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Striving Towards Sustainability?

An analysis of two Finnish tourism-focused websites' language choices

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This thesis examines word choices used in tourism-focused companies' websites' sustainability sections. It was conducted to find out how these companies convey and present their sustainability. Two Finnish tourism focused websites, My Helsinki and Visit Tampere and their sustainability-sections are used as a primary material in this study. Altogether twenty language samples were collected from the websites and analyzed using speech act theory as a theoretical framework. Each language sample was categorized into one of five types of speech acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations.

Results of the study are presented in both qualitative and quantitative manner. They show that more than half of the language samples analyzed were commissives (twelve out of twenty) whereas expressives and declarations were completely nonexistent. Second most prominent category of speech acts was assertives with seven appearances in the data. Highlighting active work being done towards more sustainable operations is present in the results. The word choices are not directive but rather encouraging.

Tourism companies are not trying to tell their customer, the tourist, how to act when traveling. Instead, they are stating how they act themselves in more sustainable ways and that way making it seem like a norm to actively take more sustainable actions. More sustainable traveling alternatives are being demanded from tourism companies and by showcasing what they have already achieved in their quest to more sustainable future, they can gain credibility from the tourists. Strictly telling what should be done is not beneficial for these companies as that could be perceived as rude, but by leading by example and highlighting their own sustainable actions, such as taking public transport, they can encourage the tourist to do so as well. The results of the actions taken by the two companies towards sustainability are not documented or displayed on either of the websites, so the outcome of the actions is difficult to measure.

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1   Introduction

The topic of sustainability is a very current and pressing issue at the moment due to global warming. It is caused by climate change which has been affected by, for example, increasing amounts of burning of fossil fuels causing the greenhouse effect and the largest contributors to it being the carbon dioxide emissions caused by people and their activities (European Commission n.d.). This Bachelor's thesis focuses on tourism related companies and their websites' sustainability sections. It examines the language choices made in forementioned sections to communicate and present tourism companies' sustainability.

Sustainability can be seen both as a value to strive towards and as a weapon to fight climate change. It is important to try to find solutions to slow down climate change and mitigate people's impact on global warming. The world, as it is and functions now, cannot continue the way it has without it having a large negative impact on the earth and its climate, ecosystems, and biodiversity. Sustainability, therefore, is a very relevant topic in the discussion of global warming. Sustainability should predominantly be actions taken by people towards an eco-friendlier and carbon neutral future. In addition to that, sustainability is also promises and resolutions made by companies to reduce their impact as well. This study focuses precisely on that: the language choices used by companies to communicate these promises and resolutions and their values considering global warming.

The focal point of this study is tourism companies and their websites' sustainability sections. It is estimated that tourism accounts for around 11% of the world's greenhouse emissions (World Travel & Tourism Council 2021, 13). This covers not only transportation to and in the destination, which are 48,6 % of tourism-related industries' emissions, but also retail, food, accommodation, as well as construction and agriculture caused by tourism (World Travel & Tourism Council 2021, 13–14). Tourism, in that way, has a diverse effect on multiple aspects of sustainability and climate change, and people, with their actions, can have an impact on them as well. Sustainability is, nonetheless, seen as an important value with 83% of travelers stating that sustainable travel is vital and 69% of travelers demanding tourism-related companies to offer people more sustainable travel alternatives (World Travel & Tourism Council 2021, 9). It is, therefore, in the tourism companies' best interest to make traveling more sustainable, or at least make it seem sustainable, to their potential clients, in this case tourists. By promising changes and informing people on the changes that have already been

made, companies can showcase their commitment to sustainability. This study, therefore, asks the question of *how tourism focused companies, My Helsinki and Visit Tampere, present and convey their sustainability*.

Firstly, in the next section, this study discusses the background information on a deeper level and links this study to already existing works. It also explains the theoretical framework used in this study. This is followed by the Materials and Methods-section where the primary sources of this study are introduced, as well as linked with the theoretical framework. After that, this paper focuses on the results where the findings of this study are examined. In the discussion section, the results and their effect are analyzed more broadly. Lastly, this study concludes with an assessment of potential future research.

2 Background

The background section first discusses sustainability as a broader topic and then moves on to review tourism's connection to it. People increasingly demand more sustainable practises from tourism companies. This is in contradiction as tourism and traveling have traditionally not been considered sustainable. This section also elaborates the theoretical framework of this study by addressing speech act theory in section 2.2.

2.1 Sustainability communication in tourism

Because of global warming, sustainability is a topic that has been researched in many different fields using diverse methods and multiple different angles. Sustainability is a very contemporary and, in a way, trendy subject due to its topicality. There cannot, however, be too many studies focusing on this topic due to its global importance. According to a recent United Nations Report (2023, 26), changes towards a more sustainable future must be made despite the backlash the actions first might receive. In addition to governments, private sector (companies owned by individuals rather than government) must also be included in making these changes and take part in recognizing and addressing unsustainable practices which are polluting and straining the environment causing global warming (United Nations 2023, 28).

The United Nations (n.d.) defines sustainability as the ability to function in the present day without compromising the future generations' ability to do so. The UN (n.d.) also categorizes sustainability into environmental and economic sustainability, of which the first is the main focal point in this study. The ever-growing business of tourism is largely justified with the economic benefits it brings but the undeniable problems it brings has forced companies needing to make more sustainable choices (Torkington 2020, 1041-1042). Although the term is often used by tourism companies, sustainability tends to be a mere buzzword that gives the impression that something good has been done without a real definition (Torkington 2020, 1056).

As already stated, tourism industry is responsible for a substantial share of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. The concept of *slow travel* has been introduced on the internet, in the media and within the academic circles as a solution to this problem (Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon 2010, 482). Slow travel is the concept of people traveling less often but, in a way, making their travels count for more by emphasizing the experience (ibid.). It also includes favoring traveling by land instead of flying, making more sustainable choices in the

destination considering food, activities and moving around (Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon 2010, 482–483). This could include more research when choosing the destination, making the content of tourism websites important and significant to travelers.

Highlighting the concept of slow travel on tourism companies' websites has its benefits. Naturally, companies want to encourage people to travel, even though tourism as an industry is proven not to be particularly sustainable (as of now, at least). Encouraging *slow travel* provides a solution to people wanting to travel, but finding it morally difficult, because of the impact it causes on the planet. Promoting slow travel could also be, in a way, guidance for tourists from the companies on how to act more sustainably as a study found out that people feel they lack the power to act sustainably and also the responsibility to do so (Dickinson, Robbins and Lumsdon 2010, 485). This is in line with people wanting and demanding more sustainable traveling options from companies (World Travel & Tourism Council 2021, 9) and seeing that the initiative to act more sustainably should come from the companies, not the tourists themselves.

With tourism companies wanting and needing people to travel in order to stay in business and make profit, they are, of course, encouraging people to do that. The contrast between the fact that traveling is at the moment rarely sustainable and the fact that making people travel more is the tourism companies' main goal is stark. As already noted in the Introduction, it is in the companies' best interest to make traveling more sustainable, or at least seem more sustainable, by communicating their promises of changes and the changes they have already made towards sustainability, as sustainability is a value that is increasingly demanded by tourists from these companies (World Travel & Tourism Council 2021, 9). The companies' websites sustainability sections, therefore, are an important medium to communicate a companies' changes and actions.

Reporting on sustainability has grown considerably in the recent decades. In 2002, 45 percent of companies reported their sustainability, whereas a decade later, in 2013, 93 percent of these companies accounted for their actions (KPMG 2013, 22). The need for sustainable reporting has also evolved from it being conducted due to social pressure to it being seen as an advance in marketing, social and political fields as well (Higgins and Coffey 2016). Sustainability reports have been shown to include many types of discourses to transmit and highlight the sense of active work with using, for example, words such as "targets" to show goal-

orientation and "achievement" to show leadership and mixing in strong, decisive adjectives such as "significant" (ibid.).

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) has established guidelines for companies to follow when making, editing and deciding what to include on their websites' sustainability pages, but the guidelines are not often followed and actual factual content is replaced with pictures and photos of actions (Fernandez-Vallejo 2023, 111). It is thus largely up to the companies themselves to decide what to include and address and also what information is seen as important enough to communicate to people.

Tourism companies are faced with a considerable challenge when making their actions more sustainable as it is a wide-ranging concept with the question on who or what entity is responsible for making the changes towards sustainability (Pomering, Noble and Johnson 2011). Moreover, it can be difficult to estimate effects other than economic and environmental effects (ibid.). As profit-making companies, tourism operators need to balance their sustainable practices with economic factors as well. Their actions cannot only depend on what is the most sustainable way of operating, but their goal is also to be profitable.

2.2   Speech act theory

Speech Act Theory was first credited to J.L. Austin in a posthumously published collection of his lectures on the topic and later, categorized and organized further by John Searle (Levinson 2016). Speech act theory demonstrates how language is not just a list of words. Instead, there is always a meaning, a purpose in saying things and therefore words also perform actions by being uttered (Searle 1969, 3–4; Levinson 2016). Uttering a word or a sentence has relevance and consequences in every-day life (Levinson 2016). For example, bidding for something in an auction actually commits you to pay for it too (ibid.). Uttering a sentence has two levels; locutionary level, which is the literal meaning of the utterance, and illocutionary level, which is the force of the utterance, its true meaning and what it is used to communicate (Searle 1968, 405-406). Words can only have one literal meaning and one locutionary level, but illocutionary level can differ based on its context, purpose and what it is used to communicate (Searle 1968, 406–407).

There are five different illocutionary acts, which are:

1. Assertives (or representatives). Assertives (or representatives) commit the speaker into something being true or false (claim, describe, assume, explain).

2. Directives. Directives are used to get (or attempt to get) the hearer to do something (request, command).

3. Commissives. Commissives commit the speaker into some activity in the future (promise, commit, guarantee).

4. Expressives. Expressives express the speaker's psychological state (thank, congratulate, condone). The truth of expressives can be presupposed.

5. Declarations. Declarations make a change in the condition or status of their objects (terminate, marry, declare). Declaration is successful if change happens.

(Searle 1976, 10–19)

Telling different illocutionary acts apart is not only based on the verbs used in them, but also depends on the purpose of the utterance in question, the force of which they are presented, the status and the relation of the different partakers in the interaction and sincerity of the interaction (Searle 1976, 2–7).

This study utilizes speech act theory as its framework to address sustainability and how it is presented on tourism companies' websites. Previous studies have approached the topic from perspective of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), but, unlike this study they have not utilized speech act theory in the analysis.

The next section focuses on the materials and methods of this thesis. It elaborates on the tourism companies' websites and how they will be analyzed through speech act theory.

3   Material and Methods

This section elaborates the material and methods used in this study. It discusses the primary sources of the study opening why they were chosen for this and how they are studied. Methods then shows how the material can be linked with the study's theoretical framework, which was more broadly covered in section 2.2.

3.1   Material

As its primary sources this study uses two Finnish tourism focused websites: Visit Tampere, operated by Visit Tampere Oy, and My Helsinki, operated by Helsinki Partners Oy. Both websites aim for the same goal: promoting tourism in their respectable areas. The role of these types of tourism websites in general could be considered important as an increasing number of people book their travels independently rather than using a service such as travel agents. With modern technology searching information online on a potential travel destination is more common now than it was pre-millennium. As more and more people search and get information online, these websites could be considered today's travel guidebooks providing information on where to find the most interesting places to visit in the area. They can have a strong impact on where people choose to travel and what activities they choose to take part in while in the destination.

These sustainability sections are on the companies' websites to showcase the companies' sustainability and to inform a potential customer, a potential tourist of the actions a company is making towards sustainability. The websites used in this study can be considered comparable as while they are not entirely similar, they both aim for a similar goal, which is promoting tourism in their areas. This way they are similar enough for comparison. The sustainability section in Visit Tampere's website was clearly marked as such and can be viewed as a PDF as well. The comparable section in My Helsinki's website had to be searched from their "Think sustainably" section. It is also not called "sustainability" but rather "Making Helsinki more carbon-neutral". The target reader of these sections could be considered as a possible tourist or someone who is doing research on where to travel and, possibly, making decisions based on their findings.

The material for this study was first accessed in September 2023 and then collected and analyzed in December 2023 and accessed again in January and February 2024 for further analysis. The data collected for this study is all publicly available for everyone to view. The

contents of the websites stayed the same during the process of collecting and analyzing it. The material that was gone through for this study consisted of 1293 words in total from which 850 words were from My Helsinki's website and 443 were for Visit Tampere's website. The language samples collected and analyzed for this study consisted of 133 words and 116 respectively, so 249 words altogether.

After first familiarization of both of the main sources, the data for this study were narrowed down to 20 language samples collected from the websites, ten samples from each of the websites equally. The selection of the language samples was made part randomly and part choosing comparable and similar samples from each website. This provides more accurate and relevant results as repetition of certain words and themes is taken into account. Ignoring the recurring elements would be misleading for the study and could possibly distort the results. The language samples were collected in one batch from the websites during the same day. They were analyzed together and separately. Every language sample was analyzed on its own to find out its speech act type and other notable features. The samples were then grouped together and based on the findings an analysis (in the Discussion- section of this study) was made.

As stated, this study is only applicable on these two websites from which the data was collected from. Other tourism websites' sustainability sections may look different or be worded differently because, as mentioned in 2.1, there are no rules or strict guidelines on how sustainability sections in websites should look or what they should include. It is also noteworthy that some tourism companies may not have such a section at all, as it is not compulsory to have them. The websites in this study were chosen among many other similar ones and can be considered giving a large enough look into the subject of sustainability for the scope of this particular study. Moving on to the method of this study, which will explain how the data was analyzed with the method.

3.2 Methods

To analyze the material presented in the previous section this study uses speech act theory. Speech act theory is more thoroughly discussed in section 2.2. Analyzing the data and grouping it into categories of assertives, directives, commissives, expressives or declarations will provide an answer to the research question of this study: "how do tourism focused

companies, My Helsinki and Visit Tampere, present and convey their sustainability?". As mentioned in section 2.2, a speech act has a certain force, and its purpose is to have a certain effect on others. It is also noteworthy to ask whether these sustainability sections are able to convey the desired effect, the illocutionary act, and whether that is in contradiction with sustainability, the locutionary act.

 The method chosen for this study is naturally only one possible method and there are multiple others, which could be used to study the collected material. For this study, the method chosen was found to be the most useful because by categorizations a more quantitative point-of-view can be achieved. Because of the limitation of scope in this study, other methods were excluded despite their possible usefulness. In the future, it would be fruitful to expand the scope, to focus on a broader selection of material and include more methods.

The following section presents the findings of this study. It is followed by a discussion section, which further elaborates these findings.

4   Results

This section indicates which speech acts appear in the collected data the most and which are more prominent than others. The results will be presented and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative part of this section introduces the results categorized in five different groups or speech acts introduced in section 3.2, while the qualitative part addresses the findings in greater detail. Altogether 20 language samples were collected and analyzed, ten from each of the two websites.

4.1   Quantitative results

The difference in the number of samples categorized into each category of speech acts was notable. Some categories of speech acts appeared in the data much more frequently than others while some categories barely made any appearances. The results can be viewed in Table 1.

	Assertives	Directives	Commissives	Expressives	Declarations
My Helsinki	2	1	7	0	0
Visit Tampere	5	0	5	0	0
Total	7	1	12	0	0

Table 1.

The most prominent category of speech acts found from the two sources were commissives, with twelve out of the twenty and more than half of all samples being commissives. Commissives were particularly common in data from My Helsinki (MH), with seven of the ten samples being commissives, whereas of Visit Tampere's (VT) data half (five out of ten) were commissives being very prominent in their data as well. Examples of commissives were "[Visit Tampere] is committed to operating responsibly" (Visit Tampere n.d.), "we strive to take them into account in all areas of our operations'" (Visit Tampere n.d.) and "[Among the actions are:] Taking part in creating follow-up surveys regarding the pricing system for vehicle traffic" (My Helsinki n.d.). All these examples, along with other commissives from the data, promise something and commit the speaker into something.

Second most common category was assertives. As presented in Table 1., two of MH's samples were assertives, whereas VT had five making the number of assertives seven of

twenty samples altogether. "We monitor and report on the progress of our corporate sustainability work on an annual basis" (Visit Tampere n.d.), "Equality is a fundamental value of our social responsibility." (Visit Tampere n.d.), "Significant progress has already been made with continuous climate work." (My Helsinki n.d.) are some examples of assertives from the data. Assertives in this data claim and explain something.

The number of directives, expressives and declarations was clearly smaller than the other two categories. There were no expressives at all in the data. Only one directive was found in MH's samples, while VT had none. Another non-existent category in the data was declarations. Some examples, like "the use of coal will be stopped entirely" (My Helsinki) and "In the future, Tampere will be known as one of the most responsible tourism, congress and event cities in the world" (Visit Tampere n.d.), which were categorized into commissives, could be interpreted as declarations as well, but were initially categorized into commissives as declarations need an actual change to happen for them to be successful. As there is no data presented on the websites of the results of their actions and whether they have been successful or not, it would not be fair to call these examples declarations. This study categorized them as commissives as they seem more like strict promises.

As stated, some differences between the two different websites were found but they are not substantial. Both websites had a certain lack of variation as the same or nearly same elements recurred on both websites. It seems that the two tourism companies present themselves very similarly in terms of sustainability on their websites, even though they are not connected to each other in any way.

4.2 Qualitative results

Slow travel, especially taking public transport instead of a car, is highlighted in the data collected from both websites. Visit Tampere, for example, "promotes sustainable mobility choices for tourists" (n.d.) and My Helsinki is "promoting walking, cycling and the use of public transport" (n.d.) in addition to "raising parking fees and extending parking fee zones" (My Helsinki n.d.). The latter is one of only a few examples which could be seen as somehow threatening to the reader as it involves limiting people or taking away something. Most of the data samples do not try to coerce people or make straight commands but rather highlight the

encouragement and reinforcement that these websites can offer people to make it easier for them to act more sustainable.

With their actions and lead, for example, taking public transport, remembering to actively make more sustainable choices in all aspects of life, these websites encourage the readers to do so as well. By making it seem like a norm to act a certain way, they avoid the need to make commands and being directive, which is seen with the lack of directives in the data.

The attitude of trying is highlighted as well, with verbs such as "strive" and "prefer". They create an atmosphere where trying is better than doing nothing and there is no need to be perfect and always make perfect choices, but at least to try to do it. By not being strict with their promises these websites can avoid the questions that can arise with promises and statements made with assertives and commissives, on how the results of them are measured, as that is seldom commented on. Only one sample from each of the sources, so two altogether, mention some type of "follow-up surveys" (My Helsinki n.d.) or "monitor and report the progress" (Visit Tampere n.d.). As these are mentioned only briefly, it is left unsaid where these reports and surveys are documented and presented. The results of them cannot be found on their websites, nor behind clear links. Another similar example to "strive" was "[w]e prefer public transport whenever possible" (Visit Tampere n.d.) where "prefer" is, in a way, like a promise but not quite, making it harder to challenge and question it, if it does not actually happen.

Although the tone stays mostly friendly and avoids commanding, the business-like manner is created with the lack of expressives, so there are no expressing feelings, positive or negative. As it is demanded from the companies for them to make their actions more sustainable, it is also important to stay relevant and have some authority to be believable. Expressives and too friendly of a tone could create a feeling of not taking the important issue seriously. The results also highlight active work being done to make operations more sustainable. Word choices such as "[w]e act as an active influencer in the consumer communications" (Visit Tampere n.d.) emphasize that something is already being done, instead of just promising to do something in the future. However, this is left unsubstantiated as a website visitor cannot verify this.

5   Discussion

It is worth acknowledging that the websites studied in this paper are tourism-focused and the livelihoods of the people involved comes from people traveling. Therefore, the promises of sustainability, in addition to actual environmental protection, are also marketing. Tourism is one of the biggest polluters for the planet (World Travel & Tourism Council 2021, 13). Therefore, getting people to travel more and acting sustainable are in contradiction. The goal for tourism companies is to make people willing to travel despite its environmental downsides and also to make people feel more secure about traveling if there is doubt about the sustainability of their actions. Some people may need reassurance for their actions to feel better about themselves as while traveling is not good for the environment, it is still somewhat of a status symbol to be able to travel and for many people is the main way of spending holidays.

Reporting about their sustainability is a part of a company's marketing as for a business it is important to get the tourists to be interested in traveling to a particular city instead of elsewhere. Higgins and Coffey (2016) state that reporting about sustainability is not only done from social pressure but can also be seen as an advantage in marketing. People should be feeling welcome to a destination but also reassured that their traveling is not polluting the environment. By providing the tourist with the possibilities in making sustainable choices, the companies can make a tourist fell at ease with their choice of destination.

The data in this study shows that multiple different promises are being made regarding sustainability and making changes towards a more climate-friendly future, such as "[e]quality is a fundamental value of our social responsibility" (Visit Tampere n.d.). Both sources think of sustainability as a value to which to strive towards and see it as something that is necessary to act upon, worth promoting and encouraging people too. Sustainability as a concept is broad and can be hard to make easily understandable which is seen on these websites as well, as the term sustainability is used, as mentioned in section 2.1, as it often is, as a buzzword for something good (Torkington, Stanford and Guiver 2020) without really explaining what it means, leaving the interpretation of the abstract word to the reader. This way the companies also avoid the need to comment on every aspect of what counts as sustainable.

As people demand more sustainable choices in traveling from tourism companies, it is beneficial for the companies to talk about and showcase their own sustainability and

emphasize the changes they have made and continue to make. For a potential client, a tourist, this can give a piece of mind, as it creates an assumption and a belief that the companies are doing their part and taking responsibility in the fight against global warming and not leaving it to the tourists. The word choices highlight that work is already being done and not just promising to start doing something in the future which could lead to a dishonest image.

While the term sustainability is never explained on either website, the ability of being carbon free or carbon neutral at a certain point in time is being used as a concrete goal. The goal is broad and for a single person alone it can seem unreachable. Telling people how they should act to achieve the goal would not be the most beneficial way of communicating as that could be interpreted as rude or off putting. This can be seen in the results of this study as only one directive, which commands and tells people what to do, was found in the data. A commanding tone could unintentionally offend and even scare the reader. As these companies are focused on tourism, every reader could be a potential tourist who the company, naturally, does not want to scare away.

Based on the results of this study, tourism companies convey their sustainability by leading by example. They use statements and promises instead of, for example, expressives and commissives, in order to be factual, or seem factual. With sustainability reporting continuously increasing (KPMG 2013, 22), reporting about their changes and improvements towards sustainability and keeping themselves accountable can be a useful way for tourism companies to communicate their sustainability. In this case, however, the two companies do not actually provide the website visitor any concrete evidence that would verify such claims.

Stating what is done as a company to increase sustainability is also accentuated in the results. Companies highlighting doing something continuously and already having achieved some results with their actions was recurring in the results as well. With addition to leading by example, this can be seen as giving good publicity to the company and therefore being good, possibly low-cost marketing. As people demand actions towards sustainability, these companies can show for themselves with even the smallest actions and promises with the attitude of something being done instead of dismissing the issue or ignoring reporting their actions thinking they are too small or insignificant to report on and with that getting bad publicity. The actual results of the promises and statements are not, however, present in the sustainability sections of these websites and therefore it is difficult to assess their commitment to sustainability.

It is worth emphasizing that the trustworthiness of these promises is hard to evaluate as there is no indication of monitoring the results and outcome of them. Making promises for more sustainable procedures and practices is also at this point still somewhat new and monitoring the results of them in the long run could, at this stage, not yet be possible. Pomering, Noble and Johnson (2011) state that effects of a certain company's sustainability practices can be hard to calculate, which makes it difficult to question its commitment to sustainability. With verbs such as "strive", there is a hint of a promise, but it is not as strict or restricting. A promise would be more brave but also easier to question and challenge. "Striving", instead, makes space for possible mistakes as well. It does not command either the tourist or the service providers.

While not being directive, the authority and believability needs to be created in some other way. On these websites one method is the lack of expressives. Expressives express feelings which could seem more personal whereas promises and statements appear more factual. This can lead to a more authoritative tone as while not all statements in the websites are confirmed to be true, they still leave the reader with the feeling that the company is acquainted with the subject and has studied it, instead of just expressing how nice something would be.

According to the UN's Global Sustainable Development Report (2023, 12) major changes in human behavior are needed in order for the world to be able to function. In that light, the promises made by these two companies can come across modest or vague. Being a for-profit company, the goal, however, is to make money and to get people to spend money on tourism. Substantial changes and promises could scare potential clients, in this case tourists, away or feel excluded as it is often seen that one person cannot achieve such on their own. By keeping their promises smaller and easily comprehensible, companies stay approachable and avoid scaring away potential customers.

Slow travel can be seen as a solution to this problem. It does not take much effort from a company to promise this, and also from a tourist to act that way. Taking public transport is highlighted often, as is walking and cycling. This also ties in with tourism companies leading by example rather than commanding as the companies promise to use public transport themselves. Showing what is being done can create credibility. The websites also highlight active work towards more sustainable actions being done. With reporting and showcasing the improvements already in practice, tourism companies can bring to view that they are taking the subject of sustainability seriously. Clear reporting on the results of the improvements is

not provided by these two websites, which leaves the promises of more sustainable actions empty.

6   Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find out what kind of language is used in two Finnish tourism-focused companies' websites' sustainability sections. It explains how these two tourism companies use less directive language where they would tell their potential customer, a tourist or a traveler, how they should act when traveling to their destination, and instead focus more on showcasing the company's own achievements towards more sustainable practices. In addition to laying out what has already been done, the websites also make promises of more sustainable actions in the future. The work towards a more sustainable future has already started for these companies and active work is being done to achieve more goals in coming times. Tourism companies, in that way, lead by example when reporting about their own actions and with that encouraging a tourist to act more sustainable too. Actively making more sustainable choices is made to seem like a norm.

As its primary material this study used two Finnish tourism websites, My Helsinki and Visit Tampere, and examined their websites' sustainability sections. Using speech act theory as a framework, this study analyzed the language used in these pages based on the categorization of samples collected from the websites. The language used in the websites' sustainability sections is not directive, as that could be interpreted as too forceful or even rude, possibly scaring the potential tourist away, which, naturally, would not be an ideal outcome for the companies that operate the websites. The language is more marked by the sue of commissives and assertives with which the companies both commit themselves into acting more sustainably and showcase the already made changes that continue to the future and with that they lead by example. It is, however, not possible to verify these commitments as the websites do not provide their visitor with actual sustainable reports.

As tourism is one of the reasons for pollution on the planet, it is necessary for tourism-focused companies to take actions on how to improve the situation. For many traveling is the main way of spending holidays and it is seen, still, as a status symbol to be able to travel. That is one of the reasons why traveling and tourism will probably not decrease or stop in the near future. Therefore, it is important to find alternative, more sustainable ways of traveling and to keep up with this progress, it is important that the tourism companies modify their actions to suit this.

With people demanding more sustainable traveling alternatives the sustainability sections on tourism-focused companies' websites are an essential part of marketing. By showcasing the actions, they have taken towards more sustainable ways of operating, these companies not only highlight their own sustainability but also encourage tourists to act that way too. Emphasizing slow travel, especially considering transport, tourism companies show their potential clients that in order to act more sustainable one does not take huge actions and that seemingly small things count as well.

The companies make promises and statements and with that they communicate what they do towards sustainability. Instead of commanding they lead by example. More sustainable ways of acting and slow travel are highlighted and made seem like a norm, in that way encouraging the reader of these pages to act that way too. As the topic of sustainability in business is a rather new concept, the actions these companies take, and their results cannot yet be measured. At this moment, it is hard to say whether they are beneficial and functioning towards their goal of a more sustainable future. Therefore, in future studies on the topic of sustainability and language associated with it even more websites could be taken into consideration and the consequences of promises made by the companies could be studied.

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