Viewing Tourism:
Investigating Residents Experiences and Perceptions of Different Forms of Tourism in Ísafjörður, Iceland.

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Declaration

I hereby confirm that I am the sole author of this thesis and it is a product of my own academic research.

__________________________________________
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Abstract

Ísafjarður is the largest town in Ísafjarðardjúp, and the capital of Ísafjarðarbær, a municipality containing it and the four towns of Hnífsdalur, Flateyri, Suðureyri and Þingeyri. It is a prominent location for the fisheries sector in the northern Westfjords. It has also recently seen a rapid expansion in its tourism sector, particularly influenced by a growth in cruise tourism, with a growth in cruise tourist arrivals of 45.8% between 2015 and 2017. This thesis investigated the perceptions and experiences that residents of Ísafjarður had towards tourism. This investigation took the form of an in-depth qualitative study utilising 14 semi-structured interviews. Residents generally had a neutral attitude towards tourism, perceiving both the economic and social benefits of tourism whilst also having experienced the impacts of some undesirable tourist behaviours. They placed value in both the role tourism had in sustaining services in Ísafjarður and the positive impacts of social and cultural exchange to both tourists and residents. Residents were particularly aware of the impacts of tourism upon the area’s environment, something they placed significant value in. They were also concerned, yet optimistic, about the future of tourism in the area, general awareness of the tourism area life cycle model having caused concern that continuing expansion may be unsustainable. While tourism is currently certainly within the development stage, participants in the research were cautious about further investment in tourism. The results of this research suggest that as well as a general plan to manage future tourism growth, specific management actions should be taken in order to limit the impacts of problematic tourist and tour operator behaviours with a disproportionate effect on social harmony.

Útdráttur

Vinaka na Siga
# Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. v

Table of contents .................................................................................................................................... vii

List of Figures ........................................................................................................................................ x

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................................... xi

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................................. xiii

1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Research Questions ......................................................................................................................... 4
   1.2 Definitions ....................................................................................................................................... 5

2 Literature review ................................................................................................................................... 9
   2.1 A Background in Tourism ................................................................................................................. 10
   2.2 The Wider Economy in Ísafjörður ................................................................................................. 12
   2.3 The Impacts of Depopulation ......................................................................................................... 14
   2.4 Tourism and Sustainability ............................................................................................................. 17
   2.5 Tourism and the Environment ......................................................................................................... 21
      2.5.1 Environmental Issue Specific management- The Precautionary Principle .................... 22
   2.6 Mass Tourism Impacts .................................................................................................................... 24
   2.7 Cruise Tourism Carrying Capacity in Ísafjörður ............................................................................. 26
   2.8 Tourism Research in Ísafjörður and the Surrounding Area ......................................................... 30
   2.9 Drive Tourism .................................................................................................................................. 31

3 Methodology ......................................................................................................................................... 33
   3.1 Reasoning ......................................................................................................................................... 33
   3.2 Sampling .......................................................................................................................................... 34
      3.2.1 Ethical Considerations ............................................................................................................. 38
3.3 Interview construction ................................................................. 39
3.4 Analytical methods ..................................................................... 41
3.5 Limitations .................................................................................. 43
3.6 Conclusion .................................................................................... 44

4 Results and Discussion .................................................................. 45

4.1 General Perceptions of Tourism .................................................. 46
  4.1.1 Overall Perceptions of Tourism ............................................... 46
  4.1.2 Tourism Trends ................................................................. 49
  4.1.3 Adventure tourism .............................................................. 50
  4.1.4 Tourism development .......................................................... 50

4.2 Cruise Tourism, Crowding, and the Behaviours of Cruise Tourists ...... 51

4.3 Perceptions of Visitor Experience and Differences in Forms of Tourism .... 57

4.4 Road Use .................................................................................... 61

4.5 Infrastructure and the Environment .............................................. 65

4.6 Conclusion .................................................................................... 73

5 Recommendations and Conclusion ................................................. 75

5.1 Management ................................................................................ 75
  5.1.1 Cruise tourism Regulation ...................................................... 77
  5.1.2 Regulation- Road Use .......................................................... 78
  5.1.3 Infrastructure Development .................................................. 80

5.2 Limitations and Future Research ................................................... 82
  5.2.1 Limitations ............................................................................ 83
  5.2.2 Carrying capacity and cruise tourism ....................................... 84
  5.2.3 Drive tourism ....................................................................... 85
  5.2.4 Environmental Impact Assessment ......................................... 85
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.3 Conclusion</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Appendix A Ethical Clearance</th>
<th>Appendix B Interview Scripts</th>
<th>Appendix C Consent Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1: Map indicating the Westfjords region of Iceland (Google, 2019) ......................2

Figure 2: Map indicating Ísafjörður’s location within the Westfjords and the approximate area considered by this research (Google, 2019) ..................................................2
List of Tables

Table 1: The sample divided into age and employment demographics........................37-38
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1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce readers to the essential components of this research. First, it will introduce the background surrounding the geographical area in which this thesis was conducted followed by the dynamics surrounding tourism destination development. Then it will outline the research questions this thesis intends to answer.

Ísafjörður is the largest town in Ísafjarðardjúp, located on a sand-spit in the fjord of Skutulsfjörður, in the Westfjords region of North-West Iceland (see fig. 1 & fig. 2). It is a prominent location for the fisheries industry, being home to several sizeable companies specialising in fishing, fish processing and other connected services. However, fishing has seen a decline since the introduction of the Icelandic Individual Transferable Quota (ITQ) system. This is both due to the inevitable reductions caused by regulation designed to reduce the level of fishing, and due to relocation of fishing quota towards the capital region of Iceland. This has in turn led to continuing depopulation, especially in the surrounding area (Júlíusdóttir, Skaptadóttir & Kalrsdóttir, 2013). It is also home to the Medical Centre of the Westfjords, the region’s only hospital. Beyond this it contains a rapidly growing tourism industry, especially in terms of cruise tourism (Islandsbanki, 2017; Statistics Iceland, 2017a; Statistics Iceland, 2017b; Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018a; Icelandic Tourist Board 2018b).

Whilst this research primarily concerned residents of Ísafjörður, as the capital of Ísafjarðarbær, residents undoubtedly have strong ties with other towns in the northern Westfjords. Particularly, theses ties form links with the towns of Hniffsdalur, Flateyri, Suðureyri and Þingeyri within Ísafjarðarbær, as well as Súðavík and Bolungarvík in Súðavíkurhreppur and Bolungarvíkurkaupstaður, respectively, whilst also containing the majority of the northern Westfjords' population. It also serves as the primary access point for much of Hornstrandir Nature Reserve, located across Ísafjarðardjúp to the north and accessed via boat, both in terms of private tourism trips and a public charter service for those with summer houses within the reserve. As such, whilst the research physically took place exclusively within Ísafjörður, and many issues are exclusive to the town itself, it can be considered to include opinions of tourism impacts of a wider area, as shown in fig. 2. This enlarged area is important to consider when talking about residents’ perceptions and
experiences of tourist road use and environmental impacts in particular (as these are not generally focussed on the impact within urban areas).

Figure 1: Map indicating the Westfjords region of Iceland (Google, 2019).
This research initially aimed to investigate the possible conflicts occurring between a variety of developing tourism forms and the long-standing fisheries sector in Ísafjörður and Hnifsdalur, Iceland. It aimed to do this via the experiences and perceptions of companies involved in on-shore fish processing, hence circumnavigating issues surrounding the quantification of complicated systems interactions (e.g. the loss of residents’ accommodation due to landlords letting property on AirBnB during summer).

However, it proved difficult to obtain responses from those involved in fish-processing, and so the sample was broadened to include workers in a variety of non-tourism related industries & other residents of Ísafjörður who did not benefit in a direct economic fashion from tourism. This sample maintained some of the interesting components of the fish processing sector. Namely these components are a sample that is both more diverse in terms of gender and in terms of nationality than those employed in fish catching jobs (Júlíusdóttir et al., 2013). It also, by excluding those directly benefitting from tourism, allowed the sample to maintain the intended design of requiring less sub-division of the sample by work sector, something that was not allowed by the university ethics committee (due to time concerns).

As discussed in the definitions section of this thesis, there are a variety of contradictory definitions of tourism, whose applicability to research varies greatly. Obviously, the common use of the term tourism is defined primarily by what it is not (i.e. neither trade nor pilgrimage), something that could only be established on a case by case basis. Therefore, this thesis will consider the UN definition (UNWTO, 2008) discussed in the definitions section, whilst being aware that this is likely not the definition used by participants and taking this into consideration when discussing the results of the interviews carried out as part of this thesis (such as highlighting when participants made specific mention of the wider aspects of tourism, and investigating what type of tourist they believe a responsible for certain behaviours).
Tourism is a fast-growing industry in Iceland in general, forming the country’s largest export as well as having increasing numbers of overnight stays and cruise tourism arrivals (Statistics Iceland, 2017a; Statistics Iceland, 2017b; Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018a; Icelandic Tourist Board 2018b). In Ísafjörður similarly rapid increases have been witnessed with a 45.8% increase in tourism arrivals seen between 2015 and 2017 (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018b) and an average growth of 24.3% annual increase in cruise arrivals per year between 2010 and 2017 (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018b). However, tourism has been said to negatively impact the sensitive environments it relies upon to attract visitors to the country (Liftenegger, Marek, Peters, Pirnea, & Rampitsch, 2014). This leads to an intrinsic risk of unsustainable practices, where if tourism proves very successful, it will damage the reasons for its own success. It has also been claimed that increases in the prominent cruise tourism sector in Ísafjörður risk exceeding the area’s carrying capacity, particularly with respect to the social impacts of tourism (O’Brien, 2014). This would constitute what has become known as ‘over-tourism’, a concept that will be discussed (along with its flaws when used within an academic context) in Chapter 2.

With these factors in mind it was deemed necessary to produce and in depth, up to date piece of qualitative research, aimed at analysing how residents perceived tourists, and residents’ experiences of tourism. This methodology was designed to expand upon previous tourism research in the area, which had identified points of conflict and benefit, by exploring the reasoning that residents might place behind such opinions. This research was designed to provide both data for academic consideration and recommendations aimed at local tourism managers. Whilst the views of tourism organisations are important to management decisions, they are beyond the scope of this research, which focussed specifically on local residents.

### 1.1 Research Questions

While some of the aims outlined in this thesis were changed due to issues encountered in the field (see chapter 3.1 methodology: sampling), the two research questions were as follows:

- Which form of tourism provides the most positive benefits to residents of Ísafjörður?
  
  a. Review existing data on the physical impacts of the different tourism forms on residents of Ísafjörður.
b. Research what impacts, have been experienced or are perceived by residents of Ísafjörður as being caused by different tourism forms.

- What could be done to improve the relationship between tourism and those not directly benefitting from its economic impacts in Ísafjörður?
  a. Discover which tourism sectors should be encouraged.
  b. Investigate areas where management measures could lead to more positive impacts on residents.

1.2 Definitions

Before proceeding with the literature review, it is important to define some of the important concepts featured in this thesis and explain how some words were used by interview participants.

Tourism:

Tourism is poorly defined as both an economic concept (Sessa, 1988; Sakellariou & Cheng 1997; Slocum, 2006; Munjal, 2018) and in academic literature, a practice stemming from both the large variety and fine detail of tourism products and the diverse fields of tourism research (Kandari, 2004; Hennessey, Yun, & MacDonald, 2014; Metro-Roland, Knudsen & Greer, 2015; McKercher, 2016; Richards, 2016; Tribe and Liburd, 2016; Savaşan, Yalvaç, & Tuncel, 2017; Bidder, 2018; Naranpanawa, Rambaldi, & Sipe, 2019).

In such a case, the etymology of the word, essentially the historical context and linguistic evolution which defined its common use, provides us with academically established insights into the use of the word in language. Tourism is drawn from the Greek root word for a tool used to draw a circle, and is believed to be in reference to the action of travelling from one’s home, along a route, and then returning, a conceptually, if often not physically, circular process (Leiper, 1983). However, it is noted that whilst journeys of a trade or religious nature certainly took place before 1500, the word tourism did not arise until after that point. Before 1500, records show that the descriptors ‘journey’ or ‘pilgrimage’ were
used. It is therefore suggested that the term tourism has primarily been used to describe, and indeed originated in its English context as a word to describe, journeys that were conceptually circular, and not primarily for the purpose of trade (or business in modern terms) or of a religious nature (Leiper, 1983). This represents a considerably narrower definition than those used by many academic sources, as well as international organisations such as the UN (UNWTO, 2008). Notably, it excludes many non-commercial tourism activities, particularly those revolving around religious or cultural events, as well as most business activities that may be factored into broader definitions of tourism. However, while academic and economic definitions of tourism have expanded the context so that in can include both ‘pilgrimages’ and ‘journeys’ it can be seen in academic research that this has not spread into common use to the same degree. As Singh and Krakover (2015) note, domestic tourists will often insistently deny engaging in tourism, instead preferring terms such as traveller or holidaymaker, in order to distinguish themselves from tourists.

**Tourism operators:**

Tourism operators are the organisations that directly supply tourism experiences at the destination level. Examples include cruise tourism companies, their staff, hotels, or tour guides, but not travel agents or other agencies that do not have staff, or offer services, in the destination. Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, given the isolated geographical area, the only air travel company included in general references to tourism operators is Air Iceland Connect, the domestic branch of Icelandair.

**The research area:**

For the purposes of this study, references to Ísafjörður, or simply ‘the research area’, include Ísafjörður and its immediate surroundings. While research was not carried out with workers employed outside Ísafjörður, participants were not asked to exclude responses that talked about the wider area. Of particular note is activity in the Hornstrandir nature reserve or on the waters of Ísafjarðardjúp, to which Ísafjörður is the main access point. This area is heavily featured in participants' responses on adventure tourism, for example (where restricting responses to the town proper would likely have eliminated the possibility of any responses, despite it being a notable part of the local tourism industry).

**Cruise Tourism:**
For the purposes of this study, cruise tourism encompasses all sea-based arrivals in Ísafjörður. It does not include landwards arrivals taking part in sea-based activities such as whale watching as part of a day trip, boat trips for multi-day hikes in Hornstrandir nature reserve, or sailing trips for which Ísafjörður is the home port. The majority of cruise tourism arrivals are large vessels (often with a capacity of several thousand people), but cruise tourism in the area also features small capacity boats. This definition was arrived upon as this is the common usage and understanding of the phrase cruise tourism in the research area, and so would avoid confusion during interviews. Where a more academic definition is needed, this will be mentioned. As can be seen from the statistics presented by Icelandic Tourist Board (2018b) and Ísafjarðarbær (2017) this form of cruise tourism constitutes a form of mass tourism (see below) in Ísafjörður. Other forms of cruise tourism may not constitute mass tourism (Johnston, Johnston, Stewart, Dawson & Lemelin, 2012).

**Mass tourism:**

Vainikka (2013, p.279) notes that there is no agreed definition of mass tourism amongst researchers, noting that mass tourism is a “multidimensional concept leading to the evocation of different meanings for different people”. They argue that whilst this has led to criticism of discussing mass tourism in research, it is still a relevant term, albeit one that requires redefining to suit the needs of today. While there is no clear definition of mass tourism, it is typically used to refer to tourism that, broadly, occurs in high concentrations, with a high number of visitors in a particular destination over a short period of time. Particular to this study, mass tourism encompasses large cruise vessels (vessels with a capacity in the multiple hundreds or thousands) and the activities engaged in by tourists from those vessels. It may also be used to include large numbers of tourist arrivals by road or air, but the remote nature of the destination renders this largely an unused reference. Nevertheless, some specific events might be described as mass tourism; for example, attendees of the music festival Aldrei Fór Eg Suður might be said to be mass tourists, as might any arriving for other major events such as ski competitions. This is because the definition is primarily reliant on a (subjective) interpretation of the word ‘mass’, and so anything that can be described as attracting masses of commercial tourists may be mass tourism; of course, this is a relative measurement which varies between destinations and countries, but often an intuitive one. The other defining attribute of mass tourism is an
emphasis on commerciality, even above other forms of commercial tourism, but this is from where much of the debate over the definition is derived.

**Land-based tourism, tourists who come from the land:**

For the purposes of this study, land-based tourism, tourists who come from the land, and similar terms, were used to describe all tourists who were not cruise tourists, and is defined more by the common usage of this or similar wordage by participants. The usage implied reference to tourists whose accommodation was on land, not their mode of transport. For example, a tourist staying in a hotel who arrived by air would generally be described as land based, because their ‘base’ was on land, rather than the sea.

**Adventure tourism:**

While this may refer to the adventure tourism sector, on which there has been plentiful academic discussion (Kane & Tucker, 2004), this term, in the context of the research area, primarily refers to those engaging in hiking and walking activities in the nearby Hornstrandir nature reserve. This is noted in reference to this study here, as this was the definition that arose from interview participants’ language over the course of this study. Only one participant referred to skiing as part of their comment on adventure tourism, and only one to sea based activities. Any reference to these activities has been clarified to indicate the specific activity, and so adventure tourism can be taken to refer to a variety of outdoor, foot based tourist activities primarily occurring in the Hornstrandir nature reserve.

**The Spit:**

“The Spit” is used in this study to refer to the section of Ísafjörður that occupies the sand-spit in Skutulsfjörður. This area includes land created by infilling of the fjord, and contrasts to settled areas along the sides and end of the fjord (including within Engidalur and Tungadalur), as these are also considered part of the town.
2 Literature review

This chapter will review relevant literature, and its implications for the study of residents’ perceptions and experiences of tourism in Ísafjörður, Iceland. It will begin by reviewing the state of tourism on both a global and a national scale, before outlining the local economy of the research area and how tourism factors into this. It will then review how depopulation forms a major threat to local social and economic harmony, and is well documented to cause lasting harm on people and their economic prospects. Then it will assess academic literature on sustainability in the tourism sector, particularly focussing on how a sustainable tourism model can be integrated into an economy that relies heavily on fisheries as a primary economic sector. After this, it will review the environmental impacts of tourism, outlining both universal issues and ones particularly pronounced in Iceland’s sensitive environment, as well as looking at those particular to the cruise tourism sector. The chapter will then discuss the results of a previous study by O’Brien (2014) focussing on cruise tourism carrying capacity in the area, as well as broader literature on carrying capacity, particularly in a social context. After this, it will cover several other tourism related studies carried out in the research area and their implications for this research, before finally reviewing the literature surrounding drive tourism as a subsector of tourism.

A literature review was decided upon in order to give the author a good understanding of the relevant background factors. This allowed both for questions to be formulated from the interviews, but also allowed for more probing investigation during the interviews themselves, inquiring about specific aspects of resident’s experiences of tourism. This enabled the collection of more in depth results. The literature review was also expanded upon after the interview process, as this was important in order to show comparability to other literature and investigate aspects that were only revealed to be important within the context of the interview data. This continuation of the literature review is an important part of successful, flexible qualitative research (Crang & Cook, 2007).

A review of relevant literature is important in order to establish how tourism has impacted upon and been experienced by residents of other areas, which can be used to provide comparison with the findings of the research. It further provides the context within which this thesis can operate, such as a factual account of local economics, demographics, or tourism numbers. Furthermore, it establishes what research has already been undertaken
within the research area, or similar areas, which impacts upon the methodology selected in this research.

A literature review also allows the discussion of wider topics outside the specific scope of the research methodology used, via their establishment in other academic research. This in turn will also allow conclusions to be drawn about the benefits of tourism forms, and how to improve the relationship between tourism and those operating outside it. It can provide evidence as to the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of certain management activities, from which recommendations can be more easily derived. Finally, without a literature review, relevant scientific literature could not be gathered for use in other chapters.

2.1 A Background in Tourism

This section will discuss the tourism sector. After defining the concept, it will first outline its importance on a global scale, and the continuing debate over how the size of the tourism sector is calculated. Then it will discuss the growing prominence of tourism in Iceland. Finally, it will outline how tourism feature in the local economic spread in Ísafjörður, highlighting the differences from other markets.

Tourism is a fast-growing sector worldwide, accounting for 10.2% of the world GDP in 2016 according to the WTTC (2017) and Weatherdon, Magnan, Rogers, Sumaila, & Cheung (2016, p.10) cite tourism as “one of the largest sectors in the global economy”. Lew (2011) disputes the accuracy of the figures provided by the WTTC but concedes that the tourism sector is of high economic importance, globally, estimating that tourism ranks about 5th or 6th in terms of international trade. These differences in definition arise from the differing explanations and criteria used to determine tourism (as discussed in ‘definitions’ above), as well as the issues with broader economic definitions, such as how much of the hospitality sector is included in the definition of the tourism sector.

Tourism in Iceland is growing rapidly, with 2.22 million foreign visitors in 2017 (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018b), forming Iceland’s largest economic sector for trade and exports (Statistics Iceland, 2017a). Tourism accounted for 8.8 million overnight stays in 2016, with a 26% increase in overnight stays in hotels and guest houses over 2015 (Statistics Iceland, 2017b). Domestic tourism is also an increasingly relevant sector for rural areas, due to a decreasing rural population (see ‘The Impacts of Depopulation’). As a result of this
depopulation, it is increasingly necessary for rural areas to seek out ways of increasing their local economic viability, both to prevent further reductions and to maintain existing services amid generally decreasing demand. The rapid expansion of tourism has led to a situation where infrastructure is often outpaced by the speed of growth, which can be seen as a form of over-tourism (Seraphin, Sheeran & Pilate, 2018).

This growth rapid has contributed to both the boom in use of private apartments for Airbnb (Statistics Iceland, 2017b), and to the high relative attractiveness of the cruise tourism sector in Ísafjörður. The Icelandic Tourist Board (2018b) noted a 45.8% increase in cruise passenger arrivals in Ísafjörður between 2015 and 2017. Compared with O’Brien (2014), which noted three cruise ship arrivals in Ísafjörður in 1996, these figures would indicate an approximate increase in cruise tourism of 3067% over the two decades between 1996 and 2016. The rapid expansion of cruise tourism in Ísafjörður is worth a brief conceptual discussion here. Cruise tourism, by its nature, provides a great deal of its own infrastructure, in the form of accommodation, entertainment, and catering onboard. That this infrastructure can be quickly transferred from other destinations via re-direction of routes or pre-planned fleet expansion being implemented in the freshly popular destination provides it with significant advantages in being able to quickly exploit a developing tourism destination over tourism forms that require either a slower rate of expansion or significantly more investment locally. As noted in Icelandic Tourist Board (2018b) the increase in arrivals in a smaller location like Ísafjörður is not proportionate to the difference in scale between the town and Reykjavik. While some of this is obviously the result of ‘round Iceland’ tour itineraries and similar factors unrelated to the ease of expansion within cruise tourism, it should also be noted that the capital region also had greater existing capacity to cater to other tourism forms, due to being nearly fifty times larger.

In Ísafjörður, the importance of cruise tourism is highlighted by the presence of tourist numbers that often outstrip the entire town in population. For example, while the town has a population of around 3,000 (Ísafjarðarbær, 2017), the average capacity of new cruise vessels (including generally lower capacity river cruise vessels) on order in 2017 was 2,379 (CLIA, 2016). As we will see in the results section, participants often observed there to be multiple cruise vessels within the town simultaneously, leading to arrivals far in excess of the population. However, whilst tourism is growing in the area, it should be
noted that the fisheries sector remains the largest private employer (Ísafjarðarbær, 2017). We will discuss the local economy further below.

2.2 The Wider Economy in Ísafjörður

In contrast with tourism, fisheries does not represent as successful and economic driver globally. However, as will be discussed, the fisheries industry is both an important source of food on a global scale and locally important to both the Icelandic and regional economy. This section will also briefly address the uneven impacts that moving away from traditional sectors can have on former workers, which we will expand upon in the next section.

Fisheries are vital for world food security, accounting for 25% of the global population’s source of animal protein (Gutiérrez, Hilborn, & Defeo, 2011). Gutiérrez et al. (2011, p.386) also state that “one billion people depend on seafood as their primary source of protein”, a likely more important statistic as it removes debate over the prevalence of animal protein in human diets. Oracion, Miller and Christie (2005) note how the economic advantages of mass tourism marginalised local fishing business in the Philippines, whilst Chen (2010) writes of difficulties integrating diversifying fisheries into tourism in Taiwan. These situations can represent both the difficulty of integrating various sectors within a locality and the issues that can be created when moving away from traditional forms of employment, as will be discussed below. As such, one of the aims of this study is to investigate ways in which greater synergies can be encouraged between tourism and the fisheries sector, which is an important part of the economy of both Ísafjarðarbær and national economy of Iceland in general.

In Iceland, fisheries represented the 3rd largest export sector in 2016, behind manufacturing and tourism (Statistics Iceland, 2017a), and one of great value to the Westfjords, where landings account for 9.4% of the national value (Statistics Iceland, 2017c) despite the Westfjords only accounting for 2% of the population (Statistics Iceland, 2017d). The municipality of Ísafjarðarbær (2017) states that 20% of the workforce is engaged in the fisheries industry, making it the largest private employer (the only larger sector being government employment). Therefore, it is important to consider the effects on fisheries
when looking at any economic changes or development in the Ísafjarðarbær municipality, to fully understand the issues and opportunities that might be created. It is also important to consider the historical structural shifts in the local economy and their continuing impacts. In particular, the implementation of individual transferable quotas in Iceland lead to significant shifts away from the Westfjords within the fisheries. These shifts were a significant contributing factor in the development of a trend of depopulation in the Westfjords, which can be seen in the light of de-industrialisation. A good discussion of the impacts of de-industrialisation is found in Iversen & Cusack (2000). The scope of this discussion is beyond this paper to summarise. Nevertheless, the basic point that loss of jobs in traditional sectors can lead to economic hardship is worth bearing in mind when considering the tourism sector within a region where the traditional sector (fisheries) has suffered losses during modern times, as well as the other relevant statement that “…a job outside one of the traditional sectors often entails a significant loss in income…” (Iversen & Cusack, 2000, p.314). We will discuss some of these factors, and how they relate to local population reductions further in the next section (‘The Impacts of Depopulation’).

Whilst fisheries is the largest primary production employer in Ísafjörður, it is also worth briefly considering other forms of employment in the town. Government employment is the largest employer (Ísafjarðarbær, 2017), and was the source of work for many of the participants in this study. As the statistics provided by Ísafjarðarbær, (2017) do not differentiate between forms of government employment, it must be noted that this includes a range of jobs from school teachers to council officials to labourers working on municipal contracts. As such, there is less to discuss in concrete form about these public sector jobs. However, it is certainly worth noting that these jobs are primarily services rendered to residents (e.g. hospital workers, road administration employees) or as part of the municipality (e.g. town maintenance workers). As such, it would be expected that if the population were to decrease, less of these workers would be required, whilst the success of private employers such as fisheries and tourism helps to ensure the tax and population base needed to provide continued employment in the public sector (Temjanovski, Dimitrova and Arsova, 2017).
2.3 The Impacts of Depopulation

This section will first briefly discuss the reasons for local rural depopulation in the Westfjords (beyond the growing urbanisation common to almost all regions on earth). It will consider some of the background concerning fishing quota, de-industrialisation and local population and employment shifts. The context of general economic perspectives on depopulation will be considered, along with factors that may lead to these shifts being seen as positive developments. It will also consider how gender and social status factors into the situation in the Westfjords, and fishing communities in Iceland. It will then examine wider literature on how depopulation can impact an area, and why negative population trends have a negative impact on the people that make up those populations, both those who leave, and those who choose to remain.

Population shifts in the Westfjords have been noted by Júlíusdóttir et al. (2013) who further stated that this had led to changes in gender dynamics in the area. Depopulation has been widely seen to be a significant feature in rural Iceland (Einarsson, 2012; Júlíusdóttir et al., 2013; Kokorsch, 2018; Magnússon, 2013). Literature supports the view that reductions in population can lead to a number of problems (both short and long term) for an area, particularly if these reductions are due to processes of de-industrialisation, as can be seen in the historical movement of fishing quota away from Ísafjörður (Einarsson, 2012).

The implementation of the ITQ system in Iceland caused significant harm, particularly to smaller communities (Einarsson, 2012). While the necessity of managing fish stocks is widely accepted, the legislation used in this regard has been heavily criticized, even leading to a reprimand from the United Nations Human Rights Committee (Einarsson, 2012). Beyond the privatisation of what had previously been seen as a common good, the transferability of quota under this system attracted particular criticism, especially due to the harm it is seen to have done to smaller communities as quota was transferred to larger, wealthier operations in other areas (Einarsson, 2012). While there is debate over the success of the quota system, and these debates, often based more on ideology than practicalities, are beyond the scope of this thesis, it is undeniable that it led to significant loss of the primary industry in many areas (Kokorsch, 2018).
Population shifts are often seen as inevitable, and may lead to better prospects in areas with higher standards of living or education, as Júlíusdóttir et al. (2013) noted was the case for women leaving fishing communities in Iceland. However, depopulation also carries a number of inherent risks. These become particularly pronounced when those leaving feel, or indeed are, forced to leave (Atkinson, 2015). This section will attempt to illustrate why depopulation should be avoided in Ísafjörður, and the possible impacts that might be avoided by diversifying the local economy away from fisheries.

Primarily, residents cannot be assumed to only desire economic prosperity in their place of living. To this point human beings should not be treated as rational actors, as noted by Nunkoo & Gursoy (2015) in their critique of social exchange theory. Whilst methodologies based on this assumption, such as cost benefit analysis, form an important part of economics it they are generally not intended to be applied to individuals working outside of the competitive market driven economic sector (specifically, the reason economic actors are said to be rational is because the competitive market causes those who are not to cease to exist. This does not apply to people, for whom life, and so continued existence, is an intrinsic right).

A number of specific factors contribute to why people who move out of the area they are familiar with might suffer harm, disadvantage, or a sense of loss. A sense of place is often very important to long term residents, and the loss is felt keenly by those who leave unwillingly. Atkinson (2015, p.385) notes the impacts a loss of sense of place can have, stating that it was heavily associated with negative feelings, such as “loss, regret and bitterness”. Vigh and Bjarnesen (2016) document how displacement and migration can lead to disruptions of everyday life, estrangement and hardship. Askland (2018) discusses the negative impacts that stem from leaving a rural area previously dependent on a traditional industry. While they talk of mining, similarities can be drawn between this and the loss of a similarly historical and social integrated sector such as fisheries. In fact, it is particularly comparable due to the similarities of both as traditionally male dominated extractive, primary production industries. Askland (2018, p.235) also states that movement away from such area is highly unlikely to consider “the local historicities that exist and that underpin people’s sense of place”.

Furthermore, long term residents are likely to have social support structures in place, including networks of family and friends that would be disrupted if they were required to move. Beames and Atencio (2008, p.100) discuss the theory of social capital and note how “formalised groups… and more informal networks such as those found at the local pub, might yield information about a job opportunity, the name of a reliable baby-sitter or the loan of a cordless drill.” This access to information or resources is addressed as social capital.

The informal groupings discussed by Beames and Atencio (2008) are particularly at risk of disruption during times of relocation, as they rely upon familiarity rather than membership of established organisations which may still be found in the new location. Beames and Atencio (2008, p.100) use the example of “parent teachers associations”, but other groups such as choirs, trade unions or membership of a church can also offer some transferability. Informal groups created through general socialisation, however, are likely to take time and effort to re-establish in a new location, and may never be in urban environments where fewer people have social ties outside of their work environment. Beames and Atencio (2008) further note that only a group (either formal or informal) can possess this social capital, and so disruption or dissolution of these groups can be said to cause loss of social capital.

Depopulation can also have the effect of stripping and area only of its most qualified or highly paid residents (sometimes called ‘brain drain’), whilst poor or vulnerable people are unable to afford the upfront cost of relocation. This has been noted by Júlíusdóttir et al. (2013), who discuss how greater levels of education have factored into the emigration of Icelandic women away from the area, as well as away from low paid jobs in the fisheries sector. Temjanovski et al. (2017 p.21) note how the ‘brain drain’ encountered in Eastern Europe “holds profound consequences for… future development”. Brooks (2017) writes of a scheme imposed in Kansas designed to counter this phenomenon, noting an impact ‘brain drain’ can have on the available education and other services in the effected region. As noted above, even among those who hold trained and skilled positions amongst traditional industries, movement away from them often leads to the movers being forced to accept lower paid, less skilled work (Iversen & Cusack, 2000). This represents both a loss of income for the individuals involved and a wider societal loss of the capital invested in the education,
training and experience of those individuals. Some kinds of highly skilled labour in the fisheries sector may involve nautical or processing engineering skills, or those of who fulfil important roles onboard fish catching vessels (e.g. an experienced captain).

In addition, the wider Westfjords region has experience with is a lack of compensation to emigrants for the loss of their homes, which, in cases of total depopulation, become drastically devalued. Many summer houses in the region are the result of depopulated settlements or fjords. Most notably, buildings within the Hornstrandir nature reserve are typically the result of lasting land ownership and construction rights after the area was abandoned and subsequently turned into a nature reserve. This example shows that governments may not choose to purchase properties in abandoned regions, even when those regions are to be turned into conservation areas or otherwise primarily designated as a public resource. As such, Hornstrandir is partially maintained as a working landscape, despite lacking any form of actual work or permanent occupation. Askland (2018) notes how depopulation from a rural area suffering the loss of traditional industry is often poorly handled. They note that moving people from such areas often is done without “any coherent strategy and consideration of long-term impacts on communities” (Askland, 2018, p.235).

2.4 Tourism and Sustainability

Tourism has long suffered from issues with sustainability, within all three of the commonly stated areas of sustainability. Tourism may have adverse effects on the environment, which is particularly problematic when that environment is the destination’s primary attraction (Liftenegger et al., 2014; Cságoly, Sæþórsdóttir & Ólafsdóttir, 2017). Destination popularity also changes over time, often as a result of that same popularity which can impact its long term economic sustainability as a destination moves through its life-cycle (Butler, 1980). It can also have significant social impacts, causing issues around social sustainability (Seraphin et al., 2018).

Assessment of residents’ perceptions of tourism and its sustainability are often carried out within the framework of social exchange theory (SET) (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2015). This posits that social exchange is “a series of interactions that generate obligations” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). A limitation of this framework is that it considers
individuals as rational actors rather than as irrational and emotive human beings (Nunkoo & Gursoy).

“Countries which improve their index of [travel & tourism] sustainability do not do so at the cost of worsening their main economic indicators of tourism” (Pulido-Fernández, Andrades-Caldivo & Sánchez-Rivero, 2015 p. 59). This helps to establish that an improvement to the social, economic or environmental sustainability of travel and tourism, the three segments of sustainability (Diedrich & García-Buades, 2009), can be made without significant impact upon the economic benefits of tourism. Given this study will cover resident’s perceptions of all three axis of sustainability, it is important not only to look at areas or tourism impacts, but also at opportunities to improve tourism sustainability as these goals are not to be held as in opposition to goals of economic benefit. This study does however have an obvious focus on the social sustainability in Ísafjörður, as it does not cover in depth environmental or economic analysis, but rather the society’s perceptions of these factors. Butler et al. (2008), Einarsson (2009) and Oracion et al. (2005) note conflicts between tourism, fisheries and environmental goals, and stress the need for integrated management and adaptation. Chen (2010) provides an extensive account of possible issues in diversifying fisheries towards tourism in Taiwan, noting how the use of common pool resources and facilities can lead to conflict, and a variety of difficulties such as wasted investment and lack of community capacity which can lead to poor development.

Solstrand (2015) provides an account of marine angling in Iceland, noting fishing as one of the premier forms of consumptive wildlife tourism, whilst Einarsson (2016) describes how whale watching can integrate into traditional fishing communities in Iceland. Both suggest opportunities that could be explored in the waters around Ísafjarðarbaer. This would help prevent some of the issues noted above in ‘The Impacts of Depopulation’, as marine angling tourism and whale-watching (when aboard a vessel) require a number of the same, or similarly skilled professionals as the fisheries sector, particularly in the highly skilled field of professional navigation and captaincy (where little of the professional skill set would transfer into similar land based employment). Hence developing in this area may help prevent the loss of personal and societal capital encountered when workers move from employment in a traditional extractive industry. However, Solstrand and Gressness (2014) and Øian, Aas, Skår, Andersen and Stensland (2017) note the conflicts between angling tourism, environmental goals and management, (though Øian et al. (2017) approach this
subject in the context of non-marine angling). This suggests an investigation of other ways to develop synergies between tourism and fisheries are necessary, as Kaltenborn, Linnell, Thomassen, and Lindhjem (2017) note in the need for integrated policy planning.

Lopes, Pacheco, Clauzet, Silvano and Begossi (2015) argue that integration with tourism brought better incomes in coastal/fishing communities and could be used to aid environmental management goals in coastal fishing communities in Brazil. Whilst the setting of their study may limit its applicability to Iceland due to differences in wealth, climate, geography and the target species of the fishery, it also limits the problems it encountered such as lack of social capital and bureaucratic inadequacies. Weatherdon et al. (2016) explain that tourism could be beneficial to fishing communities, noting tourism's high resilience to shocks as a positive in the face of climate change. They further note the willingness of recreational fishers in the Arctic to target alternative species, providing evidence that marine angling tourism has already displayed said resilience. Iceland’s relies on its natural environment for tourism, and mass tourism can pose a threat to this environment, often for the very reasons said environment is attractive to tourists (Ólafsdóttir and Runnström, 2013; Cságoly, Sæþórsdóttir, & Ólafsdóttir, 2017; Liftenegger, et al., 2014).

The possible synergies between tourism and fisheries are present in management literature as well as peer-reviewed material. For example, Brzeski, Graham and Baker (2013) note how tourism allowed small fishing communities in Nova Scotia to cope with stock collapse. While this is obviously a more severe situation, it could be reflected that continued transfer of fishing quota away from communities in the Westfjords represents creates a similar situation. Everett and Aitchison (2008) note the link between an increase in food tourism and development of a regional identity, something increasingly important to areas such as the Westfjords, where decreasing populations, greater social and physical mobility and the growing role of migrants in traditional fisheries sector jobs are notable factors (Júlíusdóttir et al., 2013). Skaptadóttir and Rafnsdóttir (2000) explore the gender division of labour amongst workers in Icelandic fish processing facilities. One of the main conclusions they draw is that gender divisions of labour are reproduced, even when the original reasons for such divisions (such as a need for dexterity or heavy lifting) have been eliminated by modern techniques, mechanisation or new workplace environments entirely.
It is also important to note that they found most women would rather continue to work in what are perceived as ‘women’s jobs’ stating “while some women preferred men’s jobs, most women preferred women’s jobs” (Skaptadóttir & Rafnsdóttir, 2000, p.14). They also note that when women are employed in new positions this often leads to these positions being regarded as feminine. The gender-based division of labour is important to consider during this research as, whilst gender is not itself a focus of this research, it does represent a significant variable, especially compared to research focussing on some specific parts of the local economy. For example, the low participation of women in fish catching jobs in Ísafjörður and Hnifsdalur makes it likely that any research based upon the experience and perceptions of fishers may risk ignoring the opinions of women, simply due to a lower proportion of positions in these areas of the supply chain being taken up by women. Júlíusdóttir et al. (2013, p.273) also note how increased social and spatial mobility of Icelandic women meant “Icelandic women left the fisheries for higher education and service industries, and the smaller towns for regional centres and the capital region”. As a result the jobs previously perceived as ‘women’s jobs’ were frequently filled by immigrant workers (primarily women).

Cruise tourism represents a set of unique environmental challenges, as it promotes a very high density of tourists and tourism facilities in areas often previously free from such concerns (both because they enable large numbers of tourists to visit remote destinations with relative comfort and ease, and because, in terms of time, most of these destination are the sea). Cruise tourism participates in the non-sustainability of mainstream tourism primarily resulting from the intensive ecological impacts of the method of travel, as well as having wide ranging social and economic impacts (Cariæ, 2016). Pollution is both an intrinsic part of cruise ships as tourist transport (Cariæ, 2016) and may result from inadequacies in port infrastructure (Dragovia, Tzannatos, Tselentis, Meštroviæ, & Škuriæ, 2018).

However, cruise tourism can also provide a source of foreign revenue. This is derived not only from the demands of passengers and crew for services, but also from the demands of accommodating the cruise ships themselves, and by the demands of the cruise tourism operators (if, for example, they desire to establish an on-land presence) (Huijbens, 2015). This revenue may take the form of increased trade for local businesses, business or employment opportunities that were not previously present in the area, or direct investment
in infrastructure developments which may be beneficial to residents or local business outside of the tourism sector. For example, harbour developments may provide benefits for the fisheries or shipping sectors, especially outside of the cruise tourism season when this infrastructure is not being used by the cruise operators.

2.5 Tourism and the Environment

This section will discuss a variety of possible impacts tourism may have on the environment. It will also discuss the precautionary approach, a management tool typically specific to issues of environmental concern.

Tourism can have a variety of impacts upon the environment. At a basic level, all forms of tourism involve transport, and few methods of transportation, particularly over long distances, utilise renewable fuel sources. While this topic is too broad to be covered within this literature review in great detail, it was expressed as a concern by several participants, and so will be summarised here. This section will then focus on the more specific impacts of tourism. First it will discuss the more general impacts of tourism upon Iceland’s environment, before moving on to focus on those that result from cruise ships (and hence cruise tourism).

Traffic forms a significant portion of Iceland’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and will need to be targeted in order to reach Iceland’s commitments for reduction in GHG emissions (Shafiei, Davidsdóttir, Leaver, Stefansson, & Asgeirsson, 2014). With the high numbers of tourist arrivals compared to permanent residents, this may form an additional consideration, along with Iceland’s overall reliance on cars for personal mobility (Collin-Lange & Benediktsson, 2011). Oklevik et al. (2019) noted how policy that encourages increased tourist numbers runs contrary to commitments on climate change mitigation under the Paris agreement.

Varieties of tourist activities, including both hiking and off-road driving have been noted to cause damage to Iceland’s sensitive environment. Evidence for this was found both in news articles (e.g. Iceland Monitor, 2018; Iceland Magazine, 2018), and academic sources (Huijbens, & Benediktsson, 2007; Gatzouras, 2015; Ólafsdóttir & Runnström, 2013). Gatzouras (2015) notes that trampling has an impact on both vegetation and soils, and that its most notable effect is a reduction in plant cover as well as changes in species
composition. Ólafsdóttir and Runnström (2013) support this, noting both that the volcanic elements of Iceland’s soil composition make it inherently vulnerable to erosion, and that moss-heath is the most vulnerable type of vegetation cover in Iceland.

The research area in this study is located in a geologically older area, leading to typically more stable, less volcanically based soils than in many other areas of Iceland. Igneous rock is still overwhelmingly predominant, but the lighter volcanic rocks common to more active areas tend not to be present inside the glaciation-carved fjord systems. It is also an area that lacks the moss-heath characteristic of the interior highlands. However, the vulnerability of these environments is widely known through national media, even in English (Iceland Monitor, 2018; Iceland Magazine, 2018), and this may effect worker’s perceptions of tourism even if these problems are less prevalent to their area (especially as the interior highlands are largely uninhabited, and therefore most concern for highland environments logically comes from elsewhere in Iceland).

Whilst environmental goals are often noted as an important source of conflict, Kaltenborn et al. (2017) noted that in respect to oil and gas development, there was little correlation between concern over the future because of development and concern over climate change. This indicates a need to develop a deeper understanding of the social impacts of development on fishing communities in respect to other sectors, who could be seen as having less relation to climate change than fossil fuel production. Kaltenborn et al. (2017) also found largely positive perceptions of nature-based tourism among residents in communities in Norway, a country with somewhat similar geography and culture to Ísafjarðarbær.

2.5.1 Environmental Issue Specific management- The Precautionary Principle

Further on the subject of environmental issues, we must consider the precautionary principle, which is enshrined in EU environmental law as a management tool to be used in connection to environmental impacts (Foster, Vecchia & Repacholi 2000). This approach is largely limited to issues concerning the environment, as, as noted below, it does not significantly differ from risk averse management as a decision-making tool but rather is heavily featured in environmental laws, regulation and policy (Foster et al.,2000). As such it is largely particular to the fields covered by these laws, regulation and policy, at least in as far as it has a practical impact at all. The precautionary principle advises against actions
to which the outcomes are uncertain, and in doing so, aims to mitigate risks from unexpected complications within highly interrelated and complex systems. The latter part of this description shows how it has come to be associated with environmental management, where highly complicated (and so poorly understood) systems are a presumed feature, and featured less in socio-economic discussion, where economic theorists often claim understanding (rightly or wrongly). However, Foster et al. (2000), note that it has been subject to variable definitions, ranging from interpretations which advise against any action not proven safe to those which allow room for cost benefit analysis. They advised that triggering the precautionary approach in terms of risk management must often be assessed as a political manoeuvre, rather than a scientific one, due to the lack of included guidelines on the weight of scientific evidence required to invoke it.

The precautionary principle is not without its detractors. Peterson (2006; 2017) argues that the precautionary principle is incoherent as a decision-making tool within a logical framework, submitting logical proof that a possibility of a fatal outcome should not always be avoided in exchange for the certainty of a non-fatal outcome. However, Peterson (2006; 2017) do argue that the precautionary principle can be of use in policy, just not as a logical decision-making tool. The crux of this argument is that the precautionary principle cannot be a separate logical framework from risk-averse rational decision making (a form of cost-benefit analysis that heavily weights negative outcomes). They note that using it in as a logical framework of its own leads to situations of absurdity, as any action will almost certainly carry some risk of a negative outcome. They point out that in many cases this negative outcome might be highly improbable to the point of absurdity. As the precautionary approach does feature some judgement as to the level of negative impact to be avoided, it is therefore no different from risk averse decision making, they argue.

Combining these observations, the precautionary approach can be seen to be a valuable political tool, where the words carry weight by their meaning and adoption into international environmental law. However it does not, by itself, represent a meaningful change from alternate decision making processes. Of course, it is meaningfully different from non-rational decision-making processes, as it heavily implies the use of rational decision making.
2.6 Mass Tourism Impacts

Cruise tourism is the primary from of mass tourism within Ísafjörður, and so this section is primarily focussed upon the impacts of masses of cruise tourists within the research area. As can be seen from the statistics presented by Icelandic Tourist Board (2018b) and Ísafjarðarbær (2017) the numbers of tourist arrivals can outstrip the town’s population. Coupled with the increases noted by Icelandic Tourist Board (2018b), it is clear that cruise tourism constitutes a mass tourism sector in Ísafjörður. However, it should be noted that not all cruise ships are part of this mass tourism phenomenon (Johnston et al., 2012).

As can be seen from existing research (O’Brien, 2014; Renita, 2014) and from later in this thesis, cruise tourism as a mass tourism form is a notable contributor to crowding in Ísafjörður. Overcrowding is often a sign of over-tourism (Seraphin et al., 2018). As a form of mass tourism, it risks creating over-tourism in the town, which is when a destination suffers strain from tourism (Seraphin, et al., 2018).

As Seraphin et al. (2018) notes, cruise tourism is a major contributing factor to over tourism in the far more established cruise port of Venice, and an aim of this thesis is to investigate whether resident’s experiences and perceptions indicate over-tourism in Ísafjörður. As Oklevik (2019) notes the drive towards increased tourism numbers by destination management organisations is a significant contributor to crowding and over-tourism, a drive that can be clearly seen in Iceland’s 24.3% annual growth rate in cruise tourist arrivals (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018b). Oklevik et al. (2019) points to the encouragement of spending intensive ‘activities’ for tourists as an alternative to this drive towards ever higher numbers.

However, over-tourism is not without its detractors as a concept. Koens, Postma & Papp (2018) discuss the possible overuse of the term. Firstly, over-tourism’s recent ascension to “the ’de-facto’ descriptor for excessive negative tourism impacts” (Koens et al., 2018, p.9) may cloud the fact that the issues it describes are similar to those covered by previous studies. This is relevant as the majority of this literature review was carried out prior to the inception of the term over-tourism, and the realisation that over-tourism describes largely similar situations removes the risk of discounting the body of research that does not record the term. As noted above, O’Brien (2014) can be viewed to have described over-tourism, though the term had not yet been coined.
Secondly, the “diverse, complex and multifaceted” (Koens, 2018, p.9) nature of tourism impacts are something that “the term overtourism [sic] fails to fully encapsulate” (Koens, 2018, p.9). However, Koens (2018) does note that over-tourism has played an important role in drawing attention to the negative impacts of tourism. Again, as discussed above in relation to the precautionary approach, the importance of a term to management and political discussion should neither be discounted nor allowed to interfere with impartial scientific analysis. Relevant to this issue are the origins of the term over-tourism, which does not arise from scientific or academic research, but is first noted in the proceeds of a tourism industry conference. Whilst not intrinsically a reason for its lack of use (terms arise from all sorts of sources), this helps to illustrate why the term may not be technically advanced in its description of tourism phenomenon compared to previously used academically and scientifically described language.

They further note that existing, more neutral, concepts such as ‘levels of acceptable change’ & ‘carrying capacity’ (see below) may be better suited to considering tourism impacts. These are the terms this thesis will primarily use when discussing tourism numbers, and their impacts upon residents. However, as an aim of this thesis is to discuss management policy, it will also consider the use of the term over-tourism in relation to its policy recommendations and conclusions.

Finally, they address seven prevailing myths associated with over-tourism. Of relevance to this thesis is that “Overtourism is not the same as mass tourism” (Koens, 2018, p. 9) as some destinations are able to readily handle high numbers of tourists. This thesis aims to investigate whether residents’ perceptions and experiences would indicate that any specific tourism form has led to ‘over-tourism’ in Ísafjörður (via exceeding carrying capacity and the limits of acceptable change). However, in relation to this point, it is important to note that mass cruise tourism was present in 2014, when the majority of indicators did not signify over-tourism (O’Brien, 2014).

A final note on over-tourism as a term is how it is typically used within current literature. Discussion of over-tourism focusses primarily on the impacts on local residents (Koens et al., 2018; Oklevik et al., 2019; Seraphin et al., 2018), often linked to concerns over gentrification and loss of sense of place (see chapter 2.3, impacts of depopulation). As such it is highly applicable as a term to any negative opinions of tourism collected in this study.
However, as will be seen, the natural environment formed a core area of concern to interview participants in this thesis. In this area in the term over-tourism is less used, and so other terms may be more appropriate in relation to these impacts.

2.7 Cruise Tourism Carrying Capacity in Ísafjörður

While there have not been a great deal of studies carried out in Ísafjörður, one particular study of carrying capacity in cruise tourism is especially worthy of discussion, due to its high degree of relevance to this thesis. This section will discuss O’Brien’s (2014) master’s thesis research that delved into this subject. It will also outline some of the overarching principles of carrying capacity and how they might apply to O’Brien’s results, given the five years since its publication have seen significant increases in tourism in Ísafjörður (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018).

O’Brien (2014) investigated cruise tourism, primarily focussing in social carrying capacity, noting that cruise tourism was approaching saturation point at the time of the research. Relevant to this is the increases in general tourism noted above, as well as the specific increases in cruise tourist landings recorded in the years after this study. The number of cruise tourists arriving in Ísafjörður increased from 54,000 in 2015 to 78,732 in 2017 (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018). As the interview period for this study was after the summer tourism season of 2017 (within the 2017-2018 low season specifically), the results of this study would be expected to show the effects of an at least 45.8% increase in cruise arrivals above what was previously regarded as saturation point. In fact, the real increase is likely higher, as general trends would indicate an increase in cruise tourism arrivals between the pre-2014 research and 2015 start period of recording arrival numbers (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018b).

Diedrich and Garcia-Buades (2009) note a growing movement away from specific numbers or thresholds to establish social carrying capacity of a destination. Instead, they note increased emphasis on “‘limits to growth’ or limits of ‘acceptable change’” (Diedrich & Garcia-Buades, 2009, p.513). This represents a change in perspective from the old way of thinking of carrying capacity as a fixed number, and notes that social carrying capacity may not be about the number of tourists, but about how accustomed residents are to those tourists. Furthermore, focus on social carrying capacity better represents the complex
relationship between the impacts of tourism and the infrastructure or facilities present in a
destination, as slower increases in numbers are more likely to be matched by equivalent
increases in both tourism focussed services and infrastructure development. The use of
‘acceptable change’ (Diedrich & Garcia-Buades, 2009) is also a useful framing, as it poses
a more complex question when looked at in conjunction with the establishment of
sustainable carrying capacity at 2014 levels (O’Brien, 2014) and the subsequent exceeding
of these levels by more than 45.8% (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018). That said, a proposed
limit on acceptable levels of change would have been more informative in establishing by
how much this has presumably been exceeded. Diedrich and Garcia-Buades (2009) refer to
Butler (1980) and the publication of their seminal tourism area life cycle (TALC) model,
which predicts that increased tourism leads to increased negative impacts at a higher rate,
eventually leading the impacts to surpass the positives. This part of the late developmental
stage of the TALC model is regarded as the point at which carrying capacity is reached,
then surpassed, as the impacts outweigh the positives of increased tourism.

Mauerhofer (2013, p.70) argues that social carrying capacity “is not clearly defined in any
field of science”. Mauerhofer (2013) points out that clear delineation of the spatial
component is necessary to establishing social carrying capacity and measures required in
order to stay within its limits, and that this component is often defined by anthropocentric
boundaries. In the case of this research, spatial limits can be defined as the limits of the
town of Ísafjörður. The conclusion of Mauerhofer (2013, p.70) was to define social
carrying capacity as:

“The limit of growth or development of each hierarchical level of human or social
integration within a certain spatial range, shaped by unilateral, multilateral,
reflexive and/or interdependent processes within an individual and between
individuals or groups of individuals within a certain time frame”

While this does not include the limit of acceptable change theory discussed by Diedrich
and Garcia-Buades (2009), it does provide a non-field specific view of the factors that
shape social carrying capacity, and how it is arrived at. Mauerhofer (2013) also provides a
highly useful comparison between social and environmental carrying capacity, noting that
if social carrying capacity for environmental impacts is exceeded, the impact of visitors to
a protected area may be the same as if the environmental carrying capacity had been
exceeded, even if the latter is not the case. In the context of tourism this can be interpreted as the impact of overcrowding causing a destination to appear overcrowded, negatively impacted by human produced pollution or simple impacts upon a destination’s aesthetics, even though these factors have not yet reached the severity required to cause a negative impact upon the environmental itself.

This is supported by the assertion that the “search for a “magic number” is not possible”, (Jurado et al., 2012, p. 1338) as a result of differing thresholds for residents, tourists and the environment. This can be useful if considering environmental factors such as the acute localised turbidity increases caused by cruise ship passage, which has been found to lack significant environmental impacts (Jones, 2011), but may still be of concern to residents who might note the significant visual ‘muddying’ of waters around cruise ships as an environmental concern. Jurado et al.’s (2012) study into a statistical approach to assessing carrying capacity does not directly inform this study, as such an analysis falls far outside the application of the chosen methodology. However it does offer insight into the use of statistical techniques within the theoretical concepts of weak and strong sustainability. ‘Weak’ sustainability is outlined as sustainability where the overall capital is stable, “recognizing that environmental capital can be replaced by other forms of capital” (Jurado et al., 2012, p. 1338). ‘Strong’ sustainability however, recognises the impossibility of this in any sort of large scale or long term structure, as there is no capital to be had at all when we all run out of oxygen and suffocate due to lack of oxygen producing organisms. ‘Strong’ sustainability notes that “natural capital cannot collapse because it is not replaceable with the other form of capital” (Jurado et al., 2012, p. 1338).

When evaluating social carrying capacity in this context, Doxey’s (1975) Irridex model provides a useful tool for assessing qualitative data on people’s current levels of tolerance for tourism in an area. Doxey (1975) proposed that people move through 4 stages of irritation with tourism. These stages as described as ‘euphoria’, ‘apathy’ ‘irritation’ and ‘antagonism, in order from the reaction to low tourism numbers to the reaction to excessive tourism numbers. These stages represent a scale in which the perceived costs gradually exceed the expected benefits from tourism (Wang, Pfister & Morais, 2007). Antagonism is described by Seraphin et al. (2018) as an indicator of over-tourism, as discussed in the previous chapter.
“Residents are generally satisfied with the pace of cruise tourism growth and consider it to be an important part of the economy” (O’Brien, 2014, p.61) (at least at the time), but there was generally indicated concern for overexploitation of natural and environmental resources in 2014 (O’Brien, 2014). It recommended cautious investment and a cap on cruise numbers in Ísafjörður at the contemporary rate, which was not applied (see Iceland Tourist Board, 2018). O’Brien (2014, p. 63) notes that “There is a growing interest in the impact of cruise tourism worldwide but little attention has been given to the impact it has on communities and culture”, a point which this study is designed to further investigate.

The predictions and recommendations from O’Brien (2014) are based on a small number of resources that residents described as over utilised (including two museums, which, while providing a cultural resource, also derive direct income from their use) as well as the application of the precautionary principle in order to limit risk from rapid expansion. In general, O’Brien (2014) noted the overall view of residents was that potential uses were under-utilised. In addition to this, it is worth remembering that the precautionary principle is used in order to manage risk. Its application is designed to advise caution when there is possibility of irreparable damage. This is relevant because, though the recommendations suggested by O’Brien (2014) were not applied, the predictive element of these recommendations is that rapid expansion risked exceeding social carrying capacity, not that rapid expansion would certainly exceed social carrying capacity. As such, the failure of social carrying capacity to be exceeded would not be, in itself, critical of a previous recommendation towards caution. For all the rigours of scientific enquiry, a certain amount of chance is always present in the future, and so the failure of a possible negative outcome to materialise does not mean advising against risk was inadvisable.

However, the Irridex model (Doxey, 1975) is useful when looking at these predictions. The model “indicates that residents’ attitudes to tourism would change over time within a precicable [sic] one-way sequence” (Wang et al. 2007, p. 412). Coupled with the statistics for increasing cruise arrivals in Ísafjörður (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018b), the Irridex would suggest an inevitable shift towards antagonism among Ísafjörður residents. This would in turn indicate the presence of over-tourism in Ísafjörður.
2.8 Tourism Research in Ísafjörður and the Surrounding Area

Renita (2014) describes possible conflict between tourism forms in Ísafjörður. Of particular note is the conflict caused by crowding, which, at times, is likely to also affect local users of some tourism facilities. It is noted both that crowding may cause issues with combined facilities use (particularly in the availability of certain tours). Crowding is also noted to place strain on local facilities, such as when reported strain on Wi-Fi internet connections. “At least one of the respondents reported that he had not installed Wi-Fi at his place because he feared the cruise tourists would damage the hardware due to excessive use” (Renita, 2014, p. 88). This study also highlights the economic disparity between the impacts of land and cruise-based tourism, stating “for almost 43% of the businesses, cruise tourism brings less than 5% of the sales of the tourist season” (Renita, 2014, p.95).

The presence of cruise tourism has also been opined upon by less academic sources which, if they lack the reliability of more thorough research, can help inform areas that this research will need to tackle. This is especially true of social issues, which, whilst often inaccurately documented by media research, do help inform perceptions of social issues through wide circulation. Æiríæ (2018) reports on an opinion poll taken from a government investigation into cruise tourism in the area, noting that 60% of residents surveyed (sample size: 550, in an area with ~2,500 residents) thought that too many cruise ships were docking in Ísafjörður and “environmental issues and pollution were among their primary concerns.” Reporting on this survey is also available from the national broadcasting service in Icelandic (Ólafsdóttir, 2018).

Everet and Aitchison (2008, p. 164) state that a “multitude of ways in which food and identity are interlinked in a specific locality”, further noting that “…food and food related industries can be central to the formation of regional identities”. This can be seen as a positive benefit to a locality in general, as well as a specific benefit to traditional food production industries such as fisheries that supply a localised food industry. Everet and Aitchison (2008) further note that food tourism can help develop a sustainable tourism economy by encouraging links to the environment and providing support for heritage restoration or the local economy. Given that cruise tourism contributes “less than 5% of the sales of the tourist season” (Renita, 2014, p.95) for many businesses, the assertion that
food tourism can contribute to social sustainability as well as bring in economic benefits suggests that cruise tourism may be less preferred by residents than tourism forms that may encourage more consumption of local foods.

2.9 Drive Tourism

For reasons that will become apparent in the results section of this thesis, literature concerning tourist road safety is also important to consider. Drive tourism is a major component of tourism in many western nations (Wu, 2014) and the Westfjords in general are often accessed by motor vehicle due to their relative geographical isolation and the logistical issues with air travel (Ísafjörður is only accessible by flight direct from Reykjavik). However, there is surprisingly little research into the behaviours of tourists whilst on the road.

Wu (2014) explores Chinese recreational vehicle tourism in Australia, noting “five safety concerns—the unfamiliar vehicle, unfamiliar roads, unfamiliar driving rules, unfamiliar accommodation systems, and personal factors” and concludes that safety concerns place constraints on drive tourism. Wu (2014) offers several recommendations on how to encourage drive tourism, such as providing GPS in the tourists’ native language, but does not specifically address the impact of drive tourist’s safety concerns on other road users, instead focussing on the tourists themselves.

Shih (2006) conducted a network analysis study of drive tourism, noting how roads and facilities needed to be complimentary in order to facilitate drive tourism development. The focus of this study on destination development may limit the degree to which these results may be applicable to Ísafjörður, where the remote location is more of a limiting factor in drive tourism and may be taken as a contributing factor in the high proportion of cruise based tourists. Nevertheless, this research does provide indication on how land-based tourism might be encouraged if desired.

Denstandli and Jacobsen (2011) investigated circumstances more similar to the Westfjords among tourist motorists in Norway. Apart from the obvious similarity between the regions due to the presence of fjords, a relatively rare geographic feature, the Geiranger/Trollstigen route investigated also features “the famous Geiranger fjord, a long-time call for cruise ships”, while the “Lofoten islands encompasses a number of ancient fishing communities”
(Denstandli & Jacobsen, 2011, p.783) as well as also being a cruise tourism destination. As stated above, cruise ships have become a prominent feature in Ísafjörður in recent years (Iceland Tourist Board, 2018). Denstandli & Jacobsen (2011, p.787) note “that roadside facilities play a crucial role in achieving overall satisfaction among motor tourists”, though they note that “the satisfaction-loyalty relationship for tourism routes may be somewhat weaker than for destinations” (p. 788). This indicates that roadside facilities along the road to Ísafjörður (Djupvegur/route 61) will improve the visitor experience and may make tourists more likely to recommend the route. However they will have lower impact on encouraging repeat visitors than investment in Ísafjörður itself, even if they benefit a similar number of tourists.
3 Methodology

This chapter will discuss the methodology used to conduct this research (qualitative interviews), the reasons for choosing these methods and the limitations that were encountered during the research. This chapter contains five sections. First, it will discuss the theoretical reasoning behind the choice of a qualitative interview methodology, and its advantages and disadvantages, as discussed in relevant academic literature. Second, it will outline the method of sampling participants for the interviews, including a discussion of the ethical concerns that might be involved in this study. Third, it will lay out how the interviews themselves were conducted. Fourth, it will illustrate what analytical methodologies were used to conduct the research. Finally, it will report on the limitations this study faced, both in terms of the general limitations of the forms of research discussed and the specific ways in which the study was adapted in the field, and how this relates to our aims and research question.

3.1 Reasoning

This section will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of this research methodology, and the reasons interviews were selected over other possible methods of study. A primary reason for this choice of methodology is contained within the choice of topic. Little previous research into the impacts of differing tourism forms in the area, particularly outside of O’Brien’s (2014) investigation into carrying capacity surrounding cruise tourism, exists. This led to two conclusions; firstly, that a wider investigation of the difference between tourism forms was necessary (see 1.Introduction), and secondly that a more qualitative methodology would allow for this result whilst at the same time avoiding re-treading the ground covered by O’Brien (2014). As such, an ethnographic method of participant observation was proposed, and subsequently rejected for being too large in scope, and too costly, for the allotted research period. Nevertheless, the focus on an in-depth qualitative study was maintained, and the methodology of collecting data via interviews, as outlined above, was decided upon. This methodology maintained the focus on residents personal experiences and perceptions of differing tourism forms in the area.

The main advantage of a more qualitative, semi-structured interview approach was the ability to investigate the experiences and perceptions of participants in far greater depth than
through a more quantitative interview-based approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Crang & Cook, 2007; Longhurst, 2003). Given that more structured approach had recently been used by O’Brien (2014) to establish social carrying capacity relating to the primary mass tourism form (cruise tourism) in the research area, research that dived deeper into the reasons behind participants perceptions of cruise tourism would build upon existing literature. It would also avoid an ‘elephant in the room’ situation, where the largest, and possibly most visibly disruptive form of tourism was ignored by the research, as any methodology attempting to avoid investigating cruise tourism would likely suffer from. Semi structured interviews allow for the investigation of perceptions of tourism impact and possible conflicts relating to a wide variety of tourism forms (Ernoul, 2009). These allow the researcher to guide the discussion towards topics of interest whilst allowing for open and complete answers which may reveal hitherto undocumented conflicts or synergies.

Focussing on on-shore workers and residents, the study was more likely to capture the perceptions and experiences of often overlooked or marginalised groups (Júlíusdóttir et al., 2013; Skaptadóttir and Rafnsdóttir, 2000). In addition, in the initial sample criteria of fish processing workers, this decision reflected a tendency of other research in similar areas that did not specifically set out to comment on issues of gender or migration status to focus on more traditionally male people that work catching fish.

### 3.2 Sampling

This section will outline the methods used to select research participants. It will note how and why these methods were chosen, primarily in terms of practical implications, but with some discussion of the implications on the study as a whole (see ‘theoretical reasoning’ in this chapter for an outline of the decision to undertake a in depth qualitative study and its implications, as these impinge on sampling, interview construction and analytical methods). However it will first discuss a major limitation encountered during the first year and how this changed some detail of the aims and objectives of this research.

Initially, this study set out to investigate the impacts of tourism on the fisheries sector in, and immediately around, Ísafjörður, Iceland. During the proposal stage, it was decided that a focus on land-based elements of this sector was considered. Unfortunately, the original aim to focus on land-based fish processing workers proved unsuccessful. This resulted from
a lack of sufficiently placed gatekeepers within this sector, individuals who form an important part of establishing links and introductions to potential participants in qualitative research (Crang & Cook, 2007). While this represented an important part of the original study formulation, it is important that qualitative research remains flexible in the face of the realities found in the field (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Crang & Cook, 2007). Therefore, the sample was expanded to involve workers in other fields. Due to the partial success of gathering candidates in the relevant industry, it was decided that this expansion would move to include workers in other land-based industries in Ísafjörður, rather than other elements of the fisheries sector. This would still potentially allow for a similar spread of participant backgrounds, something that was thought to be an important part of the research, as well as not risk further issues with sampling (as many of the same companies and organisations are involved in catching fish as fish processing, and access to said organisations had proven difficult).

The sample included fourteen participants who worked in Ísafjörður, in a variety of circumstances, but avoided those employed within the tourism industry. Tourism workers were avoided in order to provide a more accurate view of how residents perceived the tourism industry when they did not directly rely on it for employment. Fourteen was chosen as the sample size because it was advised that a sample of larger than fifteen participants would likely exceed the scope of this study. Interviewees were required to speak English due to language limitations on the part of the researcher. Due to some difficulty obtaining wide ranging contact with workers (such as through gatekeepers in management or other methods of having easy access to a wide pool of possible workers), the sample was collected via convenience sampling. Convenience sampling involves sampling based upon prospective participants who match practical criteria, and in this specific case, approaching individual workers or asking people already known to the researcher (Elikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). Most participants were approached in person, and then later contacted via Facebook message to supply further information about the study. It is noted that with such a heavy emphasis on self-selection (particularly in terms of initial contact) this may have emphasised the already present bias towards those confident with English (Crang & Cook, 2007).

The sample represents a wide range of workers. In particular, the targeting of individual ground level workers notably favours immigrant and migrant workers. Five out of fourteen participants volunteered the information that they were not raised in Iceland. No recording
of the presence or absence of citizenship was made as part of the introduction, as this was not a parameter of the study, and might be considered a sensitive topic by some. This aspect is more likely to be missed using other sampling methodologies that might target primarily Icelandic owners or management, such as a Delphi method. This is hoped to represent groups that are often less well investigated, and arguably (due to lower average pay, and therefore mobility) more sensitive to any impacts that may occur (Skaptadóttir & Rafnsdóttir, 2000).

No effort was made to establish the gender of participants, although a range of people were included in the study.

The eventual sampling criteria were simplified to two requirements. Firstly, the participant had to be a resident of Ísafjörður or to work primarily within the town on a full-time basis. This allowed for a variety of residents to be interviewed and did not prejudice against those who would have a large interest in the impacts on their place of work, but instead chose to commute. Secondly, the participants could not be currently involved in tourism operations in a professional capacity, nor involved in hospitality as their primary form of employment, nor on a seasonal basis. Whilst tourism is academically defined as including hospitality (UNWTO, 2008), hospitality is a sub-section of tourism that includes services directed towards residents (such as bar or restaurant work). As such participants were not excluded if they engaged in secondary work in the hospitality sector on a year-round basis, as this is neither seasonal work relying on the continuation of mass tourism during summer for continued employment, nor their main source of income. This was verified through the process of asking participants if they considered themselves to work primarily in the tourism or hospitality sectors (or common language variants on such) and excluding any who replied in the affirmative.

A sample size of fourteen was decided upon as fifteen was the largest sample size that could receive approval, and because the fifteenth interview candidate was unable to schedule an interview before the beginning of the 2018 summer tourism season. Whilst interviews with participants ME, PG, ST, SJ and the remainder took place in 2018, all interviews were carried out before the onset of the 2018 summer high tourism season.

To protect each participant’s anonymity, they were each assigned a pseudonym, which was not related to their name. Each pseudonym consisted of a memorable word or phrase. To further preserve anonymity, each of these pseudonyms was then shortened to the code that
appears throughout this thesis. These monikers are: PH, NH, MN, CC, SW, LF, ME, ST, WM, PG, SU, LL, LS and SJ.

The collected data allows limited analysis of the demographics within which these participants belong. Primarily this is a result of concerns over anonymity, exasperated by the nature of a small population in the research area. Therefore, revealing too much information about a participants’ area of employment might make them easily identifiable. However, a broad divide between those working in government employment, fisheries & related fields (e.g. employment within the fields of catching fish, processing fish or work within fishing technology) or other employment (which contains most of those working in identifiable fields, but also a number of retail and services workers) can be ascertained, as well as rough a division of age categories. These are shown in table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Employment Sector</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Originally from Iceland?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>35-50</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LF</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LS</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35-50</td>
<td>No- non-EEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MN</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>50+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PH</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20-35</td>
<td>No-EEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SJ</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>35-50</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: The sample divided into age and employment demographics. F= Fisheries & related fields; G= Government employees; S= Non-government services. Note that the region of origin listed here does not imply access to or lack of citizenship, merely home country (as citizenship may be attained after residing in Iceland for a certain period or may be a right based on the citizenship of a person’s parents. In either of these cases, they would still have been recorded as migrants).

However, due to the relatively small sample size, it should be noted that these demographics are provided for the reader’s consideration whilst analysis was conducted considering the sample as a whole. For a comparative study, more participants would be required.

3.2.1 Ethical Considerations

As researchers, it is vitally important that ethical considerations are observed when carrying out research. This research was not perceived as carrying undue risk of violating any code of ethics. It did not concern vulnerable individuals or those under 18, nor did it collect a large amount of sensitive information that might cause harm to participants should they be identified. However, some ethical considerations still warranted attention. Primarily these concerned participants’ ability to give informed consent to be part of the research and the protection of their personal data.

To provide informed consent, participants in interviews were provided with a consent form immediately before the interview took place, and then asked to give verbal consent for the audio before beginning the interview. This consent form was accompanied by an information sheet which contained relevant details about the researcher and the university. The contact details on the form included a phone and email address for both the researcher and the institution to allow contact in case of a wish to withdraw from the research or leave comment.
Private information about the participants was recorded on the consent form in some cases (e.g. contact details if the participant wished to receive follow up information). As such, confidentiality for personal information was established in compliance with the Icelandic Data Protection Act 2000, and any relevant foreign data laws following transportation under article 29. Data gathered concerning subjects was anonymised at the first stage of data entry, so that only the hard copy of notes, the original recordings and the consent forms bear any identifying information. Original recordings are kept on password protected digital format. This research was not conducted upon any vulnerable groups, and the ages and ability to give consent of participants was verbally checked before any commencement of the interview process (i.e. before starting recording or the use of consent forms). No interviewees were under the age of 18. Due to differences in employment rates, equality among participants with regards to gender was not considered necessary, though efforts was made to interview a variety of participants where possible. Finally, research did not take place in areas where the consumption of alcohol is commonplace (i.e. interviews did not take place in restaurants in the late evening).

### 3.3 Interview construction

This section will outline how the interviews were conducted. It will initially discuss the reasons for choosing a semi-structured interview process, and the effects this choice would have on the depth of the results.

A semi structured interview is one in which participants’ and the researcher are free to further discuss their answer to a question. This allows the researcher the freedom to investigate an answer further, provoking the participant to elaborate or produce a more in depth answer about a relevant comment, while still limiting the interview to the topics that form the basis of the research (Crang & Cook, 2007; Longhurst, 2003). The interviews were semi-structured, allowing participants to express a range of opinions within their own words. The decision to take a less formal approach to interviews allowed the subjects to explain their views in greater detail and for participants to raise said opinions as they occurred, which, depending on tone, also allowed the inference of emphasis upon certain subjects that were more readily associated with tourism. Initial, unfocussed probing questions allowed for research participants to draw attention to subjects they found particularly important (Crang & Cook, 2007, Longhurst, 2003). A notable exception was the subject of tourists’ road use,
which tended to elicit highly passionate views, but typically later in the interview. Participants would often mention the subject of road use with a passing comment, and only elaborate further when prompted. From this it might be concluded that road use is a subject that participants were either reluctant to talk about or was less readily associated with the interview wording than other themes.

Whilst interviews were quite informal, a semi-structured approach was used to ensure most relevant aspects were either covered, or indeed revealed to be something that the participants had few opinions on (Crang & Cook, 2007, Longhurst, 2003). For example, while many participants did not mention environmental impacts until prompted, some simply had not noticed any. Prompting was necessary in both cases, either to establish what impacts were noticed, or clarify that a lack of mention did correspond to the null hypothesis of ‘there are no noticeable environmental impacts’. The main disadvantages to a semi-structured interview process over a more structured approach is that some observed behaviours will almost certainly be missed, which might have been revealed by more specific questioning (Crang & Cook, 2007). For details of the specific questions used, see appendix B.

Interviews were conducted at a location of the participant’s preference, barring those already outlined in regard to ‘ethical considerations’ (3.2.1). Several interviews took place in public places, whilst others took place in private, either at the researcher’s home (this was only used at the request of participants who found this convenient, and not suggested by the researcher), the participants home, or on university premises. Interviews ran for between 22 and 50 minutes each (the target length was between 30 and 60 minutes, though one interview ran considerably shorter). Participants were interviewed in a one-on-one setting, with only the researcher and the participant involved in the interview. As noted, one interview was an exception, being conducted with two co-habiting participants who, having been approached separately, requested this for their convenience. Effort was made to ensure both provided answers to interview questions.

Whilst results were collected over three broad categories of tourism (cruise tourism, land-based tourism focussed on staying within the town, and ‘adventure tourism’), cruise tourism received the most comment. Given the larger numbers of cruise tourists, this was not perceived as being an issue with sampling, but merely a reflection of the results, as indifference or positive opinions are often expressed in a more succinct manner than
complaints. It is also worth noting that the term ‘adventure tourism’ was originally intended to refer to a wider range of activities, but due to a combination of participants’ responses, and how the term was clarified to them, it became more appropriate to narrow the definition to walking and hiking trips, primarily in Hornstrandir nature reserve.

3.4 Analytical methods

This section will outline the analytical methods used in this thesis, and some of the advantages and disadvantages of their use. The researcher completed the analysis manually.

The data was analysed using content analysis. It was primarily arranged using coding, primarily directly using the audio recording of each interview, but secondly using transcripts for more detailed analysis and cross referencing. The focus on audio-analysis comes from the relatively low sample size rendering this methodology convenient, and a greater ease of taking statements in the full context of both the surrounding statements and the tone used (eliminating a layer of separation between the interview recording and the coding process, and hence increasing accuracy). Via this method, it was hoped the participants’ views would be represented as accurately as possible, something that was found to be favourable in the context of the interviews as collected. However, transcripts were important in establishing which sections of interview data should be checked for similarity of intent.

Analysis of specific language use was found to be impractical due to a wide range of national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, where it could not be assumed that basic linguistic similarity would convey similar intent within the context of specific phrases. It was also regarded as not especially relevant to the topic. This was decided when taken in the context of a mixture of Icelandic speakers of varying ages and cultural backgrounds. English is commonly understood by most Icelanders, however the level of familiarity can vary based on both level of ‘everyday’ use and the time since undertaking formal education. Differences in dialect between the various dialects of British English (of which the traditional, though now generally recognised as incorrect, definition includes two distinct languages) (Scottish Government, 2019) and American English speakers is pronounced, as well as having the factor of non-Icelandic, non-native English speakers within the sample. Instead, analysis sought to take into account broader aspects such as tone and context in order to accurately convey participant’s meanings. By assigning coding primarily from audio, a humorous
statement about the actions of tourists was more accurately separated from one that used similar phrasing but established genuine frustration or concern. This was decided when reviewing the data collected, due to such cases occurring rather frequently, due to individual attitude as well as among differing cultural or national groupings of participants.

Analysis was conducted along thematic lines, grouping specific experiences and perceptions together, while contrasting them with any opinions in direct opposition. Coding was given first in terms of general positive and negative experiences and perceptions relating to each question. After this, a series of more specific codes were designed. Coding was largely inductive, developing from the data assembled (Bernard, 2006). Fifty-two individual thematic codes were used, though many of these were designed to be combined. While some codes were indicating general experiences, a group of 16 codes indicated the general perception a participant had towards a form of tourism, first in terms of numbers experienced, and secondly whether those experiences were positive or negative. These 16 deductive codes were included to ensure acknowledgement of the general experiences and perceptions was preserved through this stage. These codes were designed to answer the overall thrust of the pre-determined interview questions, and so are deductive (Bernard, 2006). The frequency of these codes was used as an important factor in analysis, establishing which factors were common between different interviews, in addition to the original positive and negative perceptions that had already been classified. From these codes four broad themes of frequent discussion were identified via pile sorting: (tourist) road use; cruise tourism, crowding and the behaviours of cruise tourists; the visitor experiences and participants perceptions of different forms of tourism; and infrastructure and the environment. Pile sorting involves identifying direct quotes that from important parts of each interview, grouping these quotes with other, similar quotes, and naming the resulting piles. These piles constituted sub-themes to the themes identified from the research (Bernard, 2006). For ease of discussion opposing themes (e.g. ‘positive experiences of cruise tourists’, ‘negative experiences of cruise tourists’ & ‘neutral opinions on cruise tourists’) were combined within the writing of the discussion section, whilst similar piles were also combined together to produce more cohesive overall themes (continuing the example above, concerns over the environmental impact of cruise tourism was combined with opinions on cruise tourists and the aesthetic impacts of cruise ships into the eventual ‘cruise tourism’ theme).
The five themes were consistently mentioned across all interviews and though road usage was less frequently mentioned in general, those that raised it as an issue did so with great fervour. During analysis, a fifth general theme was also used, centring on participants general views of tourism. This included much of the positive perceptions residents had of tourism as these were often less detailed. The Iridex model (Doxey, 1975) was used as a reference for classifying participants perceptions of tourism, with the sorted data divided among the model’s four stages in order to gauge the severity of any negative perceptions.

Comparisons of coding was carried out visually using physical representations; that is writing the codes on cards and arranging them into categories, rather than using a software package. This was seen to allow a better oversight of the overall picture during the analysis stage.

3.5 Limitations

This section will outline some of the limitations encountered in this study. First, it will discuss the limitation imposed by the decision to broaden the study’s sample. Then it will move on to possible limitations imposed by the demographics sampled in this research. Finally, this section will discuss the methodological limitations of research collected entirely by way of interviews.

Due to limitations encountered in sampling research is still required to assess the impacts of tourism on individuals engaged in specific sectors such as fish processing. The research was also limited in its scope. A larger sample size would be ideal, but unfortunately fell outside the scope of a Master’s thesis. Convenience sampling, where participants were more likely to be individuals known to the researcher may have resulted in some demographic biases. Whilst a broad sample was attempted, the willingness of certain demographics to reply to requests for interviews may be somewhat based on how individuals view the researcher (Crang & Cook, 2007).

The high proportion of immigrant workers interviewed (five out of fourteen participants volunteered that they were not from Iceland) may also provide some limitation on this research’s applicability, whilst expanding its applicability in other areas. In particular, the views of a wide range of nationalities have been included here, and therefore it is more
applicable to destinations with a large number of migrant or immigrant workers, while less applicable in locations without a large immigrant population.

Due to limitations imposed during the proposal stage, triangulation of the results via observation was excluded, as there was insufficient funding for such a time intensive endeavour. As a result of this there is no objective verification of tourists behaviour, meaning this research may represent the views of residents in certain situations rather than a factual account of overall tourist behaviour. In particular, observations may not represent the frequency of certain interactions with any certainty, as this is impossible to extrapolate from such a small sample and would be better documented through direct observation (Crang & Cook, 2007).

### 3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion this methodology was selected in order to provide an in depth insight into the perceptions and experiences of tourism of Ísafjörður residents. Whilst limitations were encountered at the sampling stage, a robust methodology was designed, and from this interviews were undertaken with a range of participants. Whilst a broader sample and triangulation via observational data were outside the scope of this research, this methodology nevertheless provides the capacity to answer the research questions.
4 Results and Discussion

This chapter will cover the results of the interviews in detail. However, rather than separate the discussion of these results and how they relate to current literature into a separate chapter, this will be addressed within each of the five broad themes that emerged from the results. These themes are:

- General perceptions of tourism. This theme covers participants’ perception of tourism and tourists in a general sense, and the benefits derived from it, both socially and economically. This section also covers some general negative impacts, as well as their opinions on the comparative value of some forms of tourism.

- Cruise tourism, crowding, and the behaviour of cruise tourists. This theme covers participant’s experiences of crowding and some disruptive tourist behaviours, both of which participants attributed to cruise tourists in particular.

- The visitor experience and participants perceptions of differences in the forms of tourism. This theme explores how participants viewed different forms of tourism, primarily in terms of the visitor experience offered by each form. This includes some additional discussion on the value of social exchange, and how differing tourism forms allow for greater or lesser levels of social exchange.

- Road use. This theme explores how participants perceived tourist use of the roads, and concerns about safety that arose from said perceptions.

- Infrastructure and the environment. Whilst infrastructure and the environment are in some ways individual themes, the discussion of them is deeply intertwined, so they have been combined into a single thematic discussion. Within this chapter, participants’ experiences and perceptions of tourists impacts on the environment are discussed, along with several often-linked perceptions of issues with infrastructure in the town.
Whilst these themes are all interconnected, the theme map (Figure 3) displays the connections found to be the most important to participants. From this whilst all factors contributed to participants general perception of tourism, there were strong links between cruise tourism, crowding and the behaviour of cruise tourists and visitor experience and participants perceptions of different forms of tourism and with infrastructure and the environment. You can also see strong links between road use and infrastructure and the environment, and well and less strong, but still notable links between visitor experience and participants perceptions of differing tourism forms and infrastructure and the environment.

Before addressing the body of this chapter, a note should be given relating to longer quotes: differences in sentence construction and speech rhythms in Icelandic can lead Icelandic English speakers to speak in what, when transcribed, appear to be run on sentences. This has been noted, but has been left in as close to the original form as possible for accuracy where longer quotes were necessary, and currently a great many quotes start with ellipses as a result (because the start of the sentence may have been several minutes prior).

4.1 General Perceptions of Tourism

This theme incorporates participants overall perceptions of tourism but also draws specifically on perceptions of tourism trends and adventure tourism. As economic benefits are often seen as an abstract (especially given participants were not involved directly in tourism related businesses), these were included in this section. Due to broadly similar perceptions of the forms of land-based tourism aside from those discussed within the infrastructure and environment section of this chapter, these perceptions have also been included within this theme.

4.1.1 Overall Perceptions of Tourism

Residents general perceptions of tourism, these vary, with some seeing tourism as necessary to preserve local services (CC, LS), whilst one interview participant (SW) noted that “Ísafjörður does not heavily rely on tourism, economy wise” and that “we don’t actually need tourism to sustain us.” Whilst this might seem contrary to national tourism statistics
(Statistics Iceland, 2017a), the lower reliance on tourism in Ísafjörður is mirrored by local employment statistics (Ísafjarðarbær, 2017). However, the majority viewed tourism’s economic impact as positive, particularly in terms of employment, noting that it was “…giving people jobs” (ME).

In general, participants shared a mixed, but somewhat positive view of tourism in Ísafjörður. Many stated that it was both “good and bad” (LS) or that is had “pros and cons” (CC; LL), with one (LL) saying “you cannot just say that you are against tourism or not”. Others regarded it as generally a good thing, with sentiments such as feeling “nothing but happy thoughts actually” (WM). Several, however were less positive about the future of tourism in the area given the well documented levels of growth (Statistics Iceland, 2017b; Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018; O’Brien, 2014). For example, one participant (LF) stated “I’m positive about it… but it’s getting there, in the summer, it’s starting to get a little bit full”. One participant (LS) stated: “Tourism is a big thing, especially for this town, it is a tourist town.” This view reflects upon tourism’s importance to the local economy at its most basic level.

While tourism is not as large an employer as sectors such as fisheries (Ísafjarðarbær, 2017), it is still a contributor to the local economy, and statements like the above back up the assumption that residents of a small town with a history of population loss would identify with local economic sectors that might help prevent further decline, especially if they do not want to move to, or be forced to move to, other areas.

One participant, (SU), said “… I don’t like the big mass tourism and cruise ships,” but went on to say, “small tourism I think is fab, it’s great, to bring in new ideas and new people”. They also discussed the belief that the cultural exchange facilitated by tourism could be beneficial to Ísafjörður, saying that it could “help the town”. This was supported by others, with one (WM) saying they found tourism “pleasant”, and that they enjoyed “seeing people around, maybe [increased] diversity”. Another (LL) stated that tourists made the town “a lot more lively.” This preference away from cruise tourism was less pronounced in most participants, but several referred to discontent with the contributions of cruise tourists to the town, while echoing similar thoughts about the value of cultural exchange with tourists. Another participant (LF) noted that a similar idea of social and cultural exchange had been a positive of tourism with lower visitor numbers, stating:
“It used to be, when the summer came and you got the tourists, you were happy because someone was coming and you had something to do, and now it’s getting a little bit too much”

A participant (ME) noted that tourism might help prevent the threat of population reduction. As noted above, other participants (CC, LS) believed tourism was essential to maintaining some of the services that benefitted residents. As Beames and Atencio (2008) note, depopulation can lead to loss of both formal and informal support services, which, given the history of depopulation in the area, could imply that some of these services described by participants (CC, LS) are not ‘new’, but are long term fixtures now maintained via tourism revenue. Another participant (MN) described how depopulation in Hornstrandir (specifically Aðalvík) lead to their ownership of a summer house in the area. They (MN) also noted that there was discontent among some former residents about how both the government and the church of Iceland handled the area when it the settlements ceased to be sustainable. However, again one participant (SW) disagreed with the assessment that tourism was essential to Ísafjörður.

These results appear to broadly mirror the results of studies within cruise tourism, where most respondents were found to have generally positive attitudes towards cruise tourism (O’Brien, 2014). However, O’Brien (2014) predicted that in the case of such rapid increases as are shown to have occurred by Icelandic Tourist Board (2018b), social carrying capacity for cruise tourism was likely to be surpassed. Given the prominence of the cruise tourism market in Ísafjörður (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018), a generally positive outlook was therefore unexpected. This will be further discussed under 4.2 cruise tourism, crowding and the behaviours of cruise tourists, as O’Brien’s (2014) research specifically focussed on this aspect of tourism.

This general perception of tourism as a positive which did not yet display many irritants would suggest that as of yet, over-tourism is not an issue, as this would place the responses within the apathy phase of Doxey’s Irrihex model (Doxey, 1975). However, some statements from participants (LF, SW, SU) would indicate that there is growing concern among residents. This would indicate that, if over-tourism is not yet a problem, it may be a growing risk.
4.1.2 Tourism Trends

In terms of tourism trends, participants, even those who had lived in the area (or the country) for a limited time, generally noticed that tourism had been increasing rapidly. One participant (LS) stated “…more and more people come every year to Iceland; every year’s a new record…” This is in line with the trends noted by Statistics Iceland (2017b). Two participants (CC, WM) cited stated that social media was a valuable marketing tool, with the former (CC) noting it as an important way to encourage younger tourists. A participant (CC) also noted that this form of marketing allowed cruise tourism to act as a form of promotion for Ísafjörður, believing that this could encourage younger tourists as well as lead to growth in the longer-stay land-based tourism they believed was more beneficial. Another participant (WM) perceived social media as important in encouraging travel during the quieter winter period, another way of encouraging more positively perceived tourism forms.

One participant (SU) described the seasonality of tourism, saying “If you look at the numbers that come through the Westfjords in the winter, it’s like 2%.” Others reflected on a change in seasonality, noting that the number of winter tourists was increasing. One participant said “It’s getting more and more on the increase, even in the winter these days. But the winter is, winters are much lighter now, so more people travel” (PG), referencing a recently perceived trend of winters with lighter snowfall, though this participant did later acknowledge that this trend was not established enough to be relied upon. The seasonal nature of tourism employment was widely acknowledged as a possible issue for workers by participants; therefore increasing winter tourism may be regarded as a positive development. This is mostly due to it increasing the economic contributions of tourism in winter, providing opportunities for more stable employment.

A participant (SU) further elaborated a preference for tourists who visited in winter, stating that they were “welcomed,” and that “they get involved in the community.” Whilst few other participants expressed outright support for tourists visiting outside of the peak summer season, many held similar views of how little impact tourists had in winter. The only major exception to this was concerns over road safety, which was understandably greater in winter due to icy roads and the remote location of the study area. These are described in more length later in this chapter (see section 4.4. Road Use).
4.1.3 Adventure tourism

Most participants had little to say about adventure tourism. A few expressed that they did not know enough about the subject to offer an informed opinion. Others noted that adventure tourists spent little time in the town itself, and so they had little experience of them in person, though all participants were aware of the presence of adventure tourism operators/products in the area. Most adventure tourism products in the area consist of day trips and longer camping trips through Hornstrandir nature reserve, and these were discussed by interview participants.

One participant (LF) however, did express the opinion that adventure tourism “… seems to be growing. A lot.” They went on to say that they were concerned by growth stating that the increase meant that people were in more physical locations as a result. They (LF) expressed additional worries over the concept of tourists interacting with the more remote and untouched areas of the landscape because people “tend to ruin things”. Another (PG) expressed concerns over whether safety met international standards, saying “I mean, they’re generally pretty good, but I don’t know if they’re, err, up to standard for, for large groups of tourists and things”. However, most participants who did comment regarded tourists engaging in adventure tourism activities positively, with one participant (SJ) commenting emphatically that they were more likely to care of the environment than other tourists. Another participant (WM) stated “that’s just a positive.” These perceptions place the overall view of adventure tourism far closer to the ‘euphoria’ stage of Doxey (1975’s) Irridex model than any other form of tourism commented upon.

4.1.4 Tourism development

Content analysis of the interview data revealed a pattern amongst participants’ opinions on further tourism development; primarily that there were few objections to tourism development, or at least the tourists themselves, outside of the few specific irritations. These irritations were road congestion caused by careless pedestrians and a lack of regard for residents’ privacy. Participants expressed opinions such as “99% of them are 100% good” (LF), reflecting this view that tourists were not generally problematic. Instead, concern was drawn around the large-scale infrastructure, structural and environmental impacts of cruise ships. It is important to note that this narrative primarily focussed on the physical ships. While some observers might draw attention to the impacts of large crowds of cruise tourists
on social carrying capacity, a number of the participants had the opposite opinion— that cruise tourists, by their nature, had less social impacts (ME, PH, NH, WM). The reasons given for this are obvious once they are raised; the short length of stay and the focussed on sightseeing activities that cruise tourists engage with leads to few conflicts with locals, especially those who work in full time, non-public facing positions. This was somewhat reflected in the spread of results— those whose worker involved more interaction with the public in general (both through their primary employment and the two participants who worked secondary jobs in more public facing roles) tended to be less positive about cruise tourism. Another participant (MN) suggested that the issues with cruise tourism numbers were due to high amounts delivered in a small area with a short length of stay, noting that they had heard of similar problems resulting even in areas “like Venice” with a well-established history of tourism.

However, the view that tourists were not intrinsically negative was not shared by all participants. One (LF) stated “I’m used to, living in a small town, easy going … and if it’s going to start coming more and more and more, that’s not why I live here, let’s say that, I don’t live here to get thousands of people.” Another participant (PG) noted that in relation to increasing tourism numbers:

“Generally, it’s not a problem except for the cruise ships, where, the pollution will be a problem.”

This illustrates a common thread through many of the interviews, where concerns over tourism were linked to concerns regarding the environment, and where both tourism numbers and pollution were heavily linked to cruise tourism.

### 4.2 Cruise Tourism, Crowding, and the Behaviours of Cruise Tourists

This theme concerns participants’ experiences and perceptions of the impacts of cruise tourism. As cruise tourism is the most visible form of tourism in the town, participants had a lot to say about its particular impacts. Even when noting general positive perceptions of cruise tourism some reference was often made towards a group of primarily negative
behaviours attributed to cruise tourists. Firstly the high number of pedestrians within the town that result from a major cruise landing in general, and their perceptions and experiences of such. Secondly, the issues with road safety and traffic delays that this crowding causes. Finally, this section will address concerns over tourists’ failures to respect the privacy of residents. It will then investigate how the literature surrounding high tourism numbers relates to the concerns expressed by participants.

Whilst high levels of pedestrian traffic were commented on by all subjects, most reported that this had not caused significant inconvenience. One participant (SU) however stated that they found the numbers of tourists problematic in a general sense, saying “I just don’t think it’s right that anywhere should be overloaded with more people than actually live in the town.” Another participant (MN) stated they saw the issue as not being with overall numbers, but “…the amount in single days, and in single places.” There were, however, some reports of large crowds causing delays in travel time, as pedestrians can cause congestion at intersections (CC). Indeed, many reported cruise tourists as being very low impact, despite observing high numbers, on the grounds that these tourists just ‘look around then leave’, an activity they considered unlikely to truly be an inconvenience for anyone. One participant noted that cruise tourists do not bring vehicles with them, and so whilst pedestrians may cause some issues on the roads, they did not perceive them as a significant factor in congestion. The two participants interviewed together said:

“I don’t mind them that much” (PH)

“Yeah, same here” (NH)

“It’s basically the road thing is the most annoying thing, in my opinion…” (PH)

“And window peeping” (NH)

A further point to this effect, mentioned by some participants, was that the present tourism products generally prevented cruise tourists from causing issues; with one (PG) saying “the tourists are fine… ‘cause most of the tourists will go and visit, places around Ísafjörður on buses and things like that”. While some outlined minor inconveniences, other focussed more on the positives, with one participant stating that they found the recent increases in numbers “pleasant” (WM), and that they found the issues caused by crowds more entertaining than
detrimental. Another (LL) saw even large numbers of cruise tourists as important for social and cultural exchange.

However, even while noting this, language used to describe the numbers was not always especially positive, with remarks such as “They dwarf the town, when they come.” (MER). The general attitude of tourist behaviour not being too detrimental does not align with O’Brien’s (2014) recommendation that cruise tourism numbers be kept at 2014 levels due to a risk of exceeding the area’s social carrying capacity. This is especially notable given the difference in time and numbers since 2014 research (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018b). However, the language used to describe the large numbers of tourists is consistent with O’Brien’s (2014) prediction, that continued increases in tourism would be likely to lead to a greater perception of tourism resources being over utilised. Another participant (MN) noted that on days with high numbers of cruise tourism arrivals, it could be difficult to accommodate all the cruise tourists within the usual spread of tours and activities. They noted that on a ‘standard’ day with “1300 people”, there were normally enough tours and other activities to spread out the impact, but on the peak days, or days with “7000 people” this was impossible with existing products.

Several participants reported issues regarding crowding of pedestrians in the town centre. Participants generally either noted that the numbers of pedestrians could cause delays in access to services in town or on the way to work, or that unsatisfactory tourist behaviour had led to similar results and/or safety concerns. In the former case, participants noted that on days with a high number of tourists, general delays in driving around town or accessing shops and food outlets could lead to disruption, particularly on work days. These concerns were particularly expressed with regard to cruise tourism, where large vessels could easily house more people than the town itself and tourists usually all arrive at a single jetty or gate. Delays were reported to result from a large number of people congesting walkways, large numbers of tourists crossing road junctions in succession, and tourist use leading shops or food outlets to become crowded (resulting in either extended wait times or a reluctance to use the service). One participant (LF) stated: “During the busiest weeks I know I’m not going to be able to go to the bakery or go to the shops because it’s going to be full”.

In addition, tourists were frequently regarded as failing to obey what were regarded as common-sense road rules whilst on foot, such as not waling in the centre of the roadway.
This behaviour was met by a combination of concern and bemusement by participants, with questions raised along the lines of ‘do they do this in their home countries’. One participant (LS) stated that “When I asked upon why they are walking on the road, they just stated, it’s a village, it’s fine”. Another participant (LF) said “… I don’t know if it’s only when you come to Iceland or a small town, they think oh, o.k., I can do anything I want”.

Another issue reported with tourist behaviour was a lack of respect for the privacy of residents in central Ísafjörður. This was reported by residents of both the central Ísafjörður spit and those who lived outside of the spit. This was often reported as a problem with cruise tourists, though not exclusively, with one participant explicitly stating that “it’s mostly the ships that are doing it… Maybe because you don’t get a lot of tourists by, well yet, by land”. The specific behaviours of concern included looking into residents’ homes through windows, and similar (though often more drastic) behaviour in their workplaces. One participant (SW) reported that tourists had walked into their workplace, despite it being not open to the public:

“We did have a tourist wander into the warehouse space actually, and we’re all working and we didn’t know who this dude was… we have the doors open because we have forklifts, which you could get hit by, like go away, please.”

The workplace of this participant (SW) enforces rules around use of protective gear, including gloves, hard hats, safety glasses and protective work boots. Thus a tourist entering this workplace also poses a possible health and safety issue.

These forms of inappropriate behaviour seem to have caused significant issues with social acceptance of tourists, in particular that such behaviours lead to hostile, or at least negative, perceptions of tourists. One participant (LS) stated that “They are always on the roads, like sheeps”, while another (SW) used the language “fuck dude, stop” in relation to an experience with tourists invading their privacy. While individual tourists often bore blame, participants also suggested a portion of responsibility lay with tourism operators, who participants often regarded as having provided insufficient information to tourist.

One participant (MN) noted that providing more directed experiences for tourists might help prevent issues with crowding, citing a lack of well-marked footpaths and other such infrastructure that made it difficult for tourists to know what they should do. They
stated “we have neglected, or the authorities, let’s say, have neglected finding new activities for [tourists]” when commenting on the complaints about growing tourism numbers in the area. They (MN) later noted that these actions were “pointing to the cruise ships.” This concern over the lack of activities presented to cruise tourists could be compared to Oklevik et al.’s (2019) research, which indicated that developing activities for tourists represented an opportunity for destinations to increase revenue whilst moving away from the drive for numbers that can lead to over-tourism.

Part of this concern expressed over cruise tourism was the tendency of tourists to see Ísafjörður as a kind of theme park or zoo. This was expressed through both a general opinion that the tourist experience for cruise/short stay tourists might have a less positive or significant visitor experience, and widespread reporting of insufficient respect of residents privacy by tourists. This problem was perceived as widespread enough that even when not reported as having happened to the participant, participants acknowledged the issue happening to others. As one participant (CC) noted: “they can come and try to peek in through my windows, but they would need ladders, I also live really far away” [from the town centre/cruise terminal], after they had explained that a family friend had “told me on more than one occasion he has [been] woken up by a person coming into his bedroom” (CC). (SU) said “I think it makes local people feel uneasy having all these people staring at them…” Another participant (WM) expressed disbelief in having experienced this, stating “…Looking inside your windows, I thought everywhere that was a rule,” and further noted people taking pictures through windows. Indeed, this was commonly mentioned as a problem they had heard of, seen, or friends/relatives had experienced. One participant (CC) noted that whilst they personally enjoyed being viewed in such a way whilst at work. “For the positive part, definitely would be; you know it’s a hot summer’s day and I’m [working outside] and I’ve taken my shirt off and there’s girls walking by…” However, they also said they could understand why this would be uncomfortable for many local workers. This was supported by another participant (SW), who said:

“… one time I was just trying to sit outside and enjoy the sun and people kept taking photos of me… and I was like fuck, dude, stop.”

Multiple participants noted that this could be addressed by a code of conduct explained before tourists left their ships (CC, SW, LS). The need for a code of conduct was also
mentioned in regard to pedestrian road safety in the town. However, one participant, (LF) stated “I understand that the tour guides, and on the ships, they tell people they’re not supposed to do that”.

Participants raised concerns over the level to which cruise tourists interacted with the town, both in terms of the economic contributions of cruise tourists as opposed to other tourism forms and in reflecting that the tourist experience might be negatively impacted by the short length and limited nature of their visits. A participant (CC) noted that:

“They don’t fully get the experience to enjoy what this area has to bring, they just sort of get thrown out here… They mostly just walk around town, from what I’ve heard they don’t really buy anything in the stores because they’ve been told on the cruise ships that the food isn’t any good and, that shit is shit and so they’re encourages not to properly exchange with the town…”

They (CC) also said that they thought cruise tourism might help promote more involved tourism as a result of social media and word of mouth descriptions, however. The same participant (CC) stated that for tourism operators the “main concern is keeping [tourists] on board to get them to spend money on board.” One participant (SU) took a different opinion, noting that large numbers of cruise tourists might dissuade other tourists from visiting the town. In particular they (SU) raised concerns that this would negatively impact the numbers of longer-staying tourists. They believed that long-stay tourists, in contrast to the cruise tourists, contributed more to the town both socially, via cultural exchange, and economically, via individual spending levels.

Concerns about mass tourism leading to a fall in overall tourist numbers is supported by interpretations of the TALC model (Butler, 1980; Butler, 2006). When considering the concerns in regard to soon exceeding Ísafjörður’s social carrying capacity for cruise tourism (O’Brien (2014), cruise tourism numbers might cause the area to enter the stagnation stage of the TALC model, at which point decline of the tourism area is a future possibility (Butler, 2006). Liftenegger et al. (2014) raise this concern as being specifically relevant to Iceland in terms of environmental as well as social carrying capacity. They noted that Iceland’s reliance on its natural environment meant mass tourism (which includes most cruise tourism) posed a threat to this environment, or, at least, to tourists perceptions of the environment. Whilst this view was not as wide-spread (or if so, not as clearly defined) among other
participants, the principals were generally supported by others; most concluded that the numbers of cruise tourists were either already too high or should not be allowed to increase. A majority also believed that cruise tourists contributed less to the town, both in terms of social interaction (ST) and in terms of economic impact (as noted under ‘visitor experience’).

Despite these concerns, participants generally considered tourists more of a mild irritation than a significant issue. As noted above, two participants (PH and NH) agreed that while some behaviours were annoying, they did not mind them much overall. This would place the general view of tourism squarely into the apathy section of Doxey’s Irridex model (Doxy, 1975), with a few participants expressing euphoria at certain aspects of the experience whilst others displayed a degree of irritation. Nevertheless, antagonism, the state commonly used as an indicator of excessive tourism numbers or over tourism (Seraphin et al., 2018), is decidedly absent from the recorded responses. Even the strongest opinions expressed on overall tourism numbers fell within the lower phase of irritation.

These perceptions seem to express differing results to those of O’Brien (2014), who recommended that cruise tourism specifically was at saturation point. With an increase estimated at greater than 45.8% increase (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018) since this point, rather more negative views would be expected of tourism, and particularly cruise tourism, by 2018. While this research is not aimed to assess social carrying capacity, its results do suggest that further research into this area could be required to re-assess sustainable tourism levels and the level of expansion that could be expected before a more negative opinion of tourism becomes prevalent. However, O’Brien’s (2014, p.46) data did not yet show that cruise tourism was over utilised, and noted that at the time of research, the indexes showed that the “the community has a favourable view of the cruise industry and are supportive of its further growth.” Therefore, it stands to reason that O’Brien’s (2014) conclusion being inconsistent with this research’s results may come from a simple underestimation of the levels of acceptable change within the community on their part.

4.3 Perceptions of Visitor Experience and Differences in Forms of Tourism

This theme explores how residents perceive the visitor experiences encountered by tourists in Ísafjörður and the surrounding area. Primarily this is a contrast between more negative
perceptions of cruise tourists perceptions of the town and the more positive views towards land based tourists who were described as encountering more opportunities for social exchange. In addition to exploring participants’ perceptions and experiences of this duality of visitor experience, it will attempt to address some of the underlying reasons that a visitor experience that residents perceive poorly might be of value to tourists as described in academic literature. It will also discuss how a positive visitor experience might be encouraged, and the benefits of this.

Multiple participants reported having heard of tourism operators, particularly in the cruise industry, providing deliberately misleading information about the area, specifically reporting that tourists had been told not to eat in the town due to risk of food poisoning. One participant (CC) stated that “if they say ‘oh don’t eat the food here, you’ll get food poisoning” it would encourage cruise tourists to spend money onboard rather than in the town. Given the range of food services in town, and the presence of local food hygiene legislation and enforcement (LL), this is almost certainly factually inaccurate. Furthermore, subjects often regarded this information as having been given with malign intent, perhaps to encourage tourists to use services provided by the tourism operator. This was emphasised as especially relevant given a general concern that cruise tourism does not contribute to the local economy to the same degree as other tourism forms. One participant (CC) suggested that directly increasing communication between the town and the passengers might help with some of these issues. Certainly, misinformation should be discouraged, and whilst direct intervention into cruise ships can be politically difficult, a campaign to encourage cruise tourists to sample local foods is certainly feasible, given their need to enter the town through pre-arranged, council operated port facilities.

Others raised concerns about the quality of the visitor experience afforded by cruise ships, with one (SU) stating “I just don’t understand what they’re really getting by just coming off and staring at people for a few hours.” Another participant (MN), noted that this lack of engagement might stem from an issue with information, stating that “neither is it clear to the tourists, nor to the inhabitants, what they could be doing.” They (MN) thought that this issue resulted from the need to provide things for tourists to do in the area, and that both in the research area and wider in Iceland, they did not believe the infrastructure sufficiently provided suitable activities. They further stated that improvements in this area might have positive impacts on the visitor experience in Ísafjörður. However, they (MN) also noted
some conflict over what organisations were responsible for expanding Ísafjörður’s tourism offering, especially in regard to natural resources. (MN):

“Is it the authorities, is it the owner of the land… or would there be the tourist authorities, those who are, well, advertising and want to have some more [tourists] here, shouldn’t they take some part in developing the, well, not the activities themselves, but the, er, to provide for them?” (MN)

This participant (MN) also noted how opinions might differ on the suitability of some activities between these different stakeholders, with, for example, landowners possibly not wanting tourists to come onto their property. Iceland has quite open public access laws (Umhverfisstofnun, 2019), and so this concern was aimed more at promoting destinations as a tourism product rather than legal concerns over access.

Another participant (ST), voiced similar opinions, noting, in a more positive light, that those using other methods of visiting the town were more likely to have a more authentic and beneficial experience. This concern has two interesting elements. Firstly, and most importantly, it should be noted that while it may be well founded, it may overlook other important parts of the visitor experience. As noted by Miller et al. (2000, p.436) cruise ships serve large numbers of passengers who may benefit from specific medical arrangements; for example the “oxygen therapy and onboard renal dialysis units” available aboard large vessels. This means that whilst cruise tourists may not have as ‘authentic’ a visitor experience as land based tourists, health concerns may cause cruise tourism to be the most authentic tourist experience possible without great expense or difficulty with alternative arrangements. It is also true that some tourists are not looking for authenticity in cultural immersion, and the cruise tourism offers a convenient way to experience a wide variety of natural or environmental tourism experiences for those with either limited holiday time or mobility. For example, most participant noted that land-based environmental tourism and adventure tourism offers a visitor experience featuring greater immersion in Iceland’s unique environments, but such trips will almost certainly feature a narrower range of overall geography than a similar length cruise, and even the easiest of walking trips require the prospective tourist to be able to walk for a reasonable length of time. Especially in the latter case, this is not a reasonable assumption to make of all tourists, particularly the elderly, but also people with a wide range of disabilities. Obviously, not all cruise tourists choose to
undertake a cruise for these reasons, but with the large numbers of elderly passengers on
cruises (Miller et al., 2000) they can be a significant factor for many. Other tourists may
simply not be looking to engage with the difficulties of differing customs, foods or
languages, and so favour cruise tourism for its perceived luxury, comfort and familiarity.

However, the above arguments do not discount the value of high-quality tourism delivered
by authentic and immersive tourism. As noted by Pulido-Fernández, et al. (2015), increased
non-economic tourism sustainability indicators does not necessitate reduction in the
economic indicators of tourism. In this case a drive towards longer stays, which promote
environmental sustainability through reduced transportation impact couples with the belief
that land-based tourism, encourages more positive social interactions. The fact that
participants also regarded land based tourists as more economically beneficial to the area
supports the applicability of Pulido-Fernández et al.’s (2015) research to Ísafjörður.
Marketing Ísafjörður as a more authentic tourism destination could attract wealthier tourists,
which could improve the economic benefits, whilst also providing a tourism experience
better understood by residents. The general support for these more authentic experiences
also indicates that at least a number of local residents would support a situation in which
they interacted with a wider variety of tourists on a day to day basis. However, others, such
as LF, noted that they did not wish to live in a place hosting large numbers of tourists.

Another concern that expanded somewhat on concerns directed towards mass tourism was
expressed by one participant (LF) who stated:

“I don’t want, thousands of people, I don’t think the tourists who come to this place want
thousands of people as well. They market this place like ‘oh, quiet, nature, you feel alone’…
You’re not going to feel alone if you have thousands of people staying here.”

This concern is supported academically by Liftenegger et al. (2014) and Ólafsdóttir and
Runnström, (2013) who discuss how Iceland relies on its natural environment for tourism
and that large numbers of tourists pose a threat to this resource. However, the concern goes
further than damage to the environment, noting that an essential part of that environment, a
feeling of the ‘wilderness’, may be lost simply by the presence of a large number of tourists,
rather than their resultant impacts.
Considering scepticism centred around specific behaviours of some tourists, especially cruise tourists, it would seem that negative social impacts resulting from these behaviours, when taking in context of this support for more authentic tourist experiences, indicate that the social carrying capacity of the town may be under strain because of specific behaviours and patterns of interaction on the part of tourists. Therefore, if the patterns of behaviour residents currently perceive as negative could be minimised, and more positive patterns of interaction encouraged, there may be scope to increase, if not tourist numbers (due to how heavily tied these are to the more mass tourism focussed cruise operators), at least the economic benefits of tourism. As will be seen in the next sub-section, however, this irritation with specific tourism behaviour patterns is not limited to cruise tourism, privacy issues and high-season pedestrian crowding.

4.4 Road Use

This theme will explore participants’ experiences and perceptions with tourist road use. Due to Ísafjörður’s remote location and the high price of internal flights to it, as observed by Elliot (2019a), road remains the primary method of access to Ísafjörður. For experienced drivers road travel is often seen as more reliable, as well as cheaper, than air travel. However the remote location requires driving long distances through roads and conditions that may not be familiar to tourists, something Wu (2015) highlights as two of the five main concerns for foreign drive tourists. Road use was also expected to increase in the study area with one participant noting the Dýrafjörður-Arnarfjörður tunnel, currently under construction as a contributing factor.

Traffic congestion was not widely raised by participants as a concern with tourism, and especially with cruise tourism. However several respondents commented on issues they had experienced, or had concerns about, with the driving habits of land-based tourists. These issues did not focus on concerns with traffic congestion, or the impact on road conditions—the latter of which has been repeatedly observed to be disproportionately impacted by heavy goods vehicles (Dodoo & Thorpe, 2005; Perera, Thompson & Yang, 2016). Rather, several participants highlighted issues with tourists being unprepared for Icelandic road conditions, particularly in snowy or icy weather.
Concerns were raised over ‘city drivers’; tourists who had only driven in the city in the past. Whilst somewhat hyperbolic, these statements highlight a significant difference in normal road conditions between many tourists home countries and Iceland, particularly the Westfjords. This is further evidenced in news media where, speaking on the news-discussion podcast ‘This Week in Iceland’ for the state broadcaster, RUV, Elliot, Davíðsdóttir and Hansson (2019) noted the possibility of foreigners being unfamiliar with Icelandic roads. They further discussed insufficiently experienced with similar conditions to drive safely on them as well as stating that a bridge on the main road in southern Iceland, where a major road traffic accident had taken place, was regarded as not ‘up to modern standards’. These observations of tourists driving in Iceland are further supported by statistical analysis in Kunz and Bingert (2017) who noted that “the majority of unintentional deaths in Iceland are caused by traffic accidents”.

One participant (SJ) commented on having heard that rental companies were advising tourists against visiting the Westfjords, implying that this was due to concern for loss or damage caused to vehicles. Participants’ opinions of differences in road conditions were not limited to the presence of snow or ice, as the roads in the area were noted to also be winding, remote, and isolated. This is likely primarily in reference to both the commonplace of sharp bends and turns on ostensibly major roads (i.e. those where vehicles will likely be travelling at or near the effective national speed limit of 90kmph on paved roads) and the presence of unpaved roads in large parts of the Westfjords. Both situations were perceived to be less likely in tourists home countries.

Further concerns were raised by participants due to winter weather conditions in Iceland being perceived as more severe than many tourists’ home countries. This was implied to be a reference to both snow (which is common to much of the northern hemisphere) and consistent high winds (a circumstance more unique to Iceland). Participants noted that many tourists were unlikely to have experienced driving in these situations. Furthermore, several participants raised concerns about the presence of a perceived ‘gung-ho’ attitude of tourists to the weather. In particular, this related to tourists not allowing enough time for journeys to be delayed by poor conditions; For example tourists not allowing two days before their flights to leave Iceland, was of concern to participants who believed this would lead to tourists making poor decisions as to whether to attempt a trip, even once they had seen the conditions first hand. It is important to note some of the context behind these concerns. The
northern Westfjords are separated from the ‘mainland’ of Iceland by two major mountain passes. These crossings, due to higher altitude and a lack of shelter from wind, are often rendered treacherous (Veðurstofa Íslands, 2018) whilst Ísafjörður and other towns in the region remain relatively hospitable.

Furthermore, it was noted by one participant (ST) that not only are these driving experiences likely to be new experiences for tourists in terms of life experience, but these are likely not conditions under which the tourists learnt to drive. In regards to this point, said participant (ST) argued that possibly there was a need to check that tourists could still drive under these potentially unfamiliar conditions, as having a general driving license does not generally indicate training in wintry conditions. An example that helps to corroborate this point of view is the existence of such schemes as the ‘pass-plus’ driver training scheme in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), which provides further training in conditions likely to not be covered by a general licence and lists snow/icy conditions as criteria for the further award. Hence, drivers with a UK driving licence are not explicitly expected to be able to drive in snowy or ice conditions under the terms of their license. As a result of this assessment, the participant (ST) suggested (though with some humour) introducing a further driving test for those considering driving in Icelandic winters. However, this suggestion should be seen considering that pre-licence training was often an ineffective method of increasing driver safety (Twisk and Stacey, 2007).

Whilst the perceptions and experiences residents had of road users were often less readily mentioned than their experiences of other tourist activities, they were observed to be closer to antagonism with the Irridex model (Doxey, 1975). That is, once mentioned, those who did raise road safety as a concern were far more fervent and condemning in their attitudes. This may be because road use is a genuine safety concern and poor behaviour on the roads may have posed genuine risks to residents’ personal safety on previous occasions, though no specific incidents were mentioned.

Participants concerns over driving conditions and road safety is more important for the emphasis most participants placed on the importance of land-based tourism, as discussed above. While most participants regarded land based tourism as more sustainable (SU, CC, ME, SW, LS, PG, LL, SJ, WM), as well as providing a better visitor experience for the tourists themselves (ST, SU) it is important to note that one of the two primary forms of
access for land based tourism is by road. Indeed, residents often perceive road access as preferable to flying, which is widely regarded as expensive, to the extent that government policy was recently introduced to subsidise domestic flights for Icelandic residents (Elliot, 2019a). Road travel is also more sustainable in terms of greenhouse gas emissions than air travel, something one participant (SW) noted. Combining both these factors, it is not difficult to understand why many tourists might opt to travel to Ísafjörður by vehicle, primarily using hired cars or campervans due to Iceland’s nature as an island (whilst car ferry is available to the terminal in Seydisfjördur, this is a relatively lengthy voyage only available from Denmark).

If land based tourism arrivals are regarded as part of more sustainable tourism forms (which they certainly are socially, because even if that is not why people see them as sustainable, residents viewing a form as economically/environmentally sustainable is a large part of social sustainability) and are encouraged over mass cruise ship tourism, road safety concerns will become more prominent. Further innovations in public transport to the region are unlikely, especially given that the recently declared subsidy to airfares only applies to Icelandic residents who live “more than 200 kilometres from the capital city” (Elliot, 2019a). This indicates minimal government desire to improve air or bus links for domestic tourism. Therefore, effort should be expended to help ensure road safety and to assure residents that tourists are not a liability on the region’s roads.

The issue of road safety and tourist driving habits are important as this is evidence of a slight flaw in current research into tourism in the Ísafjörður area, as well as the wider Westfjords. Road usage, among other things, is an aspect of social carrying capacity that is not largely addressed by the current research in this area, but is highlighted as a specific concern by participants in this research. This may lead to unintentional effects on the outcomes of more general research into carrying capacity in the Ísafjörður area. This concern arises as specific aspects of social (and, to a certain extent, infrastructural) carrying capacity, and particularly those that can be addressed specifically, may contribute to less actionable, more wide ranging conclusions. Clearly, from this research, tourists road usage and driving behaviour needs to be addressed, but if these concerns are factored into a wide-ranging review of social or infrastructural carrying capacity conclusions such as “the saturation point [of the area] is nearly reached” (O’Brien, 2014, p.61) may be reached. However, when consulting the evidence from this thesis, addressing concerns over tourist road safety is one of several
specific concerns made by residents that could be directly addressed by the policies of either the government (national or municipal) or tourism operators.

Another concern relating to driving habits was raised by PH who noted that there had been cases of land-based tourist’s ‘off-roading’ in unsuitable areas and expressed concern that this activity can cause serious damage to environmental resources. Tourists driving into inappropriate locations are a common feature in Icelandic national news (e.g. Iceland Magazine, 2017; Fontaine, 2018; Iceland Magazine, 2018).

Connected with road use, SU expressed displeasure at having campervans or similar sleep-in vehicles parked outside their residence. This was seen as disruptive to the character of the area, and as impolite, due to being readily avoidable by having tourists use established camping grounds. They (SU) elaborated on how they thought this fitted within the evolving tourism environment, stating that while “it worked well when we didn’t have many tourists” higher tourist numbers were rendering poorly planned campervan parking a socially unsustainable accommodation solution. This view was seconded by participant (WM) who said they disliked the campervans, but also said that they would like to own one and “I can’t be a hypocrite”.

### 4.5 Infrastructure and the Environment

Instead of the issues of overcrowding and social carrying capacity that have often been raised regarding cruise tourism expansion in the area, concerns were instead consistently drawn to environmental concerns and issues with the port and general infrastructure. Some candidates noted that greenhouse gas emissions were a concern for all forms of tourism, particularly in contrast to tourism forms for which they observed few local impacts. However, while it is important to note that such concerns exist (and form one of the negative perceptions directed against tourism in general), this section will instead focus on the issues specific to the Ísafjörður area. First it will address the environmental impacts of cruise ships, as reported by the participants in this study, and how they were perceived. Then it will look at the wider concerns over tourists’ interactions with the natural environment. It will then discuss how further development of the port infrastructure, as mentioned by several participants, was perceived. It will address how this relates to the environmental concerns expressed, and how one participant suggested a different emphasis on ongoing port development might help to
alleviate some of these issues. It will then look at how infrastructure and services in the town have been impacted by tourism, before moving on to address new developments in road infrastructure in the Westfjords. Finally, it will discuss the issues surrounding accommodation infrastructure in the research area, particularly the expansion of the short-term rental market through services such as Airb&b.

One participant (PG) expressed great concern around the environmental impacts of large, diesel burning vessels in the fjord, citing water and air pollution, as well as sediment disturbance or changes to turbidity as major issues. Other participants (SW, WM) noted that cruise ships formed a visible point source for air pollution, both in terms of greenhouse gasses and particulates.

“… even if it wasn’t visible [in the air] you can just see the amount, all day leaving that boat and going up, and you see it with every new boat, and it’s just a reminder it’s like, ‘this is a poisonous vehicle entering our fresh air’.” (SW)

In addition, another participant (WM) described how the smoke from cruise ships would create a visible layer on calm days:

“In a quiet day it would be like a cloud, hanging over. Similar to when we had an incinerator… not as bad as when we had the incinerator, but.”

Several participants (LF, WM, PG) cited pollution as their main concern with tourism stating that this somewhat limited the positives that could be seen from tourism even though they had a generally positive view.

However, another participant, (SU), noted that whilst the cruise ships were “ugly” they had not noticed any environmental impacts outside of that aesthetic. This view of aesthetic impacts was far from universal however. Whilst most participants did not express any particular opinion on the aesthetics of cruise vessels, others stated that they were “pretty” (CC) and “a nice sight to see” (WM).

Several participants noted a need to establish strict frameworks around cruise tourism, in order to ensure safe and environmentally sustainable operating procedures in other local sectors, such as fishing. Two participants (PG, LL) noted this concern in regards to any level of cruise tourism, including present levels or reduced levels, as they had a general concern
over the lack of sufficient regulation and standards in regards to cruise ships. They further stated that pollution and other issues had not yet been a major problem but that increasing numbers were likely to make them so, something that was supported by several other participants’ views. The former (PG) elaborated on this point noting an apparent lack of a recent environmental impact assessment for the cruise port which meant they could not say whether current practices were having a negative impact on the area. Though this could be attributed to a poorly publicised assessment, as this participant was a migrant worker not fluent in Icelandic, the rapid increases in cruise tourism arrivals noted by Iceland Tourist Board (2018) would render maintaining an up-to-date assessment of the overall impacts difficult (especially within a complex system where predictable relationships between ship numbers and impacts could not necessarily be expected). They (PG) stressed that developing an environmental impact assessment was an important step that needed to be carried out saying “sooner or later, that needs to be done.”

This participant (PG) also highlighted issues with water quality, such as diesel and oil pollution, as being most important to them. This was mostly mentioned as a lesser concern by other participants, compared to the more visible air pollution, but was still highlighted in relation to cruise ships. They (PG) mentioned garbage/waste dumping in spite of regulations, a concern that was also expressed by other participants, who generally believed cruise ships would still do this within territorial waters if they believed they were unobserved. One participant (LL) stated cruise ships “are polluting a lot, both like air pollution and also they are releasing a lot of stuff into the ocean, like the sewage and all that.”

One participant (PG) also talked about the impacts of cruise ship propellers on turbidity. Jones (2011) noted short term increases in turbidity caused by resuspension due to cruise ships, in a study focussing on the impacts on coral reefs in Bermuda. It is important to note that Jones’s (2011) conclusions may be limited in their transferability to Icelandic waters as they are based on the impacts on local corals. Nevertheless, this analysis showed both a short-term acute increase in sedimentation, and a long-term increase in fine sediment loads, corroborating a likely increase in turbidity near to cruise ship channels. This is therefore a concern that might be investigated within the local environmental context.

Halldórsson, Svavarsson, and Granmo (2005) noted the impacts of harbour pollution on the blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis* l.). More importantly, they noted that, in contrast to mainland
European harbours, the location of Icelandic harbours away from the mouths of major rivers with large, developed catchment areas means pollutants found in Icelandic harbours were most likely the result of pollution from the harbour sources (antifouling paints, oil etc.). This is important in the context of the cruise industry as cruise ships are likely to pose a significant contributor to any reduction in harbour water quality, despite the areas lack of sewage treatment facilities.

The impacts of off-road driving have been discussed above, but further concern was expressed or alluded to due to trampling by pedestrian foot traffic. A participant (LF) expressed concerns about adventure tourism numbers rising, due to the impacts upon the natural environment, whilst another (MN) voiced the opinion that if “we were to introduce this place or that place to everyone, they might suffer.” These opinions reflect the fact that mass tourism could lead to degradation of the environment that Iceland so relies upon for tourism (Liftenegger et al., 2014). Several academic sources also reveal the negative impacts of trampling by tourists (Huijbens, & Benediktsson, 2007; Ólafsdóttir & Runnström, 2013; Gatzouras, 2015), although these focus on the ecological impacts. Participants were often unclear as to whether they feared ecological damage or aesthetic degradation (via compromising the sense of ‘wilderness’). One participant (MN) said that dividing tourists between different attractions was a goal, and believed those working in the area’s tourism information office recognised this. They (MN) also voiced the opinion that the wide spread adoption of hiking poles was likely to cause more damage to footpaths than might be the case from just footsteps. They noted that damage from poles is often caused by “pushing them down into the ground”, which could lead to erosion and other issues.

One participant (ME) noted that volatility in the tourism market was a concern with a planned large-scale investment into expansion of port facilities. This was supported by the general view that cruise tourism may be approaching the maximum capacity that could be sustained by the fjord, and other participants made similar remarks when asked about the subject. This participant (ME) stated that whilst the 2017 season was predicted to be the busiest season for boat numbers based on bookings, they had heard that cancellations had led to it being overall similar numbers to the previous year: “A few of them dropped out, so, it was about the same” (ME). They (ME) said that this fact called into question the wisdom of any large, expensive investment in port facilities. A different participant (LS) said “I don’t think we can be used to it, you know. At one point in time we won’t be this popular I think
as a tourist destination.” The opinion that tourism is likely to decrease in the future maps onto some general Tourism Area Life Cycle model scenarios (Butler, 1980). Though in-depth analysis of the region’s tourism data is beyond the scope of this research, the presence of such a scenario based off wide-ranging analysis (Butler, 1980) of other (formerly) popular tourism destinations does indicate this is a concern.

Other participants questioned the reasoning behind the desire to further develop port infrastructure. SU said “I think they just need to look into it before and question why they’re doing it”. They expressed further concerns over how the money from port fees fed into the local economy. While they said that they would support development if cruise tourism was creating large amounts of capital for the local economy, they were sceptical as to whether this was the case.

Further scepticism over port expansion was expressed by other subjects, who said that this risked exasperating existing environmental issues (see above). Most subjects expressed the view that cruise tourism was at, or had surpassed, the town’s carrying capacity. This was generally expressed by statements along the lines of “…if we’re not careful it is going to be destructive for the town…” This scepticism about general increases in tourism numbers reflected on those with views about the proposed port expansion. However, as Dragović et al. (2018) note, port infrastructure, particularly that which avoids complex manoeuvres or the use of anchorages, is a decisive factor in reducing air pollution, which many of the participants in this research expressed concern about.

Whilst infrastructure developments designed to increase ship numbers were generally viewed negatively amongst subjects, one participant (WM) suggested that improvements in port and inshore power infrastructure could help improve the environmental impact of cruise tourism. They stated “I think we can’t supply them with electrical power, while they are docked. I think that’s embarrassing, for Ísafjörður”. The participant noted that a reason given for idling engines whilst in port was providing electricity (whether this was for passengers, crew, or general maintenance was not specified). Electricity is generally low cost in Iceland compared to other nations (Skulason & Hayter, 1998), and something that could be provided for cruise ships if it were not for infrastructure limitations. They (WM) further stated that “it would be nice if all the power that came from, that supplies to the ship would be just
hydropower”. They also noted that fresh water was an amenity supplied by the town to cruise ships without issue.

Removing the need for cruise ships to idle their engines could be a factor in limiting objections to cruise tourism, as several subjects mentioned air pollution as an environmental and aesthetic/social impact of cruise tourism. Given the general preference for ‘higher quality tourism’ amongst subjects this may also contribute to improving the quality of tourism by increasing the sustainability of Ísafjörður as a destination and increasing cruise input into the wider local economy (as power generation is localised to the Westfjords). However, the same participant (WM) also noted the limitation that cruise ships would likely create a ‘peak’ power requirement, which might lead to excess power production at other times, saying “I’m not sure of the requirements of a ship like that, but I think it’s like, massive”. They (WM) highlighted the issue with sharing this power with other uses, stating “no industry would consent to that, you get the power when it’s not needed.”

Several participants noted issues concerning the ability of local service infrastructure to sustain the high numbers of tourists in summer. Some concerns were raised around frequently used, but less important infrastructure, such as crowding in stores or bakeries during peak times. One participant (SU) commented that “It’s just annoying that the café’s you normally go into you can’t sit in, and the people who are in them really aren’t buying much, they’re just using the WIFI”, while another (LF) had experienced difficulty accessing the bakeries within the time allowed for a lunch break from their work. Another participant (WM) recounted a story of long queues for the free coffee offered at the local bookstore, and how this prompted the store to remove their coffee machine, whilst another (LL) commented on queues to use free toilets in the church. These experiences align with comments about internet connectivity found in the area, where local business owners expressed concerns about the demand for wireless internet access during peak times from cruise tourists (Renita (2014). While these situations are not necessarily immediately disastrous, as impacts to essential infrastructure might be, they do represent a significant impact on the social perceptions of cruise tourism, which is currently the largest contributor to numbers of service users in the town, during peak days. However, some participants noted that the crowds associated with cruise tourism allowed more local services to stay in business, citing their economic benefits as being beneficial to the range of options available to local people.
Others noted that crowding might put additional strain on vital infrastructure. SU stated that tourist use of medical facilities might increase waiting times for locals. Miller et al. (2000, p.436) stated “cruise ships often serve high-risk passengers and offer extended medical services (e.g., oxygen therapy and onboard renal dialysis units) for their passengers” in a review of infection control issues aboard cruise ships, which were compared to those found in a nursing home. The increased numbers of high-risk tourists over other forms of tourism where extended medical services would not be available further emphasises that cruise tourists might pose greater impact on local health facilities than other tourists.

A large number of land-based tourists in the study area also partake in adventurous activities such as hiking and skiing, which were regarded as less common among cruise tourists by participants in this study (indeed, cruises do not run during the ski season). These activities could also lead to strain on local medical infrastructure through accident and injury sustained in these obviously higher risk activities. This is particularly notable as, unlike with cruise operators provision of ‘extended medical services’, few, if any of the medical services required by these lower risk passengers engaging in higher risk activities will be provided by the tourism operator.

Cruise tourism can also provide a more pleasant experience for tourists with disabilities or other physical constraints due to a combination of more adapted facilities and the experience of a wide variety of locations without engaging in activities that they may find physically challenging, such as hiking. This is especially true for destinations such as Iceland where experiencing the environment is considered a high motivating factor in tourist visits (Liftenegger et al., 2014). Simply put, for those who may not wish to engage in high amounts of physical activity, for whatever reason, cruise tourism allows easy access to multiple locations, and typically provides a wide variety of entertainment programmes or options to tourists.

Outside of cruise tourism, there are also ongoing developments in road infrastructure in the Ísafjörður area. One participant (LF) mentioned the Dýrafjörður-Arnarfjörður tunnel, which was not yet completed at the time of this study. They held the opinion that the opening of this new tunnel, which would both shorten the route to the south of the Westfjords and allow it to stay open in winter, would increase land-based tourism in the research area. Another participant (MN) provided the opinion that there was often insufficient infrastructure to
provide tourists with suitable activities, and that this contributed to the issues with cruise tourism visitor experience (and, to a lesser degree, crowding) mentioned elsewhere in this thesis. Elaborating, they specified features such as “walking paths and so on, and clearly marked, and telling you where to go and what to, what you can expect to find.” Another participant (PG) expressed similar views, highlighting a lack of information points around the area, and stating that there could be more “description plaques” to highlight historic or interesting buildings. They (PG) pointed out that highlighting historical features would also be beneficial for the town at large. Such suggestions could be used to provide a better visitor experience to those not interested in organised bus or walking tours, but who are similarly uninterested in the often longer privately guided adventure tours (which may result from concerns over accessibility, as mentioned above, but also from a mismatch between visitors desired comfort, price or time levels and those provided by tour companies). As a wide number of participants noted the issue with tourists seemingly aimlessly wandering around town, “like sheep” (LS), such infrastructure development could provide a low-cost way of reducing some of the conflicts and negative experiences caused by this issue.

Another concern around tourism infrastructure was the use of Airb&b and other such home rental schemes. These were not seen to yet represent a major problem in the research area by most participants, at least not in comparison to the levels in Reykjavik. However, many participants did express concerns that increases, or high numbers of Airb&b use (especially in reference to Reykjavik) could cause issues. One participant, (LF) elaborated on concerns over increased adoption of short term holiday rentals, saying “I understand they are going up more, so… and that’s not a good thing”. The reasons given for this were concerns over the availability of private rental apartments and increased rental prices for residents. They (LF) addressed this directly saying:

“There are thousands of them in Reykjavik, and that means the rent goes up… and difficult to rent…very bad for local people. I understand they have the same problem in Spain now as well.”

Another participant (WM) had personal experience with this issue, as they were trying to buy an apartment. They (WM) stated that demand for apartments meant that “as soon as something is available it’s snatched up and rented out”. They (WM) further explained that they could not be sure this was always as a result of the demand for short term rentals, but
did perceive Airb&b as having a negative impact on the situation. One participant (CC) said that the demand for short term rental accommodation did potentially have positive effects as well as the widely described negatives, noting opportunities for additional income to those who had spare rooms or owned summer houses.

4.6 Conclusion

In summary, participants raised a significant number of concerns over the environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism. They called attention to the environmental impacts of a range of tourism forms and activities, from pollution emanating from cruise ships to the damage caused by illegal off-road driving. Their opinions on the environment often centred on the need for further regulation, as well as encouraging tourism forms they saw as more appropriate to the delicate environments of Iceland. Cruise tourists formed the centre of their concerns over social impacts. They called attention to a variety of issues, from poor respect for residents’ privacy to insufficient regard for their own health and safety. In this area, participants generally expressed the view that these behaviours stemmed from a lack of education, and from a lack of familiarity with Ísafjörður’s nature as a functional, working environment containing a variety of industries, rather than as a show erected solely for their entertainment. They also raised concerns over the quality of the visitor experience offered to cruise tourists, though they did not seem to consider all the factors that might be involved in a decision to undertake a cruise. These concerns centred on a perceived lack of authenticity in cruise tourism.

Participants were significantly more enthusiastic about land-based tourism than cruise tourism, citing greater benefits both in terms of economics and social exchange. Indeed, social exchange was one of the reasons that, despite their concerns with specific behaviours, most participants did not mind tourism as a way to bring money to the area. Whilst some noted its impacts on the economy, and how it helped support business in the town, most saw the primary benefit in attracting new and varied people to Ísafjörður.

However, the overall perceptions of tourism were generally apathetic, which the Irridex model (Doxey, 1975) shows is only the second stage of progression towards excessive tourism numbers. It is the final stage of the model, antagonism, that is generally held as an indicator of over-tourism (Seraphin, 2018). However, as the Irridex model indicates a
predictable, one-way progression with increasing tourism numbers ((Wang et al., 2007), it would be expected that further increases would draw residents closer to a stage of antagonism.
5 Recommendations and Conclusion

This chapter will discuss the recommendation arising from the results of this research. Firstly, we will consider the implication for management, using the example of new laws governing the nearby Hornstrandir nature reserve. It will use this as a basis to discuss how this thesis indicates that such specific management policies may produce more beneficial outcomes in terms of improving the relationship between tourism and those not directly benefitting from its economic impacts in Ísafjörður and Hnífsdalur. It will also discuss management strategies aimed at improving the management of cruise tourism, which was found to provide the least positive benefits for residents in the research area. It will also address management concerns centred on tourist road use and infrastructure development.

After this, the chapter will move onto recommendations for future research. It will outline both research that would address the limitations of this study and that which would otherwise be useful in expanding the body of scientific knowledge in and around the topics discussed in this thesis. Finally, this chapter will provide the overall conclusions to this thesis, with regard to the research questions and the most notable findings.

5.1 Management

The creation of new laws governing the management of Hornstrandir nature reserve, designed to limit the impact by tourists through both limiting camping to designated areas and putting “significant restrictions on cruise ship landings” (Kyzer, 2019) pre-empted the recommendation of similar action in this research by only a few months. However, it is still worthy of analysis with regard to future management. As the results of this thesis indicate, residents perceptions and experiences of tourism in Ísafjörður and the surrounding area (including Hornstrandir) are not generally negative (MER, CC, NH), using phrases such as “I don’t mind them that much” (PH). Participants also generally expressed the opinion that, in their experience, tourism was economically beneficial. However, many of these views were predicated on the perception of cruise tourists as having little impact because most encountered were limited to central, urban areas of the research area (i.e. close to the participants home or places of employment, where encounters are likely to be more frequent). In these locations tourists were perceived as being able to do little negative impact. Outside of this, concerns over the level of exploitation of Hornstrandir were
present in 2014 (O’Brien, 2014), whilst many participants expressed concern over Iceland’s environment, a concern supported in a wider sense by Liftenegger et al. (2014).

In addition, the majority of “attractions, activities and assets of Ísafjörður” were either unexploited by cruise tourism or underexploited in 2014 (O’Brien (2014, p.40). Therefore, new laws designed to restrict tourism expansion in overexploited and environmentally sensitive areas would likely reduce the risk of tourism exceeding the social carrying capacity within the research area. In addition, this legislation specifically addresses an area of concern without making broad strokes towards discouraging tourism. In this way it allows the economic benefits of tourism through other means to increase, something that has wide support, whilst also discouraging it from impacting one of the areas of most concern to the participants of this research. As suggested above, this method of promoting more sustainable tourism should be encouraged and is in line with other research that shows that sustainable tourism can be implemented without impacting the economic indicators of tourism (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2015).

These aspects are also worth discussing in regards to Koens et al.’s (2018) research into over-tourism. As noted, concerns stemmed primarily from specific activities and behaviours of tourists such as cruise tourists ‘window-peeping’ or tendency to stray from pedestrian walkways. Whilst overall tourism numbers were regarded as an issue, or approaching an issue, by a minority of participants (see chapter 4.1.1 ‘overall perceptions of tourism’), most participants expressed few negative views of tourism, whilst raising concern over specific activities and behaviours. This suggests that if numbers were to increase and the strain that indicates ‘over-tourism’ were to be observed (Seraphin et al., 2018), concerns may still be primarily centred around a number of activities. As Koens et al. (2018) points out, this is part of the risk of a general, negative term such as over-tourism, in that whilst it can be useful in drawing political attention to the negative impacts of tourism, these impacts are neither newly recognised, nor fully described within the concept.

A specific example of recent note would be Hornstrandir nature reserve, which O’Brien (2014) reported was considered over exploited. This perception of over exploitation of the area would likely have been a contributing factor in the recent implementation of new conservation laws designed to restrict both cruise tourism landings and camping (Kyzer,
2019). Furthermore, action in this regard indicates that whilst overall tourism numbers in the research area have been allowed to increase, movement towards limiting expansion in the Hornstrandir area may have been building for some time if laws have been approved by the government at this stage. This can also be seen as an example of the type of management policy that would be recommended by this research, as discussed below.

Given the steep increases in tourism arrivals since 2014 (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018b), it is highly recommended that a further full study of cruise tourism carrying capacity in the Ísafjörður area be undertaken. These increases in cruise tourism arrivals have likely pushed the research area further towards the level of acceptable change, and therefore carrying capacity (Diedrich & Garcia-Buades, 2009; Jurado *et al.*, 2012), than at the time of O’Brien’s (2014) research. As a result, an assessment of carrying capacity is important not only for research purposes, but in order to inform future management decisions.

5.1.1 Cruise tourism Regulation

As suggested by participants (MER) & (PG) regulation of tourism activities in the Ísafjörður area and/or Iceland in general could be more widely implemented. Tourism companies should be required to meet best practices for environmental management in particular, given how much Iceland’s tourism economy relies on its environment (Lifenegger *et al.*, 2014). However, as noted by the results of this research environmental regulation should consider the social and aesthetic impacts of actions that do not yet pose an ecological threat. Guidelines over cruise ship speed within Skutulsfjörður (the fjord within which Ísafjörður town resides) could help limit the increased turbidity caused by cruise ships. The aesthetic impact of turbidity has shown in this research was shown to be a concern for some more environmentally minded residents, even though turbidity has been demonstrated to pose little ecological threat in other cruise destinations (Jones, 2011).

Significant concerns were also expressed over the information imparted to cruise tourists by tourism operators. This included inadequate guidance on what behaviours were appropriate in the area, with concerns about invasion of privacy noted by most participants, and heavily commented upon by some (SW, CC, SU, LS). Others noted that tourists were unaware that basic safety precautions still applied, concerning road rules (as noted by
almost all participants) and workplaces (SW). In these cases, while it was noted by one participant (LF) that they believed this information was provided by tourism operators interacting with cruise tourists, clearly more should be done to prevent such behaviours. Several participants (CC, SW, and LS) noted that this should be the concern of cruise tourism operators, so perhaps a more rigorous code of conduct could be enforced upon arriving cruise ships. As this issue seems unlikely to be exclusive to Ísafjörður, it may be sensible to deal with this at the national level.

Codes of conduct can be effective in regulating tourist behaviour, but there can be multiple issues with implementing such management measures (Cole, 2007). Concerns over the costs of researching problematic behaviour can be safely ignored, considering that this thesis set out to investigate these areas in depth and was conducted without funding, but the other two recommendations that arise from this research are valid. Firstly, codes of conduct are more effective if they receive official support, so engaging with the municipal and/or national governments is important. Secondly, codes of conduct are more effective if they deliver “teleological statements that include reasons for compliance” rather than “rule based deontological guidelines” (Cole, 2007, p.450).

Seraphin et al. (2018) noted how an ‘ambidextrous’ management policy involving public and private participation may be key to dealing with over-tourism in major cruise destinations. Whilst over-tourism does not yet appear to be a major issue in Ísafjörður, implementing management policy before negative impacts can occur is a founding principle of the precautionary principle (Peterson, 2006; 2017). This management policy should be tailored to the destination in order to produce the best results (Seraphin et al., 2018), which aligns with this thesis’ findings that specific issues and tourist behaviours are important to Ísafjörður residents’ perceptions of tourism in all its forms.

5.1.2 Regulation- Road Use

Stricter regulation is also needed in conjunction with other actions within the hire car sector to ensure tourists have access to appropriate vehicles and assist their safe travel to remote regions such as the Westfjords. A stronger regulatory approach is supported by the recent scandals concerning odometer tampering (Elliot, 2019b), which shows that even
with the existence of regulations, hire car companies in Iceland are prepared to potentially risk the safety of their users in order to turn a higher profit.

It is also possible that more severely damaging tourism activities, such as ‘off-roading’ within environmentally sensitive areas should be dealt with more strictly on a legal level. Given information campaigns concerning the sensitivity of Iceland’s ecology have already been put into practice, residents’ concerns over continual ignorance of these factors might be alleviated by stronger punishments for infractions. However, the existence of these information campaigns indicates that continued tourism growth may inevitably lead to more environmental damage.

While it was suggested that driver training was a factor in the perceived number of tourists involved road accidents, Twisk and Stacey (2007, p.9) note that “drivers with formal pre-license driver training have 11% more crashes per kilometre [sic] than drivers without formal training”. While they do state that benefits may be derived from formal driver training, they suggest that many formal training systems focus too much on basic control and manoeuvres, which limits their use to the point where they have a negative effect on the life expectancy of anyone who undertakes them. Twisk and Stacey (2007) further note that this criticism also applies to much available post-licence training. However Kunz and Bingert (2017, p.39) state that “in order to prevent traffic accidents, especially tourists renting a car should be provided with information about traffic rules and road conditions in Iceland.” Wu’s (2014) research indicates that increasing tourist road confidence is an important factor in increasing drive tourism. Specifically, three of the five areas of concern for drive tourists in unfamiliar environments given by Wu (2014) should be looked at: unfamiliar environments, unfamiliar road rules and unfamiliar vehicles. Some examples of conditions less widespread in Europe were discussed by Elliot et al. (2019), such as prevalence of single lane bridges on major roads such as Route 1 (commonly referred to as the ‘ring road’). A combination of making sure tourist road users were at least familiar with practice in on such features of the Icelandic road system may be beneficial, as could signage in situ, though the latter increases aesthetic impacts on Iceland’s natural environment.

Given the almost overwhelming preference towards land-based tourism forms expressed by participants in this research, promotion of drive tourism is likely to be well received by
residents, despite the safety concerns expressed in this research. Current expansion of road infrastructure in the Westfjords, particularly the Dýrafjörður-Ararfjörður tunnel, is also likely to increase drive tourism numbers as the region becomes more accessible by road, as noted by one participant (PF). This tunnel is likely to increase driver’s familiarity with the roads during a circuit of the Westfjords (as it replaces an unpaved mountain pass), alleviating one of the five areas of concern for drive tourists laid out by Wu (2014), as well as the more obvious effect of avoiding the current seasonal closures of the route. Therefore it may be important to address road safety through other means than simply discouraging road usage. However, as discussed below, specific research into drive tourism in Iceland may yield superior recommendations as to how to address this phenomenon.

5.1.3 Infrastructure Development

In terms of infrastructure development already believed to be planned at the time of this study, participants were generally sceptical of further cruise tourism focussed infrastructure developments, citing a lack of confidence in their necessity. However, participants did also raise concerns over the levels of air pollution caused by cruise vessels. Dragović et al. (2018) showed that inadequate infrastructure is a leading cause in cruise related pollution, and in accordance with this, it is recommended that the nature of any further developments of infrastructure around cruise tourism is reviewed. In particular, one participant suggested that further infrastructure development could include the provision of electricity to cruise berths. Given the concerns raised, such a development could be appropriate. Providing electricity at Iceland’s significantly lower unit price (when compared to other nations) (Skulason & Hayter, 1998), would raise the value of Ísafjörður as a prospective port to cruise operators, as it would almost certainly reduce their fuel costs. It would also provide a method to increase revenues derived from cruise tourism while providing relatively secure, long term employment to Westfjords residents in power production. Finally, this would help reduce air pollution arising from cruise vessels, as docked vessels would not require the use of onboard generators.

Aside from this development, a possible modest expansion in port facilities, to allow the docking of larger vessels, might prove useful in reducing air pollution (Dragović et al., 2018). Large scale expansion in overall capacity was shown to be an unpopular move with
local workers who justifiably see it as a risky investment, in accordance with the TALC model proposed by Butler (1980). Further expansion aimed at increasing the numbers of cruise vessels/passengers is likely to strain the currently relatively amicable relationship between local workers and cruise tourists, as crowding becomes a more extensive problem.

The final significant infrastructure recommendation raised by this research would be to further develop the signage and information available to tourists within the town, as suggested by two interview participants (PG & MN). A lack of information has been shown to contribute to the issues with both ‘aimlessly wandering crowds’ and the cruise tourism offer in other areas (Lama, 2009; Dragin, Dragin, Plavša, Ivkov & Đurdev, 2007). To counter this, it is suggested that an increase in signage of both walking routes and directions to points of interest should be implemented, particularly addressing these issues in proximity to the cruise terminal. Information plaques are also often regarded as a good way to showcase an area's cultural heritage, and participants in this research indicated that they believed cultural exchange was a major benefit of tourism. Both of these approaches are, compared to major investment in port facilities or upgrading the accommodation offered in the research area, relatively low cost. They could help reduce the social pressure exerted by cruise tourism while at the same time increasing the value of Ísafjörður’s tourism offer (Dragin et al., 2007). It is further suggested that improvements in the field of heritage/information points might look to sponsorship or similar arrangements from cruise tourism providers, who would both likely see benefit and could improve public relations through investing in corporate social responsibility.

The issue with short-term rentals, coupled with the desire for greater land-based tourism, suggests several possible avenues of dealing with accommodation shortages. The first, and possibly the most obvious, would be an increase in the construction of specific tourist accommodation, such as hotels, hostels or traditional bed and breakfast establishments. Such options could house large numbers of tourists with a relatively low impact on housing availability (though they would occupy land suitable for building). The second would be greater provision of camping and caravan/campervan facilities, which would not affect the provision of housing at all (as they typically occupy land not intended for housing development). However, this second option has several issues. Camping is generally unsuitable to winter months in Iceland; however tourists could still be accommodated, as several participants noted, in hotels in Ísafjörður which usually have lower levels of
occupancy over winter. However, it does run the risk of encroaching onto green-field land\(^1\) (especially given the closure of the old campsite on the brown-field land\(^2\) within the spit) and does not offer the same levels of comfort and luxury that might cause travellers to be attracted to short term rental properties, as well as requiring specialist equipment.

### 5.2 Limitations and Future Research

Before engaging in the focus of academic research suggested by this study, a related issue was raised by interview participants. They frequently raised concerns over what was believed to be deliberate misinformation by cruise tourism operators as about the quality of refreshments and foods available in Iceland. Participants who believed this misinformation was happening strongly objected, reasoning that this stemmed from greed on the part of cruise tourism operators who wished to sell their own offerings over those that could be obtained in the town. These accusations of this practice should undoubtedly be thoroughly investigated in order to discern whether this practice is prevalent and represents a policy by any cruise tourism operators. Investigations should both look at whether this policy is reported by tourists (who are likely to have direct experience of it, unlike residents), and whether this is frequent enough to indicate policy on the part of cruise tourism operators. If this is the case, there may be reason to investigate whether higher instances of food poisoning occur among cruise tourists who consume foods in the town as opposed to those who exclusively consume foods and drinks provided by cruise vessels. From this a management response to what may amount to a serious campaign of misinformation can be implemented.

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1. **Green-field land**: Green-field land is occupied by either natural spaces (protected or unprotected) or designated for (or historically engaged in) agricultural use. Good examples include pasture land, non-grazed heaths, or woodland (typically established woodlands, as trees will grow on unoccupied brown-field sites in time) (Murray-White, 2019).

2. **Brown-field land**: Brown-field land is unused or disused land, typically located close to or within urban areas that is considered suitable for development without having an impact on ‘nature’. Undeveloped land that contrasts to ‘green field sites’ (see below) in being perceived, and possibly legally designated, as more suitable for development due to its perceived lack of ecological value. Good examples include sites where former structures have been demolished, and, particularly in the research area, land constructed by in-filling areas of the sea (Gray, 2019).
5.2.1 Limitations

Due to time and funding constraints, this thesis does not provide a complete picture of the area it was intended to study. Primarily, expanding the sample size to reach data saturation and re-instating triangulation through observational research, an essentially part of any ethnographic research, would provide many benefits: a wider scope, more representative data that can be cross-checked for validity and reliability, and allow the contrast between reported experiences of tourists and direct tourist actions to be factored into the results (Crang & Cook, 2007).

Secondly, limitations were found during the sampling stage of the study. While flexibility is an essential part of any qualitative research (Crang & Cook, 2007), these did result in some of the original research aims, specifically a focus on on-land fish processing, remain unfulfilled. It is the author’s view that this still represents an important area of research, and so further investigation is recommended. It is possible that the methodology of the study led to some of the issues with subject availability, and so it is recommended that a different methodology is applied in order to successfully investigate the experiences of fish processing workers outside of, or compared to, other industry segments. Similarly, the initial sample size reduction in the proposal phase caused a wider assessment of differing roles within the fisheries sector to be abandoned, and so this also represents a valuable avenue for future research.

Finally, for reasons explained in the introduction to this paper, this research focussed on industry segments containing a mix of both native Icelandic and immigrant workers from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Despite the issues with sampling, this broad spread of participants was successfully maintained throughout the research. It was always therefore held that an investigation that focussed on long term residents/Icelandic citizens might produce an interesting comparison with the results of this thesis. Unlike the other research suggestions, which are aimed at better fulfilling the original research parameters of this thesis through either obtaining a more complete set of data or better investigating areas that proved difficult for a variety of reasons, this recommendation is given due to academic curiosity. The contrast between the experiences of long-term residents, and those of immigrants, is an important field of study and could benefit the field of anthropological and social research in general.
5.2.2 Carrying capacity and cruise tourism

The results of this research do not initially seem to align with the conclusions of the only major investigation of tourism carrying capacity with in the research area, that of O’Brien (2014). However, further inspection of the details of these results reveals that this difference may have been the result of an underestimation of the elasticity of carrying capacity in the areas. Whilst the apparently massive increases in cruise tourism over the period since O’Brien’s (2014) results would indicate that carrying capacity should have been exceeded, this does not fully take into account the specifics of O’Brien’s (2014) findings. Compared with the results of that previous research, overall perceptions of tourism appear more negative. Though this is not quantifiable from the present study O’Brien’s (2014) research showed a greatly positive attitude towards cruise tourism among members of the community (twenty-seven indicators were positive, as opposed to seven negative and three neutral). The results of the interviews that make up this research may not show a large number of negative views of cruise tourism, but they do not seem to indicate such a positive outlook either.

Indeed, the factors stressed that caused O’Brien (2014) to reach their conclusions, such as the importance of “the image of the community … for both cultural and natural resources”, could be seen within the perceptions of residents. Therefore, it seems likely that a combination of factors may be responsible for the difference between their recommendations, the realities of management practices from that point, and the general indication that carrying capacity has not yet been exceeded (despite a greater than 45.8% increase in cruise tourism arrivals) (Icelandic Tourist Board, 2018).

Firstly, O’Brien’s (2014) results showed that most tourism resources in the area were not considered to be overexploited, and increases in tourism numbers do not necessarily indicate increases in those that were regarded as over-exploited. Differences in this regard might, hypothetically, be a result of shifting tourism trends, or deliberate action designed to reduce the number of overexploited resources. A focus on allowing tourism increases, whilst still limiting their impacts on areas regarded as overexploited, could quite conceivably have led to overall carrying capacity not being exceeded, especially as O’Brien (2014, p.40) recorded that almost twice as many of the “attractions, activities and assets of Ísafjörður” were unutilised or underutilised (12) as opposed to utilised or over utilised (7), of which only four were regarded as over utilised.
5.2.3 Drive tourism

A more specific concern is the need for more concerted research into drive tourism in Iceland in general. This research relies upon cross-applicability from research based in destinations as diverse as Australia and Norway. As such, further research within Iceland may be able to generate a more accurate picture of tourists and general road users’ experiences. This is especially prominent given Ísafjarður residents’ concerns over safety (ST, SJ) and driving practices (PH, NH).

While this thesis’ scope overlapped with drive tourism research, the questions raised over these concerns would undoubtedly be better addressed by a separate investigation. Further investigation in this area should focus not just on visitor experience but on road safety. This concern is important enough that constructing research that addressed the issues raised at a national level would be more practical, as any solutions would likely have to be implemented by national government.

5.2.4 Environmental Impact Assessment

One participant suggested that an up-to-date environmental impact assessment (EIA) of the cruise port should be made a priority. Establishing current baselines through such an assessment in especially important given the rapid changes in cruise arrivals noted by Icelandic Tourist Board (2018b), as any previous assessments are likely to become too dated to be relevant in a short space of time. It would further allow greater assessment of the environmental carrying capacity of the Ísafjarður area for cruise tourism, a factor of carrying capacity that was not the focus of O’Brien’s (2014) work (though it was discussed due to the interconnected nature of social and environmental carrying capacity in the study area). Environment Impact Assessments are also an important and specific part of legal frameworks, including those of the European Union, and a failure to establish one represents a significant deviation from accepted environmental management protocol. However, as these would likely be produced in single language Icelandic formats, it is possible that any existing documents may simply need to be made available (or summarised) in English in order to allay the fears raised by participants in this research. No evidence of a current EIA for cruise tourism in Ísafjarður was found by the researcher, though, again, this may simply be an issue of accessibility.
5.3 Conclusion

The need for research into the state of tourism in the Westfjords is outlined by the relative sparsity of relevant literature. Although a lot of the topics covered within this research have featured previously there has been an obvious need for reliance on cross-applicability from varied geographical research areas. There is also a need for more thorough investigation of some topics at a national level, such as the business practices of cruise tourism operators and the issues surrounding road safety and tourism highlighted by participants in this research. In-depth, interview based qualitative research into residents’ perceptions and experiences of tourism in Ísafjörður was found to be previously lacking, a knowledge gap that has been filled by this thesis. It has also allowed insight into often less represented aspects of the workforce in Ísafjörður, namely immigrant or non-Icelandic workers. Factoring in these perceptions and experiences into the overall picture of tourism provides a more rounded basis for action, given that foreign citizens constitute 8.9% of the population as of 2017 (Statistics Iceland, 2019).

In answer to the first research question, it was noted that while there was no clear most beneficial form of tourism, cruise tourism provided the least positive benefits in the views of interview participants. This stemmed from a combination of the mild negative impacts they had perceived or experienced, in combination with a perceived lesser economic benefit when compared to other tourism forms. Between the remaining land-based tourism forms, aside from the negative impacts of short-term rental properties that were observed, there were positive opinions of all groups. Between regular hotel tourists and adventure tourists, adventure tourists were often regarded more highly due to the perception of being more likely to care about the environment, but were also regarded as having less overall impact, positive or negative, due to the short amount of time spend within the town.

It was concluded that encouraging land-based tourism forms could improve the relationship between tourism and those not directly benefitting from its economic impacts in Ísafjörður and Hnifsdalur. Land-based tourism forms as a whole were perceived as both more economically and socially beneficial, as well as being seen as being far less of a contributing factor in problematic behaviours. Even though a lack of economic analysis or observational triangulation means that these claims cannot be explicitly verified, the positive social
perception of land based tourism is likely to reduce the amount of social carrying capacity utilised by similar overall numbers of tourists if land-based tourism was encouraged.

Continuing with the subject of this thesis’ implication for carrying capacity in Ísafjörður, in observing residents’ perceptions and experience of differing tourism forms, some conclusions may be drawn. Firstly, thesis showed that tourism in Ísafjörður was less a matter of numbers and more a complex issue involving specific concerns, tourist behaviours, and infrastructural issues. Secondly, in answering the question of what could be done to improve relations between tourism and those not directly benefitting from its economic impacts, it was found that specific policy and action are likely more beneficial than general approach aimed at reducing overall tourist numbers. This aligns with Seraphin et al.’s (2018) research, which indicated that specifically tailored management solutions were vital in managing over-tourism in Venice. Whilst Ísafjörður certainly does not suffer such drastic issues, this study shows that specific issues currently represent significantly more concern to residents than overall tourism numbers. Thirdly, it is believed that the area may continue to attract increased tourism revenue, both by encouraging more profitable, sustainable and beneficial forms of tourism, whilst implementing specific policies in order to deal with problematic behaviours. In particular, work to address the social impacts of cruise tourism by encouraging cruise tourists to contribute more to the local economy and discouraging behaviours with negative impacts upon social harmony may increase the benefits and decrease the costs felt by residents.

Aside from the results of this research, it would seem from this research that the area’s carrying capacity for cruise tourism has likely not yet been exceeded, though this event may be closer than when O’Brien (2014) conducted their evaluation of the carrying capacity. As a result, it is important the areas carrying capacity for cruise tourism be re-evaluated as soon as possible, given cruise tourism was seen to have the least positive benefits for residents in Ísafjörður. Further to this, any further research into carrying capacity should be conscious of Diedrich & Garcia-Buades’ (2009) and Jurado et al.’s (2012) assertions that carrying capacity be evaluated as a degree of change, rather than a fixed number.

When placed within the frame of over-tourism as a concept, the combination of these factors would indicate that Ísafjörður is not yet suffering from over-tourism. Furthermore, this thesis draws attention to the importance of specific activities and concerns to residents, rather than
overall numbers. This supports Koens et al.’s (2018) assertion that generalist terms such as over-tourism may not be adequate in covering the complexity of situations within destinations, and that more neutral concepts such as ‘limits of acceptable change’ may be more useful from a research and management perspective.

Whilst concerns were raised by many participants over the environmental impacts of tourism in Ísafjörður, research has shown that encouraging more sustainable tourism forms need not risk the economic indicators of tourism (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2015). The results uncovered here display some pathways, both in the short and long term, towards a more sustainable tourism sector in Ísafjörður, and other, similar areas.

As many participants in this research put it, tourism is both good and bad, and this research has displayed that participants had perceived and experienced these aspects as relating to specific concerns. Therefore, if the good can be encouraged and the bad discouraged through specific policies aimed at tackling specific concerns, the perception of tourism in the area may improve. This may allow for further improvements economic indicators of tourism in Ísafjörður, which residents generally perceived as important to both improving the town and to preventing depopulation. In conclusion, Ísafjörður residents perceived tourists who camped (in tents) or stayed in hotels as the most beneficial to the area, whilst they noted that specific issues lead to most conflicts, particularly with the cruise tourism sector. However, they did not generally view even cruise tourism as an overall negative. From this it can be said that dealing with these specifics on a case by case basis would improve the relationship between tourism and those who do not benefit from it directly in Ísafjörður far more than any sweeping action directed towards the tourism industry at large.
References


Appendix A Ethical Clearance

This appendix contains the letter of ethical clearance provided by the thesis supervisory committee.

Research ethics training and clearance

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This letter certifies that James Regan has completed the following modules of:

- Basic ethics in research
- Human subjects research
- Animal subjects research

Furthermore, the Masters Study Committee has determined that the proposed masters research entitled Fishing For Tourists: Investigating Workers & Residents Experiences & Perceptions of Different Forms of Tourism and in Ísafjörður and Hnifsdalur, Iceland meets the ethics and research integrity standards of the University Centre of the Westfjords. Throughout the course of
his or her research, the student has the continued responsibility to adhere to basic ethical principles for the responsible conduct of research and discipline specific professional standards.

University Centre of the Westfjords ethics training certification and research ethics clearance is valid for one year past the date of issue.

Effective Date: 15 June 2018
Expiration Date: 15 June 2019

Prior to making substantive changes to the scope of research, research tools, or methods, the student is required to contact the Masters Study Committee to determine whether or not additional review is required.
Appendix B Interview Scripts

This Appendix contains the scripts used for interviews as part of this research. For the sake of clarity, elements that came into the interview structure as a logical result of the responses have been included here in *italics*, in order to save entering two scripts- the one the author had printed to remind them of the rough order, and the 1-2 additional questions that arose as a result of the typically initially unmentioned environmental impacts. As these interviews were semi-structured, it was not necessary to include these adaptations to circumstance in the script, but they have been noted where they, or similar wordings, were used in a large number of the interviews. The interview script/structure is as follows:

Intro- say hello, give name, the purpose of the interview, ask the interviewees name, and how they are doing.

Consent- pass over consent form & written research/data use summary with contact details (separate, as this needs to be kept by the interviewee). Upon written consent, start recording and get verbal consent BEFORE beginning interview.

Introduction questions:

So, what is your job at [company]?

Follow up with [so what does that entail?] if this is unclear (e.g. office work can be clarified to ‘talking to sales partners’ etc.)

Then begin the body of the interview, from which point anonymity is to be preserved in the interview if possible.

Q1 (exploratory). What do you think about tourism in Isafjordur?

   a) You commented on high/increasing numbers, what are your opinions about that?

   b) You commented on [tourism form], what are your opinions of [tourism form] tourists?

   c) You talked about [issue], could you elaborate?
Q2 What are your opinions on cruise ships?
   A) [if not covered in initial answer] and what about the cruise tourists
   B) I’ve heard there has been an increase in ships over recent years, how have you found this?
   C) Have you noticed any environmental impacts from cruise ships?

Q3 What do you think about the hotels in Isafjordur?
   A) …and what about the tourists?
   B) Have you noticed an increase in people staying at the hotels?
   C) Have you noticed any particular environmental impacts from land base tourists?

Q4 What do you know about Airbnb in Isafjordur?
   A) Have you noticed any increase in Airbnb numbers/what do you think about this?

Q5 exploratory- What do you know about adventure tourists in Isafjordur?
   A) Have you noticed any difference in environmental impacts or behaviours from adventure tourists?

Q6- Has tourism affected your work or home life at all?
   A) Typically prompt whichever part of this question was not mentioned in the answer.

Q7- Is there anything else you would like to add at all?
Appendix C Consent Forms

Due to changes during the sampling stage of this thesis, the consent forms contained descriptions of the intended thesis, as seen below.

Fishing for Tourists:

Investigating Fish Processing Workers’ Experiences & Perceptions of Different Forms of Tourism and in Ísafjörður, Iceland

Consent Form

This study is being conducted by James Regan, under supervision from Háskólasetur Vestfjarða, and Dr Georgette Leah Burns of Griffith University, Australia.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences and perceptions of fish processing workers of different tourism forms, in and around Ísafjörður, Iceland. The study will be carried out by James Regan, in the form of a face to face interview. The interview audio will be recorded, but you will remain anonymous, and only the researcher will have access to the audio file. The information gathered will be used as part of a master’s thesis, which will be published via the skemman thesis database, and may be further published as part of an academic journal(s) or other academic material.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time prior to the thesis submission (May 8th). For further information please see the information sheet you have been given, which includes contact details for the researcher, thesis supervisor, and relevant university staff members.

Informed consent

I confirm that I understand the above information and agree to participate in the study.

Date:

Signature: ________________________________