



# **Sustainable Tourism in Reykjavik**

Encho Plamenov Stoyanov



**Líf- og umhverfisvísindadeild**  
**Verkfræði- og náttúruvísindasvið**

# **Sustainable tourism in Reykjavik**

Encho Plamenov Stoyanov

10 eininga ritgerð sem er hluti af  
*Baccalaureus Scientiarum gráðu í Ferðamálafræði*

Leiðbeinendi  
Anna Dóra Sæpórsdóttir

Líf- og umhverfisvísindadeild  
Verkfræði- og náttúruvísindasvið  
Háskóli Íslands  
Reykjavík, janúar 2012.

Sustainable Tourism in Reykjavik

10 eininga ritgerð sem er hluti af *Baccalaureus Scientiarum* gráðu í Ferðamálafræði

Líf- og umhverfisvísindadeild  
Verkfræði- og náttúruvísindasvið  
Háskóli Íslands  
Sturlugötu 7  
101 Reykjavík

Sími: 525 4000

Skráningarupplýsingar:

Encho Plamenov Stoyanov , 2012, Sustainable Tourism in Reykjavik, BS ritgerð, Líf- og umhverfisvísindadeild, Háskóli Íslands, 34bls.

Prentun: Háskólaprent ehf.  
Reykjavík, janúar 2012.

# Abstract

For the past few years' sustainability has become a buzzword in modern societies. Nowadays many people, organizations and companies try to be friendlier to the environment, to live in a more sustainable way and to pollute the environment less. This paper reviews some of the major actors for sustainable tourism analyses. The actors are namely: local tourism enterprises & tour operators, host population (locals) & tourists, tourist authorities (national tourism organizations, governments etc.), non-governmental organisations (NGO's), and environmental organisations.

The accent of the essay is upon the host population and the tourists for the objective of this essay is to find out whether tourists and citizens of Reykjavik are familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism. The objectives were also to introduce to the reader the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism, to present what has been done in Iceland on the matter, as well as the attitude of local people and tourist towards those topics.

A questionnaire survey was created and spread out among tourists and citizens of Reykjavik. The survey was organised in the manner of the structured questionnaire with a few open questions. Primary data was selected by distribution of the semi-structured questionnaires. In total 552 people participated in the research – 452 citizens of Reykjavik and 100 tourists visiting the capital.

The main outcome of the research is that the meaning of the word 'sustainability' and concepts such as 'sustainable tourism' and 'sustainable development' are unclear for most people, regardless of their background and place in society. Most of the citizens of Reykjavik do not feel responsibility towards the image of the tourism industry, while most tourists feel that they have responsibility towards the city of Reykjavik, yet the citizens of Reykjavik are for the further developing of the tourism industry and both groups claim that tourism is beneficial for the Icelandic capital.

Keywords: sustainability, sustainable development, sustainable tourism, locals, tourists Reykjavik.

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
Figures.....	vi
Graphs .....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
1 Introduction.....	1
2 Sustainable development & Sustainable tourism.....	3
2.1 Impacts of tourism .....	3
2.2 Official policy for Sustainable tourism in Iceland and environmentally approved systems.....	6
2.3 Environmentally approved systems .....	7
3 Methods .....	10
4 Results of the Survey for Citizens of Reykjavik.....	12
4.1 Background information of the participants .....	12
4.2 Knowledge about sustainable tourism .....	14
4.3 Contribution of tourism activities to the economic of Reykjavik /according to citizens of Reykjavik/ .....	15
4.4 The connection between tourism activities and preservation of the socio- cultural environment in Reykjavik /according to citizens of Reykjavik/.....	16
5 Results of the Survey for Tourists .....	20
5.1 Background information of the tourists .....	20
5.2 Tourists' knowledge about sustainable tourism.....	21
5.3 The attitude of tourists towards the topics of tourism preservation and responsibility for Reykjavik.....	23
6 Discussions .....	26
6.1 Sustainable tourism tourists and locals .....	26
6.2 Sustainable tourism - oversimplifications.....	26
6.3 Peoples' attitude towards the tourism industry? .....	28
6.4 Responsibility .....	29
6.5 Critique .....	30
7 Conclusion .....	31
Reference .....	32

# Figures

Figure: 1 Framework for sustainable tourism analyses. Reference: adopted and modified from Buhalis and Fletcher (1995).....2

Figure: 2 Sustainable development model. Reference: adopted form Adams (2006) .....3

# Graphs

Graph 1. Age of the participants. ....	12
Graph 2. Participants' education. ....	12
Graph 3. Is your job connected to the tourism sector? .....	13
Graph 4. Involvement in the service industries in Reykjavik 2010. ....	14
Graph 5. Are you familiar to the concept of Sustainable tourism?.....	14
Graph 6. People who claim to be familiar with the term sustainable tourism. ....	15
Graph 7. Do the tourism activities have a positive contribution to the economic well being of Reykjavik? .....	17
Graph 8. The connection between tourism and the socio-cultural environment of Reykjavik.....	18
Graph 9. Answers to the statement: "The number of tourists in Reykjavik needs to be increased" .....	19
Graph 10. Do you feel responsibility towards the tourism industry / the image of Reykjavik? .....	19
Graph 11. Age of participants. ....	21
Graph 12. Participants' education. ....	21
Graph 13. Nationality of foreign participants. ....	22
Graph 14. Is your job connected to the tourism sector? .....	22
Graph 15. Are you familiar with the term sustainable tourism?.....	23
Graph 16. Where did you hear or read about sustainable tourism (ST)?.....	24
Graph 17. Do the tourism activity have a positive contribution to the economic well being of Reykjavik? .....	24
Graph 18. Does tourism activity stimulate the protection, conservation and renovation of historical sites, buildings and monuments? .....	25
Graph 19. Do you feel responsible for the city of Reykjavik? .....	26

# Acknowledgements

This research project would not have been possible without the support of many people. The author wishes to express his gratitude to the helpful supervisor the associate Professor Anna Dóra Sæþórsdóttir. The co-operation, advices and the supervision are much appreciated.

The author would like to acknowledge grateful thanks to the personnel of the tourism related agencies: Icelandic Visitor, Elding, Special tours, BSÍ; The tourist information centre in Reykjavik; numerous hotels Hotel Saga, Hotel Cabin, Hilton, Radisson SAS; and many other) for the assistance and the support provided.

The author would also like to convey thanks to the Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences for providing work facilities and comfortable environment.

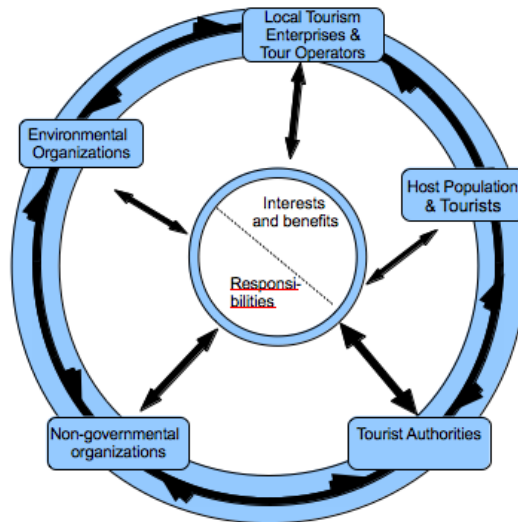
The author would also like to express his gratitude to his beloved families and especially to Kalina Petrova for the understanding, support and the endless love, through the duration of the studies.

# 1 Introduction

Protecting the environment has become a major issue in the recent years. Nowadays most people are aware of the fact that our planet has quite limited natural resources. People are starting to realize the impact that environmental destruction could have and the idea that each generation have the same right to live in an unpolluted and safe environment constantly gains popularity. The view that the planet we live in often, referred to as 'our' planet, is not our property but borrowed and should be returned in analogous if not better condition to the next generations is spreading rapidly in the modern world. However, often, environmental concern is in conflict with short-term economic benefits of numerous companies, which increase their short-term profits with little concern for the environment (Buhalis & Fletcher, 1995).

The environment is the 'heart' of the tourist product at the destination level. Therefore while consuming the product tourists are also consuming the environment – they travel to a destination in order to consume the product (Goodall, 1992). However the 'consumption' of the environment doesn't remain unnoticed and the tourism industry is often criticised for number of abuses to the physical nature of the destination. Many environmental organisations state their concerns and protest against the "*anarchic and chaotic tourism development, which is observed in many destinations*" (Buhalis & Fletcher, 1995, p. 3). Such concerns over the increasing negative impacts of development upon the environment have created the need for a new less damaging approach to development. "This conceptual approach is termed sustainable development and it has become a new paradigm for all forms of development including tourism" (Holden, 2008, p.148).

Some of the major actors for sustainable tourism analyses are: local tourism enterprises & tour operators, host population (locals) & tourists, tourist authorities (national tourism organizations, governments etc.), non-governmental organisations (NGO's), and environmental organisations (figure 1). The subject of trends and responsibilities is in the centre of the framework for sustainable tourism analyses (figure 1) and as such is considered to be of great importance. It is important for the host population to realise that their environment, apart from supporting their survival and enjoyment, is the primary attraction for the tourists. Therefore they should try to maintain and improve it. Naturally a certain amount of tolerance might be required, at tourism destinations especially during peak periods (Buhalis and Fletcher 1995).



**Figure: 1 Framework for sustainable tourism analyses. Reference: adopted and modified from Buhalis and Fletcher (1995).**

The accent of this paper will be upon the tourists and the host population (locals). Consequently the goals of the essay are to investigate whether citizens and tourists of Reykjavik:

- are familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism
- have been introduced to the concept sustainable tourism during their stay in Iceland

However before we go in details of the organization of the structure of the survey we need to clarify the meaning and the origin of the term sustainable development and sustainable tourism.

## 2 Sustainable development & Sustainable tourism

The term sustainable development is often credited to the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development or the so-called Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987). The origins of the term ‘sustainability’ as opposed to ‘sustainable development’ could be traced back to the conservation movement of the mid-nineteenth century (Stabler and Goodall, 1996). The concept of ‘sustainable development’, however first originated in the World Conservation Strategy, published by the World Conservation Unit (IUCN) in 1980 (Reid, 1995). The ideas leading to the concept of sustainable development could be traced even further back in time. Debates on the subject of preservation of nature and the best use of natural resources were amid the main themes of discussion among environmentalists and economists long before the Brundtland report. A bright example is George Perkins Marsh’s book ‘Man and Nature or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action’ originally published in 1864. This book had vast impact on sustainability debates, the effects of which are re-echoing to the present day.

Sustainable development, which we will understand as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,”(WCED, 1987) is a complex and complicated concept. Social development, economic development and environmental protection are often referred to as the “interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars” (see figure 2) of the concept of sustainable development (UN General Assembly, 2005). The broad spectrum of the term (environmental, economic and social aspects) allows interpretation and articulation of the concept in different ways.

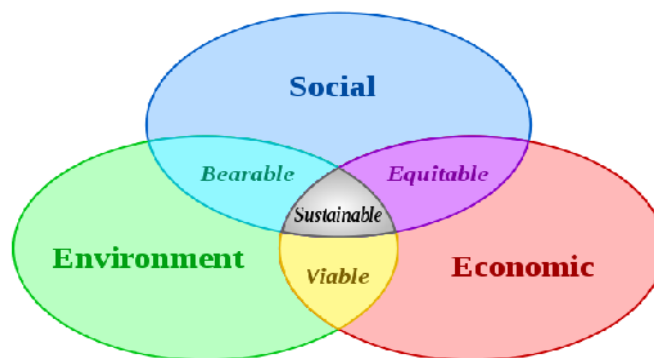


Figure: 2 Sustainable development model. Reference: adopted form Adams (2006)

### 2.1 Impacts of tourism

If we view the sustainable development model (figure2) from a tourism perspective it will become clear that tourism have an impact on each of the segments in the model.

## 1. Economic impacts of tourism

Tourism is a favourable branch of the economy of many countries and its potential to generate wealth and create employment opportunities are among the reasons for the expected growth of the contribution of tourism to the GDP at global, national, and local levels (Youell, 1988). At global level data from the World Travel and Tourism Council (2011) indicate that the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is expected to rise by 4.2% pa i.e. from US\$5,991.9bn (9.1% of GDP) in 2011 to US\$9,226bn (9.6%) by 2021. In Iceland the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is expected to be ISK74.4bn (4.7% of total GDP) in 2011, rising by 4.4% pa ISK114.3bn (5.5%) in 2021 (in constant 2011 prices). It is difficult to estimate the contribution of tourism and travel at local level (e.g. in Reykjavik) because both The World travel and Tourism Council (2011) and Statistics Iceland (2011) do not present data on local contribution to GDP. However according to Youell (1998) tourism can benefit economies at regional and local levels by injecting revenue into urban and rural areas, stimulating new businesses, enterprises and creating employment opportunities.

Compared to the manufacturing, and the heavy industry sectors job opportunities in the service sector are relatively easy to make, as the demanded start-up capital is considerably lower (Youell, 1988). According to Youell (1988) tourism contributes for the creation of four main types of jobs in sectors not directly connected with the industry:

- Traditional travel service job: include employment in airlines, hotels, restaurants, attractions, car rental companies, tour operators and travel agents
- Government travel service jobs: include employment in tourism promotion and information offices, national park or monument guides, air traffic controllers, highway safety, lifeguards (etc.)...
- Travel and tourism capital investment jobs: on the public side, including design and construction of highways, parks and airports...cruise ships, and some rental shops and restaurants
- Travel product jobs: provide goods and services to travellers, run the gamut from film developers to accountants, to dry cleaners...to sign makers. (p. 144)

Another positive aspect of tourism comes from the so-called multiplier concept. Simply said some of the money spent by the tourists in the given area are re-circulated and spent again in the local economy. This interaction brings some extra income to the local economy.

There are also a negative impacts on the economy caused by tourism. The industry could sometimes attract workers that are less committed to their task. This is so, because tourism often generates only seasonal jobs rather than continuous employment. Tourism can also create a deficit of jobs in primary industries, when people quit their job and start working in seemingly more glamorous jobs in tourism (Youell, 1988). Another negative impact is that the prices in a given tourist destination could rise and create financial difficulties for the people living in that area. People sometimes have to contribute to the building of facilities, such as tourist information centres, that they will never use.

## **2. Tourism's socio-cultural impact**

Tourism could have both positive and negative socio-cultural impacts on the lives of the people living in a given community.

Forgotten traditions could be 'revived'; monuments and historical sites could be preserved and maintained better because of tourist interest. Tourism could also heighten the special and unique aspects of the culture of the local people.

Unfortunately tourism could also have a negative impact upon the socio-cultural life of a given community. Among the major problems are:

- Overcrowding in the peak of the visiting season. This could cause hostility between local population and visitors because of the increased light, noise and waste pollution as well as behavioural problems
- Language impoverishment. This could be a serious problem that takes generations to eradicate.
- Destruction of local customs. This issue includes the commercialization of local music, dances, customs etc.
- Alterations of religious codes. Religious traditions and customs might be ignored because of desire to keep the tourists and give them what they want and could have at other tourism destinations (Islamic countries offering alcohol and foods that are not allowed in their religion, shops working on holy days etc.) (Youell, 1998).

## **3. Environmental impacts of tourism**

The environment is one of the main factors that regulate the level of attractiveness and desirability of a destination. In Iceland most of the efforts regarding implementation of sustainable policies in the tourism sector have been directed towards the environmental impacts of tourism. However the revenue from the tourism industry can contribute to renovation, preservation and transformation of national parks, historical monuments, cities and buildings. Tourism revenue can also be used for the improvement of the general environment at the destination level – streets, lights, signs, public parks, gastrations, roads etc.

Tourism could also have negative impacts on the environment. According to Youell (1998) among the most harmful impacts of tourism on the environment are:

- Physical erosion. It is represented mainly by the process of wearing away of natural features e.g. mountain passes, soil and vegetation. It also includes the destruction of historic monuments and archaeological sites.
- Water supply. When destinations are located near or in areas where there is a shortage of water supply the demand of water by visitors could worsen the problem.

- Loss of wild life and habitats. The overuse of tourist destinations and especially fragile areas may endanger the wild life and the natural habitat of the destination.
- Air pollution. The overuse of private transport and air travel could strongly increase the air pollution in the area...(p.152)

Every segment of the sustainable development model (figure 2) is tightly involved with tourism and could affect a destination in numerous ways. Sustainable development planning is essential for tourism as it could minimise the negative and increase the positive effects caused by tourism. “It is important to stress that the concept of sustainable tourism goes far beyond minimising environmental impacts. Central to the concept is the need to protect and respect the integrity of communities and cultures, and to involve local communities in tourism planning and development issues” (Youell, 1988, p.153).

According to Middleton and Hawkins (1998) sustainable tourism means:

- achieving a particular combination of numbers and types of visitors, the cumulative effects of whose activities at a given destination, together with the actions of the servicing businesses, can continue into the foreseeable future without damaging the quality of the environment on which the activities are based. (p. viii)
- It must be mentioned that there are more than a hundred definitions of the concept from all kinds of perspectives – ethical moral, ideological etc. (Briguglio, 1996)

Many governments, companies, tourism related firms and agencies realise the benefits that could be attracted by only using the concept of sustainable tourism in an advertising campaign or as a slogan. The concept of sustainable tourism could have many different meanings in different context, which makes it relatively easy for firms and organization to use it without having to actually apply the concept to their actions and businesses. However the term ‘sustainable tourism’ should not be used as a mere label. Butler (1999) argues that the tourism industry has been fast to recognize the marketability of the concept of sustainable development and sustainable tourism. In many cases those concepts were adopted “in name if not in operation” Butler (1999). Using these terms could be not only profitable; but also protect the companies from strong criticism and possibly stringent regulations and possible prohibition. As a result many small-scale tourist operations in a wide suddenly started to label themselves as ‘sustainable’ in the hope of successfully competing for the approval of tourists and environmental organizations (Butler, 1999).

## **2.2 Official policy for Sustainable tourism in Iceland and environmentally approved systems**

The Icelandic government published the first plan that regarded sustainable development and the tourism industry in 1996 under the title Tourism industry policies (Stefnumótun í ferðapjónustu). In this plan it is claimed that the industry

should be in harmony with the land and the nation and that all this should be done in the spirit of sustainable development. As for other aspects, only a few and general words were used for what methods should be utilised for achieving those goals. The next report on the policy of the government in this field was introduced in 2003 where the ideology of sustainable development was pointed out as the core of this vision of the future (Íslensk ferðapjónusta, 2003). The committee presented the concept as ideology of sensible utilization of natural resources. At the same time they defined sustainable development as a realistic policy, regarding environmental issues taking into account the economic and social factors, as well as those for protection and conservation of nature (Íslensk ferðapjónusta, 2003). However the description was rather shallow and it failed to provide a concrete definition of the concept of sustainable development.

In the year 2000 the association of the tourist industries (Samtök ferðapjónustunnar) published a booklet 'Environmentally friendly approval' (Vistæn vottun). The aim of the booklet was to give overview of the existing systems of approval, to give suggestions for future policies and to direct and lead the tourism industry towards sustainable development (Stefan Gilson, 2000). In the year 2005 the organisation of the tourist industry renewed its policy regarding environmental issues. However the new policies were a mere description of some projects that organisations were going to work upon and the methods they were going to use. Despite that the same year (2005), in a parliament proposal on tourism (Alþingistíðindi 2004-2005 A6, 2005) sustainable development and sustainable tourism were not mentioned at all. As a result the minister of environment advised that a tourism industry plan (Ferðamálaáællun 2006-2015, á.á.) should be written (the first of its kind). In contrast to the proposal, in the tourism industry plan, it was heavily emphasised that the tourism industry should be based on the spirit of sustainable development, and one of the methods that should be used to achieve this goal was to work according to the quality of environmentally approved systems.

## **2.3 Environmentally approved systems**

Iceland was one of the 179 countries that adopted the action plan Agenda 21, presented for the first time by the world United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (UNEP, n.d.). After the conference in Rio de Janeiro the Icelandic government set goals for creating a new environmental policies programme and subsequently organised new governmental action plan on environmental and development issues in the spirit of sustainable development. The plan had to be adopted before the end of the year 2000. In 1997 the Icelandic government agreed upon the executive plan and the minister of the environmental issues had to implement it. The plan was published the same year in a report called Sustainable Development Within the Icelandic Society, Millennium development goals (Sjálfbær þróun í íslensku samfélagi Framkvæmdaáætlun til aldamóta, 1997). The plan had very holistic approach. Individuals and organizations had the right to have influence on decisions regarding the environment in the region they live and operate in (Sjálfbær þróun í íslensku samfélagi Framkvæmdaáætlun til aldamóta 1997; Velferð til framtíðar 2002).

Among the methods used to achieve the goals for local development was to urge the local communities to make an executive plan about environmental issues based on the ideology of sustainable development and Agenda 21 (Sjálfbær þróun í íslensku

samfélagi Framkvæmdaáætlun til aldamóta 1997). This was partly realised as pointed out in a report of a committee established by the minister of the environmental issues regarding evaluation of the status of development. This report was published in 1999 (Sjálfbær þróun í íslensku samfélagi, Mat á stöðu framkvæmdaáætlunar 1999). According to that report, even though Iceland has in some ways lagged behind its neighbouring countries, which were also following Agenda 21, the committee was still on the opinion that the development had been in the correct direction, which is to say to introduce the basic aim of sustainable development into the decision making policies and the economy of Iceland (Sjálfbær þróun í íslensku samfélagi, Mat á stöðu framkvæmdaáætlunar 1999).

Just as presumed in Agenda 21 the Icelandic government continued to work on all the issues regarding sustainable development. In 2002 the minister of environmental issues introduces the main vision of direction for development until 2020. This vision was worked upon in cooperation with many companies, organisations and entrepreneurs, which were calling for ideas and critiques from the public and the local governmental organisations (Velferð til framtíðar, 2002). This work without doubt made the influence of the term (sustainable development) a lot stronger especially in the governmental system. In April 2002 already 48 local governments altogether with 93% of the population were connected with Agenda 21 in some way or another (Stefán Gíslason 2001; Velferð til framtíðar, 2002). In spite of the fact that Icelandic representatives of the public and private sector have undertaken steps for natural preservation and making the tourism industry more sustainable the country was still at the start of the journey to making tourism more sustainable. Agenda 21 does not restrict government officials from particular actions it rather acts as a form of moral guidance. It encourages the initiative of governmental environmental policies and promotes the idea of responsibility and public awareness on the matters of sustainability and tries to grasp the attention of the public and the businessman.

However when considering participation in systems of approval it turned out that only 5 municipalities in the country had received an approval by Earth Check, formally known as Green Globe (Rannveig Ólafsdóttir, Kristín Rut Kristinsdóttir, Helga Jóhanna Bjarnadóttir & Árni Bragson, 2009). Among the Icelandic companies that have received Green Globe certification are: Whale Watching Reykjavik, Country Hotel Anna (in south Iceland) and Hotel Hellnar (on the Snæfellsnes Peninsula). Other companies in Iceland have earned different eco-certification labels. 'Reykjavik City Hostel' and 'Eldhestar' are the only Icelandic accommodations, which have earned the Nordic Swan certificate for adhering strict environmental practices. Whale-watching companies such as 'Elding' and 'Special tours' are certificated from the Blue Flag, which is Danish organisation certificating marinas, whale-watching tours, beaches etc. Websites such as 'www.savingiceland.org' promote radical ideas for preservation of the Icelandic nature and provides links to informative articles concerning environmental problems facing Iceland.

In Iceland much more efforts have been put into promoting and applying the concepts of sustainable development and sustainable tourism at national level than at regional. According to the manager of the department of Culture and Tourism of Reykjavik - Dóra Magnúsdóttir there are not any sustainable tourism policies advocated from the administration of Reykjavik nor are there any officially published reports on the subject of sustainable tourism development (Dóra Magnúsdóttir, personal communication, January

06, 2012). To make the situation even worse according to Brynhildur Davíðsdóttir, associate professor of economics, in 2011 Agenda 21 is no longer operational in Iceland, i.e. there is no-one working on the adoption of the programme (Brynhildur Davíðsdóttir, personal communication, January 10, 2012). Those findings makes one wonder whether the citizens of Reykjavik and the tourists visiting the country are familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism. The researcher decided to create a survey in order to find out whether the tourists visiting the capital and the citizens of Reykjavik are familiar with the concept 'sustainable tourism'.

### 3 Methods

The researcher chose quantitative form of research, because it allows the empirical investigation of groups of people simultaneously. The preferred form of quantitative research was the individual questionnaire, as it gives certain advantages. For instance if the participants were not clear about the meaning of a question they could ask for clarification. Two quantitative surveys were organised – one for tourists visiting Reykjavik and one for the host population of the capital.

Both questionnaires contain less than ten questions, which often encouraged people to participate even if they were in a hurry. The topic of the surveys (translated in English) is ‘Sustainable tourism in Reykjavik’. Most questions regarded the concept of sustainable tourism. In order to find out what people know about the concept, other than the definition, additional questions regarding the attitude of people towards tourism were included in the surveys. The surveys consisted mostly of closed ended questions, however in the cases that closed ended questions were not suitable open-ended question were applied instead. Both surveys were composed of dichotomous questions, multiple-choice questions and open questions, where each participant can share his/her opinion. For participants who have opinion different than the possible answers in the multiple-choice and in the dichotomous questions an option ‘other’ was included. If one marks the field ‘other’ he/she is free to write an answer in an empty field. The surveys contain a separate field for the participants’ background information. It must be mentioned that people frequently refused to participate in the survey because of the title ‘Sustainable Tourism in Reykjavik’ – for some it sounded too complicated.

The questionnaire for citizens of Reykjavik with few minor differences is similar to the one for tourists. However in order to take part in the research the citizens of Reykjavik needed to be Icelandic citizens and to have lived in Reykjavik for at least two years. The questionnaire for citizens of Reykjavik was mainly spread through the Internet through social networks such as Google +, Facebook, and the website of the university of Iceland ‘ugla.hi.is’; only one hundred of the participants took part in the research by filling out the hardcopy of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was open for everyone to see, however the conditions for participating in the survey were described in each network. The hardcopy of the questionnaire for citizens of Reykjavik was spread at the streets of Reykjavik, mostly at the centre of the capital. Personnel of hotels (Hotel Saga, Hotel Hilton, Radisson SAS), tourist information centres (BSÍ; The tourist information centre in Reykjavik), and tourism related agencies (Icelandic Visitor, Elding, Special tours,) also participated in the research. In total 452 citizens of Reykjavik answered and 67 refused to answer the questionnaire for citizens of Reykjavik.

The survey for the tourists was distributed only as a hardcopy at the following hotels and tourism related agencies: Icelandic Visitor, Elding, Special tours, BSÍ; The tourist information centre in Reykjavik, Hotel Saga, Hotel Cabin, Hilton, Radisson SAS, several guesthouses and at ‘downtown’ Reykjavik.

The computer programmes ‘Google Docs’ and ‘Excel’ were used for the analyses of

the data. The researcher created an Internet copy of the survey for tourists and filled all the answers of the tourists, so both surveys could be processed with the same computer programmes.

People frequently refused to participate in the survey because they did not know the meaning of the term sustainable tourism.

The survey was conducted in the months from 15 June to 25 of July. In total 100 foreign tourists participated and 20 refused to participate in the research. Finding tourists to participate in the research was rather difficult. Some of the people wanted to enjoy their stay and did not want to be bother with surveys, others have visited Iceland before and rejected the questionnaire with the argument that they have filed a survey before. On a few occasions most of the tourists rejected to answer the questionnaire, because of difficulties that they have encountered on their travel (transportation delay, postpone trip because of weather conditions etc.). In those cases the tourists were too nervous to spare some time on a survey and if they did participate they often went astray from the question and complained about the travel agencies, travel consultants and poor services. At other times, when the tourists were happy with their stay or the way they were treated in Reykjavik, the researcher was more than welcome to offer the questionnaire. However very few people from this group were eager to participate and themselves demanded to fill out a copy of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire increased tourist's interest in the topic of sustainable tourism. After they filled out the questionnaire many of the tourists wanted to know more about sustainable tourism and encouraged the researcher to tell them how would he answer the questions if he were a tourist (participant).

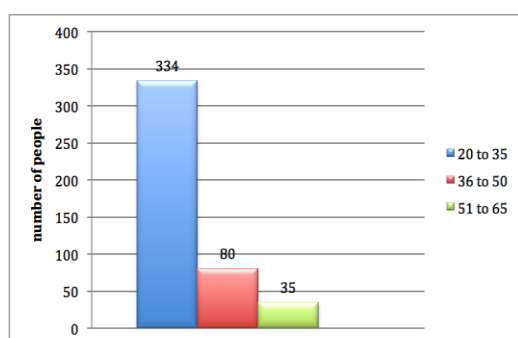
In contrast finding participants from the local population wasn't as challenging as persuading tourists to take part in the research. Most of the citizens of Reykjavik were willing to take a few minutes of their time in order to participate in a research. It was fascinating how many people participated in the research through the Internet. In several days more than two hundred people participated in the survey through the 'World Wide Web'. The survey was distributed through social networks such as 'Google+', 'Facebook' and the website of the University of Iceland 'www.ugla.hi.is'.

## 4 Results of the Survey for Citizens of Reykjavik

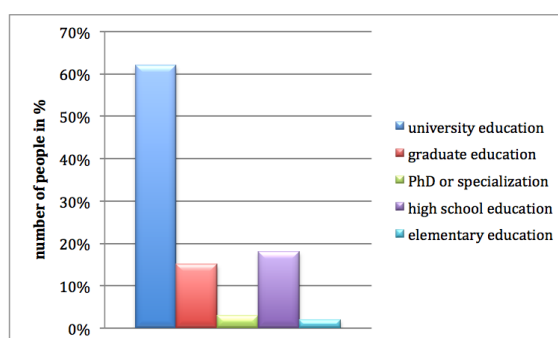
### 4.1 Background information of the participants

The participants in the survey for citizens of Reykjavik were 452. Sixty-seven citizens of Reykjavik refused to answer the questionnaire. However most of them were willing to fill the field with their age. From all people that refuse to participate, thirty were older than 65 years (65+), ten were between 51-65, two were from 36-50, and twenty-five refused to participate in the research and to give any personal information. Most of the elderly people did not want to answer the survey because the name sounded too complicated, because they were in a hurry or because according to them it was worthless to try to answer something that you have never heard of before. Mostly young people answered the survey (graph 1.) – 74% (334 people) of the participants were at the age between 20 and 35 years old, 18% (80 people) were between 36 and 50 years old, 8% (35 people) were between 51 and 65 and only 1 person (0%) was in the category 65+.

However, women were more active and more willing to participate. They accounted for 70% of all participants (316 people) where as men accounted for 30% (136 people). The highest number of participants was with university education 62%, 15% of the people were finished or studying Master studies, 3% (15 people) were with PhD, or specialization, 18% of the people (83 people) were with high school education and only 2% of the people (8 people) were with elementary education (Graph 2).



Graph 1. Age of the participants.

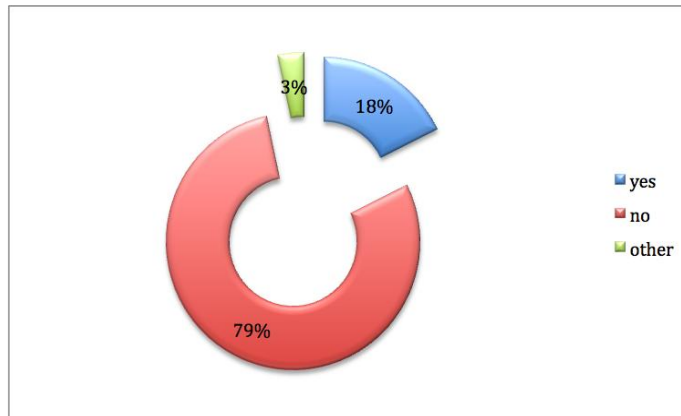


Graph 2. Participants' education.

The research showed that the level of education does not have a strong relation with the level of knowledge regarding sustainable tourism, exception if the individual has been in a specialised education in the field of tourism studies i.e. there is no correlation between the variables education and the positive answers to the question “are you familiar with the term sustainable tourism”, since 90% of the participants were with university education or higher and only 5% from all participants could define the term.

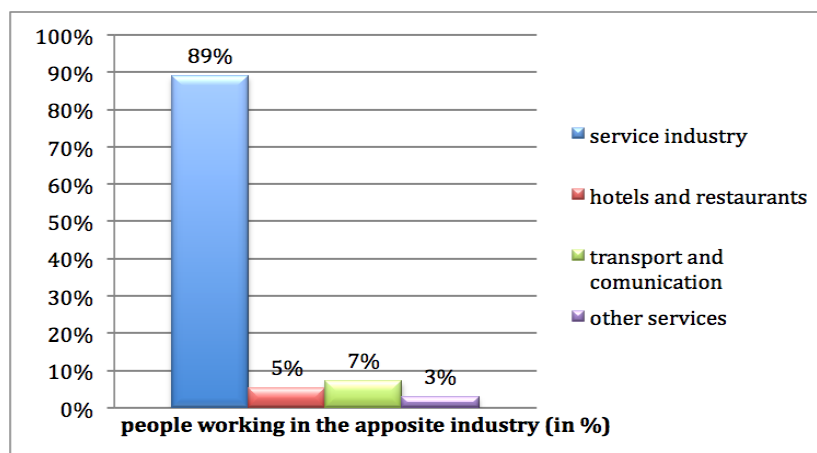
The largest proportion of the sample (79%) claimed that their job is not connected to the tourism sector, 18% stated that their job is connected with the tourism sector and 3% of the participants were unemployed (graph 3). The people marked the field ‘other’ (3%) were unemployed, because they were students (not part time working),

there was a lack of vacant work positions and/or other reasons. However, most people defined themselves as having a job related to the tourism sector only if their work was directly connected to the tourism sector. Some of the participants had the same line of work (e.g. shop consultant), nonetheless they gave differed answers when asked “is your job connected to the tourism sector”.



**Graph 3. Is your job connected to the tourism sector?**

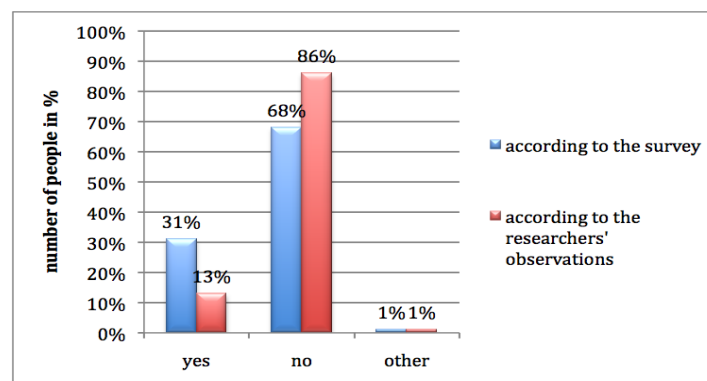
According to the centre for official statistics in Iceland - ‘Statistics Iceland’ (2000-2008) the employment in tourism as percentage of the total employment is 5.1% in 2006, 5.2% in 2007 and 5.1% in 2008 and 2009. In Iceland approximately 179,481 people were employed in 2009 from whom: 9,241 people were employed in the Tourism Industry, 5,906 were employed in Tourism Characteristic Industries, and 3,335 people were employed in Tourism-Connected Industries. Graph 4 displays that in the capital region in 2010, 83% (89,900 people) of the people employed were working in the Service Industry, 5.2% (5,600) were working in hotels and restaurants, 7.2% (7,700) worked in the Transport and Communication Industries and 3% (3,200) worked in other services. The percentage for people employed in those industries has been steadily growing throughout the recent years. The only exception are the Transport and Communication industries which were at their peak at 2009 7.7% and then went descended to 7.2% in 2010. The percentage given displays higher figures in the number of people working in the tourism related industries and lower numbers for people working directly for the tourism industry. Many people probably answered ‘no’ to the question “Is your job connected with the tourism sector?” because their line of work is not directly connected to the tourism industry.



**Graph 4. Involvement in the service industries in Reykjavik 2010.**

## 4.2 Knowledge about sustainable tourism

The participants that claim to be familiar with the term accounted for 31% (142 people). As illustrated in 'graph 5' (according to the survey) the number of participants who did not know the meaning was far greater 68% (308 people) and nearly 1% (2 people) gave chose to mark the field 'other' and give different answers to the question. %. However, after closer analyses it turned out that only 5% of the participants (24 people) could accurately define the term 'sustainable tourism' and 8% (37 people) were somehow familiar with it. An accurate definition of the term did not have to be a cited definition for a respectable author, but it had to include the notion that tourism should be developed in a way that preserves the nature and the environment (physical, economical and social), in order future generations to be able to visit and enjoy the destination in the same way as present generations do.

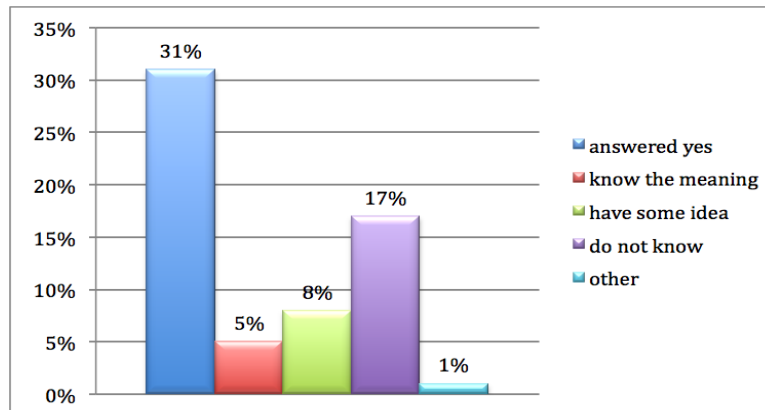


**Graph 5. Are you familiar to the concept of Sustainable tourism?**

Some of the people who were actually familiar with the concept defined sustainable tourism as: tourism done in a way that achieves balance and harmony between the quality of the environment and the use of the environment, nature and natural recourses from tourists i.e. the quality of the environment should be preserved if not improved for future generations in a way that allows them to enjoy the environment in the same way that present generations do.

Some citizens of Reykjavik that participated in the survey did not know the meaning of the term 'sustainable tourism', but answered positively to the question "Are you familiar with the term 'sustainable tourism' they accounted for 17% of all participants. Some individuals in this group defined the term as: travelling on your own, organizing tourism without the help of the government; owning a tourism agency; hitchhiking; travelling only in the nature without using man-made facilities etc.

In the last group called 'other', people gave different answers for the second question of the survey and marked the field 'other'. The group accounted for only 1% of all participants. Some of the participants claimed that they are familiar with the term, but they cannot define it, other stated that they have heard of 'sustainable tourism' but don't know what it means. One person remarked that sustainable development and sustainable tourism were terms used too much in too different contexts, which make them a mere meaningless speech parasites. Graph 6 displays the percentage of people who claimed to be familiar with the term, the percentage of people who actually are familiar with it, the percentage of individuals who are not familiar with as well as the percentage of people who marked the field other and gave different answer to the second question of the questionnaire.



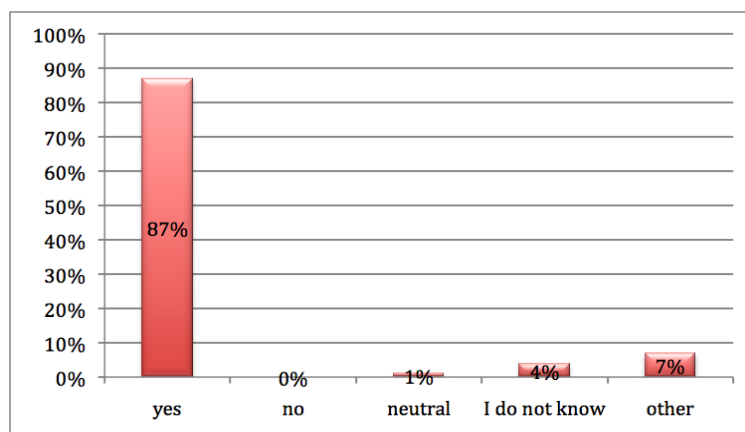
**Graph 6. People who claim to be familiar with the term sustainable tourism.**

As mentioned before only 5% of the participants were able to define the term properly. All except one of the twenty-four individuals who gave an accurate definition of the term sustainable tourism have perceived the term in a tourism course, in a guide school, university (environmental or tourism speciality) or other tourism related educational programme. There was only one person (who accounted for the rest 4 %) with elementary education that was able to almost quote the definition of the term. He had broad understandings on the subject and claimed to have educated himself through the Internet. On the other hand people who claimed to know the meaning but could not defined it accurately or could not give any definition have perceived the term sustainable tourism mostly from the media. The media sources named most frequently were the national television station 'RÚV', the national radio station 'RÚV 1' and the newspaper 'Frettablaðið'.

### **4.3 Contribution of tourism activities to the economic of Reykjavik /according to citizens of Reykjavik/**

The aim of this chapter is to display the opinion of the citizens of Reykjavik regarding the influence of tourism upon the economical well being of the capital of Iceland. From the people who took the survey 87% think that tourism has a positive contribution to the economical well being of Reykjavik. Only two people, accounting for 0%, stated that tourism doesn't have a positive contribution for the economy of the capital. Four participants (1%) answered that tourism has neither positive nor negative contribution to the economy of Reykjavik, 4% (twenty people), claimed that they don't know the answer to this question and thirty-two people (7%) chose to give another answer to the question (graph 7).

Most of the people who marked the last possibility 'other' stated that tourism could have both positive and negative effects depending on how it is managed. According to some of the participants if the tourism industry is well organised and the tourism activities are constantly monitored the image of tourism could become even more positive and the industry as a whole could become much more beneficial for the economic of both the country and the capital of Iceland.



Graph 7. Do the tourism activities have a positive contribution to the economic well being of Reykjavik?

#### **4.4 The connection between tourism activities and preservation of the socio-cultural environment in Reykjavik /according to citizens of Reykjavik/**

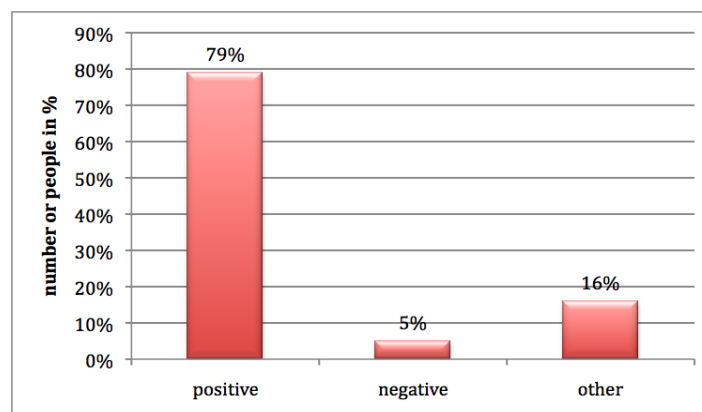
The participants were asked an open-ended question regarding the protection, conservation, renovation and transformation of historical sites, buildings, heritage and monuments. When answering the question some people went astray from the given frame and commented the tourism activities in different context. Some of the participants stated that tourism activities not only stimulate the protection, conservation, renovation and transformation of historical sites, buildings, heritage and monuments, but also help the Icelandic nation to discover or rediscover the authentic. They claimed that through tourism Icelanders realise what makes the Icelandic culture unique, what is truly Icelandic is rediscovered and in some cases discovered. Other participants share the opinion that the tourism activities are sometimes acting as a reminder or more precisely as a pointer. They show destinations that need to be protected, sites that never were in the 'spot light' but are valuable and beautiful places, which rise interest in tourists. When such places are visited more often the tourism organisations and the government start to maintain them better, build adequate infrastructure and invest money in the preservation and the marketing of the newly 'found' sites. Other citizens of Reykjavik follow another line of thought. They consider tourism as positive for the creation and maintenance of the tourism attraction and buildings and for opening new, or more, job positions. Places such as the 'Old Sheriffs house', The Tourist Information Centre and the settlement museum 871+/-2, at Aðalstræti, near Ingólfspork were given as example for renovation, maintenance and creation of job positions because of tourism.

Another positive aspect of tourism is that renovation and maintenance of historical sites and monuments makes Icelandic people more conscience, more aware of the cultural value of their own history, traditions and culture. It is not clear whether it is done on purpose or by accident, but some places and monuments are not maintained as they should have been and their historical value has faded away. Bright example is Víkurkirkja in Reykjavik. Once situated in the heart of Reykjavik, Víkurkirkja was among the first Christian churches in Iceland. The church could be traced back to the

year 1200 (Wikipedia, 2010). Despite that, the church is destroyed and there is not a single monument to keep the historical value of the ancient church. Many citizens of Reykjavik have never heard of the story and do not recall the existence of such church in the capital of Iceland.

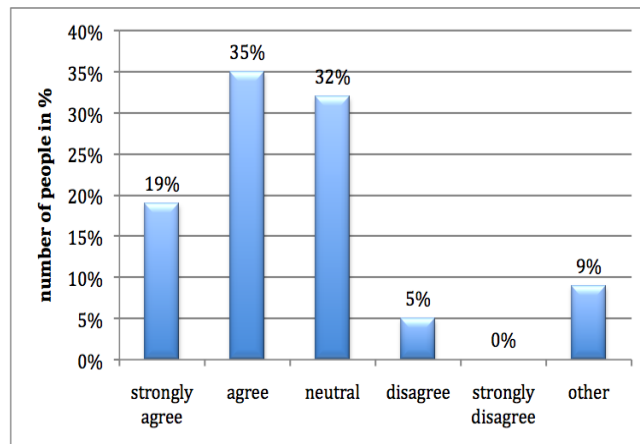
However there are citizens of Reykjavik that recognise more negative effects of tourism than positive ones. There are participants who are rather disturbed by the growth of the industry in the capital. In his answer, of the open-ended question about the socio-cultural environment of Reykjavik, one participant, stated that Reykjavik could become an overcrowded tourism-oriented city “just like Paris” in which local people have to bare all the negative effects of tourism: noise pollution, light pollution, and waste. Another individual explained that if there were too many people visiting the capital the administration of the city would not be able to deal with all the problems and Reykjavik would loose it’s image and it’s beauty. Others suggested that tourists should pay more taxes in order to help the administration of the country and of Reykjavik with the maintenance and the preservation of buildings, historic sites, monuments, etc.

In total 79% or the people stated a positive opinion for the connection between the tourism activities and the preservation of the socio-cultural environment in Reykjavik, 5% stated that the connection is rather negative and 16% of the participants were rather neutral on the subject and stated that it depends on how the industry is managed, or presented the connection as both negative and positive (graph 8).



**Graph 8. The connection between tourism and the socio-cultural environment of Reykjavik.**

According to Statistics Iceland the number of foreign tourists visiting Iceland was steadily increasing since the year 2003 to reach 502,000 visitors in the year 2008 (Statistics Iceland, 1990-2008). Although many of the citizens of Reykjavik have concerns about the increasing number of foreign visitors only 5% of the participants in the survey marked a negative answer to the statement: “The number of tourists in Reykjavik needs to be increased”. The low number of people (23 out of 452) disagreeing with this provocative statement must be due to the positive attitude towards tourism displayed in graph 7, where 87% of the participants stated that tourism activities have a positive contribution to the economical wellbeing of Reykjavik.

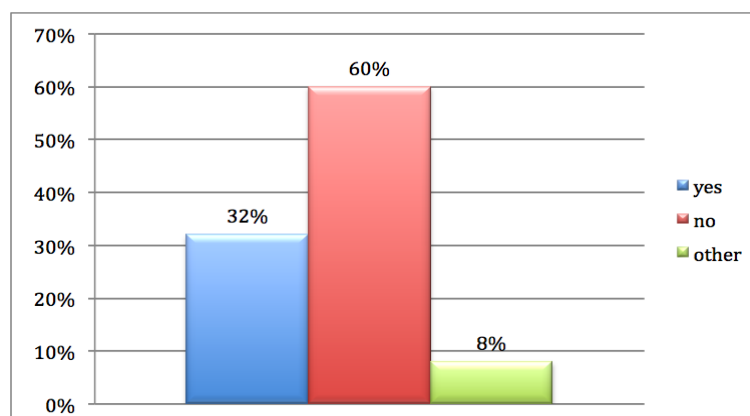


**Graph 9. Answers to the statement: “The number of tourists in Reykjavik needs to be increased”**

As displayed in graph 9 the field ‘I strongly agree’ was marked by 19% (85 people) of the participants, 35% (157 people) agreed with the statement and 32% (143 people) were neutral on the subject. In the category other 9%, or 41 people gave their opinion on the matter.

Once we know peoples’ opinion on the matter of the increasing number of foreign visitors it is interesting to find out whether citizens of Reykjavik feel responsibility toward the tourism industry i.e. the image of the tourism industry and the and the image of Reykjavik as a tourist destination.

The majority of the people - 60% (271 people), don’t feel that they have responsibility towards the tourism industry (graph 10). Some of the participants in this group answered simply with ‘no’ and gave no explanation or argument for their answer. Others stated that they have responsibility only for themselves, or that only people working in the tourism industry have to feel responsibility towards the industry and its image.



**Graph 10. Do you feel responsibility towards the tourism industry / the image of Reykjavik?**

However 144 people or 32% of the participants answered that they have responsibility for the tourism industry. Most of the people in this group felt that there is a strong connection between the image of Iceland and Reykjavik as tourist destination and the wellbeing of the tourists. Others claimed that part of their responsibility for the tourism was to keep Reykjavik clean, to be friendly and to help the tourists with directions and anyway they could in order to make the stay of the tourists more comfortable.

As displayed in the previous chapters (chapter 4.1.) the level of profit from tourism and the employment in the tourism related industries are constantly rising. Among the reasons for the prosperity of the tourism sector is the attitude that locals have toward the tourism industry. The image of Reykjavik is formed by combination of governmental efforts, to encourage tourism activity, and by the behaviour of the local population towards the foreign visitors.

Only 8% of the participants marked the field 'other'. The people who marked the field other mostly explained that they do not know, or that they are not sure whether they have responsibility for the tourism industry or for the image of Reykjavik as a tourist destination. Other answered that they both have and do not have responsibility but did not explained their answer.

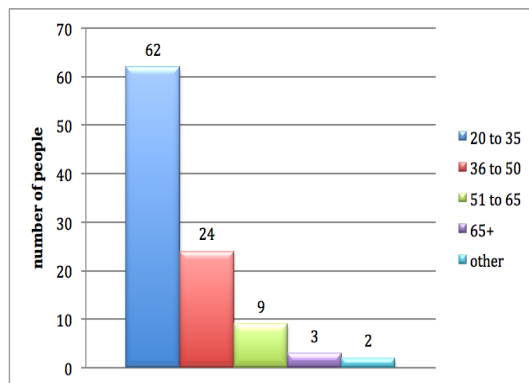
## 5 Results of the Survey for Tourists

### 5.1 Background information of the tourists

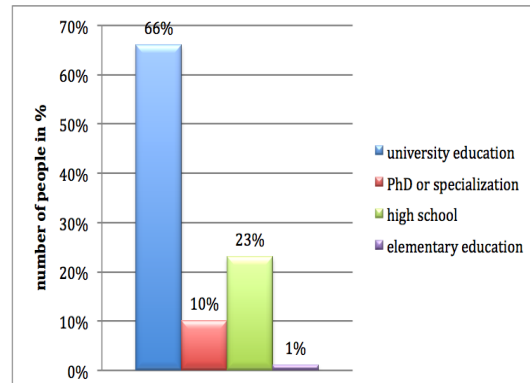
The participants in the survey for tourists were 100. Twenty visitors of the capital refused to answer the questionnaire. Only 5 of the foreign visitors shared some personal information: 3 of the tourists that refused to participate were in the age group 65+, the other 2 were in the age group 36-50. People refused to answer the questionnaire because they were not familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism.

In the survey for citizens of Reykjavik, female participants accounted for 70%, whereas in the survey for tourists men were slightly more active and accounted for 52% of all participants, which leaves 48% for the female participants. However similarly to the survey for citizens of Reykjavik the first age group '20 to 35' years of age was dominant in the survey and accounted for 62% of the people (graph 11). In the age category from 36 to 50 years, were 24% of the participants, 9 people (9%) were in the category from 51 to 65 years, 3 people were above 65 years old and 2% of the people marked the field other because they were under the age of 20.

Only 1 person was with elementary education and 23 people were with high-school education. Most of the tourists who took part in the research were with university degree 66% and 10% of the tourists were with PhD degree or specialisations which could not be included in any of the other categories (graph 12).

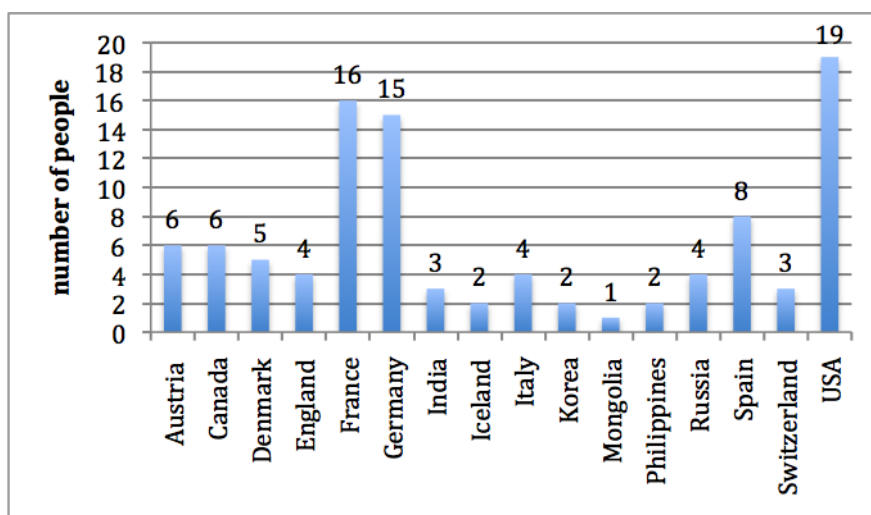


Graph 11. Age of participants.



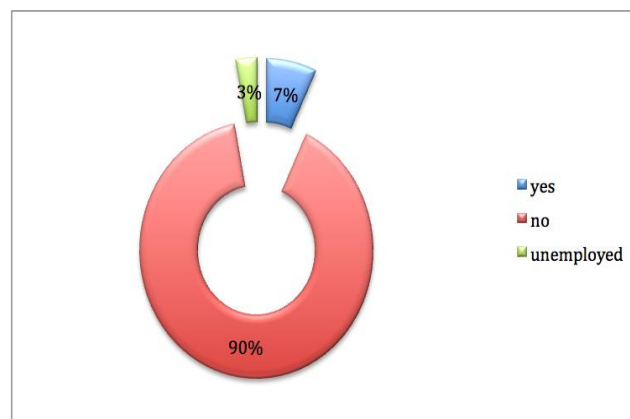
Graph 12. Participants' education.

People from 16 nationalities took part in the research for tourists (graph 13). The majority of the participants were from USA (19), France (16) and Germany (15) (graph 12). However it is difficult to draw solid conclusions regarding the relationship between the nationality of the tourists, their education and knowledge on the subject of sustainable development. There are a few tourists from each country and such a small number of tourists cannot be used to draw conclusions about the understandings of the entire nation.



**Graph 13. Nationality of foreign participants.**

Most people had difficulties answering the first question of the survey: “Is your job connected with the tourism sector?” Some of the participants, who work in shopping centres answered positively to the question others answered negatively. Similarly to the survey for citizens of Reykjavik the majority of the tourists gave a positive answer to the question only if their job was in direct connection with tourism e.g. working for a tourism company, guiding, organising trips etc. The final result was that 7% of the participants defined themselves as having a job connected to the tourism sector, 90% of the participants claimed that their job is not connected to the tourism sector and 3% marked the field “other” because they were unemployed (graph 14).

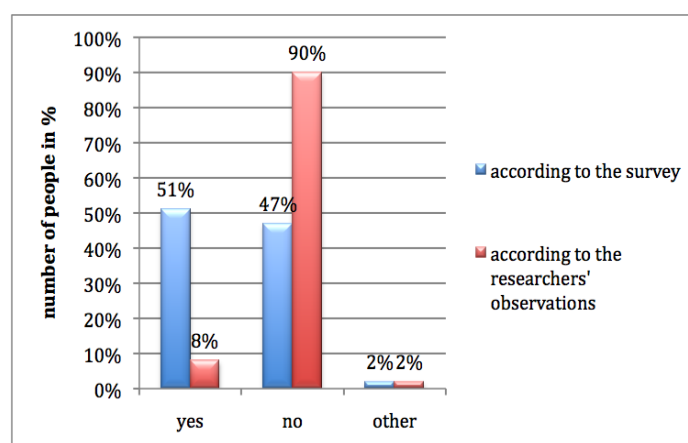


**Graph 14. Is your job connected to the tourism sector?**

## **5.2 Tourists’ knowledge about sustainable tourism**

In total 47% of the tourists marked the field “no” meaning that they were not familiar with the term, 51% claimed to know the meaning of the term and 2% marked the field other. The people who marked the field “other” claimed that there was no such thing as sustainable tourism or that sustainable tourism is merely a concept and it could not be applied in reality. At first glance it seems that almost half of the participants (47%) know the definition of sustainable tourism, unfortunately that is not the case. Most of the tourists who claim to be familiar with the concept sustainable tourism (39%)

usually confused sustainable tourism with green tourism, eco tourism and responsible tourism. It is relatively easy to confuse those concepts, because all are somehow connected to environmental preservation. Seventeen percent of the people answered positively to the second survey question without actually knowing the meaning of the term, while two percent of the participants answered that they do not know the meaning of “sustainable tourism” but provided a definition showing some knowledge on the matter. The people who claimed to know what sustainable tourism means and were able to properly define the term accounted for only 8% of all participants (graph 15). Similarly to the same question in the survey for citizen of Reykjavik, the researcher defined as ‘proper’ any definition that included the notion that tourism should be developed in a way that preserves the nature and the environment (physical, economical and social), in order future generations to be able to visit and enjoy the destination in the same way as present generations do. However it must be mentioned that many tourists answered just with one word e.g. green, eco, or a short statement: environmentally friendly tourism, tourism that does not pollute the environment etc. Sometimes it was a true challenge for the researcher to separate the people in different groups mainly because of this short answers. Another challenge was that some of the tourists, did not speak English as a mother tongue, wanted to participate but could not express their knowledge on the subject because of the language barrier.



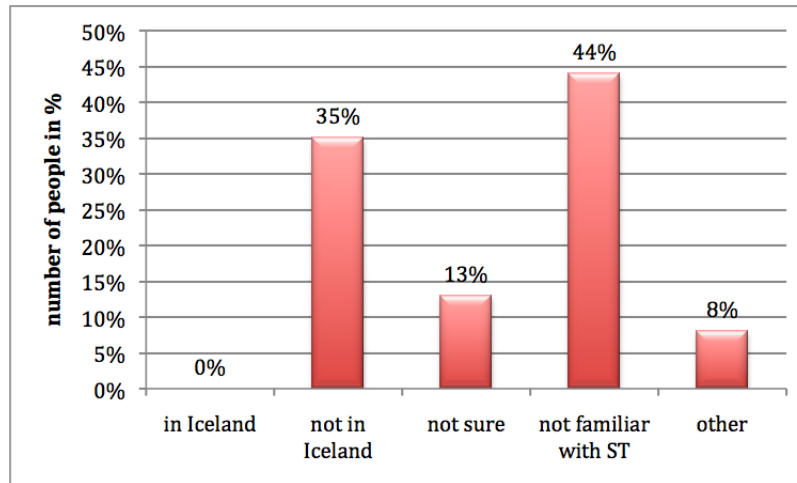
**Graph 15. Are you familiar with the term sustainable tourism?**

There is a high probability that people believe to know the meaning of the term ‘sustainable tourism’ because they have been briefly introduced to the term (by the media, friends, while in school etc), or because the term is so widely used by politicians and by tourism companies. The term is indeed so widely used that the meaning is somehow washed away by the reiteration of the term in different contexts often with varying meaning.

It is interesting how do people perceive the term sustainable tourism and whether they have been introduced to it Iceland. That is why the tourists were asked: “Where did you hear or read about the term sustainable tourism?” From all the tourists 44% answered that they are not familiar with the term, 13% were not sure where did they hear or read about it, 35% marked the field ‘not in Iceland’ and 0% marked the field ‘in Iceland’ (graph 16).

Many authors in the field of geography (Nijkamp & Coccossis 2000; Holden, 2008; Goodall & Stabler, 1992; etc.) have argued that the tourists are becoming more

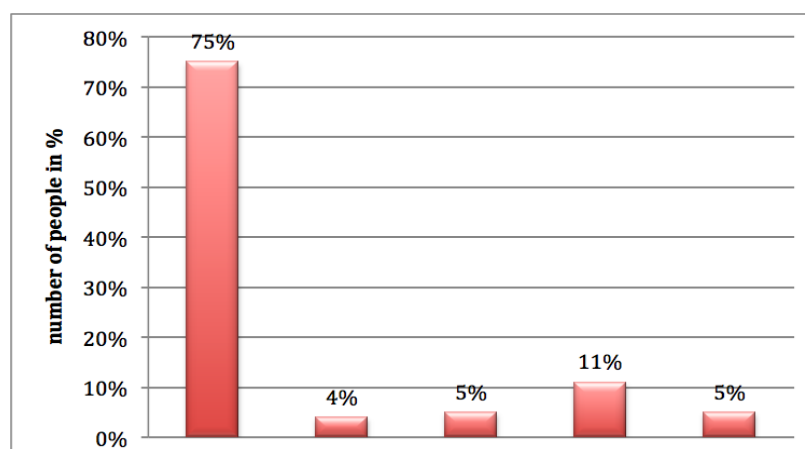
interested in sustainable ways of tourism. Having this in mind and the fact that Iceland is worldwide known for the sustainable way of using natural resources it is more than strange that none, from one hundred tourists, have heard the term in the capital of Iceland.



Graph 16. Where did you hear or read about sustainable tourism (ST)?

### 5.3 The attitude of tourists towards the topics of tourism preservation and responsibility for Reykjavik

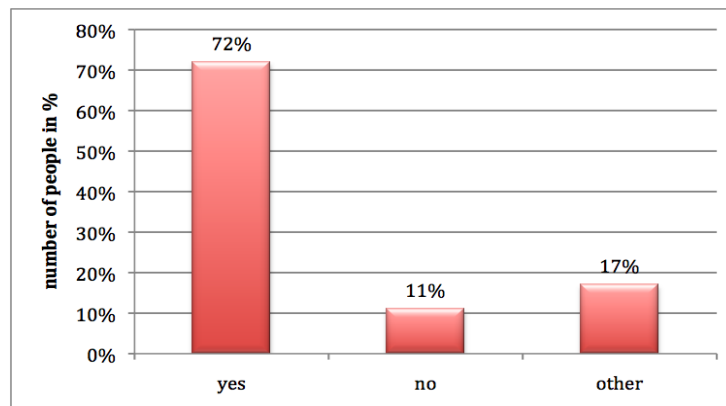
Most of the tourists (75%) that completed the survey think that tourist activities have a positive contribution to the economical well being of Reykjavik (graph 17.). Only 4% of the participants claimed that tourism activities do not have a positive contribution to the economic wellbeing of the Icelandic capital, 5% were neutral, 11% did not know enough to give an answer on the topic and 5% of the participants marked the field 'other' and chose to give a different answer. Most of the people in the last group ('other') stated that tourism activities could have both negative and positive impact on the economy of the capital depending on the way they are managed and organised.



Graph 17. Do the tourism activity have a positive contribution to the economic well being of Reykjavik?

The high percentage is probably due to the fact that in the recent years the benefits of tourism are more widely recognised than ever before. Many governments, among which the Icelandic government, are trying to increase the tourism activity in their country, by creating new attractions, renovating the existing ones and advertising the country as a tourist destination. Many of the projects are presented in Reykjavik since it is the capital and a major tourist destination in Iceland. A bright example for such activities is the project for increasing the tourism activity in Iceland. The project was organised by ‘Visit south Iceland’ (Þorleifur Friðriksson, personal e-mail, December 18, 2011). More than forty owners and co-owners of tourism related companies were invited to a tour in South Iceland. The tour started and ended in Reykjavik where the offices of most companies’ owners are. Such projects could bring high benefits, however tourists must be introduced to and able to recognise their responsibilities towards the destination they visit.

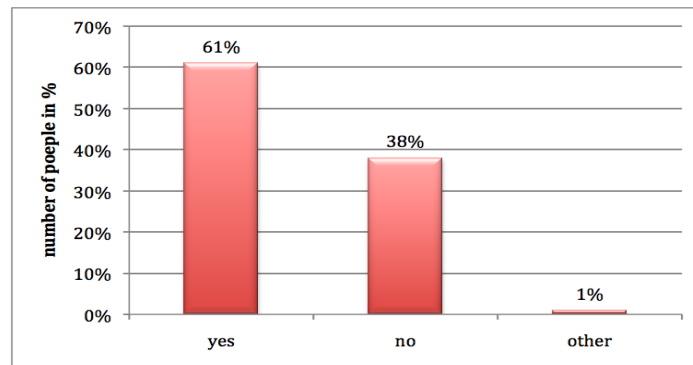
Most of the participants in the survey (72%) answered ‘yes’ on the question ‘Does tourism activity stimulate (in a way) the protection, conservation, renovation and transformation of historical sites, buildings, heritage and monuments?’ (graph 18).



**Graph 18. Does tourism activity stimulate the protection, conservation and renovation of historical sites, buildings and monuments?**

Only 11% of the tourists answered ‘no’ to this question and 17% gave different answers in the field ‘other’. The most common opinion in the field ‘other’ was that tourism activities could stimulate all the mentioned above things, only if managed properly. The processes of preservation, conservation, protection and renovation of tourism sites are tightly connected to sustainable tourism. More than 70% of the participants have positive attitude towards the tourism industry and vital processes for the adoption of sustainable tourism and yet so few people are familiar with the concept (ST). It is almost like a circular labyrinth people are going in circles around the core of the concept but can never actually enter the centre of the labyrinth.

Part of the conservation and preservation of monuments, buildings and historical sites are the attitude and the behaviour of the tourists. Most interesting is whether tourists recognise their responsibilities i.e. whether they feel that they have a responsibility for the city of Reykjavik. From the tourists that participated in the survey 61% claimed that they felt responsible for the capital of Iceland; 38% of the people do not feel any responsibility for the city of Reykjavik and one person accounting for 1% of the participants marked the field other and stated that he will be environmentally aware (graph 19).



**Graph 19. Do you feel responsible for the city of Reykjavik?**

This is rather disturbing and could be rather dangerous. People should be educated on such topics, the responsibility that they have should be presented to them simply and clearly. In that way many of the host-guest problems will diminish and both parties could enjoy more the positive impacts of tourism.

## **6 Discussions**

### **6.1 Sustainable tourism tourists and locals**

According to Buhails and Fletcher (1995) local people can be divided into two main categories. People who have a direct relation with tourism, i.e. people who are serving or supplying the tourism industry, personnel in the catering trade, transportation, shops, travel agencies, proprietors of local tourism business and entrepreneurs supporting the tourism industry. All these people derive most of their income from tourism. Therefore, they benefit from their involvement within the tourism activity and receive a financial return on the usage of environmental and cultural resources. Consequently, they tend to be more tolerant towards tourists and are prepared to accept some environmental damage in order to increase their personal income. Most people working for the tourism sector are, therefore, more willing to sacrifice natural resources as long as tourists are still satisfied with their travel to the particular destination.

There are of course numerous people, which have no involvement with the tourism industry and are employed in non-tourism related jobs. People from this category are forced to loose part of their public welfare for a very low, if any, rate of financial return. The local population often have to finance, via taxation and payments, the infrastructure providing the tourists means for free access to tourism attractions. This means that the local people might have a net loss from tourism activity. As a result they tend to be strong environmentalists and often against rising levels of tourism activities (Buhails and Fletcher, 1995), even if those activities are said to be sustainable and therefore environmentally friendly.

“[T]ourists are the last category of users of the local environment resources, although they stay for a short period of time” (Buhails and Fletcher 1995). ‘Tourist’ is a term, that summarizes many travellers, but there are different types of tourists that have different impacts on the environment. Cohen (1972) classifies tourists into four categories depending on their preferred types of travel and their role in the tourism industry. The categories are as fallows: the organized mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the explorer and the drifter. However the survey is conducted in a single city, it stresses on the tourism in that city and the number of tourists participated was not enough for conclusions regarding the type of tourists to be made. Therefore the participants are not classified in different categories, which is why they are simply referred to as tourists. Analogously to the questionnaire for citizens of Reykjavik the tourists had difficulties answering the first question of the survey. Often people claimed that their job is connected with the tourism industry only if was in direct relation with it. Tourists having the same line of work (e.g. shop consultants, or restaurants personnel etc.) defined themselves differently according to their understanding of the question.

### **6.2 Sustainable tourism - oversimplifications**

As mentioned before there were participants in both surveys that answered positively to the question “Are you familiar with the term sustainable tourism”, but could not define it accurately. Most of the citizens of Reykjavik, who did not know the term

tried to define it by themselves. This action often led to answers involving the words ‘self’ (sjálf) and town (bær) – probably because the term in Icelandic (sjálfbær ferðamennska) includes the Icelandic equivalent of both words. Therefore a common answer was that sustainable tourism was a self-sponsored tourism, in other words tourism developed without the help of the town administration or the government. The term sustainable development was also often defined as doing something yourself – without the use of tourism agencies. Some of the people, who claimed to be familiar to the term, defined it as owning a tourism related agency or as hitchhiking. The majority of individuals in this group claimed that the term is self-explanatory and that they have perceived it in the media. There were also numerous tourists who claimed to be familiar with the term but defined it as travelling without the use of tourism agencies, tour operators, without polluting etc. At times it was truly difficult to distinguish whether a participant is familiar with the concept or not. Many participants answered with just a few words e.g. tourism that is good for the environment; green tourism; eco-tourism, or claimed to be familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism and gave inaccurate answers such as: building infrastructure that will support tourism, tourism that; having something that keeps people going back, tourism, which respects the environment etc.

But why are the people visiting Reykjavik and the local population not properly introduced to the term sustainable tourism and which are the major mistakes in the process of introducing the concept?

As previously described it is obvious that it took the Icelandic government a few years to develop an executive plan for introducing and applying sustainable development in Iceland. At the beginning of this century, local governments and tourist industry officials had taken some actions in this field. It is rather difficult to estimate the results of these actions, however according to Þorvarður Árnason (environmentalist) there were a lot less results than were hoped for. The reasons are three kinds of over-simplifications.

- First the ideology has been oversimplified and that has ruled over both thought and actions. This reviles itself for instance in the fact that sustainable development is sometimes regarded as sustainable utilization (Íslensk ferðapjónusta, 2003). It includes the danger that economic aspects will be the ruling factor in the discussion (Þorvarður Árnason, 2008).
- Another oversimplification is that sustainable development and environmental issues are regarded as equal. Often people do not notice that sustainable development is not an environmental policy in the common sense of the concept, as it is an environmental development policy. This kind of simplification could make people to refer to everything that concern conservation of nature and environmental issues as a matter concerning sustainable development and therefore abstain from any innovative ideas, attempts for solutions and discussions on the subject (Þorvarður Árnason, 2008).
- The third oversimplification gives the notion that sustainable development mainly includes our attitude towards future generations. People tend to forget that the main questions of this ideology actually concern real time (Þorvarður Árnason, 2008).

It is hard to say anything about the knowledge and the attitude of the public towards sustainable development from a single survey, but one research could be pointed out made by Þorvarður Árnason (2004) gathering information from all over the country. Three quarters of the people who participated answered that they have already heard about sustainable development, and half of those thought that they have a clear idea about the meaning of the concept. That means that 60% of those who answered had either poor understanding of the concept or have never heard about it.

Here another investigation should be mentioned that was made in the districts around the national park of Vatnajökull in the years 2002-2003. The result indicated that more than half of those who answered claimed that the concept of sustainable development was quite unclear. When the participants were asked whether they agree or not to the statement: "The establishment of the national park of Vatnajökull will lead to sustainable development" (Karl Benediktsson, Edda Ruth Hlín Waage & Steingerður Hreinsdóttir, 2003). More than half of all who answered said that they are neutral, around 30% said that rather agree or strongly agree and 20% said that they are rather or strongly opposed to it (Karl Benediktsson o.fl., 2003).

Even though the results of these investigations should not be taken too seriously, they still indicate that in the beginning of this century the general public had limited knowledge and understanding on the subject of sustainable development. At the same time the use of the concept within the government was oversimplified and according to the formally mentioned investigation of the attitude of firms within the tourist industry and the tourists themselves, still a concrete guiding regarding sustainable tourism for tourists, companies and individuals seem to be missing (Rannveig Ólafsdóttir o.fl., 2009).

## **6.3 Peoples' attitude towards the tourism industry?**

It is interesting how the majority of both tourists (75%) and local population (87%) agree that tourism is beneficial for the wellbeing of Reykjavik, but cannot really explain why do they think that way. This reminds of the attitude towards the concept of sustainable tourism often described as the attitude towards 'Mom and apple pie'. (Weaver, 2005). Everyone is for the conservation and the preservation of the city – how could anyone be against it? It seems that sustainable tourism is something people simply agree to.

Next the participants in the questionnaire for citizens of Reykjavik had to agree or disagree with the statement 'Iceland needs more tourists'. This statement was included with the intention of provoking people to talk about problems involving carrying capacity, light, noise environmental pollution and other positive and negative aspects of the travel industry related to sustainable tourism. The reason for this question (statement) to be included in the survey was a lecture held at the University of Iceland in 2009 (march). The topic was nature preservation, tourism and sustainability. The lecturer Rannveig Ólafsdóttir presented pictures of damaged highland and hiking areas and argued that the Icelandic nature is wild, magnificent, and yet very fragile. The focus was upon the Icelandic moss damage, soil degradation and erosion due to tourism. As she talked about the long time period that the soil and the class Musci deviation Bryophyta plant (moss) needed to recover Rannveig showed pictures of what looked like irreversible

soil erosion. She argued that tourism, if poorly organized, could trigger erosion processes and it could take decades for the soil to recover. Tourism could have positive aspects, but if the tourism flow exceeds the carrying capacity of a destination the tourism industry would bring more damage than profits and would not contribute to the economical well being of the destination. Examples about light pollution and culture-related problems were also mentioned in the lecture.

As mentioned before only 5% of the participants disagreed with the statement 'Iceland needs more tourists'. The people who marked the field other accounted for 9% (41) shared some particularly interesting opinions. In the field other the majority of people shared that they are not informed enough to agree or disagree on the subject. Some of the participants argued that there was a need to increase the tourism activity not only in Reykjavik, but also in Iceland as a whole. Also according to some participants the tourism flow needs not to be concentrated in a few areas and only in certain regions, it needs to spread all over the country, that would ease the tourism pressure upon some of the most-visited destinations – (Blue lagoon, Geysir, Gullfoss, etc.) and would allow Iceland to welcome more tourists. Such answers strongly remind of the concept of spatial zoning which according to Williams (1998) is an established land management strategy, which aims to integrate tourism into environments by defining areas of land that have different suitability or capacity for tourism. Others argued that the carrying capacity should be better assessed to determine a sensible limit for tourists. The World Tourism Organization (1992:23) defines carrying capacity as:

fundamental to environmental protection and sustainable development. It refers to maximum use of any site without causing negative effects on the resources, reducing visitor satisfaction, or exerting adverse impact upon society, economy and culture of the area. Carrying capacity limits can sometimes be difficult to quantify but they are essential to planning for tourism and recreation.

The participants who advocated those ideas did not have tourism or geography-related education, nor are they working in the Tourism or the Service industries. Reykjavik and Iceland would probably benefit if more surveys are organised and distributed to the local population, so ideas coming from the citizens of Iceland could reach the authorities.

It was fascinating how many of the people answered 'no' to the question "Are you familiar with the term sustainable tourism?" but showed understandings on the subject when answering other questions of the survey.

## **6.4 Responsibility**

The last two questions of both surveys stressed upon the feeling of responsibility among citizens of Reykjavik and tourists. As mentioned above the 'responsibility' feature is situated in the middle circle of the 'five actors framework for environmental analyses of tourism' and it is of great importance. According to Nijkamp & Coccossis (2000) evidence suggest that modern tourists are quite environmentally conscious. "They may avoid areas with saturated tourism development and littered beaches. In addition to this, a responsibility is emerging for new tourists to behave respectfully towards the environment". Many have argued (Nijkamp & Coccossis 2000; Holden,

2008; Goodall & Stabler, 1992 etc.) that tourists are becoming more aware of alternative and sustainable forms of tourism and methods, which could help with the protection and the preservation of the environment.

According to Vignir Sigursveinsson (personal communication, August 24, 2011) – one of the owners of the biggest whale-watching company in Reykjavik – ‘Elding’ - most of the tourists coming to Iceland are rather environmentally friendly and well aware of ways of environmental preservation and sustainability principles. Indeed there were much higher expectations for the tourists’ awareness of the term ‘sustainable tourism’.

The whale-watching industry is a bright example of how tourists are educated on the subject of ‘sustainable tourism’ but the term is never mentioned through the whole “lesson”. This sounds odd, but many companies, more or less, provide information to the tourists on questions such as: how to pollute less; how to save water, paper and electricity and how to recycle. In this case the tourists ends up with knowledge on unknown subject. Most tourists presented some understanding on the subject of sustainable tourism, but they could not clearly define the meaning of the term, nor could they recall perceiving it in Iceland.

## **6.5 Critique**

This paper could be criticized for lack of depth in the research questions. The essay does not truly introduce to the reader to the correlation between sustainable tourism and all the indicators of the sustainable development model (see figure 2.). The research questions could have been organised in a way that allow the researcher to gain further understandings on questions such as: why people are not familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism, and why most people have a positive image of tourism and are not able to justify their answers. It must be mentioned that the number of the age groups is too small and the difference in the size of the first age group (20-35) with the others, in the survey for citizens of Reykjavik, is too great and therefore the sample is biased and will not present accurately the knowledge of the average citizen of Reykjavik.

The paper however reveilles the existence of major educational gaps standing in the way of the development of sustainable tourism in Reykjavik and presents some thinking points and ways of filling those gaps.

## 7 Conclusion

According to Adams (2006), one of the reasons for the widespread acceptance of the idea of sustainable development is the equivocal meaning of the term. Although neat the Brundtland definition was said to be inexact (Adams, 2006). Consequently sustainable development and sustainable tourism are widely accepted concepts, yet the meaning of both terms remains mystery for many of their proponents. In the survey many citizens of Reykjavik claimed to be familiar with the concept of sustainable tourism and defined it as a self-funded tourism or tourism developed without the help of the town administration or the government. The problem is that people are often introduced to sustainable tourism and related concepts but the proper names of the concepts are almost never put forward. This confuses people and even if they have a grasp on the concepts they cannot give an adequate definition when they have to, even though most of the people who gave inaccurate answers showed some understandings on sustainable tourism practices.

It is rather interesting how people could be found of an idea without actually knowing why. Almost all people were pro tourism and stated that tourism activity stimulates (in a way) the protection, conservation, renovation and transformation of historical sites, buildings, heritage and monuments, but only a few people cared to explain their position. It seems that the ideas and believes that people have are shaped by the media and the tourism advertisements. This could explain why most people could not defend their own position on the matter.

Another problem was that the majority of the people had a hard time deciding whether their work is connected to the tourism sector. For most participants a given line of work is in relation to the tourism sector only if it was directly involved with the tourism sector. The feeling of responsibility is equally spread among tourists, 60% of the tourists feel responsible for the city of Reykjavik, and citizens of Reykjavik - 61% of the participants claimed that they feel responsible for the tourism industry and the image of tourism.

In conclusion – tourism could be a highly beneficial industry for the city of Reykjavik. The tourism sector could become even more sustainable if people are able to receive a good education on the subject. People need to be introduced to the concept with its proper name. Both the positive and the negative aspects of sustainable tourism and tourism in general should be clarified to both tourists and citizens of Reykjavik so they could form their own opinion on the matter whether tourism is beneficial for them, for the economical wellbeing of Iceland and its capital etc. Elementary school education should provide children with the basic knowledge of concepts such as sustainability and sustainable development. The media should introduce people to the way the sustainable development is used as a mere label and that the use of such labels does not always mean a good thing. The companies that are educating people on the matter should clearly define the concept and use the term properly. Through education people will understand that they have responsibilities for the places they live in regardless whether they are tourists or part of the host population. With a bit of help, education of tourists and local people, Reykjavik could be among the cleanest and the most sustainable developed cities in Europe and why not in the entire world.

# Reference

- Adams, W.M. (2006). *The Future of Sustainability: Re-thinking environment and development in the twenty-first century*. Report of the IUCN Renowned Thinkers Meeting, 29–31 January 2006. Retrieved December 15, 2011, from: [http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn\\_future\\_of\\_sustainability.pdf](http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_future_of_sustainability.pdf)
- Alþingistiðindi 2004-2005, A 6, (2005). 131. löggjafarþing, þingskjal 1032-678. mál. Tilgata til þingsályktunar um ferðamál. Reykjavík: Alþingi.
- Briguglio, L. (1996). Defining sustainable tourism. In Archer, B. Jafari, J. & Wall, G (eds.), *Sustainable Tourism in Islands and Small States Issues and Policies*. Wellington House, London.
- Buhalis, D. & Fletcher J. (1995). Environmental impacts on tourist Destinations. In Coccossis H. & Nijkamp P., (eds.), *Sustainable Tourism Development*. USA: Ashgate Publishing.
- Butler, R. (1999). Alternative tourism: Pious hope or Trojan horse, *World Leisure and Recreation* (pp. 9-17), vol. 31 (4).
- Cohen, E. (1972). *Toward a Sociology of International Tourism*, Social Research (pp. 164-182), vol. 39 (1).
- Goodall, B. and Stabler, M. (1992). Environmental auditing in the quest for sustainable tourism: The Destination Perspective. Conference proceedings: *Tourism in Europe*, Newcastle Polytechni, 8-10 July.
- Holden, A. (2008) *Environment and Tourism*. Madison Avenue, New York: Routledge.
- Samgönguráðneytið (2003). *Íslensk ferðaþjónusta. Framtíðarsýn*. Reykjavík.
- Karl Benediktsson, Edda Ruth Hlín Waage & Steingerður Hreinsdóttir (2003). *Þjóðgarðstal. Viðhorf heimamanna til stofnunar Vatnajökulspjóðgarðs*. Höfn: Háskólasetið á Hornafirði.
- Middleton, V. & Hawkins, R. (1998). *Sustainable Tourism A Marketing Perspective*. Preface. Linacre House, Jordan Hill, Oxford.
- UN General Assembly, (2005). United Nations General Assembly, Draft resolution referred to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, *2005 World Summit Outcome*. Retrieved January 06, 2012, from: <http://www.un.org/hiv/universalaccess2010/worldsummit.pdf>
- UNEP, (n.d.). United Nations Environment Programme. *Rio Declaration on environment and development*. Retrieved January 05, 2012, from: <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=78&articleid=1163>

- Rannveig Ólafsdóttir, Kristín Rut Kristinsdóttir, Helga Jóhanna Bjarnadóttir & Árni Bragson (2009). *Umhverfissvitund og umhverfisstjórnun í ferðaþjónustu. Viðhorf ferðaþjónustuaðila og ferðamanna til vistvænnar vottunar í og við Vatnajökulspjóðgarðs*. Akureyri: Rannsóknarmiðstöð ferðamála.
- Reid, D. (1995) *Sustainable development: an Introductory guide*, London: Earthscan Publications.
- Umhverfissráðuneytið (1997). *Sjálfbær þróun í íslensku samfélagi*. Framkvæmdaáætlun til aldamóta. Reykjavík.
- Umhverfissráðuneytið (1999). *Sjálfbær þróun í íslensku samfélagi*. Mat á stöðu framkvæmdaáætlunar. Reykjavík.
- Samgönguráðuneytið (1996). *Stefnumótun í ferðaþjónustu*, (2. útg.). Reykjavík.
- Stabler, M. and Goodall, B. (1996). Environmental auditing in planning for sustainable island tourism. In Briguglio, L., Archer, B., Jafari, J., and Wall, G. (eds.) *Sustainable tourism in islands and small states: Issues and Policies* (pp. 170-196). London: Pinter.
- Statistics Iceland (1990-2008). *Export revenue from tourism industry and number of tourists 1990-2008*. Retrieved November 15, 2011, from: [http://www.statice.is/?PageID=1512&src=/temp\\_en/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=SAM08114%26ti=Export+revenue+from+tourism+industry+and+number+of+tourists+1990-2008%26path=../Database/ferdamal/ferdaiddnadir/%26lang=1%26units=Million%20ISK/changes%20between%20years/Percentage](http://www.statice.is/?PageID=1512&src=/temp_en/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=SAM08114%26ti=Export+revenue+from+tourism+industry+and+number+of+tourists+1990-2008%26path=../Database/ferdamal/ferdaiddnadir/%26lang=1%26units=Million%20ISK/changes%20between%20years/Percentage)
- Statistics Iceland (2008-2010). *Employed persons by economic activity, sex and regions 2008-2010*. Retrieved November 15, 2011, from: [http://www.statice.is/?PageID=1191&src=/temp\\_en/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=VIN01103%26ti=Employed+persons+by+economic+activity%2C+sex+and+regions+2008%2D2010+%28NACE+REV+2%2E%29++%26path=../Database/vinumarkadir/rannsoknir/%26lang=1%26units=Fj%F6ldi](http://www.statice.is/?PageID=1191&src=/temp_en/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=VIN01103%26ti=Employed+persons+by+economic+activity%2C+sex+and+regions+2008%2D2010+%28NACE+REV+2%2E%29++%26path=../Database/vinumarkadir/rannsoknir/%26lang=1%26units=Fj%F6ldi)
- Statistics Iceland (2008-2010). *Export revenue from tourism industry and number of tourists 1990-2008*. Retrieved November 15, 2011, from: [http://www.statice.is/?PageID=1512&src=/temp\\_en/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=SAM08114%26ti=Export+revenue+from+tourism+industry+and+number+of+tourists+1990-2008%26path=../Database/ferdamal/ferdaiddnadir/%26lang=1%26units=Million%20ISK/changes%20between%20years/Percentage](http://www.statice.is/?PageID=1512&src=/temp_en/Dialog/varval.asp?ma=SAM08114%26ti=Export+revenue+from+tourism+industry+and+number+of+tourists+1990-2008%26path=../Database/ferdamal/ferdaiddnadir/%26lang=1%26units=Million%20ISK/changes%20between%20years/Percentage)
- Stefán Gíslason (2000). *Vistvæn vottun. Yfirlit yfir núverandi kerfi og tillögur um stefnu*. Reykjavík: Samtök ferðaþjónustunnar.
- Stefán Gíslason (2001). Staðarskrá 21. Öflugt tæki við stjórnun sveitarfélaga. *Sveitarstjórnarmál*, 61 (5), 404-405.
- Umhverfissráðuneytið (2002). *Velferð til framtíðar. Sjálfbær þróun í íslensku samfélagi. Stefnumörkun til 2020*. Reykjavík: Umhverfissráðuneytið

- United Nations (1987), World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our common future* (the Brundtland Report), Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- WCED (World Commission on Environment and Development) (1987), *Our common future*, Towards sustainable development. Retrieved December 06, 2011, from: <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm>
- Weaver, D. (2005). *Sustainable Tourism*. Elsevier, Oxford UK.
- Wikipedia, (2010) *Víkurkirkja* (Reykjavik). Retrieved November 24, 2011, from: [http://is.wikipedia.org/wiki/V%C3%ADkurkirkja\\_%28Reykjav%C3%ADk%29](http://is.wikipedia.org/wiki/V%C3%ADkurkirkja_%28Reykjav%C3%ADk%29)
- Williams, S. (1998). *Tourism Geography*. London: Routledge.
- UNWTO (1992). United Nation World Tourism Organisation. *Tourism carrying capacity*: Report on the Senior-Level Expert Group Meeting held in Paris, June 1990.
- WTTC (2011). World Travel & Tourism Council. *Iceland Key Facts at a Glance*. GDP. Retrieved January 24, 2012, from: <http://www.wttc.org/research/economic-impact-research/country-reports/i/iceland/>
- Þorvarður Árnason (2004). Umhverfisvitund Íslendinga. *Landabréfið. Tímarit Félags landfræðinga*, 20(1), 3-24,
- Þorvarður Árnason (2008). Sjálfbær þróun – Til hvers of fyrir hverja? *Náttúrufræðingurinn*, 76(3-4), 83.
- Youell, R. (1998). *Tourism an introduction: Impacts of tourism* (pp. 138-162 ). Addison Wesley Longman, New York.

