive money only via membership fees, also voluntary work is very important – not a really good situation to be honest."

(Eric Neumeyer)

Trails/Way-marking

There are about 300.000 kilometres hiking trails in Germany of which 200.000 kilometres are in a relatively good condition. Eric Neumeyer suggests that this already existing trail network is sufficient, as it is important to focus on their quality, rather than on the development of even more trails. Especially for hiking trails that are close to urban areas, it is important to obtain a variety of hiking routes that are somehow connected to one another. Hikers appreciate the existence of a trail network that offers a variety of hiking possibilities and, therefore, also the possibility to always experience something new. A network that offers 4-6

kilometres marked hiking trails per square kilometre is considered as rather tense and rare, however, 2-4 kilometres market trails per square kilometre is seen to be sufficient for a comprehensive trail network that fits the needs of German hikers.

"According to our studies, only 20 % prefer hiking from one place to another, 80 % prefer rather circular routes. Moreover, most of the hikers prefer rather day trips."

(Eric Neumeyer)

Eric Neumeyer proposes the *Rennsteig* in Central-East Germany is a long-distance trail that fits due to its features very much the profile of contemporary hikers. The Rennsteig tempts people to hike its approximately 170 kilometres via several day trips. This is quite unique because German hikers generally prefer to stay in one destination only from where they can hike via various tours that would not last longer than one day. Moreover, Eric Neumeyer indicates that there is a trend towards specialised trails in Germany, such as theme trails, educational trails, barefoot trails and treetop trails.

"Especially treetop trails are popular attraction points within national parks. Due to their rather short length from a several hundred meters, they are suitable only for short hiking trips. However, they can contribute to be a successful pull-factor for tourists."

(Eric Neumeyer)

National parks in Germany are administrated at the local level but they are financially supported by the respective federal state. In this regard, each national park is ultimately funded by the government. Hiking trails outside national parks are mostly maintained by local hiking institutions. Thus, voluntary work plays a significantly smaller role for the maintenance of trails within the national parks, due to the implemented funding system that allows national parks to employ paid staff. However, most national parks seek to collaborate with local hiking clubs as existing trails are often part of a bigger trail network and, therefore, also require the attention of both responsibilities the national park and the hiking club. A coherent way-marking system is intended within hiking regions that cross national parks and areas outside them.

Although there is an umbrella organisation that fosters hiking in Germany, Eric Neumeyer suggests a lack of nationwide criteria that regulate the establishment of new hiking trails. The

German Hiking Association, however, releases standards that describe how sustainable trails are supposed to look like.

> *"It is crucial that there is a concept that determines the funding for the next 10-15 years. Also it must be clear who is going to take care of the trails, who is responsible of the way-marking and how nature conservation is guaranteed via legislations. […] There is actually not a national standard that even describes what a hiking trail in particular is."*
>
> *(Eric Neumeyer)*

Even though there are no national standards that regulate hiking trail administration in Germany, a bill that was passed in 2011 rules now the matter of safety in natural habitats. Until October 2011, every landowner was responsible for keeping away any type of threat that might endanger people using the land. This circumstance was connected to often unbearable work for landowners, which resulted in high expenses and unnecessary interventions in the nature to reduce the risks of accidents. Now, however, landowners are no longer liable for accidents that happen in their forests and that are caused by natural circumstances, such as a falling branch that hurts someone.

Marketing

Aside from the standards the German Hiking Association introduced for constructing hiking trails, a prevailing quality award called "Qualitätsweg Wanderbares Deutschland" (German quality trail) has been developed to certify distinct trails in Germany to be from high quality. This award system is intended to set nationwide quality standards in the hiking area as it awards in cooperation with local tourism and hiking institutions not only hiking trails but also gastronomy and accommodation services along those trails. In this regard, the award seeks to fulfil the increasing demand of hikers looking for suitable accommodation and various services along the trails, by considering three criteria: First, to enhance the quality of hiking in a distinct area in a sustainable manner. Second, domestic and international hikers and tourists receive transparent information that supports their decision to choose a particular hiking trail. Third, the respective hiking destinations can utilise the quality award to develop a competitive advantage in order to build an own quality brand. (see also Deutscher Wanderverband 2014b)

"The German Hiking Association markets the awards in cooperation with partners. The German Tourism Association, for example, releases a brochure that is called "Wanderbares Deutschland" and that highlights and describes quality trails in Germany. This is also very important for the international marketing of German hiking trails."

(Eric Neumeyer)

Eric Neumeyer talks about the responsibility of the German Hiking Association. The organisation seems to be one of the main driver of outdoor participation in Germany. Yet, it was pointed out that the organisation heavily relies on its member clubs and, thus, voluntary work. Eric Neumeyer had a clear idea about the challenges that occur when managing more than 200.000 kilometres of hiking trails. Without out the collaboration with national tourist organisations, the management and administration of those trails would simply be impossible. As pointed out in the interview, especially attractive and popular trails are financially supported by domestic tourist organisations and sometimes even via EU project funds. Eric Neumeyer seems to welcome this development, however, he points out that voluntary work is still the strongest driver of the outdoor movement in Germany.

Eric Neumeyer points out that there is no consistent way-marking system in Germany. However, this does not seem to restrict outdoor participation in general, as there are different parties that take responsibility in way-marking their own trails. This shows the importance of assigning particular hiking trails to local clubs and to people who may even take pride in taking care of their heritage. Popular trails naturally are visited frequently by tourists. Locals do not necessarily want to feel responsible for the trash and marks of others. Hence, it appears to be necessary that local tourist organisation take charge of the maintenance of such areas.

A major theme of the interview was related to the quality award that the German Hiking Association assigns for popular and attractive trails. Eric Neumeyer described the award to be a major contributor of domestic and international outdoor participation. It seems that a centralized marketing concept alongside its execution in terms of an award system can benefit the encouragement of outdoor participation.

6.1.2 Development potentials for outdoor participation in Finland

In order to answer the research question concerning the preconditions that determine hiking in Finland and the potential for improvement, Heli Saari, Project Manager Outdoors Finland, of

the Finnish Tourist Board was interviewed. The current chapter presents her insights and perceptions about the Finnish hiking scenery and her ideas about future challenges and potentials. Moreover, Anne Rautiainen, expert for the Finnish Everyman's right at Suomen Latu shared some of her expertise via email correspondence.

Administration

Finland is rather large by area and compared to its number of inhabitants. Heli Saari suggest that there are far too many hiking trails that cannot be sufficiently maintained and where nobody is officially in charge of. This issue raises the question to whom these hiking trails are actually directed and how people will benefit from them in the future. Local municipalities and Metsähallitus are in this regard key drivers in developing and maintaining hiking trails in Finland.

> *"And of course the trails that are taken care of by Metsähallitus are the best ones. They are good marked, mostly there are very good signs in the nature and they are also well maintained so it is easy to use them."*
>
> *(Heli Saari)*

Rural areas and areas that are less attractive for tourists may face problems maintaining their trails, especially when they are not part of the responsibility of Metsähallitus. Since Heli Saari suggests that a great share of administrating new and existing hiking trails is undertaken via projects that are funded by the government, voluntary work is crucial to complete this work. However, local clubs often do not have the resources to successfully maintain and mark the local trails. As a result, hiking trails are not always in good condition and are, therefore, difficult to use, especially for people that do not belong to the local community or who are less experienced in hiking.

A key feature of hiking in Finland is the Finnish Everyman's right. Although Finnish people very much appreciate the right to freely explore the nature, they do not use already existing trails when going outdoors. Very often, Finns only explore the nature around them, neglecting the already established and marked routes.

"We do not use paths and trails as much because of the Everyman's right. For this reason, it is important that trails should have bigger attractions: better trails, better landscapes, special things/rocks/animals/something. In the normal forest, everybody can go via the Everyman's right. And a trail without an attraction is just like normal forest. It can never get a quantity amount of walkers."

(Anne Rautiainen)

Trails/Way-marking

Suomen Latu (2014a) publishes on its webpages three trail classifications that have been established, varying from easy trails that are clearly marked, to intermediate trails and to demanding trails, each of which is marked with its respective symbol. However, trail classification is an ongoing process that has not yet been competed, as indicated by Heli Saari, and even though a coherent marking system is intended, way-marking remains to be a matter that is still completed differently from the involved organisations. Moreover, proper way-marking and trail development remains to be a task that is based on project funds that are provided by the government.

"Of course during the last years there has been a lot of project work when we have made almost everything for hiking trails in Finland."

(Heli Saari)

Marketing

With regard to the characteristics of hikers in Finland, Heli Saari explains that day trips are the most popular alternative for Finnish people. Even if people spend their entire holiday at a hiking destination, they prefer to hike a new route on a daily base, rather than hiking one long route that connects two different places. This finding, however, offers potential as Heli Saari suggests. Due to the rather short lengths of the desired hiking routes, they should not exceed a one day hiking trip. Hikers also prefer suitable accommodation for their trips. As a result, hiking in Finland is supposed to be fostered by developing not just the trails themselves but also by improving the infrastructure alongside the routes. Moreover, Heli Saari indicates that existing trails should be developed rather than having new trails built, as there are far too many unused trails in general at the moment.

"What I see as the biggest potential for people who make day trips is that most of them want to sleep well in hotels or cottages with comfy beds and nice breakfast. And to connect those two things, like good trails and services is what we are working on a lot at the moment."

(Heli Saari)

National parks are very popular hiking destinations in Finland. These are mainly administrated by Metsähallitus and, therefore, tend to offer a high standard of services alongside the route, such as fire places, accommodation or places to set up a tent. Trails within the parks are also generally well maintained and consistently marked. European distance trails, however, have been somewhat neglected in Finland, as described by Heli Saari. There are two European distance trails leading through Finland, the E6, which leads in Finland from Kilpisjärvi in the Northwest down to the Southwest coast, and the E10, which has its origin in Nuorgam in the Northeast and leads Southwards alongside the Russian boarder. Heli Saari claims that these trails are in rather poor condition. This is especially so as they do not lead onto maintained hiking trails and display inadequate way-marking, thus leaving hikers unaware whether they are walking on a European distance trail. Therefore, also marketing activities around those trails remain rather little.

"The European distance trails are not working in Finland."

(Heli Saari)

Heli Saari talked about the engagement of Metsähallitus in regard of domestic trail management. Especially national parks, national hiking areas and popular hiking trials seem to benefit from the service of the Finnish organisation. However, local municipalities perform the biggest workload in keeping the hiking network in a good condition. This seems very unique, leaves out however an explanation about the amount of voluntary work that is needed to manage outdoor facilities in Finland. Moreover, Heli Saari points out the importance of the Finnish Everyman's right as it allows people to ramble around almost everywhere they want. Only her colleague Anne Rautiainen mentions concerns in regard of the right as it might hinder the development of commercially oriented outdoor facilities. Hence, the Finnish Everyman's right surely is a key driver of outdoor participation in Finland, yet, it raises questions about its purpose when it comes to the development of trails that are supposed to attract a great number of people. Heli Saari also talked about the inconsistency of way-

marking in Finland. Especially rural areas and E-paths are poorly marked. It might be still a long route until a unifying system is implemented.

6.2   Special trails to promote outdoor participation

The following four subchapters present the insights of the interviewed hiking authorities of particular hiking facilities from Germany. The data helps to understand how hiking facilities, such as E-paths, national parks and hiking regions are administrated, way-marked and marketed in Germany (see sub research question D in chapter 5.1) .

6.2.1 European long-distance paths

The current subchapter presents the background information about E-paths in Europe and Germany. Frank Schlinzig, former member of the trail commission of the European Ramblers Association, was interviewed. Figure 8 illustrates the network of relationships between the codes given to certain interview passages and how they correlate with the three main themes. This approach helps to provide an answer to the research questions concerning how popular German hiking facilities, in this case E-paths, are administrated, way-marked and promoted.

*= = *is associated with*   * < > *contradicts*
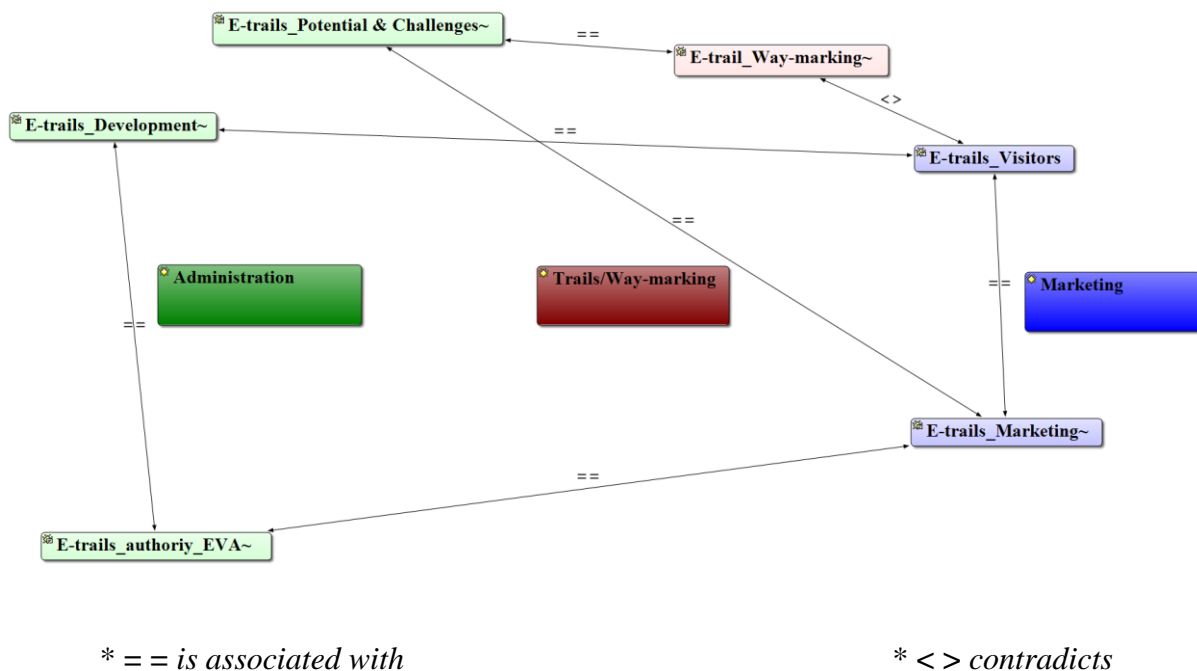
Figure 8. E-paths interview network illustrating the three main themes alongside their given codes and their relationships

E-paths are a joint project of members of the European Ramblers Association. In particular, the 12 trails lead through various regions and the trails reach from the North Cape all the way towards Crete in the South. The trails are maintained and way-marked by hiking authorities of the respective countries they run through. (European Ramblers Association 2014) The German Hiking Association (Deutscher Wanderverband 2014c) states that the European Ramblers Association lists approximately 5 million hikers within its 28 member countries. Moreover, 9 of the 12 E-paths run through Germany, displaying a total length of around 9.700 kilometres.

Administration

Frank Schlinzig states that the E-paths have been developed from 1969 onwards, driven by the idea to create hiking opportunities beyond national borders. The established European Ramblers Association set its objective in promoting the understanding among nations through the E-paths that connect people from different countries.

> *"The development of the E-paths was a long process that is not quite finished yet. There are for example still discussions about the need of the paths due to their length. [...] However, nobody has to walk the entire distances. They just display an opportunity to walk along them."*
>
> *(Frank Schlinzig)*

As the E-paths in Germany mostly run on already existing trails that belong to various local hiking and tourist organisations, there are ultimately already infrastructural services developed alongside the trails. Frank Schlinzig argues that this is a significant difference compared to E-paths that are located in Finland as there are, for example, due to the lower population density, a lower amount of accommodation options.

> *"In Germany, you will find every 20 to 30 kilometres some type of accommodation, unlike in Finland. In Finland, accommodation possibilities and sights are sometimes apart from the original route. For this reason, visiting such an accommodation or sight might result already in a trip on its own."*
>
> *(Frank Schlinzig)*

Trails/Way-marking

Even though an E-path is a particular route of long distance, Frank Schlinzig indicates that this does not refer automatically to a consistent way-marking system. In general, local German hiking clubs are responsible for managing the way-marking along the E-paths that belong to their area. For this reason, the paths are given the common signs of the respective club's way-marking system as the E-paths also run via the local trails. However, E-paths are always somehow indicated with a distinct sign. In the best case, this will be a "blue shield with the yellow stars of Europe, in the middle of which is the letter *E* and the corresponding number of the E-path" (European Ramblers Association 2014).

> *"Some of the hiking clubs might be able to regularly way-mark their trails. [...] However, many are not because E-paths are increasingly used as a tool to develop and promote quality trails. Hiking clubs are due to the lack of manpower not able to way-mark the paths as often as they should in order to fulfil the criteria for a quality trail. Now, touristic organisations more and more take control of these trails, which is not necessarily good because they would sometimes change the route of the paths."*
>
> *(Frank Schlinzig)*

Frank Schlinzig specifies that E-paths are still marked more regularly than in other European countries, such as Italy. Way-marking in Italy is often reliant on projects that are more or less funded by private institutions and the government. In Switzerland, however, way-marking is of a higher standard than in Germany. Trail maintenance is a semi-governmental matter and, therefore, way-marking does not rely as much on volunteers as it is the case in Germany or Austria.

Marketing

Frank Schlinzig claims that E-paths are increasingly used to serve marketing objectives of local and regional tourist organisations in order to promote newly developed quality trails or a particular hiking/travel region. This can be considered a potential for the E-paths as they benefit from their promotion alongside the marketing of particular regions and their trails. For this reason, an E-Path can be seen as a selling factor to promote hiking in a particular area.

"Because E-paths are increasingly used to promote local regions, the original thought of European distance-paths to connect people from different nations can get lost. […] Touristic authorities want to keep people in their region."

(Frank Schlinzig)

As detected from the interview with Frank Schlinzig, the idea of E-paths is to promote hiking beyond national borders. Therefore, hiking on E-paths is intended to encourage people to hike longer distances that connect different places, regions and countries. Hiking in this sense is considered to be a long-lasting leisure activity

"People walking on the E-paths are actually the real hikers because they try to hike also longer distances. They continue from where they stopped last time and they really profit from their hiking experience. And then there are the people who just hike during their holidays and who hike only in certain areas."

(Frank Schlinzig)

Frank Schlinzig mentions that E-paths in Germany lead through already existing trails. This seems to be beneficial as the biggest share of the German trail network is already assigned to parties who take care of them. As a result, the administration and maintenance of German E-paths appears to be covered via a collaboration between the European Ramblers Association and local hiking institutions. Moreover, Frank Schlinzig talks about a sufficient distribution of appropriate infrastructure alongside those paths. This assumption might base on the dense allocation of resting possibilities, such as accommodation and gastronomic facilities that naturally can often be found along hiking tracks in Germany.

E-paths in Germany often serve commercially-oriented reasons, as approached by Frank Schlinzig. However, E-paths are associated with history and tradition alongside their purpose to connect people from different regions and countries. Therefore, they might be considered to be a driver of hiking from a traditional standpoint of view, which is to walk from one place to another. However, nowadays they can also be used to foster outdoor participation, as their appearance can be included into promotional activities of distinct hiking and travel regions. Hence, E-paths seem to be capable of filling a gap that might occur between traditional and modern outdoor participation.

6.2.2 National park Hainich

The present subchapter seeks to display background information concerning the national park Hainich in Central Germany. Figure 9 illustrates the network of relationships between the codes given to certain interview segments and how they correlate with the three main themes. Manfred Großmann, manager of the national park, was interviewed. This chapter seeks to answer the research question concerning how popular German hiking facilities, in this case national park Hainich, are administrated, way-marked and promoted.

* = = *is associated with*   * [] *is part of*
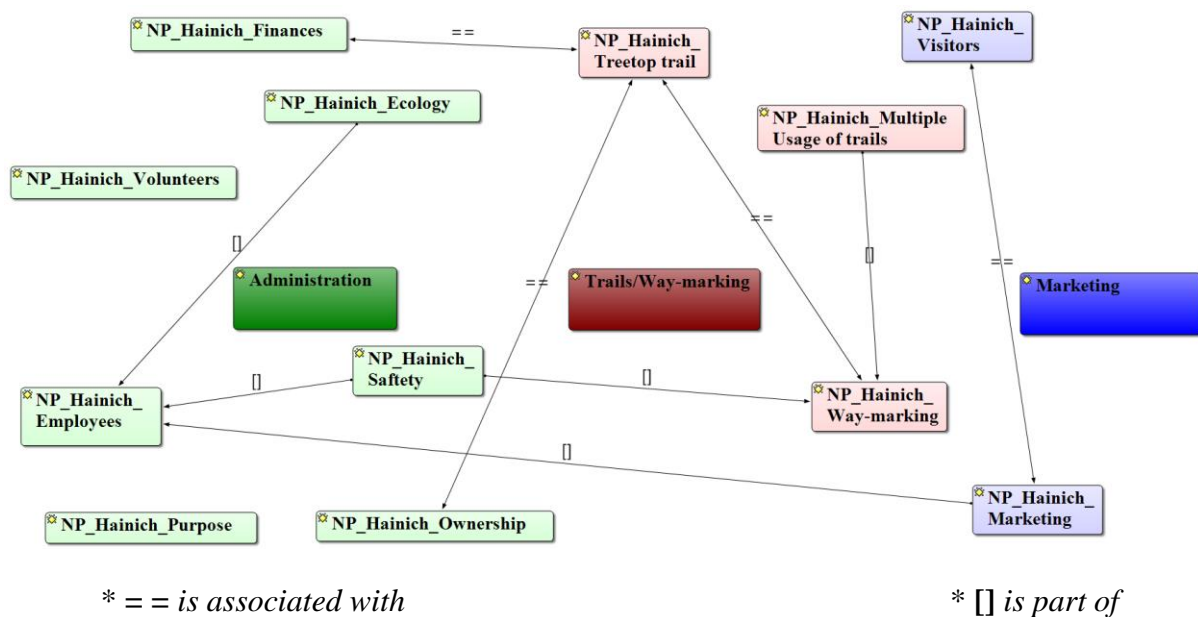
Figure 9. Hainich interview network illustrating the three main themes alongside their given codes and their relationships

Hainich is the federal state's Thuringia only national park, founded at the end of 1997. 16 circular routes and 2 distance routes offer more than 100 kilometres hiking trails for visitors who want to pursue various activities, such as hiking, cycling and horse riding. Moreover, the 7.500 hectare big national park is one of the largest coherent broadleaf forest areas in entire Europe. Most of the local beech trees can be found in the national park. (National park Hainich 2010, 12)

Administration

According to Manfred Großmann, the primary purpose of the national park Hainich is to guarantee an undisturbed development of the local natural habitat. Moreover, as all other

German national parks, Hainich serves as an important platform for research and also as an environment for leisure spending and relaxation.

> *"Our national park statue points out also the purpose of improving the living and working environment of people who live in the region. This refers to promoting local tourism and economy"*
>
> *(Manfred Großmann)*

The biggest share of the national park's area, 95 %, is owned by the federal state Thuringia in which Hainich is located. The remaining 5 % are largely obtained by the local city Bad Langensalza. Because the national park is mainly in governmental ownership, the national park's employees are paid via the federal state budget. However, voluntary workers are also needed occasionally in order to support certain happenings or events. It is now a matter of discussion whether some of these volunteers can even be assigned to tasks that would require their permanent responsibility. This upcoming decision is based on the fact that the annual available budget for labour costs is decreasing and because the average age of the national park's employees is steadily rising. For example, the average age of the forest workers is now already 55 years.

> *"We have 25 forest workers, 2 territory leaders and 11 employees that are in charge of the national park's administration. So overall 38 employees. [...] Our annual budget that is allocated from the federal state budget accounts 2,2 million euros. Already 1,7 million euros are assigned to pay our staff. "*
>
> *(Manfred Großmann)*

The remaining 500.000 euros is intended to finance everything that is needed to run the national park, such as investments in signposts, boards and marketing material.

Trails/Way-marking

As suggested in the interview, despite an existing way-marking system in Thuringia, Hainich signs its trails according to EURPARC Germany guidelines, which were developed for national parks in Germany. In this way, a value of brand recognition was supposed to be developed. Moreover, problems do not occur with signposting of the trails but sometimes rather through the multiple-usage of trails.

"There are separate routes for hikers. However, there are no distinct paths for cyclists or horse riders. Every now and then this may lead to problems with mountain bikers, especially when they are seeking to face special challenges by cycling very fast."

<div align="right">

(Manfred Großmann)

</div>

A significant feature of the national park is its tree-top trail that was launched in 2005 and once again extended in 2009. Manfred Großmann states that it was important to disturb the national park's nature as little as possible when building the tree-top trail. As a result, the more than 500 meter long trail is located at the edge of the national park, close to a parking lot and not far from the city of Bad Langensalza. The main purpose of the tree-top was to raise the attractiveness of the national park Hainich as a travel destination and, moreover, to foster environmental research and education. As Figure 10 indicates, the stream of visitors increased significantly with the launch of the tree-top trail in 2005. The amount of annual visitors more than doubled with the establishment of the trail.
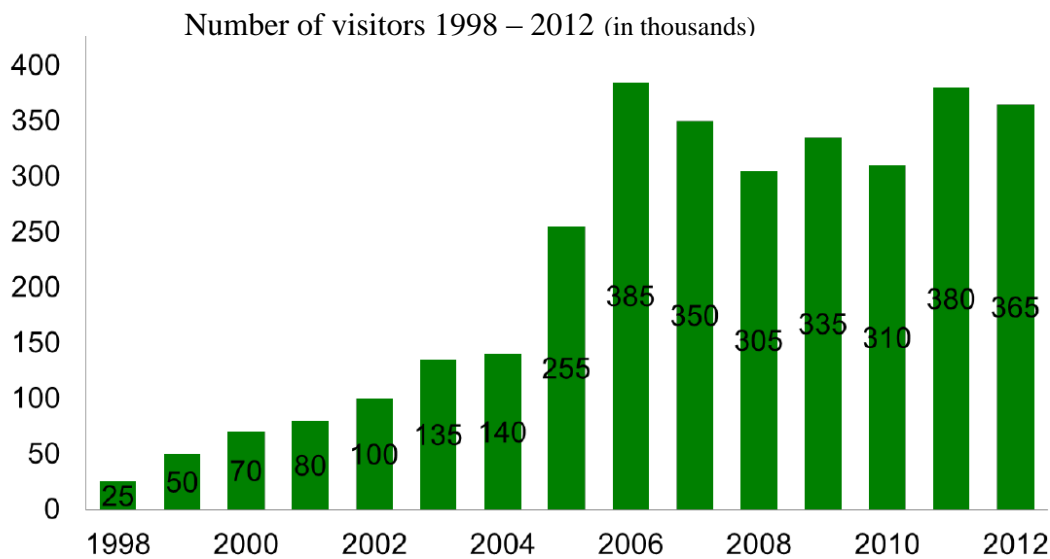

Number of visitors 1998 – 2012 (in thousands)

Figure 10. Visitor numbers of the national park Hainich (Figure provided by Manfred Großmann)

"Launch in 2005 and extension in 2009 cost approximately 5 million Euro. […] The first part was financed by the German Federal Environmental Foundation, the European Union and the city of Bad Langensalza. The second part was funded to 90 % by Thuringia, after they realised the potential of the trail."

<div align="right">

(Manfred Großmann)

</div>

Marketing

Building and extending the tree-top respectively took place in the winter months, when fewer visitors were present. As shown in Figure 11, the trail is now a significant pull-factor that attracts people to visit the national park and the region. Up to two thirds of all national park visitors also visit the tree-top trail, which symbolises the importance of the trail for local tourism and economy. Although visiting the national park is free of charge, visiting the tree-top trail costs 8 euros for adults but is free of charge of children under 12 years. The profits of the ticket sales do not benefit the budget of the national park as it is a non-profit organisation rather they are collected by the city of Bad Langesalza.

Number of national park visitors in relation to visitors of the tree-top trail (in thousands)
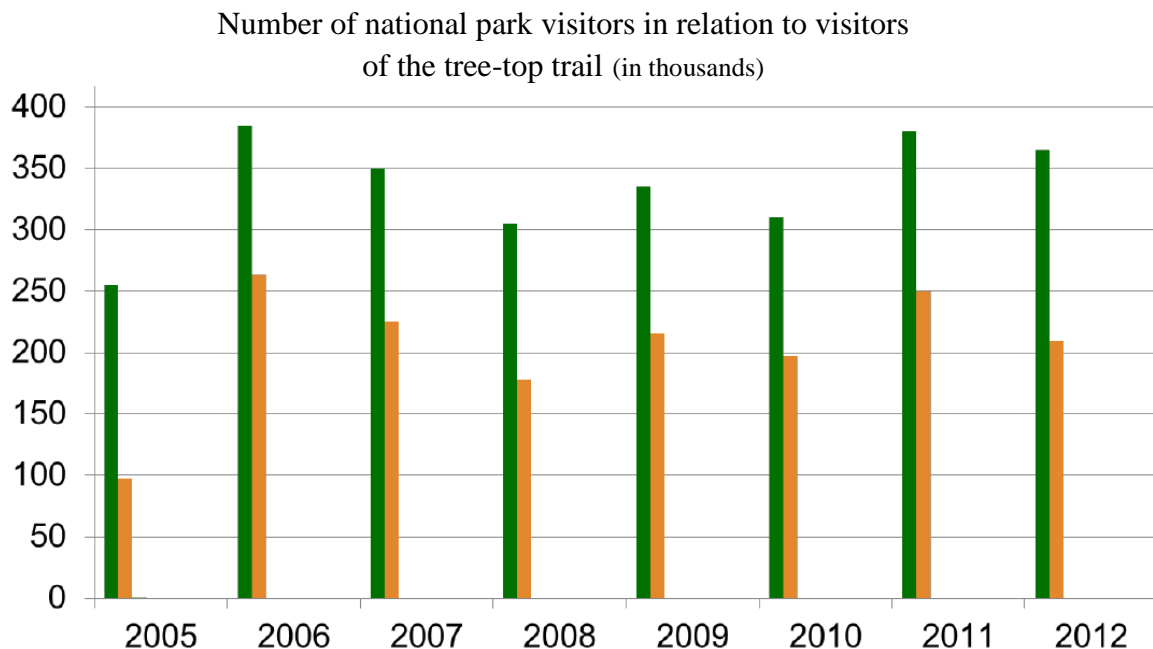

Figure 11. Visitor numbers of the tree-top trail in relation to the total numbers of visitors of national park Hainich (Figure provided by Manfred Großmann)

"The national park's marketing budget accounts 30.000-50.000 Euro per year. However, a big share of all marketing activities is undertaken by the regional tourism association."

(Manfred Großmann)

This implies that the regional tourism association "Welterberegion Wartburg Hainich" is also in charge of other touristic sights in Thuringia. However, it displays that there is a central party in marketing the national park Hainich.

Manfred Großmann argues that the national park's purpose is not only to preserve nature, but also to promote local tourism and economy. As a result, it seems reasonable that the national park administration launched a large-scale project to construct a tree-top trail. The project appeared to result in a win-win situation for both the national park and the local municipality. The national park accounts significantly more visitors and has an additional platform to conduct research. However, since the national park is a non-profit organisation and, thus, is prohibited to generate profits, the local municipality receives the revenues that occur due to the tree-top trail usage by visitors. From ecological and economic standpoints of view, this collaboration between national park and local municipality seems to have role-model character that might be applicable also elsewhere.

6.2.3 National park Harz

The current subchapter aims at presenting information to answer the research questions concerning how popular German hiking facilities, in this case national park Harz, are administrated, way-marked and promoted. Figure 12 illustrates the network of relationships between the codes given to certain interview segments and how they correlate with the three main themes. Dr. Friedhart Knolle was interviewed. He is responsible for media and marketing activities and he manages the regional development of the national park Harz.

* = = *is associated with*   * [] *is part of*   * => *is cause of*
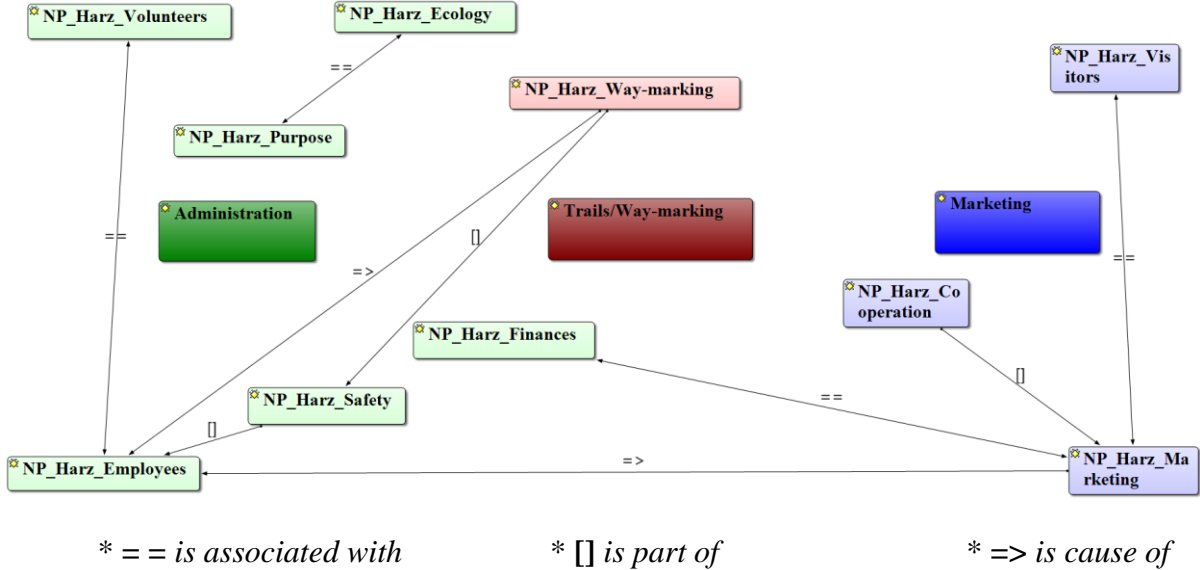
Figure 12. Harz interview network illustrating the three main themes alongside their given codes and their relationships

National park Harz, founded in 1989, has a total size of approximately 24.700 hectares and is located in two federal states, Lower Saxony and Saxony Anhalt. Its area covers only 10 % of the entire popular Harz region but it is considered to be an important factor that attracts people to visit the region. Almost 97 % of the national park is forest. (National park Harz 2011, 9-10) Similar to all other German national parks, Harz is a spot of environmental protection, research, education and regional development. Furthermore, it offers various recreation and relaxation opportunities (National park Harz 2011, 68-69).

Administration

Dr. Friedhart Knolle indicates that the national park Harz is not only owned by the respective federal states and partly the state but, naturally, it is also entirely funded by the government. Table 6 presents the main expenditures and revenues from 2008 to 2012. The revenues do not represent the state budget that is allocated to finance the national park. Mostly the sale of wood in the course of renaturation activities generates some sort of income.

> *"Only the state should be responsible for national parks. Otherwise you would make yourself depending on third parties and their mood whether to invest money or not."*

> *(Dr. Friedhart Knolle)*

Table 6. Expenditures and revenues of national park Harz (National park Harz 2012, 72)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Expenditures	11.500.000 €	10.480.000 €	10.680.000 €	11.195.000 €	11.200.000 €
Revenues	2.500.000 €	2.023.000 €	1.900.000 €	2.280.000 €	2.440.000 €

As stated by Dr. Friedhart Knolle, safety is a sensitive issue that is treated carefully within the national park administration. Despite people entering the national park at their own risk, the implemented traffic safety measures regulate the matter of safety in the park.

> *"Only areas, such as streets and a railway that lead through the national park area are responsibility of other parties. […] Otherwise we have to justify to the prosecutor why someone got hurt or even died in our national park."*

> *(Dr. Friedhart Knolle)*

Unlike other national parks, Harz regularly benefits from the work of voluntary workers that are involved in certain tasks and projects. However, important duties, such as way-marking the trails, are exclusively done by paid employees as these are considered to be a central aspect of the national park's services. Moreover, the maintenance of the park is undertaken by rangers.¨

> *"Altogether we have about 180 employees. […] They are solely paid through finances of the two federal states. […] And then we have the two national park houses, which we have outsourced in the past. Including the people there, we have about 200 employees."*
>
> *(Dr. Friedhart Knolle)*

In particular the ecology aspect is treated carefully within the national park structures. The park authorities utilise in this sense all available resources to raise the awareness to keep local nature unharmed and free of trash. Given that the national park is the owner of the area, the park's rangers are responsible for the waste disposal. Although the national park authorities are aware that they do not shape people's perceptions about waste disposal, they do not have trash bins within the national park.

> *"A church is a holy place and you won't find trash bins there. Nobody would stick his or her chewing gum under the altar. We strive on manifesting the same kind of image for our national park. […] Take rather more out than you take in."*
>
> *(Dr. Friedhart Knolle)*

Trails/Way-marking

As indicated, the way-marking duties of the approximately 800 kilometres long trail network are solely completed by paid staff members, whether they are rangers or forest managers. However, the marking system itself leans on the prevailing system of the *Harzclub* association, which is the dominant promoter of hiking in the region and which takes care of various other duties, such as nature protection, releasing maps and marking trails (Harzclub 2014). Ultimately, the national park Harz has its own corporate way-marking design which is meant to display the identity of the protected area.

"Deciding which paths people are using is a central part of the visitor management and environmental protection. This is an area that we would not leave in the hands of someone else other than us."

(Dr. Friedhart Knolle)

Marketing

Dr. Friedhart Knolle suggests, it is difficult to provide exact numbers about the amount of annual visitors of the national park. This is mainly because there are many trails from outside leading into the park area and since it is often difficult to state whether people are Harz region visitors and/or also national park Harz visitors. However, it is estimated that approximately 2-3 million people per year visit the national park.

As Dr. Friedhart Knolle argues, it is difficult to distinguish between national park Harz visitors and visitors of the entire Harz area. Therefore only assumptions can be made concerning the profiles of the people who visit. Especially because the Harz region has to offer a big variety of different sights, people might not solely come because of the national park in the region but they visit because they are already in the area anyway due to other sights. This fact might be different from other areas, where the national park is the centre of interest.

"A typical Harz visitor might be 45 years old, is married and has 1,9 children. He or she has an academic background or some sort of other higher education. But you have to consider all the uncertainties I just mentioned [...]. Foreign tourism varies from 8-9 % in the entire Harz area but it represents also the proximate share of foreign visitors in the national park."

(Dr. Friedhart Knolle)

Table 7 displays the economic impact of tourism on the entire Harz region. However, as already mentioned, the actual national park zone represents only 10 % of the entire Harz area and, therefore, the presented numbers only apply to a considerably smaller scale than the national park. (ift GmbH 2012)

Table 7. Tourism as a significant economic factor for the Harz region (ift GmbH 2012)

	Harz area in total / year
Over-night stays in commercial businesses	5,9 mio.
Over-night stays in non-commercial businesses	1,7 mio.
Over-night stays via camping and caravans	1,9 mio.
Over-nights stays at private households	4,8 mio.
Amount of day trips	38 mio.
Gross revenue	1,9 mio. €

As pointed out by Dr. Friedhart Knolle, national park Harz is only a smaller part of a well-developed touristic region. Therefore, he mentions it to be difficult to provide accurate data about the traits of a typical national park visitor. However, this does not seem to be problematic. Usually, an organisation must understand the needs of its primary target group. However, in the case of Harz, the national park benefits from promotional endeavours of an entire area. The national park, in this sense, appears to be only one selling feature in the promotion of local outdoor participation. Hence, the case shows that a collaboration between various regional outdoor and tourist facilities can be a key driver in fostering outdoor activity among people. This joint effort seems to create a much bigger promotional outcome than the national park possibly could achieve on its own.

6.2.4 Travel region Fläming

In order to provide another case that seeks to answer the research question concerning popular hiking facilities in Germany, a final interview was conducted that provides data about the travel region Fläming. For this reason, Traugott Heinemann-Grüder, now former managing director of the *Tourist Association Fläming*, was interviewed. The written notes related to the interview are presented according to the main categories administration, way-marking and marketing.

Fläming is a designated travel region located in South-Western Brandenburg and Eastern Saxony-Anhalt and in the South in close distance to the German capital Berlin. The region offers a wide range of commercially-oriented outdoor facilities that are suitable for cycling, walking and skating. Moreover, various accommodation possibilities present tourists with a

large number of options to stay longer than just one day. The region is largely marketed via the Tourist Association Fläming (Tourismusverband Fläming 2014).

Administration

As indicated by Traugott Heinemann-Grüder, the travel region Fläming is characterised by its commercially-orientated approach towards tourism. Therefore, the region contributes its share to the local economy. Thus, voluntary work plays only a minor role in the administration of the region. Local hiking club members might take care of the administration of distinct trails, however, those trails tend not to lead through the developed tourists areas. Funding for the region is largely allocated from budgets from the two federal states Brandenburg and Saxony-Anhalt and from local municipalities.

An indicator of the tourist -orientated administration of the region is the fact that the route of particular trails has been modified in the past in order to cross areas with a higher quantity of sights and accommodation possibilities. This was meant to increase the attractiveness of the region to visitors. Moreover, trails have been adapted and improved so that they would meet the requirements of German quality trails. As a result, Fläming can now claim to possess two quality trails, "Burgenwanderweg" (castle path) and "66-Seen-Rundweg" (66 lakes circular path).

Trails/Way-marking

Traugott Heinemann-Grüder argues that there is no consistent way-marking system that would cover the entire Fläming region. Only in the federal state Brandenburg there exists a coherent way-marking system that covers most of the Fläming trails there. In general, tourist administrators from particular trails and local hiking clubs may follow various other types of way-marking, often depending on which municipality they belong to. Despite all these differences, the region as a whole is generally well way-marked.

Traugott Heinemann-Grüder implies that the area benefits from the bill that was passed in 2011, which rules the matter of safety in natural habitats. As explained in chapter 6.1.2, landowners are no longer liable for naturally caused accidents that happen on their ground. Now, private landowners do not have to worry anymore about cutting down a tree or branch

that displays a potential threat for tourists. As a result, expenditures that used to be spent for safety issues earlier can now be allocated elsewhere.

In order to modify distinct courses according to the requirements of the German quality trail awards, trails that are located further away from motorways were established. Moreover, the shortest distance between sights was considered another factor that would enhance the attractiveness of trails. In general, the more ecological, sustainable and attractive a trail, the higher the chance for it to become a German quality trail. The German hiking association examines the compliance of their requirements for quality trails regularly. Therefore, trail maintenance is perceived to be a duty of local trail authorities.

Marketing

Traugott Heinemann-Grüder highlights the commercially driven orientation of the travel region Fläming. Marketing aspects are seen vital for the region's development. The Tourist Association Fläming consists of approximately 4,5 people that are in charge of promoting the region, however, various other local institutions and businesses undertake their own marketing activities.

The region itself is not particularly famous for unique natural features. However, special outdoor facilities have been developed that would enhance the attractiveness of the region. For example, the two European distance trails E10 and E11 are advertised to be a point of special interest in the region. Although those long-distance trails are historically meant to attract people who would like to hike large distances, the travel region Fläming advertises the trails to bring and keep visitors in the Fläming region. Moreover, because the geographical profile of the region is rather flat, at least compared to the Uplands in the Central and Southern part of Germany, special trails for roller skating have been developed because the flat area benefits this particular outdoor activity. These trails are marketed as one of the best of its kind in Europe. As a result, the roller skating trails alongside an established arena for roller skating encourage people from all over the world to come to Fläming, whether it be to practice this outdoor leisure activity or to attend events that are held in the arena.

Figure 13 indicates the composition of type of stays at the travel region Fläming. The recognizably biggest share consists of day trips (40,2 %), followed by short holiday trips (24,9 %) and main holiday stays (15,8 %) (Tourismusverband Fläming 2011, 20).
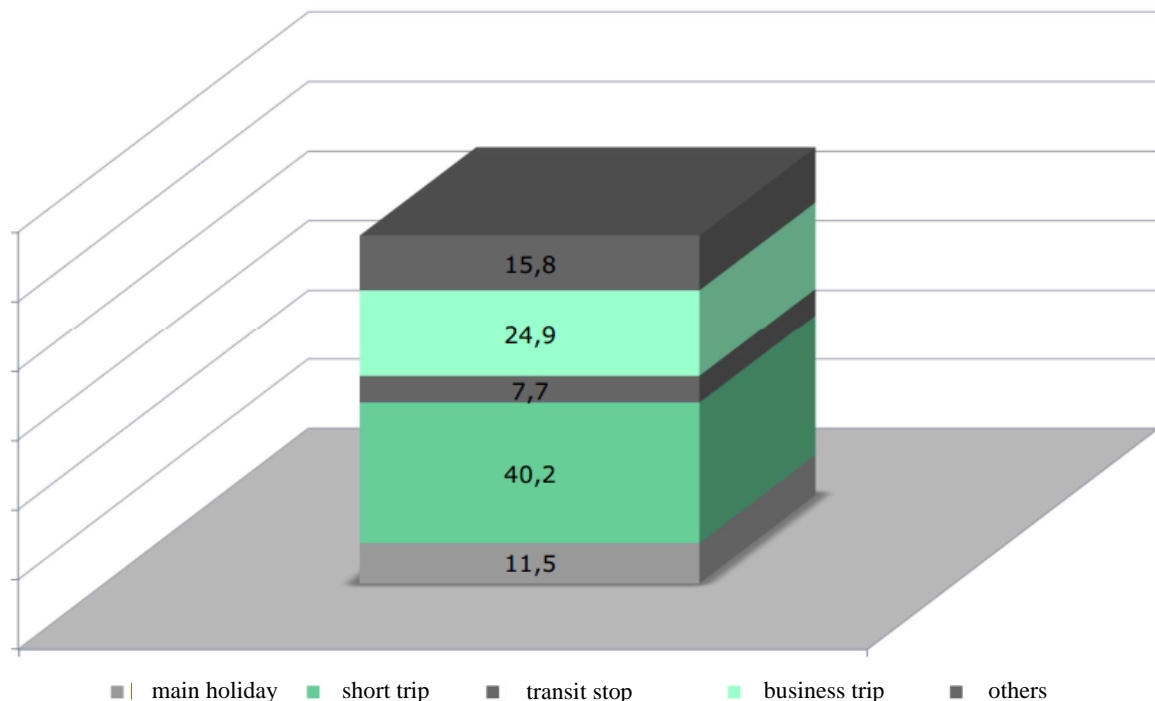

Figure 13. Type of stays at the Fläming region in 2007 (Tourismusverband Fläming 2011, 20)

Moreover, Fläming offered its guests in 2010 approximately 7.800 beds. The overall bed occupancy rate amounted to 35 %. With 1 million over-night stays in total, the area is one of the most important travel regions that are close to the German capital. Moreover, the impact of foreign travelers is important for the local economy. Foreigners stay altogether 170.000 nights at the travel region Fläming, which results in 16 % of all over-night stays. (Tourismusverband Fläming 2011, 14-19).

Traugott Heinemann-Grüder highlights the commercial character of the travel region Fläming. It seems that local stakeholders agreed upon a concept to generate revenue while encouraging outdoor participation. Therefore, it appears also understandable that routes have been changed in order to meet the requirements of the desired award of the German Hiking Association. Moreover, E-paths are heavily marketed to create an additional pull-factor that attracts people to visit the region, and also the roller skating path seems to contribute its share in getting visitors into the area. From the perspective of outdoor participation promotion, it seems

irrelevant whether a region offers services and facilities for free or for a certain price. What counts is ultimately the number of people that are encouraged to be active outdoors.

7 ENCOURAGING FINNISH OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION

The results of the present study sought to identify examples of the successfully run German outdoor facilities for Suomen Latu and other Finnish outdoor authorities, thus seeking to generate ideas to promote outdoor participation in Finland. In this regard, the following subchapters provide an overview of possible improvements to promote outdoor activity in Finland. The conditions for hiking in Germany help to understand in which direction and to what extent a development in Finland might be useful. Additionally, the three main areas of "administration", "trails/way-marking" and "marketing" were identified to be crucial when promoting outdoor participation, as they correlate to successfully implemented outdoor facilities. Therefore, the following subchapters seek to present particular implication suggestions from these fields. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of Suomen Latu to utilise the recommendations of this study to encourage Finnish people to be more active outdoors.

7.1 Development potentials for outdoor participation in Finland

As Heli Saari stated, there is no consistent way-marking system in Finland and it may only remain an aspiration to develop a nationwide prevailing system. Most trails are already marked, and establishing another marking system in the respective areas would require significant monetary investments and sufficient manpower to implement such changes. As introduced in the literature review, there is no uniform way-marking system in Germany either. However, members of local hiking clubs take charge of the maintenance and administration of the German hiking clubs, which also includes way-marking activities (Deutscher Wanderverband 2012). Finland has a strong voluntary culture too. As a result, voluntary activities in Finland might be increasingly channelled in order to achieve an even better environment that encourages outdoor participation.

As presented in the literature review, Ulrich et.al (1991) state outdoor recreation management to be an approach to promote outdoor activities. In this sense, Simpson et.al (2008, 4) consider it important to capture people's interest in the outdoors by offering them an exciting environment in which they can be physically active. Finland has, with its vast amount of lakes and forests, a perfect base to promote outdoor participation. However, Heli Saari referred to infrastructural deficiencies in Finland's natural areas in the South. Which means that there are less accommodation and gastronomic possibilities available. In contrast, Lapland with its

well-maintained national parks and winter resorts, represents a role model of how to develop and administrate outdoor facilities alongside supporting infrastructure in order to enthuse people to go outdoors. The scattered land-ownership situation and the wide distribution of summer cottages seems to restrict a similar development in the South of Finland. This circumstance remains to be another aspect that involves improvement potential to increase outdoor participation.

Moreover, Heli Saari argues that Finnish people prefer day trips when being outdoors. This feature applies also to German hikers. German outdoor authorities seek to cope with this trend by providing both centralised facilities for accommodation that are connected to a variety of routes and especially circular routes that offer the opportunity to explore different areas, always starting from the same over-night place (PROJECT M GmbH, 2014). Furthermore, German hiking authorities seek to keep tourists and hikers in a distinct region by offering special types of trails, such as educational trails and theme trails that are attractive to people. Finland certainly has a much smaller population density than Germany and, therefore, it might be challenging to develop an infrastructural network that is as tight as the German one. However, in Finland there is potential to develop outdoor facilities that attract people to go outdoors on a more regular base, especially by keeping in mind what Finns prefer when being outdoors: over-night stays and day trips. Local municipalities certainly would continue to the greatest asset in developing such facilities alongside the necessary infrastructure. Ultimately, it is important to consider people's preferences when encouraging them to be more active outdoors. As discussed in the literature review, social marketers seek to change behaviour by making healthy choices the easier option (Grier and Bryant 2005). This concept might lead further decision making in the outdoor sector in Finland, especially on the local level.

As suggested by the literature, physical activity is influenced by various social and environmental determinants (Biddle and Mutrie 2007, 22). In Germany, a quality award for trails has been introduced. This award is associated with various benefits. In relation to social determinants, people are more likely to promote particular hiking facilities among peers if they were satisfied about the quality of the respective trails or regions. Moreover, the award encourages outdoor authorities to improve their trails and facilities in order to offer a more attractive environment for outdoor activity participation. Holding a quality award for a trail certainly displays a competitive advantage that is appealing to outdoor lovers and tourists. Similar to the quality awards, German hiking bodies also utilise the existence of E-trails for

their region's promotion. Both developing quality awards for outdoor facilities and promoting E-trails represent future possibilities for the Finnish outdoor sector.

7.2 Implication suggestions to promote outdoor participation in Finland

Based on the results of the case studies of the particular German hiking facilities, the current subchapter seeks to provide implication suggestions that are meant to promote Finnish outdoor participation. All of the ideas are categorised according to aspects concerning hiking facility "administration", "trails/way-marking" and "marketing". Furthermore, the presented thoughts require attention from all three aspects in order to be successfully implemented and to attract people to go outdoors. Therefore, the ideas introduced in one category might correlate with aspects of another category. Finally, the implication suggestions should be considered to be guidelines and not universal solutions. Therefore, Suomen Latu may consider modifying the findings in order to make them applicable in Finland.

7.2.1 Administration

Encouraging voluntary work

To increase outdoor participation, it is important to guarantee a proper platform on which activities, such as hiking, can take place. As it may be difficult to allocate funding to improve and maintain hiking trails, other channels have to be found to tackle those challenges. Voluntary work offers in this sense a great opportunity to achieve two goals, enhance outdoor participation and the quality of outdoor facilities. In Germany, voluntary work related to the outdoors takes place mostly in clubs. This chance is also given in Finland. As in Germany, events, such as national/regional hiking days, could also be organised in Finland in order to promote voluntary activity and to bring people together. Hiking is not solely a physical activity, but it belongs to cultural heritage, in Germany and also in Finland. Hence, strengthening the hiking movement by encouraging voluntary work will ultimately also have a positive impact on outdoor participation in general.

Improving outdoor facility infrastructure

People enjoy visiting places that offer good accessibility, sights and accommodation. As stated by Heli Saari, the amount of day trips and weekend trips are increasing in Finland, as in Germany. Moreover, people would like to stay at one place rather than changing accommodation on a daily bases due to their outdoor experience. Therefore, established routes that provide the opportunity to stay at one place but from where it is possible to see various sceneries and sights certainly have an appealing character. In Germany, circular routes and trails that are connected to one another have been increasingly developed to meet the new demands of people. Similar activities could also be launched in Finland, guaranteeing sufficient resting spots next to routes and a versatile trail network alongside different sides, and offering accommodation that can easily be reached by car or public transportation.

Developing national parks

The share of national parks is much greater in the South of Finland than in the country's North. This offers great potential to promote outdoor activity participation. Due to the scattered land-ownership, there are boundaries in establishing outdoor facilities to the same extent as in Lapland. Moreover, the majority of Finnish people live in the Southern part of Finland and, therefore, most of the summer cottages are also located below the Arctic Circle. National parks generally represent areas that are attractive to people because they offer unique wildlife and special sceneries alongside well-maintained trails. As a result, national parks, especially in the South of Finland, could be utilised and developed in order to meet people's desire for nature and adventure while being active outdoors. Summer cottages are integral part of Finnish outdoor culture. Therefore, the focus should be on encouraging people to leave their cottages at least for a while, for example to visit the next national park. Competing entirely with the summer cottage heritage will probably remain challenging.

Establishing profit-orientated travel regions outside Lapland

The travel region Fläming in Germany represents an area that encourages people from the German capital Berlin, but also from elsewhere, to go outdoors and visit the area. Since the region is rather flat, special trails alongside sights were developed in order to provide an attractive environment that encourages people to hike, cycle and roller skate. The South of

Finland is rather flat and given the vast amount of tranquil lakes and forests, the area is perfect to develop trails that motivate people to go more outdoors. Fläming in Germany is rather commercially orientated. Along connected circular routes, many businesses can be found that offer sufficient gastronomic and accommodation possibilities and other services. Moreover, events are regularly organised to enhance the appeal of the region. In Finland, the development of an attractive roller skating route may prove effective. The popularity of winter sports would also allow a re-usage of the trail for various winter sport activities. The German Fläming region is a success because of the businesses that are interested to attract and keep people in the area. A similar approach might be considered in Finland when developing such an area.

7.2.2 Trails/Way-marking

Developing coherent way-marking systems

The example of Germany shows that no coherent nationwide way-marking system is reqired in order to successfully maintain and promote outdoor facilities, such as trails for hiking, biking and skating. However, uniform marking systems are needed at least within one particular region to provide the area with a unique identity that can be marketed to people. Increased cooperation between responsible authorities that are involved in way-marking activities might support the development of a comprehensive network that connects various hiking areas, whether they have a similar marking system or not.

Marking E-paths according to standards of the European Ramblers Association

E-paths in Germany are consistently marked according to the guidelines of the European Ramblers Association. Although only a few people seek to walk the entire E-paths, the distinct *E* (E-path) on a signpost promises people to hike on a trail that has special meaning and history. Finnish authorities could improve the marking of E-paths in order to communicate the existence of it within a particular region.

Developing a hiking culture and identity via way-marking activities

In Germany, local hiking clubs are responsible for the respective way-marking system in the region. In this regard, way-marking activities are voluntary based and reflect a joint product of members of local clubs. Way marking activities and trail maintenance are considered to be duties that are accomplished in groups while being together outdoors. This sense of belongingness is important to understand when observing various way-marking styles. In many cases, the respective signposting method results of the spirit of the voluntary workers that are in charge of the trail or the entire region. Considering this, way-marking activities and trail maintenance are important drivers of both the development of clearly marked trail networks and strengthening the voluntary hiking club culture in Germany. In Finland, this ideology might find its application as well. By leaving responsibility to volunteers and people who are interested in contributing their share to the development and promotion of the Finnish outdoors, a tool might be found to strengthen the national outdoor identity.

7.2.3 Marketing

Awarding high-quality trails

German outdoor institutions, together with various German tourist organisations, frequently award hiking trails of high quality. These awards are well-marketed and communicated in order to attract people to come to the respective area (Deutscher Wanderverband 2014b). The Finnish outdoor scenery could greatly benefit from such an award system. Heli Saari suggested that the quantity of hiking trails in Finland is already sufficient. They do however lack the necessary quality to cope with people's expectations of a great outdoor experience. First, a prevailing and transparent award system should be developed that guides Finnish outdoor organisations in the development of their outdoor facilities. Second, the awarded trails and the award itself should be well-communicated to Finnish people and international tourists in order to develop awareness and appreciation towards the award. For example, the German hiking association devoted a web page to the quality award and trails, and an issue-promoting brochure is released on an annual base. Ultimately, the German criteria for awarding distinct trails might build a valuable base when establishing an own award system in Finland (see criteria in Deutscher Wanderverband 2014d and 2014e).

Developing and marketing of tree-top trails

In the present study, a national park's tree-top trail has been chosen to represent the value of special trails for local hiking and tourist organisations. Tree-top trails might be implemented for various reasons. They might serve research purposes as the location of the trails allows scholars to investigate otherwise difficult-accessible areas of forests. They might also be used to educate adults and children about the tree-top as a natural habitat. Finally, tree-top trails offer fascinating views and insights that encourage people to go outdoors and visit the respective region. Naturally, people are tempted to see both, the tree-top trail and the area that is located around it. In Finland, the domestic nature, with its large areas full of forests and lakes, provides perfect scenery to enjoy the outdoors from the perspective of a tree-top.

Developing and marketing of E-paths

In Germany, E-paths serve mainly two purposes. According to the ideology of the European Ramblers Association, German E-paths allow people to hike beyond borders and, thus, cover large distances. In contrast to this, local hiking and tourist bodies use E-paths as an attraction force that is intended to attract people to come to their area. Properly marketed, the two E-paths in Finland could display an opportunity for Suomen Latu as well to encourage people to go outdoors. Hereof, E-paths display a selling feature that is able to capture people's attention for a particular region whilst also encouraging people to walk longer routes.

8   CONCLUSIONS

This present study sought to reveal well-working practices from the German outdoor scenery that could be modified and subsequently applied in Finland. Based on semi-structured interviews with experts from the German and Finnish hiking field and with authorities of German outdoor facilities, this study presents implication suggestions that might be acknowledged by Suomen Latu. In particular, the study's findings help to recognise potential improvement within the Finnish outdoor sector and, moreover, provide ideas that can help encourage Finnish people to go more often outdoors.

The results of the research show that the administration, way-marking and marketing of particular outdoor facilities are crucial aspects when developing those. Alongside this basic construct, a strengthened voluntary core was identified to be an important contributor in realising demanding and time-consuming maintenance and way-marking activities. The German example showed that this voluntary effort works well in a club-setting. Clubs play an integral part of the voluntary culture in Finland as well. Thus, the base to increasingly direct voluntary activities towards recreational outdoor management seems to be given in Finland.

Moreover, findings from this study recommend that circular routes alongside customer-friendly infrastructure respond well to people's preference for short trips that take place in one area. Even though challenges might occur in Finland to establish such paths, especially in Southern Finland due to the scattered land-ownership situation, there seems to be potential to highlight already existing areas with such features. In this regard, Finnish municipalities appear to remain the key driver in initiating such endeavours.

Developing special trails, such as E-paths, tree-top trails and skating paths was identified to be another approach to enthuse more people to go outdoors. Especially in collaboration with local outdoor bodies and tourist organisations, those trails represent a distinct way to attract people to experience nature from different angles. E-paths foster the idea of hiking in a traditional sense when strolling from one place to another but they can also benefit the promotional endeavours of distinct outdoor areas. Tree-top trails let people experience the forest from a whole different perspective and they also allow the possibility to conduct meaningful research. Skating paths correspond very well to people's desire to go skating when no snow is available. As a result, an allocation of all these special trails certainly can

strengthen the image of a country and highlight its versatile orientation in regard of the outdoor sector. When well marketed, people surely will appreciate the newly given opportunities to explore the nature differently.

Finally, a coherent way-marking system does not seem to be necessary in order to successfully promote outdoor participation. As shown on the German example, outdoor authorities focus rather on marking systems on a regional and local scale and do not face major challenges with this approach. A similar situation is given in Finland, where different institutions apply various way-marking concepts. However, as explored in this study, a quality award could bring more transparency to the Finnish hiking sector by indicating where particularly proficient way-marking systems are applied. This quality award approach might even have an encouraging character to improve hiking trails and facilities in areas that have not been considered to receive the award so far.

8.1   Self-evaluation and objectivity of the research

Writing this study certainly was a demanding task that required dedication and self-motivation. Every chapter holds a new challenge but in the course of the writing process, valuable insights and knowledge was gained which enabled me to always progress one step further. This gradual learning process felt very enriching to me, also because the outdoors has always been an integral part of my life. Becoming acquainted with the contemporary research project as part of my master's studies was an eye-opening experience, especially because I got to realise how complex and versatile the outdoor scenery is and how different market participants interact with one another.

Hiking and related outdoor activities underwent significant changes during recent years. It is no longer a plain leisure activity but it is increasingly connected to various health benefits and it is acknowledged as a distinct market that is attractive to commercial entities. However, this changing environment also provided me with the chance to write my master's thesis about outdoor activity promotion. Various parties seem to benefit from an increased outdoor participation, as this type of physical activity can be a positive driver of economic, cultural and social aspects within our society. Suomen Latu realises this potential of outdoor activities. Therefore, I truly hope that the provided implication suggestions that are part of the present

thesis help the organisation with its goal to encourage Finnish people to be more active outdoors.

Qualitative research has its limitations. Anthony and Onwuegbuzie (2004) argue that the gathered insights do not necessarily reflect the knowledge and opinions of other individuals, even though they might be from a similar field. In this sense, the collected data in the present study represents only the insights from the study's participants. Moreover, the implication suggestions that result from this study are difficult to verify, as the collected data is based on a rather small sample size. Finally, trustfulness is always a sensitive issue in qualitative research. Perceptions and insight knowledge of study participants hardly can be verified and also the researcher remains to be a subject that is influenced by personal biases. (Anthony and Onwuegbuzie 2004)

Although I am confident to deliver valuable insights with this study, there are certain aspects that I could have done differently when conducting this research. Face-to-face interviews probably would have been more effective instead of the phone interviews that I conducted. On the phone, I was not able to see and, therefore, react towards mimics and gestures of the interviewees. As a result, I might have misinterpreted longer silent moments after asking questions as being awkward. By quickly trying to clarify the raised questions or by providing possible answer scenarios, the interviewees did not answer perhaps in the way which they originally planned. I should be more patient in future research and leave the timing and content of the answer entirely up the interviewee.

Semi-structured interviews build the core of this research. They fit the purpose of the study quite well because of their explorative nature. However, it is not possible to conduct the same interviews again as the time and the environment constantly is changing. Interview guides have been developed for each interview. Therefore, it was at least possible to create a similar surrounding to collect further data that correlates to the character of this study. Related to the results of this research was the missing interview data of one of the cases. In future research, I will make sure to always record an interview with two devices at the same time to prevent a loss of information.

In order to provide a more comprehensive base of German examples of outdoor facilities, I could have conducted more case studies. There are numerous other successfully implemented

trails and hiking areas in Germany that were left out in this study. However, due to limited time and the capacity of this study, I chose to select only the cases that were presented in this thesis. Moreover, another researcher perhaps would have chosen other cases instead of the ones that I have approached in this study. There are probably various ways to justify the selected qualitative data and I believe it remains questionable which German outdoor facilities are the very best in their category. The presented ones certainly display cases that had valuable insights to offer and, therefore, the value-adding nature of this research is assured. Also transparency of the study can be pursued at any time as the selection-method of the cases was fully described and because data collection and analysing methods were explained throughout this research.

In general, I am satisfied with the outcome of this study because I genuinely believe I have conducted a credible piece of research, due to the research approach, its design and the selection of the study participants. Moreover, I feel I have recognised the need to provide various outdoor facilities in order to promote outdoor participation. Forests, water areas and meadows represent the most basic and naturally beautiful environments to be physically active, recover, relax and socially interact with others. I believe that offering special outdoor facilities within these environments can help to bring people's hearts closer back to the great outdoors.

8.2   Suggestions for further research

The area of recreational outdoor management offers a vast variety of further research possibilities. For example, future studies might seek to gather knowledge about how to implement the outdoor facilities investigated in this study. Where could a tree-top trail be implemented in Finland? What would it look like and who would finance it? Based on this approach it would be important to consider marketing issues in greater detail. How can a healthy marketing-mix contribute towards identifying and attracting people to visit the trail?

Future research should also investigate other cases. In this study, the degree of presented cases has been limited. Researching other types of trails would create a greater assemblage of ideas and expertise of how to manage various outdoor facilities and, therefore, certainly represent a more valuable base for future decision-making of Finnish outdoor authorities. Related to this, other outdoor facilities from other countries could also be investigated. What

type of outdoor culture do other countries have? What facilities there attract people to go outdoors? Could they also be implemented in Finland?

It is crucial to find as much knowledge as possible about recreational outdoor management from elsewhere. However, it remains necessary to also implement those ideas in order to really make people go more outdoors in Finland.

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APPENDIX 1 – Thematic questions guide for the case interviews

Accessibility

1. How is the outdoor facility accessible for visitors?
2. Are there various starting destinations to access the route?
3. Is everyone able to access the facility? Or does the accessibility exclude certain groups?
4. How has accessibility been taken into consideration during the planning and construction of the park

Versatility and functional quality

5. What is the purpose of the facility?
6. Are there different type of trails for different type of people?
7. What are the special features of the trail? Specify please.
8. Is your trail a touristic attraction? To what extend?
9. What makes your facility a good outdoor recreation facility?
10. What is special/different at your facility compared to others?
11. Have you done any user research about the visitors (age, gender, main user group, number of visitors, visitor preferences, share domestic vs. international visitors etc.)?

Services / infrastructure / way-marking

12. What kind of services do you offer to people along the facility? What and where are these? (e.g. hospitality, rest rooms, stores, water refills, resting places, etc.?
13. How do you mark your facility?
14. Are the services you provide along the facility marked?
15. Who does the way-marking?
16. Who maintains the marking infrastructure and how often?
17. To what extend is the trail marked?
18. Do you have a coherent marking system?
19. Did you implement your own system or is does it lean on the marking system of another institutions?
20. How do you cope with the usage of a facility by various user groups (e.g. bikers vs. hikers)?

Administration

21. How many people run the facility?
22. Do people get paid/reimbursed for their labor?
23. Do you have an office?
24. What type of work needs to be done to run the facility?
25. To what extend is voluntary work relevant to run the facility?

Quality of the safety procedures/arrangements

26. How do you assure the safety of your visitors?
27. Do you have certain laws/guidelines that you need to follow?
28. Have you developed own safety procedures?

Ecological quality

29. How are/were ecological aspects taken into consideration in the daily usage of the facility (e.g. amount of trash bins, etc.)?
30. How do you keep the facility clean or how do you clean it up? Who does this labor (voluntary work or paid staff)?

Economical quality

31. What are the estimated expenses/costs of the park p.a.?
32. What is the ownership situation of the facility (e.g. private ownership, municipal possession, club ownership)?
33. How and from where do you allocate funding?

Marketing

34. How do you market you facility?
35. Do you have a marketing strategy?
36. Do you have marketing material?
37. Who does the marketing work?

History/development/challenges/solutions

38. What challenges did your facility face in the past?
39. How did you learn from them?
40. How did the facility develop in the course of the years?
41. What are the historical milestones in your facility's history which benefited its development?