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Creating the world's most sustainable and attractive travel destination

A content analysis of sustainable place brand identities in Southern Sweden

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Abstract

This study examines how the place brand identities of seven Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) in southern Sweden guide their sustainable tourism communication. With the importance of sustainability becoming clear, interest in sustainable place branding is growing rapidly in scholarly and professional contexts. In practice, Sweden aims to become the world's most sustainable travel destination by 2030. Thus, its regions are encouraged to use nudging to promote sustainable tourism, prompting visitors to make sustainable choices to reduce the negative impact. Despite a strong communicative link, place branding research focuses on tourism, business, and politics but lacks consistency with practice. This study examines the communicative aspect of sustainable place branding to reveal any dissonance between region's place brand identities (PBIs)and their sustainable tourism communication.

This study conducts a two-stage analysis of textual content from seven DMO websites: Stage 1 quantitatively analyses the PBIs using deductive coding following Taecharungroj's (2019) Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity framework. Stage 2 qualitatively analyses the sustainable communication utilising inductive and deductive coding based on the Sweden's *Strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality industry*. Stage 1 findings indicated homogenous PBIs with a focus on natural landscapes and outdoor activities, while Stage 2 showed that sustainable tourism communication primarily focuses on environmental sustainability, followed by social and economic sustainability.

The study recommends DMOs to use their unique PBIs to guide sustainable strategies, involve visitors in sustainable practices, and emphasise making tourism more sustainable instead of just implementing certain practices, to enrich visitor experience so that Sweden can meet their 2030 goal.

Keywords: place brand identity, place branding, sustainability, content analysis

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Introduction

There is a significant urgency for implementing sustainable practices as global temperatures continue to rise alongside the knowledge that greenhouse gases must decrease by 43% within five years to prevent a catastrophic increase above 1.5°C (United Nations, n.d.). Sustainability is however, not isolated to environmental issues as it also has social and economic impacts that need to be addressed (United Nations, 2015). For instance, a rigid economy may lack the ability to accommodate for current needs in an unpredictable tourism sector. Such an economic model can thus hamper job safety an threaten the livelihood of individuals working within tourism (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). Tourism is one area that has a considerable impact on the world's emissions, both a harmful and valuable practice as it also accounts for a sizeable share of multiple countries GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2022). Despite Brundtland's (1987) well-known report on sustainable development that outlines how to ensure a common future for all generations, there is still a focus on environmental ideas, overlooking social and economic sustainability (M. A. White, 2013). Thus, harnessing the power of tourism in a responsible, well-rounded, and sustainable manner is of utmost importance to bolster economies, nurture communities and continue to protect natural and cultural assets.

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged travel-habits (World Economic Forum, 2022), with 81% of people worldwide now believing sustainable travel is important (Statista Research Department, 2022). Amid this change, however, 'over-tourism' has become a topic of discussion. People are flocking to the same destinations causing a lack of connection with the local environment and deeply affecting residents (Skinner, 2021). This has caused the

question to be asked "whether tourism can be sustainable at all or whether it is an unsustainable practice by definition" (Kalandides & Gresillon, 2021, p. 11).

Despite the environmental harm and social injustices tourism can cause, people are and will continue to travel. Thus, the relevance of this study is apparent as it elucidates practices that can ease the impact of tourism, on both the environment and the community, and in some instances prove to be beneficial to the destination.

The Swedish Case

Revising the strategy of the place brand is one way to address certain shortcomings of tourism, for example by implementing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) or Agenda 2030. This is a list of 17 objectives that encourage action across issues such as poverty, corruption, the environment, and social justice. The aim is that these all be resolved by 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

Sweden is one of the countries that has adopted the Agenda 2030 with the goal of becoming "the world's most sustainable and attractive travel destination based on innovation" by 2030 (Visit Sweden, n.d.-a). In their strategy they state: Tourism has a ripple effect - where tourists go, numerous industries witness increase in employment and growth (Näringsdepartementet, 2021, p.5). Crucial to this goal are innovations within transportation, the food system and circular economy that are thought to propel Sweden's tourism sector over the coming years (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). Place branding plays a major role in meeting this goal and can succeed in attracting both international and domestic visitors (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). *Place branding* is defined as:

A network of associations in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims,

communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design (Zenker & Braun, 2010, p. 3)

While typical associations of Sweden are the health and education system, standard of living, infrastructure, natural beauty, environmental friendliness, and progressive stance (FutureBrand, 2019, 2020; Jezierska & Towns, 2018; Pamment, 2016), Sweden's place brand focuses instead on authenticity, openness, freedom, sustainability, and modernity (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). Regional DMOs are responsible for communicating the Swedish brand while also sharing their unique identities in their own place brands. This is done through a *place brand identity* (PBI): a carefully selected identity that is strategically used by DMOs and urban planners to communicate the place as they want it to be seen (Rodrigues et al., 2020; Skinner, 2010). A carefully considered PBI may achieve internal and external change (Boisen et al., 2011), however, DMOs tread a fine line between communicating an authentic and competitive PBI and one that does not commodify the place culture nor misrepresent its residents (Skinner, 2021).

The Current Study

Regarding sustainable place branding, the main problem area that this study investigates is the current lack of agreement and research into understanding how to sustainability communicate the place brand without relying purely on marketing or promotion. Rather than communicating a "sustainable place brand", research suggests that DMOs should instead focus on the bottom-up communication of a place that sustainably balances visitor enjoyment, authenticity, and reflection of residents and stakeholders identities (Skinner, 2021). However, there are currently few studies that investigate this in practice.

This study will examine the relationship between PBI and sustainability by analysing the communication of seven DMOs in the south of Sweden in relation to Sweden's goal of becoming "the world's most sustainable and attractive travel destination based on innovation" by 2030 (Visit Sweden, n.d.-a). The seven regions are Blekinge, Gotland, Halland, Skåne, Småland, Öland, and Östergötland. The study aims to enhance our knowledge of the relationship through a case study using content analysis. Though not generalisable, it can prove as a starting point for future research.

The study is a two-stage content analysis. Stage 1 utilises the Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity framework (Taecharungroj, 2019) to understand the DMOs PBIs. Stage 2 investigates how the DMOs communicate sustainability dimensions based on Sweden's Agenda 2030 strategy (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). The results from the two stages will then be compared, the aim to investigate the role that the regions' PBIs play in how they communicate various aspects of sustainable tourism.

Literature Review

Place Branding

Place branding is a multidisciplinary field of research that has received increased attention over the last two decades in the areas of business, social psychology, sociology, political science and communication (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2018; Hanna et al., 2021; Ingenhoff et al., 2019; Rodrigues & Schmidt, 2021). While place branding is the accumulation of the communication of products and exports, external promotion, domestic and foreign behaviour and policy (Iversen & Hem, 2008), communication based research focuses on the creation and maintenance of the place brand. This is done through the authentic representation of internal stakeholders' identities, external place image, and culture (Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019). As such, Fernández-Cavia et al. (2018) claim that place branding should be seen as an attempt to reorganise the social structure that is a place, looking at more than just marketing elements but seeing place branding as the overarching concept that guides all communication, decisions and strategies (Kavaratzis, 2009). From this perspective, "place branding is a form of communication and the place brand a communication device" (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2018, p. 4).

Much of the research from the communication perspective continues to conceptualise and define the field, often focusing on distinguishing the terms "place branding", "place marketing", and "place promotion" that are used interchangeably (Boisen et al., 2018; Kavaratzis, 2004, 2018). A recent attempt suggests that "place promotion" and "place marketing" are sales and exposure based, attracting new customers through promotional activities, while "place branding" is the process of creating a stable, authentic identity around which all communications should revolve (Boisen, 2015; Boisen et al., 2018; Skinner,

2010). Place branding is in this case the strategic process of selecting stories and meanings in order to differentiate a place, while a place brand is the selected foundation from which all communications stem (Boisen et al., 2018). Place branding is the area of interest for the study at hand as opposed to the two other terms.

Place Brand Identity

The unique dynamics between culture, image, and identity are generally agreed upon as the main drivers for successful place branding (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Identity in this case is the strategic foundation for all outward communication and the reflection of ongoing communicative processes between the place and those who interact with it (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2018; Hankinson, 2015). Further, place identity (PI) is conceived as "pluralistic and fluid" whereas place brand identity (PBI) is "selected and designed" (Kerr & Oliver, 2015, p. 68). PI is created by the self-perceptions of internal stakeholders (Hankinson, 2015) and can be seen as a dynamic process that encapsulates individual's understandings of their "sense of place" in combination with the collective PI grounded in history and culture (Hankinson, 2015; Kalandides, 2011; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). Co-creating PI is vital for an authentic brand which accurately reflects the characteristics of place and those residing there (Hankinson, 2004; Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019; Rodrigues & Schmidt, 2021; Taecharungroj, 2019).

In contrast, PBI is the carefully selected identity which fuels all place branding, strategically used by DMOs and urban planners to communicate the place as they want it to be seen (Rodrigues et al., 2020; Skinner, 2010). While the purpose of this is to emphasise a unique and competitive proposition that supports the development of a place and its

residents (Florek, 2021), it is widely believed that it should still be reflective of the PI in order to be accepted as authentic (Hankinson, 2015).

There have been various attempts at creating frameworks to help understand PI, the most notable and commonly referred to being that of Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) based on the mirroring and reflecting model used in organisational identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2002). This model focuses on the creation and negotiation of PI based on residents' interactions with place, rather than understanding the strategic choice of PBIs across communication channels which instead builds upon place brand attributes. An early understanding of place brand attributes was introduced by Kavaratzis (2009) who outlined eight elements in place brand management that occur within three stages of communication. These elements are: vision and strategy, internal culture, local communities, synergies, infrastructure, cityscape and gateways, opportunities, and communications (pp. 34-35). Kalandides (2011) further developed this, identifying five elements of PI that could be used in bottom-up place branding, considering the dynamic nature of PI, and noting that they work together in a process and should always be considered holistically.

Additional studies of note in this area have investigated what makes up a PI all suggesting different attributes, associations, attractions and personalities that are present among different cities, regions and countries (Florek, 2021; Florek et al., 2006; Hankinson, 2004; Hanna & Rowley, 2008; Konečnik Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013; Vinyals-Mirabent et al., 2019; Wäckerlin et al., 2020; Zenker & Beckmann, 2013). Ruzzier and Chernatony (2013) suggest an applied process for practitioners where one must use primary and secondary research to understand place image and identity before creating a PBI.

A more recent contribution put forward by Taecharungroj (2019) is the *Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity* (Figure 1), a model which sums up prior research in the field and acts as

a midway between other suggested frameworks (Florek et al., 2006; Hankinson, 2004; Hanna & Rowley, 2008; Kavaratzis, 2009). While this is a relatively new model, its three categories of "Place Physics", "Place Practices", and "Place Personality" have been tested in two recent studies (Rodrigues & Schmidt, 2021; Taecharungroj, 2019). In this model, *Place Physics* refers to the tangible and physical attributes associated with a place, *Place Practices* refers to the behaviours and interactions that occur within the place, and *Place Personality* refers to the emotional and spiritual associations of a place. The model itself outlines how these three pillars interact in creating a PBI. Here, physics and practices interact in the form of "Institutions" or social structures such as norms and power relations. Practices and personality create "Experience" which is how a place resonates with those who engage with it. Physics and Personality create "Representation" which is how the place is viewed and communicated externally.

Figure 1

The Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity (Taecharungroj, 2019, p.45)
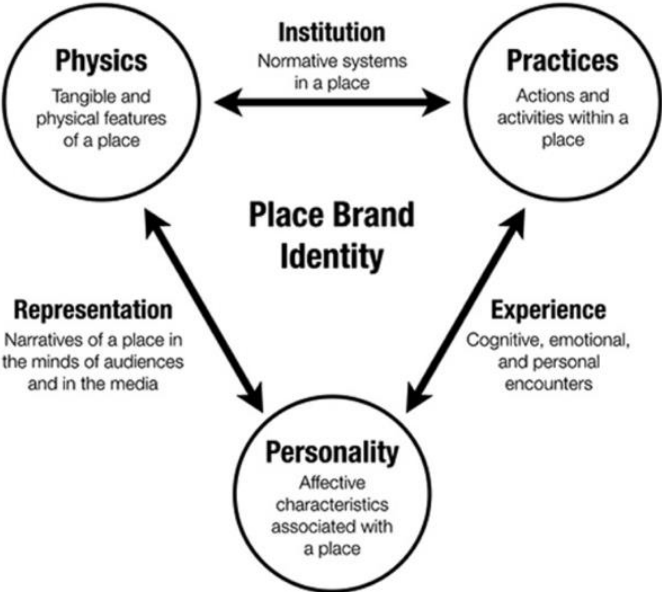
Place Brand Identity Management

Traditionally, destination management organisations (DMOs) have been responsible for creating place brands and communicating engaging and unique identities in order to be seen as attractive (Florek, 2021). In an ideal world this means creating a strong place brand that differentiates the place from competitors but remains true to the reality of the PI (Rodrigues et al., 2020). Place brand management has been at the centre of empirical research in the field, with a growing number of studies investigating online communications on DMO and municipality websites. An early study by Florek et al. (2006) investigated common place branding techniques on city council's websites in New Zealand, their findings show that most websites were similar in structure and few communicated the respective brands in an effective manner. Similarly, Fernández-Cavia and Castro (2015) suggest DMOs should recognise their websites as more than just a centre for information, but an opportunity to engage with potential visitors. Other studies in this field include Choi et al. (2007) who examine the disparities between DMO communications and place image in Macau, and Hanna and Rowley (2019), Vinyals-Mirabent et al. (2019) and Vinyals-Mirabent and Mohammadi (2018) who investigate communication of place personality through DMOs web platforms. However, most of these focus on positioning and personality rather than PBI.

In the past years, a concern for the sustainability of place branding has arisen, with scholars critiquing the unbounded management of effective place brands (Skinner, 2021). This has led to problems such as "over-tourism", "disruption to communities", "the loss of amenities", and the "touristification of the physical environment that prioritizes […] visitors over residents" (Skinner, 2021, p. 186). Furthermore, there is growing critique against the top-down management of place branding present in much of the past literature, in which

the opinions and ideals of key stakeholders and the community are overlooked (Hereźniak & Anders-Morawska, 2021). This has resulted in a shift towards green place branding, managing digital communications, co-creation of PI, and sustainable place brand management (Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021; Rodrigues et al., 2020).

Additionally, DMOs often come under criticism in academia for creating a place brand that does not reflect internal stakeholder identities or the existing infrastructure (Boisen et al., 2018; Hanna & Rowley, 2015). Failing to do so can consequently lead to rejection of the brand by locals (Hankinson, 2015) and lacking competitiveness (Boisen et al., 2018) on the local level which in turn may affect potential overall goals for increased tourism on the national level (Florek et al., 2006). In the worst case, this can mean becoming attractive to "the wrong type of tourists" who may not be respectful to the place, leading to locals becoming resentful of tourism altogether (Skinner, 2021, p. 182). In addition to this, the promotion of a PBI that has no grounds in terms of infrastructure and practices can decrease a place's competitiveness (Hanna & Rowley, 2015). Baseless place promotion is not the only issue as recent research has criticised the simplification of PI - commodifying practices, culture and traditions for marketing purposes (Caprioli et al., 2021; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2015; Tillotson et al., 2021). Therefore, to succeed, it is vital that DMOs find a balance between authentic PBI (Foroudi et al., 2018) and strategic intent (Florek, 2021). Furthermore, management of a place brand should be identity driven and created in dialogue with stakeholders (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013, 2021).

Sweden - A part of the "Nordic" Region

In recent years, Sweden and Scandinavia have been the focus of much place branding research. One stream of research is the Nordic region and the overarching brands of

Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark. Inter-regional branding is most often used to enhance the reputability of multiple places, branding them as one in order to appear more attractive (Pasquinelli, 2015). In the case of the Nordics, this includes presenting concepts such as "Nordic Noir", "Nordic Design, "New Nordic Food" and "The Nordic Music Wonder," (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015 in Lerøy Sataøen, 2021, p.335). This has been investigated through different place branding perspectives, however, very few focus on the implementation of practices in the individual countries (Cassinger et al., 2019). Recent research on DMOs in the area includes Caprioli et al. (2021) who look at the commodification of intangible culture in Sweden and Denmark through DMOs social media communication, critically noting their simplification of the concepts of "hygge" and "fika". Similarly, through an analysis of nation branding manifestations on DMOs websites, Lerøy Sataøen (2021) found that Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, and Demark, all relied on portraying stereotypical ideas of the country's culture, history and nature in order to appear attractive. For instance, Sweden as "ultra-modern" (Musial, 2002 as cited in Lerøy Sataøen, 2021, p.332), Denmark as democratic, and Iceland as "part of the 'exotic North'" (Lerøy Sataøen, 2021; Loftsdóttir, 2015, p. 5). More recent research focused on the Nordic brand worth noting has been conducted by Andersen et al. (2019, 2021) Cassinger et al., (2019, 2021), Lerøy Sataøen (2021), and Magnus (2016).

Another stream of research is Swedish place branding from a political science perspective, where the focus is on implementation of infrastructure and policies and their effects. Notable research includes that of Andersson and James (2018) who studied the Swedish city Växjö, noting that if places use an established green political stance in their place branding it may then lead being accused of 'greenwashing' as the branding efforts highlight environmentally friendly practices that may be deceptive.

Additionally, there has been a focus on the branding of places and the dialogue between stakeholders (Björner & Aronsson, 2022; Cassinger & Eksell, 2017; Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019). Pedeliento and Kavaratzis (2019) present the case of Stockholm where sustainable place branding efforts are performed with a bottom-up approach, enabling, and empowering the residents to lead the charge for sustainable development. Here, sustainability is a core value directly related to the political agenda rather than being an attractive branding element. Björner and Aronsson (2022) analysed the different actors who contribute to the place brand of Dals Långed, including DMOs, local businesses, tourists, and the community.

Sweden's nation brand is well-defined, with guidelines in place for how it should be presented both for domestic and international audiences (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017; Näringsdepartementet, 2021). The Agenda 2030 claims that it is mainly the job of the regions to implement this place brand (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). This directly relates to research about inter-regional branding, and the 'co-opetition' that occurs between regions; working together to boost the overarching brand, but still competing on a local level (Pasquinelli, 2015). Interestingly, there has been little analysis of the inter-regional branding of Sweden, with the country brand as an overarching element in the brand hierarchy or the co-opetition between regions (Pasquinelli, 2015). Additionally, there is little research on the PBIs employed by regional DMOs, other than Kompaniets and Rauhut's (2013) study that analysed municipality websites in Northern Sweden and found that the municipalities tended to copy the strategies of surrounding regions rather than effectively presenting their unique attributes. This is similar to the results found by Florek et al. (2006). Both studies, however, took place over a decade ago so it is likely that these findings are no longer

relevant due to the change in technology and user interaction that means businesses actively need to establish a more competitive online presence.

Sustainable Place Branding

The relationship between sustainability, over-tourism and place branding has become increasingly relevant in place branding literature (Kavaratzis & Florek, 2021). Additionally, DMOs and urban planners are increasingly working to balance urban development with sustainable practices, knowing that if implemented effectively it can lead to economic growth and preservation of natural and cultural heritage (Skinner, 2021). However, this has amounted much criticism, Ripoll Gonzalez and Gale (2023) stating "in the absence of any notable shifts in processes or outcomes, the claims a city is making to being or becoming sustainable should be viewed sceptically" (p. 22).

Research in this area often focuses on 'sustainable' and 'green' place branding, critiquing its authenticity and impact on residents (Chan, 2019; Kalandides & Grésillon, 2021), or 'smart city branding' (Grebosz-Krawczyk, 2021) whereby cities use "technological solutions to improve the management and efficiency of the urban environment" (European Commission, n.d.). However, the field is still in need of development (Govers et al., 2017; Maheshwari et al., 2011), with academics such as Skinner (2021) questioning whether sustainable place branding is just implementing sustainable practices, or whether it is rethinking the concept of branding to appear "attractive" to instead focus on sustaining current tourism levels and nurturing the place itself.

As noted by Kalandides and Gresillon (2021) and Taecharungroj et al. (2019), research and practice is highly focused on the environmental, with a lack of consideration towards the social, cultural and economic aspects of sustainability. In their analysis of 'Sustainable

Berlin', Kalandides and Gresillon (2021) criticise the tourism industry for promoting the 'sustainable city' without considering what these 'green' aspects mean for other elements. This criticism is echoed by Skinner (2021) who states that environmental sustainability is often treated as isolated even though it is affected greatly by social factors. On the other hand, tourism can have a positive impact when sustainability is considered holistically; increased tourism creates a prosperous economy benefiting the community while nature tourism leads to the protection and conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

While this area of research is beginning to see contributions, a clear understanding of successful sustainable place branding is yet to exist. Notable contributions include Taecharungroj et al. (2019) who investigated the different types of sustainable positioning and developed a framework for small town practitioners. They suggests five types of sustainable town; elegant, compassionate, lively, peaceful and, green (p. 223); stating that taking a 'sustainable' position does not necessarily mean the same thing for each place brand. Maheshwari et al. (2011), in a study on branding of a mega-event in Liverpool, notes how place branding campaigns can support sustainable development goals when considered holistically. Additionally, Ryan and Mizerski (2010) explore the economic sustainability that comes from presenting a unique and authentic place brand within a community, while Koumara-Tsitsou and Karachalis (2021) investigate the link between PBI and sustainable development. They suggest that a place brand based on tradition and culture, promoting local products and experiences, can make a place appear unique and attractive whilst contributing to economic and social sustainability and strengthening local pride and culture. This again demonstrates the dynamic nature of sustainability whereby the three dimensions are intertwined. While this research area is growing, there remains a gap when it comes to the relationship between PBI and the three sustainability pillars, with a limited

understanding of how identity affects sustainability communication. Additionally, the majority of research in this area, excluding that of Taecharungroj et al. (2019), are case studies of one or two places meaning that research findings cannot be generalised.

Purpose of the Current Study

The purpose of this study is to further understand how the sustainable place brand is communicated in the tourism industry. It will look at the way seven regions in Sweden use their PBIs to guide communication of economic, social, and environmental sustainability. As outlined in the Strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality industry (Näringsdepartementet, 2021, p. 17) economic sustainability focuses on creating a long-term vision and circular economy that provides a stable foundation for businesses and locals, while social sustainability focuses on preserving culture and local practices, all while ensuring an inclusive work environment. Environmental sustainability focuses on minimising emissions from transport, protecting and preserving the natural and cultural environment and preventing over-tourism by prolonging the season.

While not all aspects are relevant to communication, with tourists as the main audience, many of these do translate to the activities and practices encouraged by DMOs. In communicating sustainability efforts, businesses in Sweden are encouraged to use "nudging", a technique that influences customer behaviour by presenting the more sustainable option as standard (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2022). This means promotion of sustainable practices should appear natural and in line with their PBIs. Thus, by identifying similarities and differences in the websites of DMOs with a clear focus and the shared sustainability agenda, this study aims to understand whether PBI plays

a role in the current communication of sustainability in the travel and tourism industry.

Accordingly, the research questions being explored are:

RQ1: What are the place brand identities communicated on the websites of the seven

DMOs in Southern Sweden?

- *What are the similarities and differences between the place brand identities*

   communicated on the DMO websites?

RQ2: How is sustainable tourism communicated on the websites of the DMOs in

Southern Sweden?

- *What are the similarities and differences between the dimensions of*

   sustainable tourism communicated on the DMO websites?

- *In which ways does the communication of sustainable tourism align with the*

   place brand identity of each region?

As the research field is still being developed, this study focuses on sub-research

questions and does not present hypotheses.

Method

Based on PBI theory, this study is concerned with way DMOs in Southern Sweden communicate sustainable tourism**.** This study follows the social constructivist perspective in which everything is a construction of associations, values, expectations, and emotions that instil different meanings for each individual (Boisen, 2015). Thus, a place is not a physical space but rather a social construct (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2018) created through the interaction of people and spatial elements (Boisen et al., 2011). It is important to understand "the ways in which people relate to places and how places change" (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2018, p. 3) as a place that does not spark association will only exist in a vacuum of the mind (Boisen, 2015). Identity is important here as it represents the dynamic way people relate to space that is created through social relationships (Boisen et al., 2011), culture and practices (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

Research Design

After reviewing previous empirical research in the place branding field, a content analysis was deemed the most appropriate method when investigating the communication of place (brand) identity in digital form (Caprioli et al., 2021; Choi et al., 2007; Florek et al., 2006; Oliveira & Panyik, 2015; Rodrigues & Schmidt, 2021; Taecharungroj, 2019). Content analysis is effective when used in regard to comparative research questions (Treadwell & Davis, 2019), such as the current study which compares differences and similarities in PBIs.

This study will utilise a two-stage content analysis using qualitative and quantitative elements to give deeper meaning, inspired by Seale et al. (2006) and their study of online cancer support groups that utilises word frequencies investigated in context to give the data

a deeper meaning. In the current study, the quantitative Stage 1 guides the qualitative Stage 2 to understand how PBI guides sustainable tourism strategy.

The first stage of analysis will consist of an automated word frequency to answer RQ1. Quantitative content analysis allows for systematic, objective analysis that can reveal communicative patterns (Bengtsson, 2016; Berelson, 1952; Gill et al., 2008). Automated content analysis minimises coder fatigue (Gill et al., 2008) and aids in processing large datasets (Flick, 2018), two crucial elements for this data-intensive study. Automation may also accelerate analysis and aid with testing for (intercoder) reliability (Dade & Hassenzahl, 2013; Gill et al., 2008). Weaknesses of content analysis includes the issue of finding representative data and its reliance on fault-free coding that can cease the possibility to generalise data, thus great attention must be at the forefront throughout coding (Maier, 2017). Intercoder reliability and steps to ensure validity and reliability is declared in Pilot Study section.

The second stage will be a qualitative analysis, investigating how the Strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality industry (Næringsdepartementet, 2021) has been adapted by each region (RQ2 and 2A) and communicated with regards to their PBIs identified in Stage 1 (RQ2B). Reliable coding-frames as employed in this study compounds the strength of content analysis compared to other qualitative data analysis methods, but may obscure underlying meanings of the data (Flick, 2018). Blending quantitative and qualitative measures can overcome this weakness and provide multiple perspectives, as is also relevant for the social constructivist approach (Boisen, 2015; Boisen et al., 2011).

Sample

This study uses a purposive sampling method which consists of seven of the eight regional DMOs in Southern Sweden, as referred to by Visit Sweden (2022). West Sweden was excluded from the study as this DMO consists of three larger regions on the same website. The final dataset, once collected, proved to be too large considering the space and time restraints of the study.

The official websites were chosen as the main reference point to a place online; viewed as credible sources that share both informative and interesting content while capturing the essence of a place and its identity (Florek et al., 2006; Luna-Nevarez & Hyman, 2012). The seven regional websites have been identified and can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Overview of Sampling Including Total Pages and Units of Coding

Region	Website	Pages
Blekinge	www.visitblekinge.se	60
Gotland	www.gotland.com	100
Halland	www.visithalland.com	13
Skåne	www.visitskane.com	40
Småland	www.visitsmaland.se	93
Öland	www.oland.se	44
Östergötland	www.visitostergotland.se	14

Only pages in English will be included in the study for two reasons. The first being that, although it could be argued that "sustainable tourism" is travelling domestically and locally, the target markets for Visit Sweden include 10 international destinations targeting tourists from Europe, Asia, and North America (Visit Sweden, n.d.-b). This being considered, most

regional pages only had Swedish and English as a language option, thus it is assumed that international visitors will read the English webpages. This study has chosen to focus on the international audience as Sweden's goal to be the "most sustainable destination in the world", pointing to the destination being a sustainable place to visit environmentally, socially, and economically, rather than this goal being to combat the high emissions of international tourism. The second reason for the choice of including only English pages is due to the language proficiencies of the researchers, in which only one is fluent in Swedish.

Additionally, the sample will only include sections dedicated to tourism to reflect Sweden's 2030 goal that strictly relates to tourism (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). It is important in a content analysis to limit analysis to only those aspects that are relevant to the research (Schreier, 2012). As such, irrelevant textual information will be excluded. The exclusion criteria can be seen in Appendix A.

The collection of the web-based data was challenging as the websites have differing information architecture, size, and amount of content. Setting a valid and reliable sample size that could be used across websites proved difficult. Previous studies investigating place brand communication on websites deemed the home page and pages within first two to three levels of hierarchy as sufficient for content analysis (Choi et al., 2007; Lerøy Sataøen, 2021; Vinyals-Mirabent et al., 2019). These studies achieved a representative sample, however, no justification for their choice is presented. The current study will include pages within two clicks of the homepage (three levels deep and including any clicks on the menu and submenus of the site). This is based on three factors:

(i)   It was calculated using the online tool SimilarWeb that the average 'pages per visit' for the seven DMO websites was ≈ 2.58 pages (as of November 2022-January 2023) (SimilarWeb, 2022a, 2022b).

(ii)   The different information architecture means that in some websites all pages

can be accessed within three clicks whereas others produce over 600 pages.

Thus, to make it fair, it was reasoned that all websites of the study should

receive similar treatment.

(iii)   Data within the first two clicks of each website were considered essential for

answering the research questions as most websites share a similar structure by

typically introducing content to the visitor in a hierarchical manner. Randomly

chosen pages could as such be difficult to use in a comparative manner.

Categories

To ensure validity, the categories used in Stage 1 and Stage 2 were primarily created

deductively to ensure that they adequality represented the aim of the research. Several

categories were then created inductively throughout the pilot study.

Stage 1: Place Brand Identity

The first stage follows Taecharungroj's (2019) study on PBI in which the Three Pillars of

Place Brand Identity framework is used to categorise data. Although used previously in

research related to user generated content (UGC), it has been deemed appropriate for use in

this study due to the nature and development of the framework, whereby it was created

using a summary of previously established place brand elements. Additionally, the

categories have been tested in previous studies (Rodrigues & Schmidt, 2021; Taecharungroj,

2019). Something to note, however, is that Taecharungroj's (2019) study excludes the

elements of vision, values, and mission due to the nature of the data being based on UGC.

This has been adapted for the purpose of the current study which focuses instead on

strategic communication. The content analysis therefore begins with background research identifying the mission, values, slogan, and vision of each region which will then be taken into consideration as part of the PBI (see Appendix B).

The categories in the framework are "Place Physics", "Place Practices", and "Place Personality". According to Taecharungroj (2019), *Place Physics* refers to the physical settings, or "perceptual tangible features" (p. 44) of a place, including museums, sport facilities, hotels, restaurants and theatres, as well as natural and geographical settings. *Place Practices* are likened to human activities that can reflect a sort of lifestyle and may include events, rituals, parades, and performances, as well as social relations with stakeholders. Lastly, *Place Personality* is symbolic in the sense that it may reflect the resident's personality and the environment's character as it relates to personal values and other emotional attributes (Taecharungroj, 2019). The current study further follows Taecharungroj's (2019) process of defining categories by word types; all object nouns categorised as Place Physics, all verbs and person nouns as Place Practices, and all adjectives as Place Personality (see Table 2). These word types reflect the contents of the categories; nouns being tangible features, verbs being practices and action words, and adjectives being characteristics. Whilst the researchers agree with this method of categorisation, the decision was made to manually assign categories to words that were not fitting. E.g., "activity" is not a physical, tangible feature of a place despite it being a noun as thus was categorised as Place Practices.

Table 2

The Coding Framework for Stage 1

Category	Word type	Coded words
Place Physics	Nouns	xx, **xx**, **xx**, xx, xx, xx, xx, **xx**
Place Practices	Verbs	xx, **xx**, xx, xx, **xx**, **xx**, xx, xx
	Person nouns	xx, xx, **xx**, xx, xx, **xx**, xx, xx
Place Personality	Adjectives	xx, xx, **xx**, **xx**, **xx**, xx, xx, xx

Stage 2: The Sustainability Strategy

The categories used in second stage of analysis are deductive and have been derived

from Sweden's Strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality industry

(Näringsdepartementet, 2021) (Appendix C). The three main categories – "Social

Sustainability", "Environmental Sustainability", and "Economic Sustainability" - are taken

from the national strategy document but align with the established elements of

sustainability (White, 2013). Subcategories are derived from outlined plans for each goal and

were deduced with the DMOs websites in mind, thereby focusing on categories related to

the promotion of sustainable tourism and hospitality, rather than those pertaining to

sustainable development (e.g., infrastructure and policies). Additionally, several of these

subcategories have been divided further where deemed necessary, and several additional

categories were added following the pilot study. The coding framework is illustrated in

Figure 2 and the coding manual with the criteria for coding shown in Appendix D.

Figure 2

The Coding Framework for Stage 2

Sustainable Tourism Communication

Economic Sustainability

- Certifications
- Circular and Shared Economy
- Collaboration
- Equipment Rental
- Events

Social Sustainability

- Accessibility
    - Digital
    - Physical
- Civil Society
- Cultural Heritage
    - Food Culture
    - Intangible culture
    - Known Figures
    - Sami culture
    - Tangible culture
- Health
- Inclusion
- Local Businesses
- Local Products

Environmental Sustainability

- Cultural Environment
    - Cultural Heritage
    - Natural Heritage
- Diversifying Experiences
- Nature Tourism
- Preserving and Protecting Nature
- Second Hand
- Teaching Responsibility
- Transport
    - Transport to a place
    - Transport at a place
- Sustainable Food
- Sustainable Products

The Content Analysis

Web pages tend to be regularly updated and information changes regularly. To lessen the effect that had on this study all data was collected on March 29th, 2023. The textual data from each region's website was pasted into Microsoft Word documents and then transferred to ATLAS.ti for analysis. The two stages of content analysis that followed are further illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

The Methodological Approach

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │     Data Collection     │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
                       │                   │
        ┌──────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────┐
        │     Stage 1      │        │     Stage 2      │
        └──────────────────┘        └──────────────────┘
                 │                           │
    ┌─────────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────┐
    │ Word frequency analysis │   │ Code the document       │
    │ using Atlas.ti          │   │ according to the        │
    │                         │   │ deductively created     │
    └─────────────────────────┘   │ sustainability          │
                 │                │ categories              │
    ┌─────────────────────────┐   └─────────────────────────┘
    │ Categorise results into │              │
    │ the Three Pillars of    │              │
    │ Place Brand Identity    │              │
    │ using Taecharungroj's   │              │
    │ (2019) framework.       │              │
    └─────────────────────────┘              │
                 │                           │
    ┌─────────────────────────┐              │
    │ Create a word cloud      │             │
    │ using Atlas.ti           │             │
    └─────────────────────────┘              │
                 │                           │
              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
              │ Look for similarities and    │
              │ differences in the           │
              │ communication of             │
              │ sustainability               │
              └──────────────────────────────┘
```
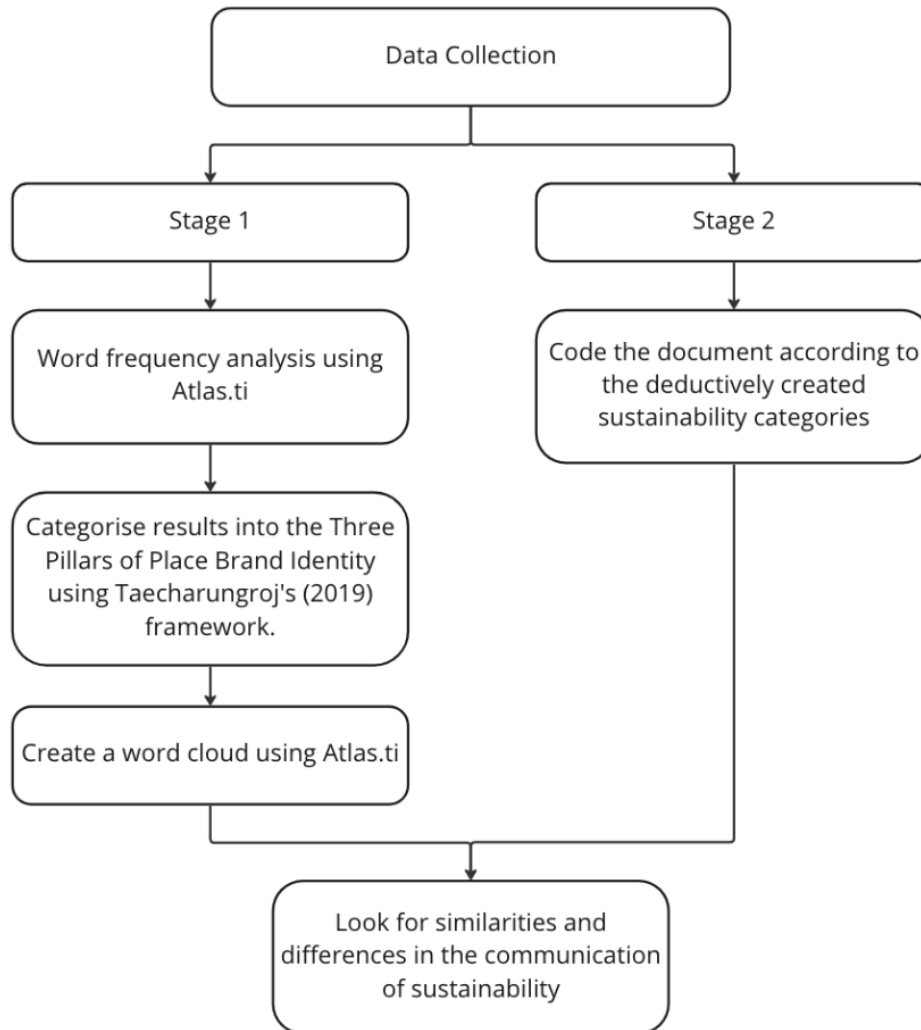
Stage 1: Place Brand Identity

The first stage of analysis followed the same steps as the textual place brand analysis carried out by Taecharungroj (2019) – beginning with a quantitative word frequency analysis using ATLAS.ti to automatically generate the results. ATLAS.ti automatically excludes words such as "a", "in", and "the" which was deemed appropriate as these words do not add value to the study. Additionally, ATLAS.ti automatically infers base forms, combining words such as "hike" and "hiking" which was deemed necessary as the study focuses on collecting the concepts communicated by the DMO rather than the specific words. Following the automatic analysis, the researchers manually excluded any words that did not add value to

the analysis such as "many", "also", and "along". The context and use of these words were identified before excluding them. For the full stop list see Appendix E.

Following the automatic word frequency analysis, a word cloud was generated from the top fifty words. Fifty words were chosen as, following the pilot study, this number showed to adequately reflect PBI without adding additional low volume words. The results were then categorised. When the analysis had been completed for all documents, the results were then compared, and any unique concepts were highlighted.

Stage 2: The Sustainability Strategy

Before beginning the qualitative content analysis, the material was segmented according to formal criteria, units of analysis being sentences which were placed on individual lines on ATLAS.ti. Due to space and time constraints, it was not possible for both researchers to code all seven websites, so the researchers coded half each. To ensure consistency they read the other's documents after the data analysis and alerted one another of any strong disagreements.

Comparative Analysis

Following the two stages of content analysis, the results from each stage were compared to investigate whether any similarities and differences in the way the regions communicate the same sustainability agenda were reflective of their PBIs. The aim here was not to come to a generalisable understanding of the relationship between PBI and sustainable communication but to do a case study of seven regions with a focus on sustainable branding to understand the role their PBIs play in how they communicate sustainable travel and tourism.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted by the two researchers prior to the main content analysis. To ensure reliability, which in the case of qualitative content analysis refers to the quality of the coding framework that will be used (Schreier, 2012), the researchers went through two sessions of intercoder training during the pilot test. Stage 1 was completed together. The consistency of the coding manual for Stage 2 was tested and measured through inter-coder test for percentage of similarity. Where similarity was low, it helped identify issues and strengthen the framework.

The pilot test analysed two different DMO websites; first the website of Visit Örebro, a DMO in Middle Sweden (www.visitorebro.se), and second the website of Höga Kusten, a DMO in Northern Sweden (www.hogakusten.com). The first part of the pilot test was treated as an intercoder training. This was the analysis of Visit Örebro whereby the coders worked to test the coding manual. The data was collected and both researchers completed the two stages of analysis. Following the word frequency, the concepts were compared and a process for adding to the stop-words list was agreed on. All examples of each word were coded in context. Following this procedure, it was decided that this step did not add much depth to the analysis and enough information could be seen in the initial data taken from the word cloud, so this step was taken out of the research design.

The second stage of the analysis was conducted. The results of each researcher were compared using a Simple Percentage Agreement test carried out automatically using ATLAS.ti. This is calculated as: the number of units to which both researchers have coded divided by the total number of units coded, timed by 100 ((Friese, 2021). This is seen as a sufficient method of measuring intercoder reliability when a detailed coding framework has

been used (Schreier, 2012). This resulted in a similarity of 49.9% between coders (Appendix F). The areas that demonstrated most dissimilarity between coded segments "Food Culture", "Sustainable Food", "Cultural Environment", "Tangible Culture, and "Collaboration". Additionally, there was a disparity when it came to the coding of repeated excerpts, whereby only one researcher coded them. Next, the researchers discussed the identified differences in the coding process and updated the coding manual accordingly which included merging categories and adding additional conditions.

Following this, both researchers coded the Höga Kusten website. Another simple percentage of similarity test presented a greatly improved result of 68.3% over 30 categories (Appendix F), which while not considered satisfactory showed a considerable improvement. Disparities in the categories "Collaboration", "Cultural Environment", "Nature Tourism", "Local Businesses", and "Accessibility" were noted. The coded documents were examined by the researchers and all differences discussed. When an agreement was reached on how a category should be used, the codebook was updated to minimalise future issues. This included adding more examples, merging several categories, and refining the criteria for coding each category.

The main challenge presented during the pilot was the coding during the second stage of analysis. The initial coding manual was not specific enough to cover all aspects mentioned by the DMOs. Following the pilot test, this was improved with clarification of what each category contained and further examples. Additionally, it was found that the identification of all words used more than ten times resulted in too large of a sample in the larger website. Here it is difficult to get an insight into the PBI as so many words are included. It was decided that a smaller sample size would give a more focused insight and thus the criteria for stage 1 became the top fifty words.

It was decided following the pilot study, that the first stage of analysis could give an adequate insight into the PBIs of the different regions, with the possibility to look closer at any specific elements through an automatic text search using ATLAS.ti during the discussion stage. In conclusion, the researchers deem that, based on the pilot test, the study gives sufficient data to begin understanding the role identity plays in communicating sustainability.

Ethical considerations

Drisko and Maschi (2015) note that there are few mentions of ethical issues in studies utilising content analysis, partly due to it being non-reactive (Schreier, 2012) and its objective nature (Burles & Bally, 2018; Treadwell & Davis, 2019). Qualitative coding of data is a possible issue as this can be more subjective. It is important therefore that the coding manual is detailed, and that the researchers code separately and compare results for any disparities to ensure validity.

The current study is performed on publicly available websites and does not collect personal data, e.g., in the form of UGC, and so informed consent is not needed. As this study does not make use of interviews, there are fewer ethical considerations regarding subjective narratives (Burles & Bally, 2018). The current study poses a low risk as there is no participation involved meaning there is no need for consideration of anonymity and confidentiality. Additionally, great care is taken by the researchers of the project to ensure that plagiarism and research misconduct is eliminated.

Findings

In the following section, the findings of the study are presented in the two respective stages. Findings for Stage 1 presents an overview of the region's PBIs that are of a quantitative nature based while Stage 2 is of a more qualitative approach based on a coding frame related to the DMOs communication of sustainability (Appendix D).

Stage 1: Place Brand Identity

Blekinge

A noticeable theme of Blekinge's place brand is its focus on nature and the coast with words like "fishing" (232), "archipelago" (147), "island" (130), "boat" (87), "nature" (80), and "sea" (72). Visit Blekinge's brand identity highlights its proximity to water, with a focus on fishing and the archipelago (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Word Cloud of the 50 Most Common Words on Blekinge's Website

Table 3

Top 10 Words on Blekinge's Website

Word	Total Count	Total Percentage
Fishing	232	1.79%
Blekinge	220	1.70%
Archipelago	147	1.13%
Island	130	1.00%
Experience	104	0.80%
Karlskrona	99	0.76%
Boat	87	0.67%
Nature	80	0.62%
Ronneby	72	0.56%
Sea	72	0.56%

Place Physics emphasises outdoor and nature experiences with words like "adventure", "forest", "outdoor", and "reserve" ("nature reserve") (Table 4). 'Place Practices' contains "fishing" and "hike", whereas the Place Personality is characterised by terms like "exciting" and "large,". "Exciting" indicates nature-oriented activities like ice skating and fishing, and "large" refers to the region's extensive natural landscape and numerous lakes, which has a clear influence on Blekinge's PBI.

Table 4

Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity: Blekinge

Category	Coded words
Name concepts	**Blekinge, Hanö, Karlshamn, Karlskrona, Olofström, Ronneby, Sweden, Sölvesborg**
Place physics	Accommodation, archipelago, area, **ark56**, boat, coast, food, forest, island, lake, museum, nature, **outdoor**, **pike**, place, reserve, restaurant, **salmon**, sea, tour, trail, trip, water, world
Place practices (verbs)	activity, adventure, discover, enjoy, experience, explore, fish, fishing, hike, offer, year
Place practices (person nouns)	guide
Place personality	beautiful, exciting, good, large

Gotland

Visit Gotland shows a varied PBI with words such as "nature" (126), "experience" (110), "museum" (102) along with more unique words such as "medieval", "century", "rauk", and "island" (Figure 5). These words relate to Gotland's past, including the Stone Age and Viking era, e.g., "medieval" pertains to the annual "Medieval Week" event while "rauk" describes the rare natural rock formations. Fewer practices like "experience" and "shop," are observed in the region due to Gotland's emphasis on the Place Physics and cultural history.

Figure 5

Word Cloud of the 50 Most Common Words on Gotland's Website

Table 5

Top 10 Words on Gotland's Website

Word	Total Count	Total Percentage
Gotland	576	3.16%
Visby	239	1.31%
Island	174	0.95%
Year	134	0.73%
Nature	126	0.69%
Place	112	0.61%
Experience	110	0.60%
Farm	108	0.59%
Museum	102	0.56%
Open	94	0.52%

Visit Gotland includes some unique words (Table 6). Notably; "pippi" (Person Nouns) for Pippi Långstrump, a fictional Swedish character by Astrid Lindgren; "film" (Place Physics) mainly relating to the "Bergman Week"- event that celebrates film and the Swedish movie

director Ingmar Bergman; "Fårö" ('Name Concepts'); the largest detached island of Gotland

with strong ties to "film" as it hosts the Bergman Week; "Cultural" (Place Personality) further

emphasises the cultural atmosphere of Gotland. Additionally, words in the Place Physics of

Gotland include "age", "church", "film", "medieval", "rauk", and "world", with "world"

referring to Visby's UNESCO World Heritage Site (Table 6). The focus is on the cultural history

of the island, with limited mention of locals, but hints of internal stakeholders with words as

"farm", "people", and "art".

Table 6

Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity: Gotland

Category	Coded words
Name concepts	**Fårö**, **Gotland**, **Visby**
Place physics	**age**, area, art, bus, century, church, city, **course**, **easter**, farm, **film**, food, history, hotel, island, **medieval**, museum, nature, **people**, place, **rauk**, world, restaurant, road, sea, shop, stone, summer, tour, train
Place practices (verbs)	activity, experience, shop, walk, year
Place practices (person nouns)	child, guide, **Pippi**
Place personality	beautiful, **cultural**, good, large, long, open, **rich**, small

Halland

Compared to the other regions, Halland has largest number of unique words. A

relatively refined identity is evident with a focus on food, locals, and nature-related

experiences, all of which are often intertwined. The regularly occurring words "beach",

"water", "sea", "surf", "dune", and "sand" point to Halland's coastal nature and "locally",

"produce", "farm", and "beer" points to the food culture of Halland (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Word Cloud of the 50 Most Common Words on Halland's Website

Table 7

Top 10 Words on Halland's Website

Word	Total Count	Total Percentage
Halland	87	2.06%
Beach	86	2.04%
Trail	45	1.07%
Sweden	38	0.90%
Water	32	0.76%
Child	31	0.73%
Good	31	0.73%
Sea	31	0.73%
Farm	29	0.56%
Nature	25	0.56%

Table 8 shows notable unique words of Halland; "dune" (Place Physics), "sandy" (Place Personality), and "stretch" (Place Physics), mainly referring to the stretches of sandy dunes in Halland. The region emphasises its Place Practices and Place Personality with words like "buy", "fishing", and "stand" (-up paddle-boarding), "easy", "friendly", and "perfect" rather

than its Place Physics. This highlights the unique practices and personality of the region and those living there rather than just the natural environment.

Table 8

Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity: Halland

Category	Coded words
Name concepts	**Falkenberg, Halland, Halmstad,** Sweden**, Varberg**
Place physics	area, beach, **beer**, castle, coast, **dune**, farm, forest, hotel, nature, place, **produce**, reserve, restaurant, **sand**, sea, **spa**, **stretch**, trail, water
Place practices (verbs)	activity, **buy**, discover, enjoy, experience, fishing, offer, shop, **stand**, **surf**, walk
Place practices (person nouns)	child, **family**
Place personality	good, **easy**, exciting, **friendly, fun**, local, locally, long, open, **perfect, sandy**, small

Skåne

The PBI of Skåne is mixed. Food, nature, and the culture of Skåne are communicated in varying ways though few *unique* factors are promoted. Museums, shopping, and nature-experiences sum up the region.

Figure 7

Word Cloud of the 50 Most Common Words on Skåne's Website

"Trail" (111), "park" (104), "shop" (92), and "city" (87) account for Skåne's most

common words (Table 9).

Table 9

Top 10 Words on Skåne's Website

Word	Total Count	Total Percentage
Skåne	381	2.23%
Trail	111	0.65%
Park	104	0.61%
Enjoy	101	0.59%
Sweden	98	0.57%
Malmö	94	0.55%
Shop	92	0.54%
Place	90	0.53%
Beach	88	0.52%
City	87	0.51%

One of the unique words of Skåne is "different" (Place Personality), despite Skåne having the fewest unique words out of all regions. The other unique words are "Lund", "Malmö", "Skåne", "centre", "south", and "town" (Table 10).

Table 10

Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity: Skåne

Category	Coded words
Name concepts	**Lund, Malmö, Skåne**, Sweden, Swedish
Place physics	area, art, beach, castle, **centre**, city, design, farm, food, forest, museum, national, nature, park, place, restaurant, sea, **south**, tour, **town**, trail, train, view, water, world,
Place practices (verbs)	bike**,** enjoy**,** experience**,** explore**,** hike, offer**,** shop**,** walk, year
Place practices (person nouns)	child
Place personality	beautiful, **different**, good, great, large, local, long, old, open, small

Småland

Småland shows a strong nature based PBI with words such as "lake" (245), "nature" (181), "forest" (162), "trail" (160), and "park" (142) (Figure 8).

Figure 8

Word Cloud of the 50 Most Common Words on Småland's Website

      Percentage wise, Småland mentions its name the least compared to all other regions

(Table 11) and has few unique words.

Table 11

Top 10 Words on Småland's Website

Word	Total Count	Total Percentage
Småland	393	1.48%
Lake	245	0.92%
Nature	181	0.68%
Forest	162	0.61%
Trail	160	0.60%
Museum	152	0.57%
Place	144	0.54%
Park	142	0.53%
Experience	139	0.52%
Sweden	128	0.48%

As shown in Table 12, notable words of Småland include "Astrid" (Place Practices) for the author Astrid Lindgren and "IKEA" (Place Physics). Words categorised as Place Physics dominates Småland's PBI.

Table 12

Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity: Småland

Category	Coded words
Name concepts	**Jönköping, Kalmar, Småland**, Sweden, Swedish, Växjö
Place physics	area, castle, century, church, city, design, exhibition, food, forest, glass, history, hotel, **house, Ikea**, island, lake, museum, national, nature, park, part, place, restaurant, tour, trail, view, water, world
Place practices (verbs)	adventure, bike, enjoy, experience, offer, shop, year
Place practices (person nouns)	Astrid, guide, Lindgren,
Place personality	beautiful, large, long, old, small

Öland

The PBI of Öland celebrates its rare nature in varying ways along with different nature-based activities. This is presented with words such as "trail" (37), "nature" (23), and "island" (22) (Figure 9). The island features unique nature such as the landform "alvar" and "rauk" rock formations.

Figure 9

Word Cloud of the 50 Most Common Words on Öland's Website

Table 13

Top 10 Words on Öland's Website

Word	Total Count	Total Percentage
Öland	97	2.81%
Trail	37	1.07%
Trip	32	0.93%
Borgholm	29	0.84%
Road	24	0.69%
Nature	23	0.67%
Island	22	0.64%
Long	22	0.64%
Alvar	21	0.61%
Experience	20	0.58%

Öland's promotion of nature is evident with words like "cycling", "hiking", "coast", "beach", and "landscape" (Table 14).

Table 14

Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity: Öland

Category	Coded words
Name concepts	**Borgholm, Böda, Öland**
Place physics	area, beach, **bird**, castle, coast, food, forest, **fortress**, **holiday**, **ICA**, island, **landscape**, nature, park, path, place, restaurant, road, route, sea, stone, summer, tour, trail, **treasure**, trip, **village**, **wind**, world
Place practices (verbs)	bike, cycle, cycling, enjoy, experience, hiking, year
Place practices (person nouns)	tourist, visitor
Place personality	beautiful, good, great, long, open, popular, small

Östergötland

The focus of Östergötland's PBI are "experience" (21), "nature" (18), and "lake" (16). Two unique words to note are "canal" (26) and "cave" (16), the former referring to Göta Canal – Sweden's longest canal – while the latter refers to the naturally formed Trollegater cave.

Figure 10

Word Cloud of the 50 Most Common Words on Östergötland's Website

Table 15

Top 10 Words on Östergötland's Website

Word	Total Count	Total Percentage
Östergötland	40	2.21%
Canal	26	1.43%
Experience	21	1.16%
Linköpe	21	1.16%
Area	19	1.05%
Sweden	19	1.05%
Nature	18	0.99%
Tourist	17	0.94%
Cave	16	0.88%
Lake	16	0.88%

Notably, the most unique words for Östergötland relate to the person nouns as part of Place Practices, e.g., "grandpa", "Catarina", and "Tåkern", these are further discussed in the section "Differences between regional PBIs".

Table 16

Three Pillars of Place Brand Identity: Östergötland

Category	Coded words
Name concepts	**Göta, Kinda, Kolmården, Linköpe, Linköping, Motala, Norrköping,** Sweden**, Vadstena, Vättern, Östergötland**
Place physics	archipelago, area, boat, bus, **canal**, **car**, castle, **cave**, city, destination, history, lake, museum, nature, part, place, trail, train, world,
Place practices (verbs)	experience, **meet**, travel, year
Place practices (person nouns)	tourist, **grandpa**, **Catarina**, **Tåkern**, **Trollegater**, visitor, Astrid, Lindgren
Place personality	beautiful, **historical**, large, local, long, old, popular, **southern**

Stage 2: The Sustainability Strategy

The section will present the findings from Stage 2 of the content analysis. It begins with a brief overview of the data before diving deeper into how sustainable tourism is communicated. The results from each region are presented in alphabetical order, first looking into the distribution of the three dimensions of sustainability, and then into the individual codes used to communicate sustainable tourism (RQ1).

Overview of the Data

Across all webpages most of the sustainable tourism was related to environmental sustainability (54.55%), followed by social (39.75%), and then economic (5.7%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11

The Distribution of the Sustainability Dimensions Across Total Coded Units (N=6771).
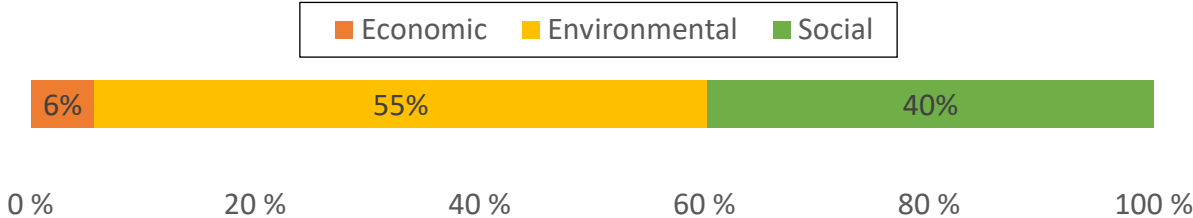
Figure 12 presents the percentage of sustainability coded across each website. Halland was found to include the most at 70%, followed by Skåne (62%), and Gotland and Småland (53%). Öland, Östergötland and Blekinge have a lower percentage of sustainability, with 36%, 34% and 34% respectively.

Figure 12

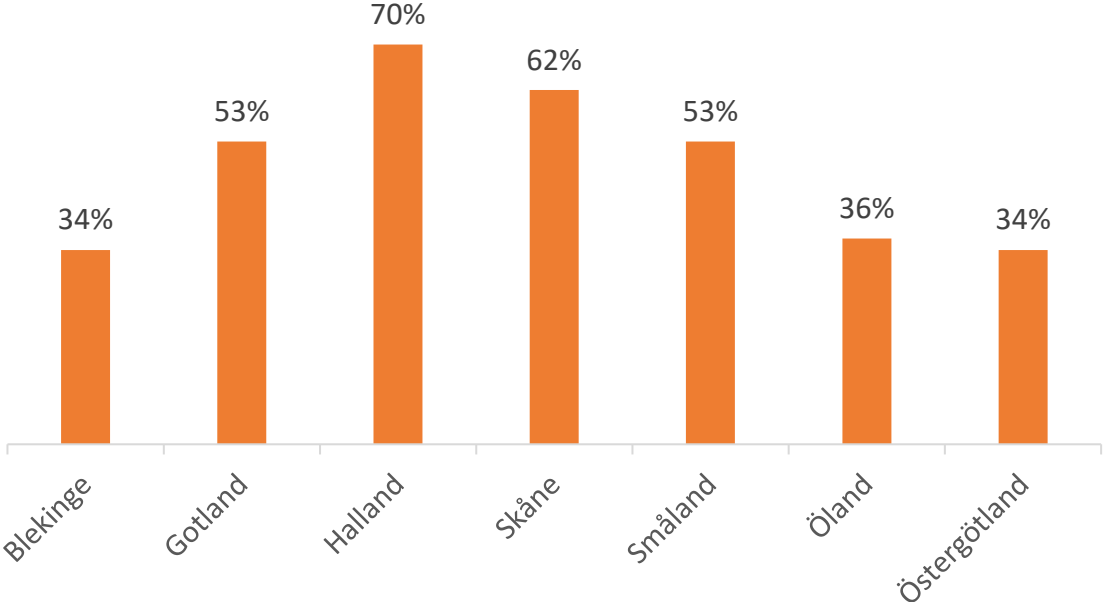*The Presence of Sustainability Across the DMOs Websites*

Figure 13 presents the three dimensions of sustainability as per region whereby environmental sustainability is again the most prominent, however, notably not in all regions. Gotland stands out in this regard, with more cases attributed to social sustainability. For more information on the codes within each category, see Appendix G.

Figure 13

Distribution of the Three Sustainability Pillars by Region

Sustainability Pillars by Region
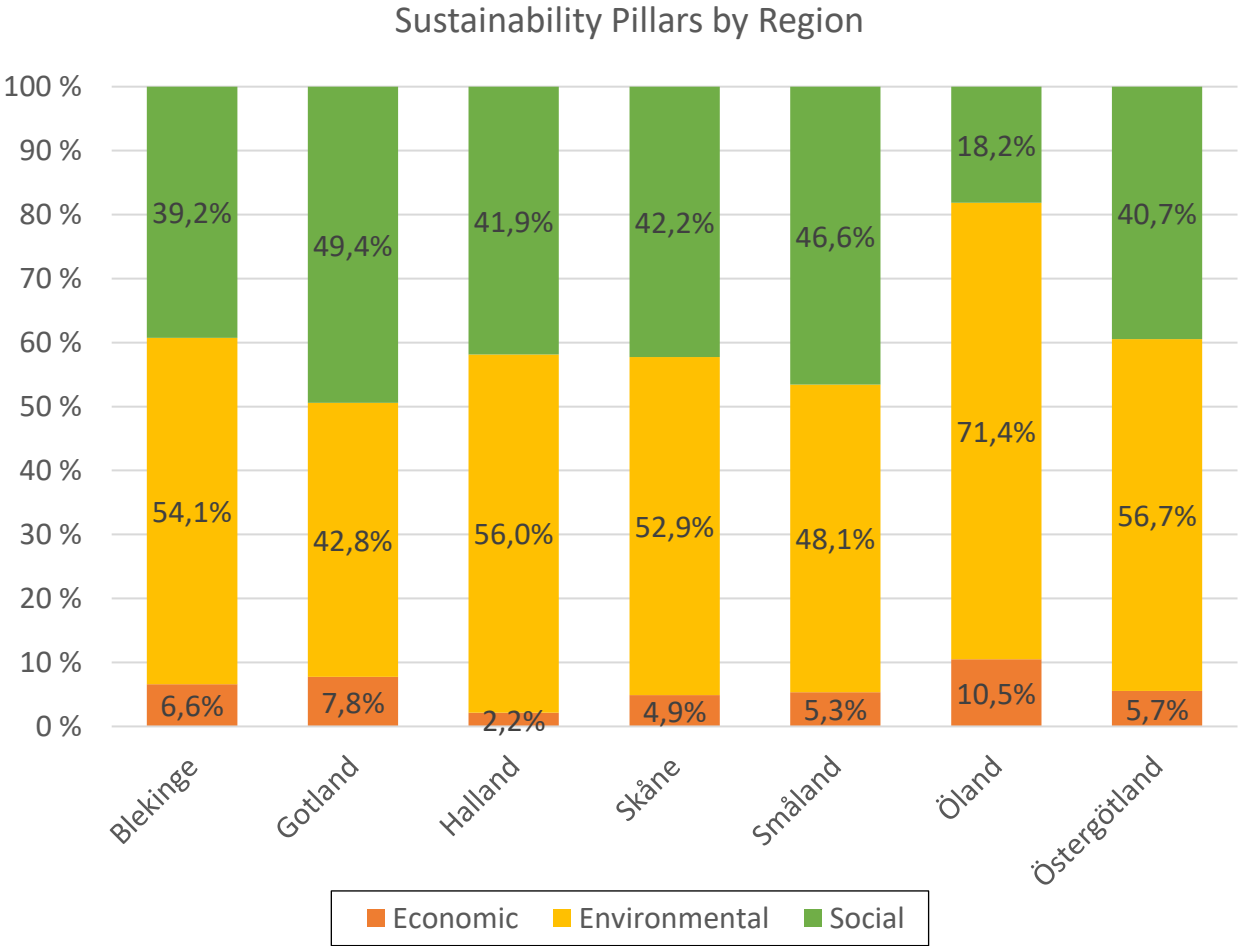
Blekinge

Of the coded units on Blekinge's website (750), it was found that 54% were examples of "Environmental Sustainability", followed by 39% "Social Sustainability" and 7% "Economic Sustainability" (Figure 14).

Figure 14

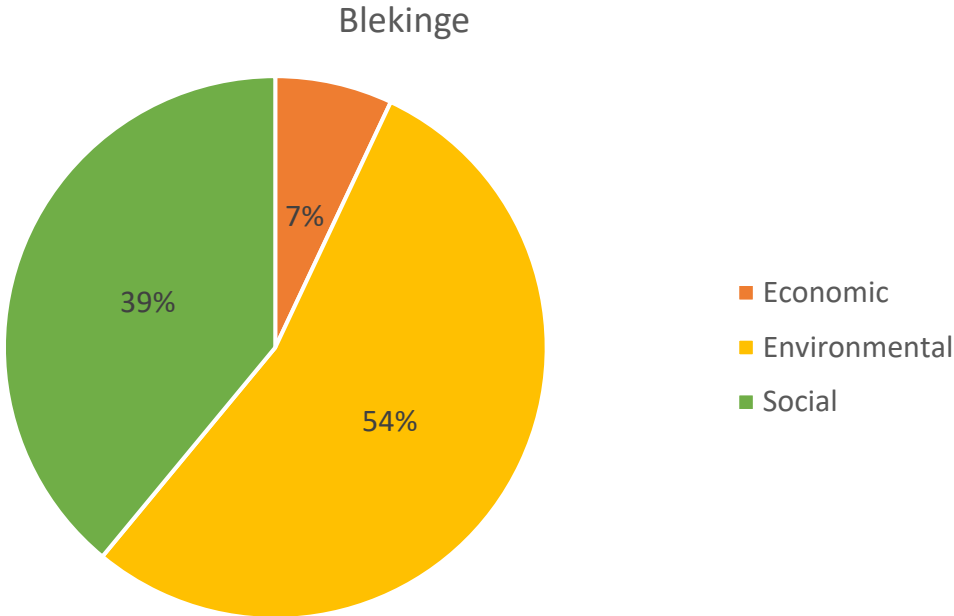*Distribution of Sustainability on Blekinge's Website*

Figure 15 shows the aspects present within each dimension. Under "Environmental Sustainability" there was a significant focus on "Nature Tourism" (227). Here are examples of "explor[ing] unspoilt nature", "kayaking", "hiking", "canoeing", and "fishing". While there is a mix, much revolves around the natural landscape of Blekinge and its waters. Following "nature tourism" is "Cultural Environment: Cultural Heritage" (93), with most examples of forts, museums, and sites such as the "naval museum". Following this is "Cultural Environment: Natural Heritage" (68) whereby there are mentions of the "archipelago", "islands", and "nature reserve".

Figure 15

Elements of Sustainable Tourism Present on Blekinge's Website (N=750)
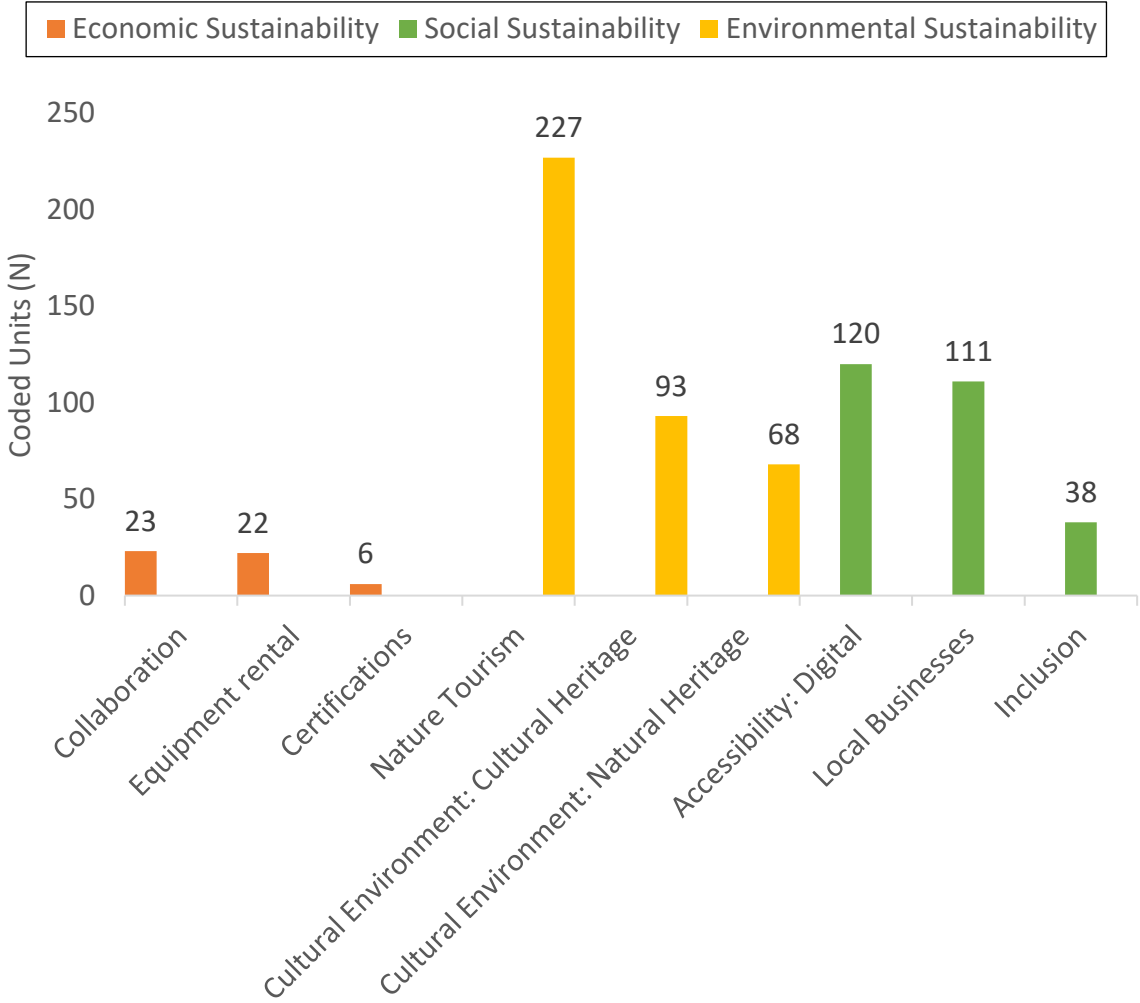
Under "Social Sustainability" most cases relate to "Accessibility: Digital" (120), referring to "download the map", "buy fishing licenses online", contact via email, and downloading digital guides or apps. Closely following is "Local Businesses" (111), related mostly to hotels, restaurants, or nature tourism companies. Thirdly is "Inclusion" (38), examples being "family friendly", "children", "visitors of all ages", and "groups ".

"Economic Sustainability", the least present at 7%, shows 23 examples of "Collaboration" referring to public transport, several local organisations, and local DMOs such as "Destination Tärnö". "Equipment Rental" (22) refers to water tourism-based

equipment; "kayak", "boat", "canoe"; alongside "bikes"; and "Certifications" refers to

UNESCO and ARK56 trails.

Gotland

The analysis of Gotland's website found a total of 1640 cases of which 49% were

related to "Social", with "43% related to "Environmental", and 8% "Economic" (Figure 16).

Figure 16

Distribution of Sustainability on Gotland's Website

Gotland
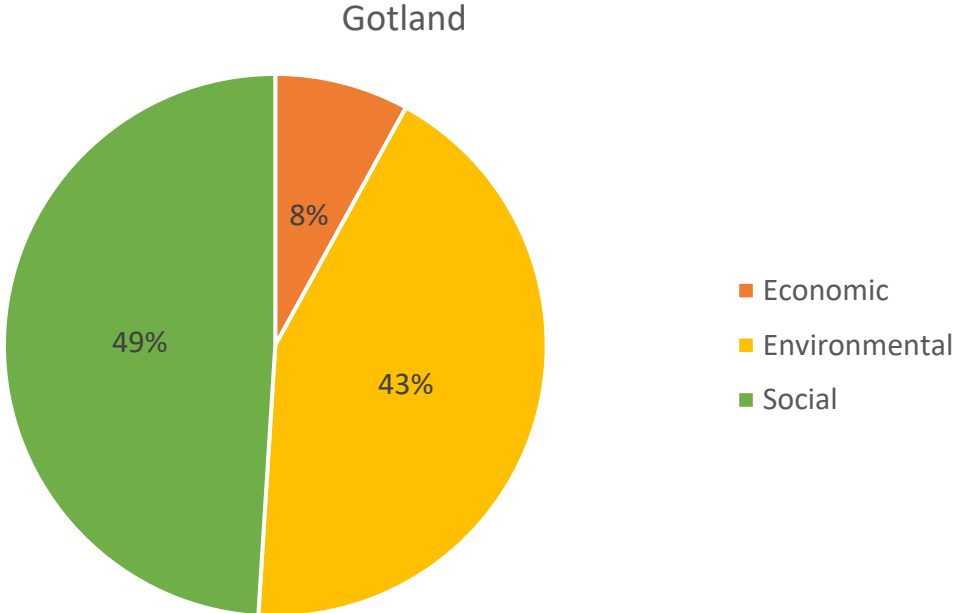
- Economic
- Environmental
- Social

Figure 17 presents the findings from Gotland by code. Under "Environmental",

"Cultural Environment: Cultural Heritage" (332) is most prominent, with examples of "The

World Heritage City", "the Viking age", "the Middle Ages", and historic farms. Following this

is "Nature Tourism" (176), where "hiking", "cycling", "canoeing", as well as "truffle hunting"

and "horse riding" are seen. Lastly, "Cultural Heritage: Natural Heritage" (136) highlights the

regions "nature reserves", "prehistoric origins", the "rauks", unique landscapes and animals.

Figure 17

Elements of Sustainable Tourism Present on Gotland's Website (N=1640)
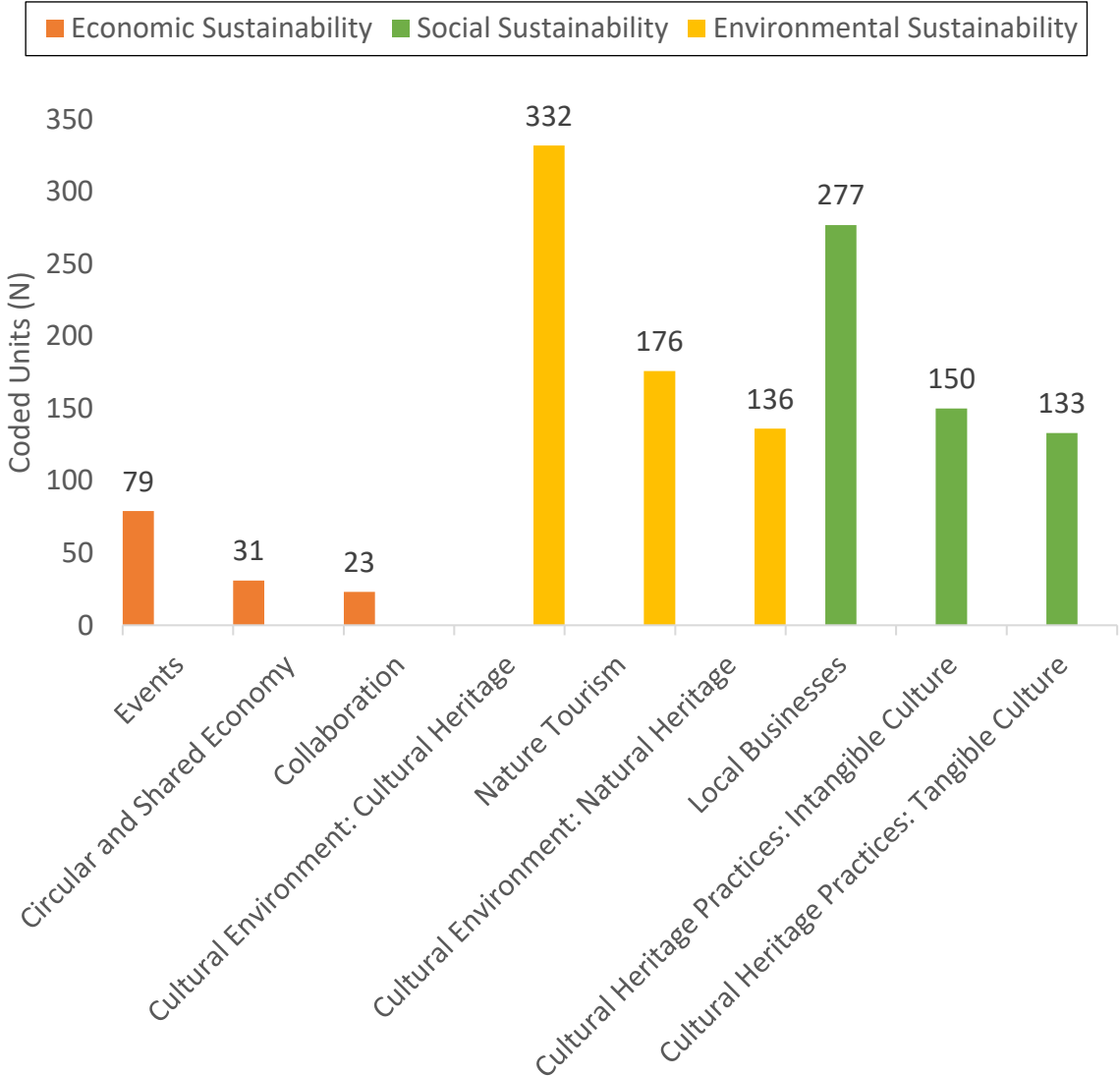
Most prominent under "Social Sustainability" is "Local Businesses" (277), highlighting

local theatre companies, artists, restaurants, hotels, and farm shops. Following this,

"Cultural Heritage Practices: Intangible Culture" (150) discusses local artists and creativity as

"one of our core values". There is also a strong focus on the cultural history of the island and

its trading routes as part of the Hanseatic league, and the cultural practices of the "Gotland

Farmers". "Cultural Heritage Practices: Tangible Culture" (133) presents "theatre", "music",

and films shot on Gotland such as "Pippi Longstocking", "Bergman Island", and "Kiki's Delivery Service", alongside cultural artifacts such as "image stones".

The most common aspect under "Economic Sustainability" is "Events" (79), which includes major events such as "Bergman Day" the "Visby Spring Day", "Medieval Week", and "Almedal Week". Following this is "Circular and Shared Economy" (31) with a focus on the "REKO ring", direct sales between farmers and consumers, and "flea markets". Thirdly is "Collaboration" (23) which mentions the "Gotland County Administrative Board", "Visit Sweden" "Naturum", and various centres around the island.

Halland

The analysis of Halland returned a total of 406 cases. Of these, 56% were related to "Environment Sustainability", 42% "Social Sustainability", and 2% "Economic Sustainability" (Figure 18).

Figure 18

Distribution of Sustainability on Halland's Website
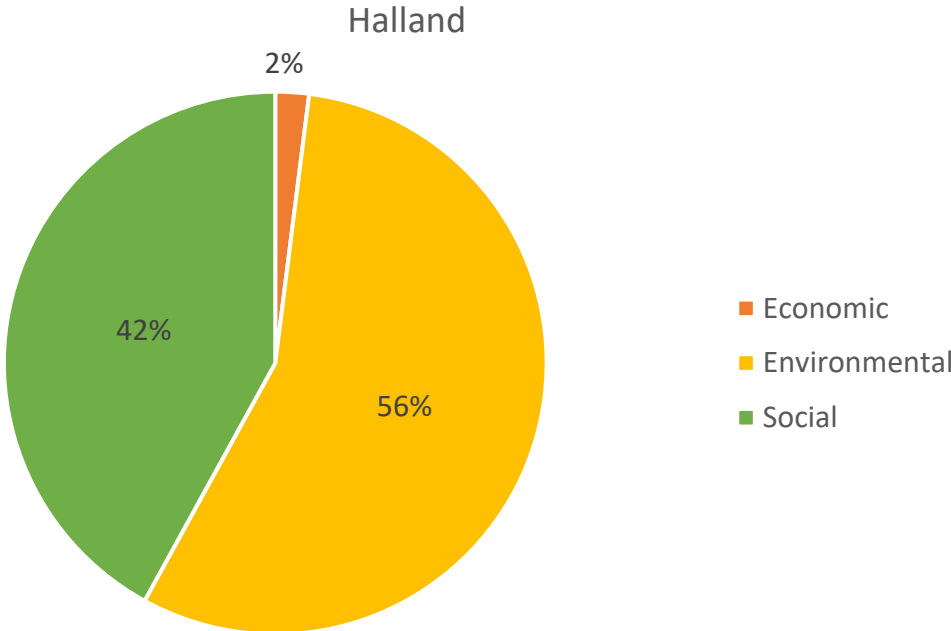
Looking into "Environmental Sustainability", the most examples are of "Nature Tourism" (136), referencing "hiking", "cycling", "surfing", "stand-up paddle-boarding", and beach visits (Figure 19). Following this is "Cultural Environment: Natural Heritage" (66) which focuses on the "unique mix of beaches and forests"; "undulating sand dunes", "rolling meadows", and "nature reserves". Thirdly is "Teaching Responsibility" (35), focused on "tips for a sustainable vacation", including "recycle the garbage, save on the water, turn off the lamp when you leave the hotel room", "don't destroy nature, break off twigs from living trees, pluck flower or light fires and BBQs where it's forbidden".

Figure 19

Elements of Sustainable Tourism Present on Halland's Website (N=406)
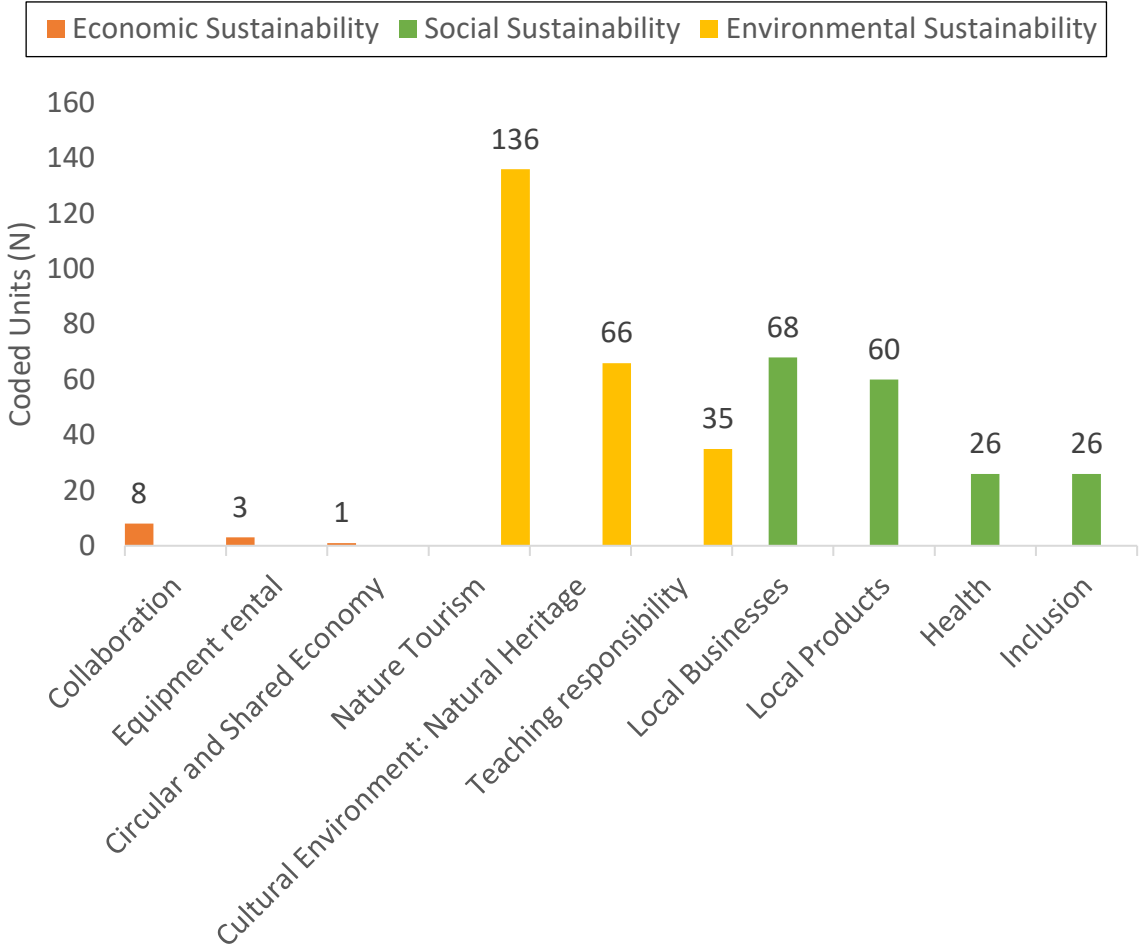
Of "Social Responsibility", there were 68 examples of "Local Businesses", including restaurants, breweries, farm shops and local producers. Following this is "Local Products" (60), most of which includes locally produced foods such as "kombucha", "strawberries", as well as "locally sourced ingredients". Thirdly, "Health" and "Inclusion" were both found 26 times. "Health" focuses on "spas", "tranquillity and luxury", a "relaxing stroll", and "harmony through your body and soul. Meanwhile, "Inclusion" refers to "family-friendly", "children", and "the whole family".

"Economic Sustainability" makes up only 2% of cases in Halland. The majority of these are examples of "Collaboration" (8), all of which are examples of collaboration with other

DMOs, apart from one mention of "Naturum" visitor centre. There are 3 examples of "Equipment Rental" referring to renting a bike, canoe, surfboard, or electric bike. The last example of "Economic Sustainability" found was "Circular and Shared Economy" (1), referring only to "flea markets".

Skåne

A total of 1485 units of analysis were found on Skåne's website. Figure 20 shows the distribution of these.

Figure 20

Distribution of Sustainability on Skåne's Website
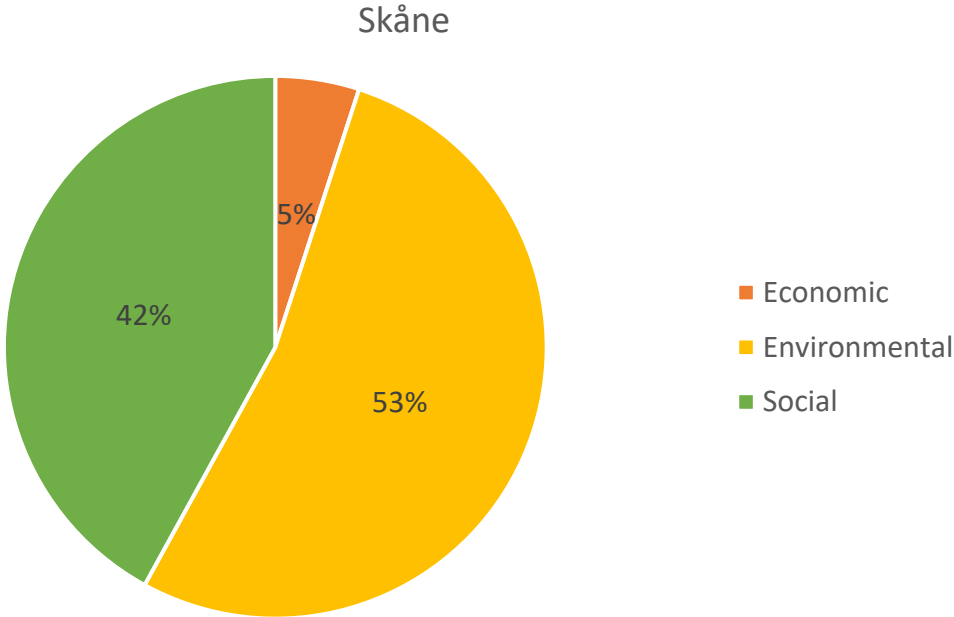
Figure 21 shows these in more detail, with the most coded units attributed to "Nature Tourism" (389). These included examples of "kayaking", "canoeing", "hiking", as well as some unique activities such as "alpaca trekking", "porpoise safari", "surfing", "trolley cycling", and labelling itself as "a mecca for birdwatching". Also, in the environmental dimension is "Cultural Heritage: Cultural Environment" (227) which includes examples of

buildings such as manor houses, cathedrals, and castles, as well as cultural history, museums and medieval sites. "Cultural Heritage: Natural Environment" (211) focuses on the mix of "nature reserves" and "national parks", and unique nature formed in the "Jurassic period" or "14,000 years ago when the inland ice melted", as well as on the general aspects of the land such as "lush green summer forests", "deep woodland", and "breath taking sea views" that are common across all regions.

Figure 21

Elements of Sustainable Tourism Present on Skåne's Website (N=1485)
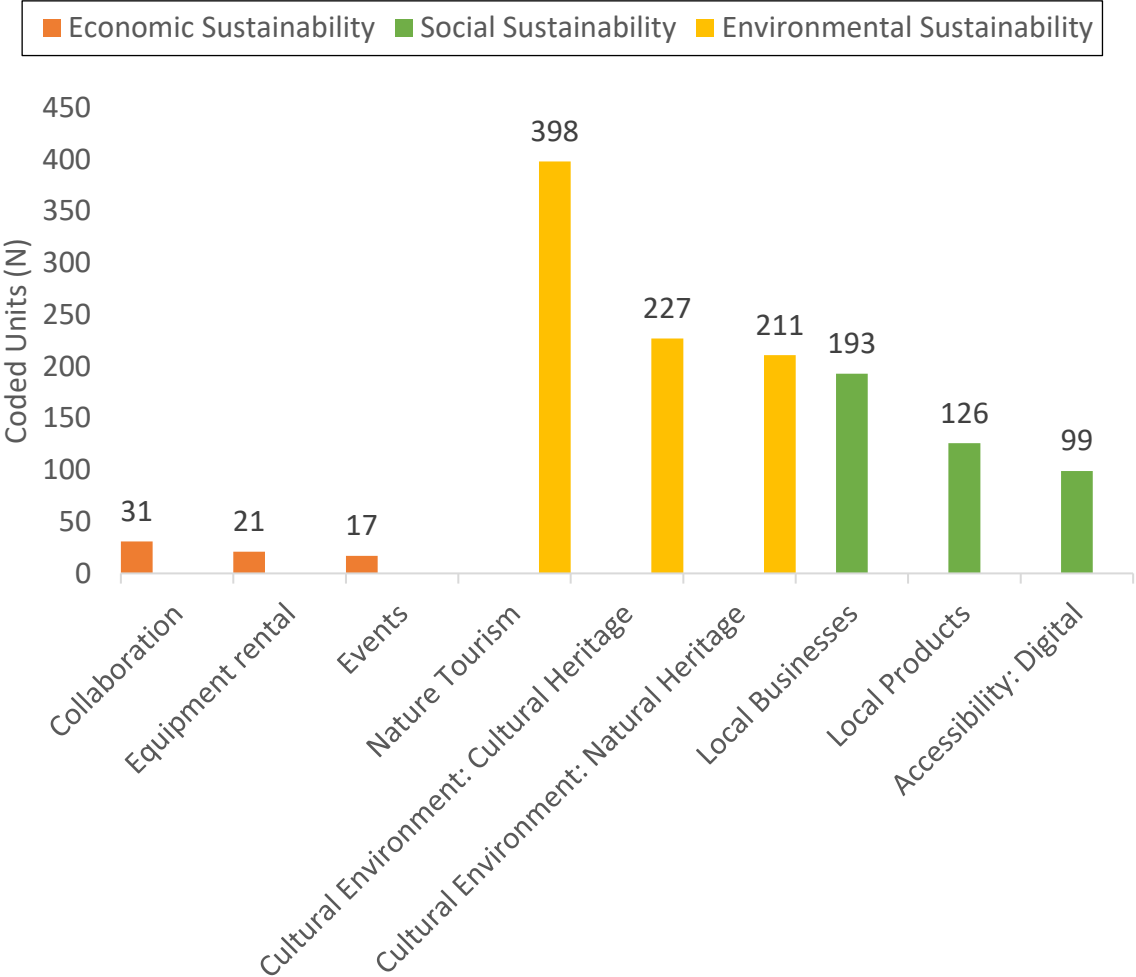
Delving into "Social Sustainability", the most coded category is "Local Businesses" (193), where examples include hotels, restaurants, bath houses, art galleries, farm shops, and small businesses. "Local Products" (126) is the second most common, with mentions of "locally grown produce", "local vineyards", "handmade craft products" and "design pieces". "Scandinavian style" and shopping as a method of promoting local designers is at the centre of this. Interestingly, Skåne also have one of the most mentions of "second-hand" across the regions as they focus on multiple facets of sustainable shopping. Thirdly, "Accessibility: Digital" makes up 99 of the coded units, examples including links to external maps, booking transport via apps, and local Facebook pages for purchasing produce.

"Economic Sustainability" has a total of 94 coded units. Looking deeper into "Collaboration" (31), there are examples of local and national transport agencies; "SJ" and "Skånetrafiken". Additionally, there are mentions of "Naturum" visitors centre, and inter-regional collaboration encouraging trips to Gothenburg and Copenhagen. "Equipment Rental" (21) shows examples of bike, canoe, rowboat, kayak, and trolley bike rental. "Events" (17) mentions both larger events such as "Walpurgis", as well as smaller events such as the "Annual Antique Fair in Brösarp", and the "Lund Comedy Festival".

Småland

Following the data analysis, Småland had a total of 2038 units of analysis. As shown in Figure 22, these are made up of 48% "Environmental Sustainability", 47% "Social Sustainability", and 5% "Economic Sustainability".

Figure 22

Distribution of Sustainability on Småland's Website
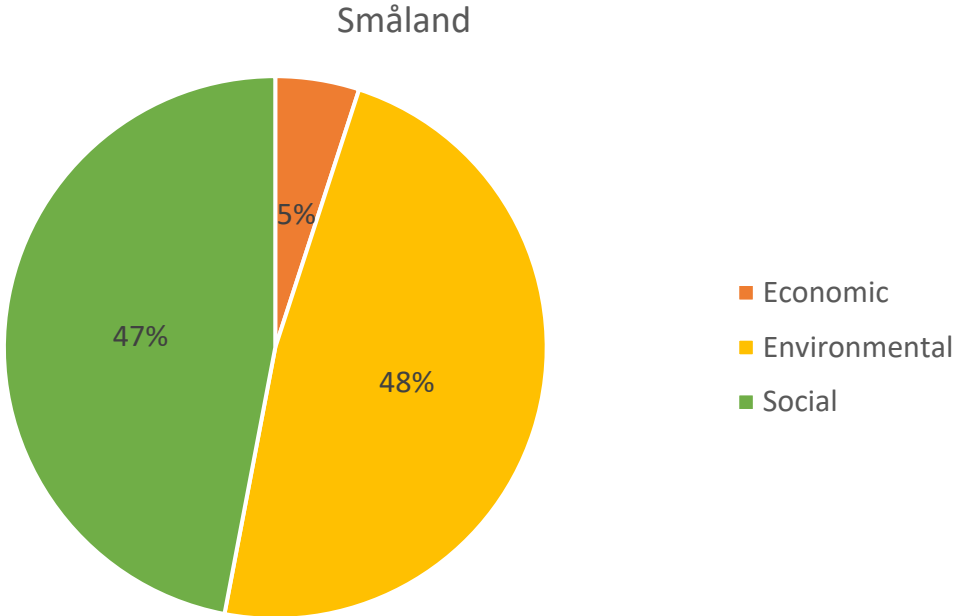
Figure 23 presents these dimensions in more detail. "Environmental Sustainability" is the most present, with "Nature Tourism" (470), "Cultural Environment: Cultural Heritage" (426), and "Cultural Environment: Natural Heritage" (210) being featured most throughout the website. "Nature Tourism" includes examples of "paddling", "hiking", bird watching, cycling, eating out in nature, "camping", and "fishing". "Cultural Environment: Cultural Heritage" refers to stone age dwellings, industrial buildings, art museums, and manor houses. Lastly, "Cultural Environment: Natural Heritage" includes mentions of "570 million years old" granite, "national park", "great coniferous forests, flowering meadows", and "unusual species". Småland tends to have less of a focus on unique natural wonders and more of a focus on the overall landscape of the region, encouraging tourists to experience the diversity of "Småland's idyllic forests" through nature tourism.

Figure 23

Elements of Sustainable Tourism Present on Småland's Website (N=2038)
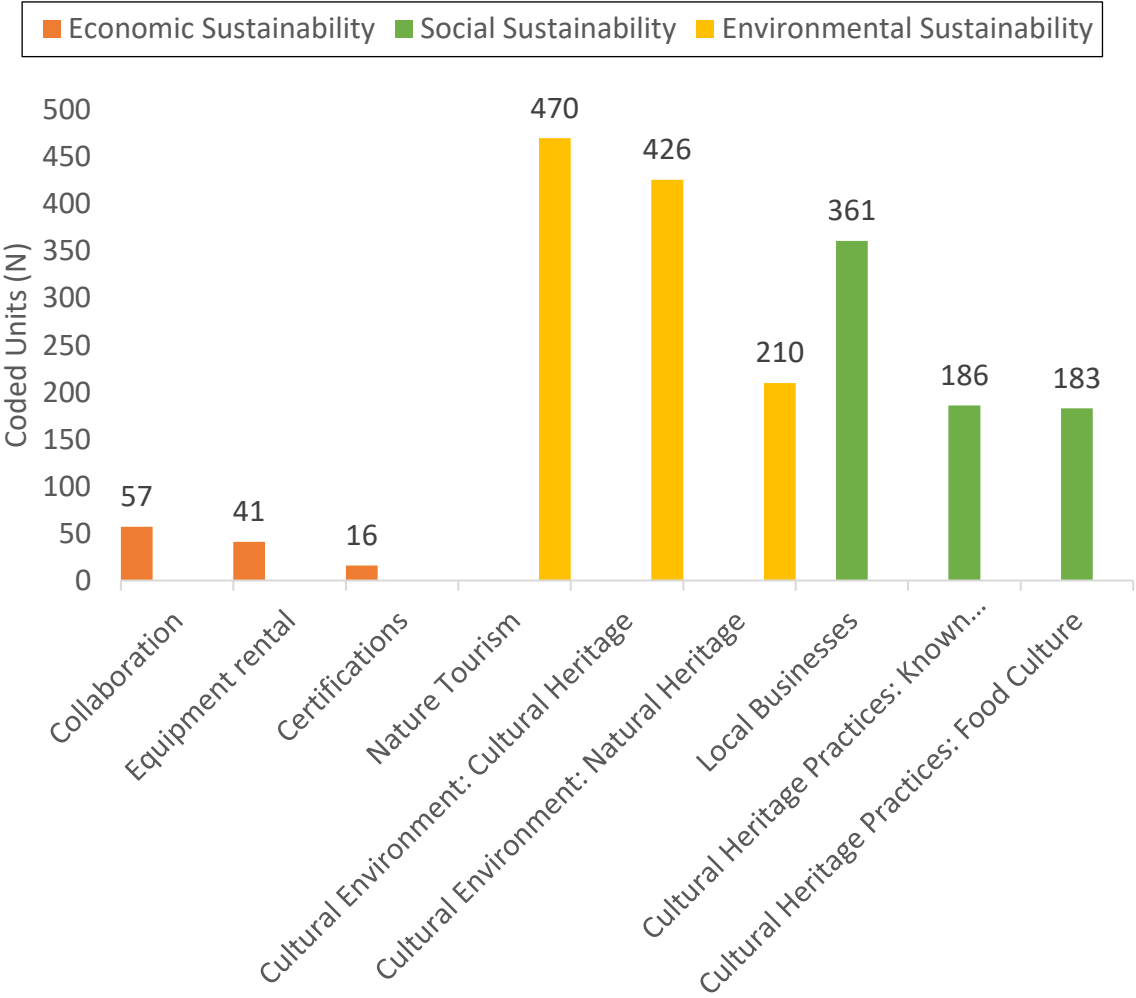
Under "Social Sustainability" the most common aspect was "Local Businesses" (361),

with mentions of hotels, design shops, art and culture centres, glassworks, restaurants, farm

shops and attractions such as "Astrid Lindgren's World". Following is "Cultural Practices:

Food Culture" (183) where examples include flavours such as "genuine Småland" dishes,

"ingredients from the Småland pantry" as well as practices such as foraging and "traditional

home cooking". This is not seen in such high amounts across the other websites. "Cultural

Heritage Practices: Known Figures" (186) follows this with mentions of prominent individuals

of Småland such as "Astrid Lindgren", "Bruno Mathsson", and "Ingvar Kamprad".

"Economic Sustainability" communicated through Småland was mainly through "Collaboration" (57), with examples referring to the "Swedish Environmental Protection Agency" owning land, the "County Administrative Boards" who have information about nature reserves or manage projects, alongside "Visit Sweden", the "Swedish Tourist Association", and inter-regional collaboration mentioning the neighbouring regions of "Blekinge" and "Skåne. "Equipment Rental" (41) follows with mentions of renting a "kayak", "canoe", "SUP", and "bike". Thirdly are "Certifications" with mentions of "KRAV-labelled" food and restaurants, the "UNESCO Register for Good Safeguarding Practices" regarding protecting cultural history, and the "Europa Nostra diploma for the remarkable renovation of the traditional buildings" in Eksjö.

Öland

The website for Öland's regional DMO has a total of 235 units of analysis. As seen in Figure 24, 71% of these were related to "Environmental", with 18% related to "Social" and 11% related to "Economic".

Figure 24

Distribution of Sustainability on Öland's Website
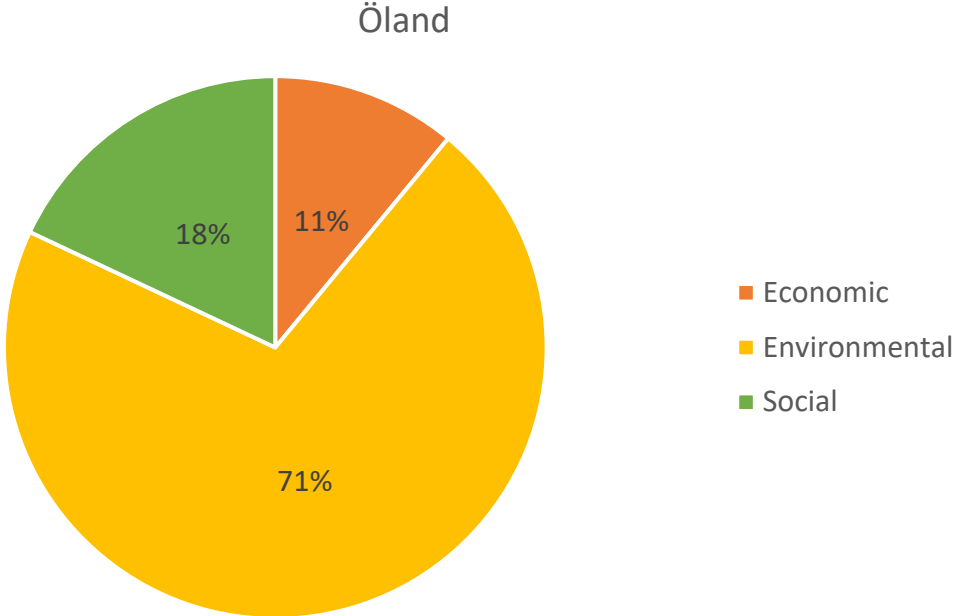
Figure 25 explores these dimensions further, presenting the most coded category overall as "Nature Tourism" (97) whereby examples include "hiking", "cycling", "mountain biking", and bird watching. Following is "Cultural Environment: Cultural Heritage" (48). Here, there are examples of lighthouses, once important fishing harbours, and areas with "very rich archaeological findings". There are mentions of the iron age, castle ruins and windmills. Furthermore is "Cultural Environment: Natural Heritage" (23) of which examples include "deciduous forests, pine forests, open pastures, elves, marshes and herb-rich meadows", nature reserves and national parks, as well as more unique aspects such as "Öland's finest stretch of sea-stacks".

Figure 25

Elements of Sustainable Tourism Present on Öland's Website (N=235)
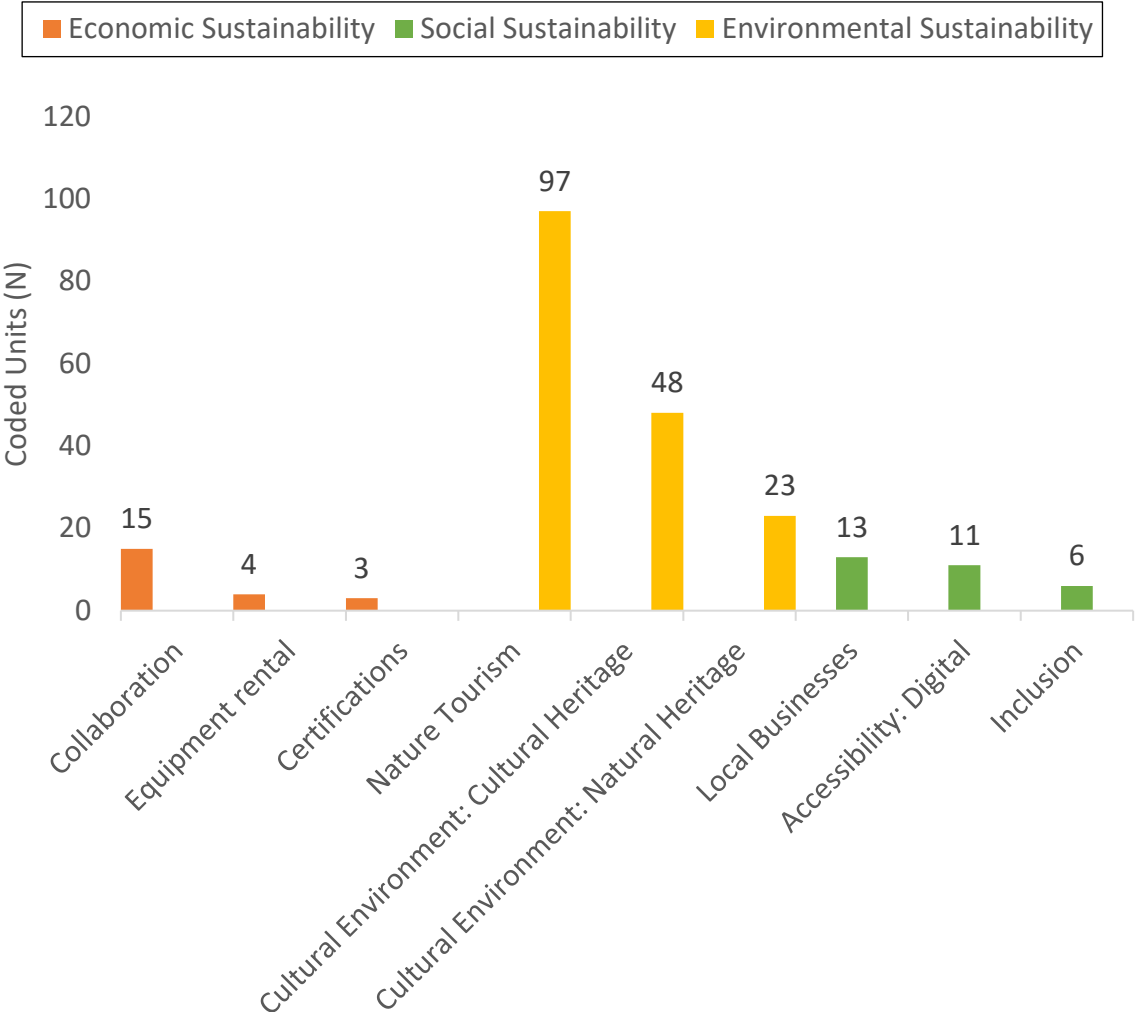
"Social Sustainability" consists mainly of "Local Businesses" (13), with mentions of restaurants, hotels and one local castle. "Accessibility: Digital" (11) follows this, with examples including emailing for information and booking and digital maps. Thirdly is "Inclusion" with only 6 examples, referring to children, "open to everyone", and "family friendly".

"Collaboration" is most prevalent in "Economic Sustainability" (15), with mentions of the "Swedish Tourist Association", Naturum Visitors Centre, ten mentions of ICA grocery

store and two mentions of local organisations. Following this is "Equipment rental" (4) – all

mentions of bicycle rental. Thirdly are "Certifications" (3), all of which are mentions of the

"UNESCO World Heritage Site".

Östergötland

The analysis of data from the Östergötland regional website found a total of 217 units

of analysis. Of these, 56% were related to the "Environmental" dimension, with 41% related

to "Social", and the remaining 3% "Economic" (Figure 26).

Figure 26

Distribution of Sustainability on Östergötland's Website

Östergötland

- Economic
- Environmental
- Social

3%

41%

56%
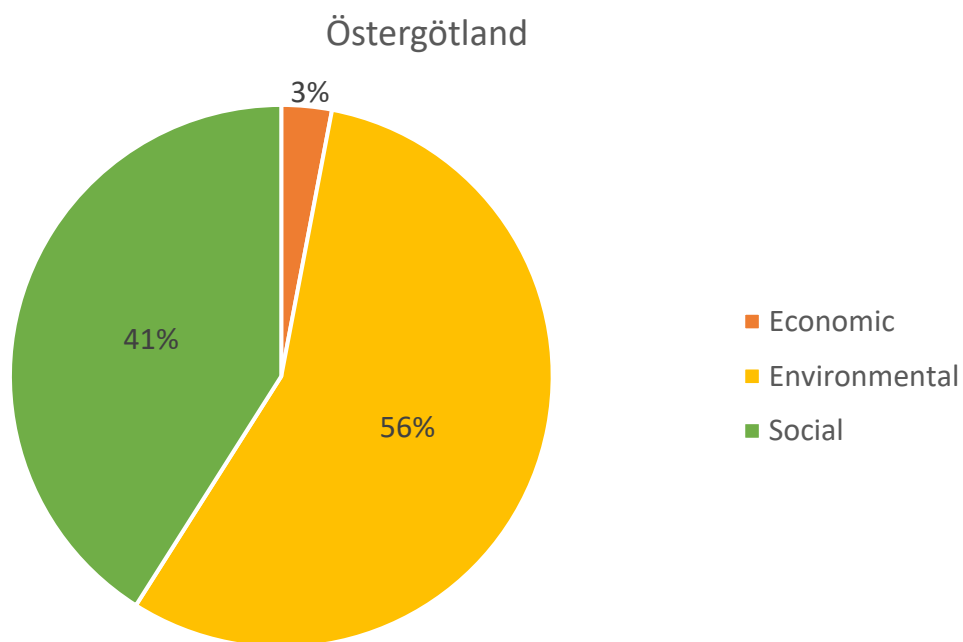
Figure 27 explores these in more detail, with "Nature Tourism" (61) being the highest

coded category overall. Here are examples of "cycling", "boating", and "paddling" along the

Göta Canal, "hiking trails", "kayaking", and "bird watching". Secondly is "Cultural

Environment: Cultural Heritage" (48) which among other things focuses on the "Göta Canal"

and its cultural history, "medieval buildings" and its "historical industry areas". Thirdly,

"Cultural Environment: Natural Heritage" (26) explores the archipelago with its "thousands

of islands" and its unique wonders such as "one of Sweden's largest bedrock caves".

Figure 27

Elements of Sustainable Tourism Present on Östergötland's Website (N=217)
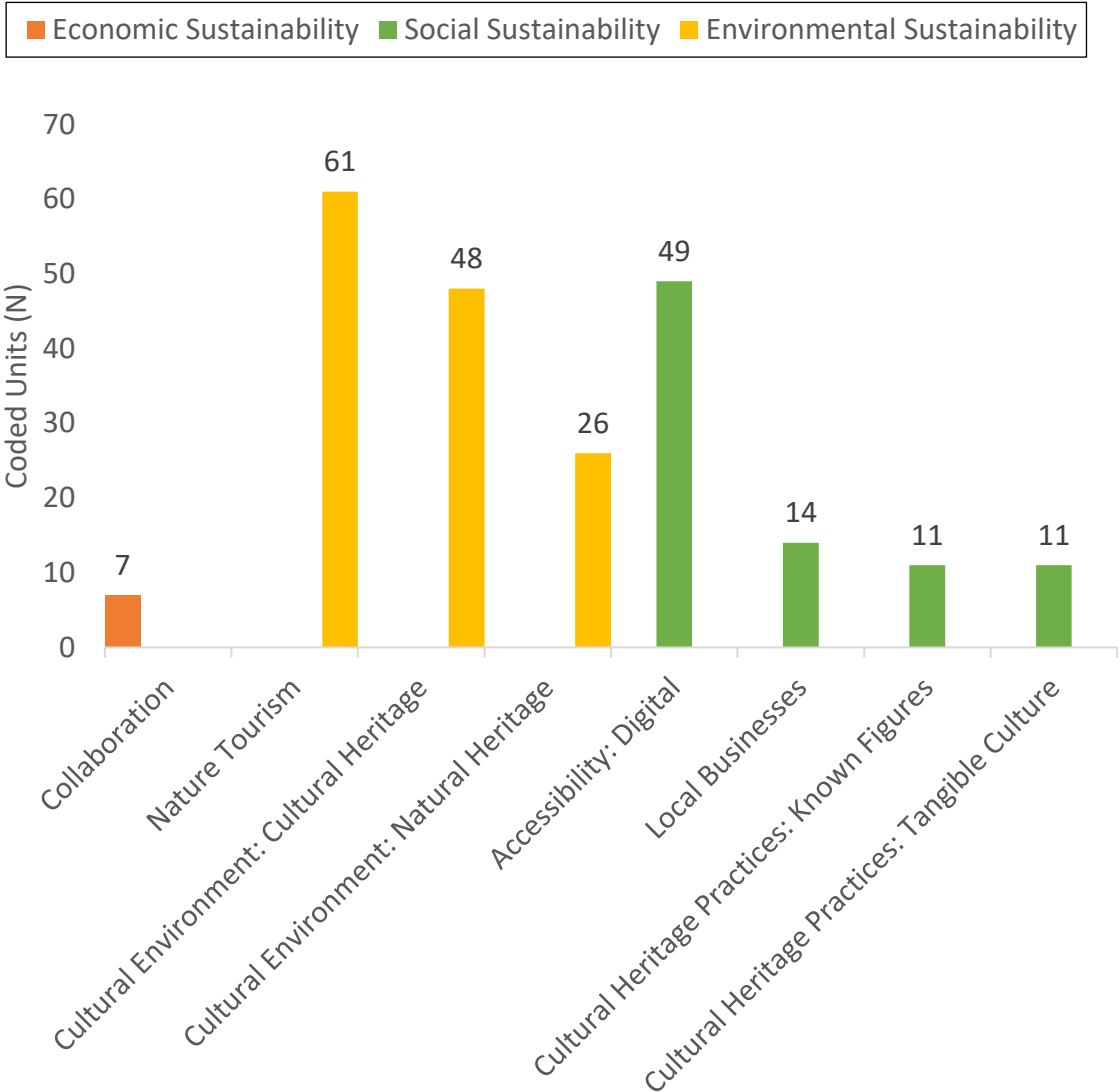
"Social Sustainability" in Östergötland tends to focus on "Accessibility: Digital" (49), with examples related to downloading a digital map, emailing local DMOs and businesses for information or booking, and one example of "digital hiking". "Local Businesses" follows this with 14 examples, including cruise boat companies, local attractions such as "Kolmården" wildlife park, "Astrid Lindgren's World", and "Bamse's World". Additionally, are the examples of Ödeshög Chocolate Factory, Smultronstället ice cream parlour, and Coletta's sweet shop. Lastly, in the category of "Cultural Practices", "Tangible Culture" and "Known Persons" have 11 mentions throughout the text. "Tangible Culture" refers to art works, "football, yellow trams and the unique Industrial Landscape", with the addition of several historically significant sites. "Known Persons" includes the mention of popular culture figures "Astrid Lindgren" and "Bamse", as well as historical figures "Princess Estelle", "Saint Birgitta", "Hilding Bielkhammar", and "Gustaf von Heidenstam".

"Economic Sustainability" includes a total of 7 cases, all of which come under the category of "Collaboration" and refer to travel companies ("SJ" and "Flixbus"), Naturum visitors centre, the "Swedish Property Agency" whom care for Alvastra Kungsgård.

Discussion

Stage 1: Place Brand Identity

The Stage 1 findings suggest that each region appears similar on a surface level due to a limited context. A detailed discussion will follow addressing similarities and differences across the seven DMOs based on their most frequent PBI words.

Similarities Across Regional Place Brand Identities

An apparent similarity in region's PBIs is the promotion of nature and nature-related experiences, with hiking, cycling, and paddling being representative for many regions. Östergötland claims that; "even the borders of a nation are not important if one travels far enough" (Visit Östergötland, 2023), meaning an inclusive approach that may promote surrounding regions as well to aid the overall tourism sector.

Inter-regional Branding

Småland, Öland, Östergötland all demonstrate inter-regional branding. Öland utilises this by promoting its connection to Småland via the Öland bridge, likely done to overcome the deficit of being physically smaller and with fewer offerings than Sweden's largest island Gotland. Braun (2015) claims that unified regional assets are more appealing than individual ones. Östergötland exemplifies this as a region with a narrow PBI consisting of its forests and archipelago. It relies on inter-regional branding by promoting the Göta Canal running across Sweden and Astrid Lindgren's World in neighbouring Småland. Skåne assumes a different position by partly relying on its link to Copenhagen, an internationally well-known destination. Considering the two place's proximity to each other, they can both benefit the two regions and nations. Magnus (2016) states that the Nordic countries have tended to

cooperate numerous times and that past and current competition amongst the Nordic countries is a main reason for their international recognition and acclaim (Magnus, 2016). The author sums up by stating that "[...] over the years the relationship between the Nordic countries has generated added value. If one country does something, all countries gain from it."(Magnus, 2016, p. 197). Ultimately, the case of Skåne illustrates an example of Nordic cooperation, an aspect that may be vital for Sweden's 2030 tourism goal.

Co-opetition, the idea of competing and cooperating simultaneously so that both parties can flourish (Pasquinelli, 2015), is apparent in the case of Skåne and Småland whom underline a Swedish landscape with rich history and typical foods such as rock candy and potato dumplings. Such an approach in place branding points to an attempt at attracting visitors who seek a typically Swedish experience, especially when one considers each region's selling points. Skåne presents itself as "Small Scandinavian province – large chunk of paradise" (Visit Skåne, n.d.-a) and Småland as "Welcome to Småland - Sweden for real!" (Visit Småland, n.d.-b). By working together, Småland and Skåne can promote the Swedish brand abroad and strengthen tourism in Sweden. As Vinyals-Mirabent and Mohammadi (2018) note, reiterating certain elements may skew the personality of a place. Thus, the continued promotion of the abovementioned typically Swedish elements by Skåne and Småland can potentially be seen as a conscious attempt of assigning a 'Swedish personality' to the regions. Arguably, this 'Swedish personality' can be pivotal in the efforts of spearheading the Swedish brand and becoming the most attractive travel destination.

Typical Place Brand Identities

Some regions share similarities in their PBIs (as opposed to a region-specific PBI). This can be seen as taking an inclusive approach with the intention of attracting as many visitors as possible. Whilst it is generally regarded that a place brand should be unique (Ruiz-Real et

al., 2020), this is debatable for the current research as all Swedish regions are encouraged to promote the Swedish brand (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2022). Thus, the researchers of the study suggest that both the regional differences (uniqueness) along with joint key messages (common goal) should be communicated in a region's PBI.

Skåne and Småland are two regions that inherit inclusive PBIs, strongly corresponding with them being valuable tourism markets in Sweden (Tillväxtverket, 2021, 2022). Inclusive PBI may be key to win against competing regions. Though, as Skinner (2021) notes; if place branding is about competing against other regions, it should be done so sustainably and responsibly.

Differences Between Regional Place Brand Identities

Distinct, unique features of a PBI could be identified e.g., in Halland and Östergötland. In the case of Småland and Skåne, regional characteristics are tied to ideas of a typically Swedish image. Småland, for instance, highlights its landscape in relation to the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren whose stories are based on Småland's cultural environment, thus enforcing the stereotypical image of the region. An apparent theme of Småland is this reliance of Swedish stereotypes which are considered unique compared to neighbouring regions. Småland is presented by Visit Sweden as: "Småland – as Swedish as it gets" (Visit Sweden, 2021). Facos' (1998) states that red wooden houses, forests, and lakes have for long been associated with a stereotypical image of Sweden. Said image is telling in Visit Småland's branding: "Welcome to a place full of design, furniture, Astrid Lindgren, wooden houses, shimmering lakes, enchanting forest and outdoor adventures.". A notable word of Småland's PBI is "IKEA", the international company founded in Småland. Småland's deliberate choice of including IKEA in its brand relates to the *Country-of-origin effect* where the nation may affect

consumer's perception of a brand (White, 2012). Though, White's (2012) study shows that an inverse effect is true, including the case of IKEA and Sweden, meaning that positive associations made with IKEA translate into positive associations of Sweden.

Öland's 7th most used word "Experience" implies immersing oneself in the island's culture rather than commodifying history through stereotypical ideals. Öland's efforts of avoiding commodification, simplification, and commercialisation of the place and its history can successfully deter over-tourism and the distancing of internal stakeholders (Caprioli et al., 2021; Skinner, 2021). Öland's slogan "Love Öland with care" further reinforces this notion of treating the island and its residents with respect.

Östergötland is unique in that the DMO utilises storytelling, an element that has proven to be especially effective as it may provoke certain emotions within the visitor (Pachucki et al., 2022; Sedra & El Bayed, 2022). The person nouns "grandpa", "Catarina", and "Tåkern" refer to characters in Östergötland's storytelling, however it is difficult to tell if the stories told are real or fictional. It should be noted that the place brand of Östergötland concentrates on the places, representing a traditional, top-down method of place branding which could instead be improved by including more mentions of the local community and aiming instead to reflect the authentic culture of the place rather than just its physical attributes.

Sense of Place

A *sense of place* may be shaped through interactions of institutions, social relations and the geography of a place (Kalandides, 2011). Blekinge is one of few regions with a cohesive PBI that revolves around its close access to water, the archipelago, and fishing. This correlates strongly with Blekinge's coastal locality that boasts "northern Europe's closest archipelago" (Visit Blekinge, n.d.-b). Based on Kalandides (2011) description of sense of

place, one can presume that this is mirroring the regions' past fishing communities. It is imaginable that a sense of place can be construed into a marketable PBI, even commodified, similarly to Kavaratzis and Ashworth's (2015) claims of disconnection between place culture and place brands. For instance, both Gotland and Öland promote their ancient past of Vikings and the Stone Age. The current sense of place on Gotland likely relates to its cultural personality of numerous artists, directors, and screenwriters.

Halland asserts itself as a place of great food culture and sandy dunes along a coast that invites for surfing and paddle-boarding. The concept of *New Nordic Food* is disseminated by Simonsen (2019) who claims that food of the Nordic countries has not historically shared a strong relationship but can in certain cases reflect strong nationalism. The researchers of the current study support Halland's promotion of food as a useful strategy to drive both their unique PBI but also as an effort to represent Sweden. Similarly, unique activities in Halland such as surfing, and paddle-boarding are emphasised compared to generic nature activities like hiking and cycling. This is likely due to the region's smaller size and need to maintain competitiveness via uniqueness. As a smaller region, there is a typically a greater pressure to promote an authentic brand as to not upset internal residents (Brorström et al., 2019). One can presume then that Halland's food culture is authentic, considering similar claims made by Styregård (2023).

Further, Halland's slogan "coastal living" (Visit Halland, n.d.-c) represents not only the common Place Physics of "coast", "dune", "sand", and "sea", but also hints at the authenticity of the PBI in which it mentions "living" and having the place personality of "local" and "friendly", involving internal stakeholders in the brand rather than just appealing to tourists (Hankinson, 2015).

Stage 2: The Sustainability Strategy

This section will highlight the similarities and differences between the ways in which the dimensions and aspects of sustainable tourism are communicated between regions (RQ 2a).

Environmental Sustainability

"Environmental Sustainability" was the most present dimension across the data set and named in the most in all regions other than Gotland (Figures 11 and 13). This reflects the suggestions of Kalandides and Gresillon (2021) and Taecharungroj et al. (2019) that in practice as well as research there is often more of a focus on environmental sustainability.

All regions apart from Gotland focus on the aspects of "Nature Tourism", as well as their respective Cultural and Natural environments. This includes the mention of generic activities such as "hiking", "cycling", "paddling" across all regions. Interestingly, only few regions included regular mentions of more unique activities that rely on the natural environment of the place, such as "fishing" in Blekinge and "surfing" in Halland and Skåne.

Looking into the ideas of effective brand management, discussed by (Skinner, 2021), something to note is the extensive promotion of "Nature Tourism" (1543) compared with the mentions of "Protection and Preservation"(67) and "Teaching responsibility" (68). This prompts the question if the encouragement of "nature tourism" is leading to the protection of natural and cultural heritage or to "the touristification of the physical environment" (Skinner, 2021, p. 186).

As seen in Figure 28, Halland mentions "teaching responsibility" most, an example being "you need to start thinking about reducing the adverse environmental impact of your travels". However, most examples do not align with the "nature tourism" aspects of

"hiking", "cycling" and beach visits that they promote. They instead focus on encouraging visitors to engage in sustainable behaviour across all areas of their visit, found in "tips for a sustainable vacation" which relates to food tourism, nature tourism, accommodation, travel and protecting nature.

Figure 28

Responsible Nature Tourism Codes Across Regions
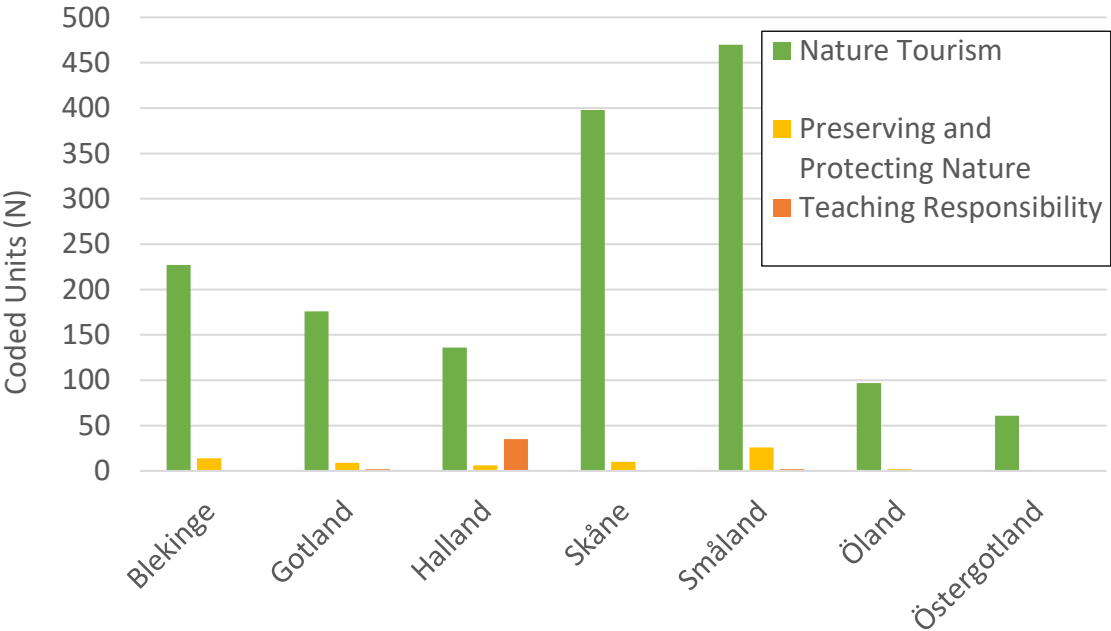
Blekinge has the highest percentage of "Preserving and Protecting Nature", most of which are examples of "fishing licenses" and "bird sanctuaries", which while they are not active suggestions for the traveller to engage in sustainable behaviour, they are practices in place to safeguard the environment against the nature tourism that they promote (namely "fishing"). Arguably, this in combination with the minimal inclusion of these codes by all regions, suggests that while they are promoting a more sustainable activity in "nature tourism", there is no visible process or outcome which suggests visitors are going to carry out this activity in a sustainable manner. This shows that while the regions have implemented aspects of the Strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality

industry (Näringsdepartementet, 2021), they have missed several vital aspects such as that visitors need to be a part of the sustainable experience and show respect and responsibility for the place, by which is taught through sharing knowledge (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). This is contrasting to Skinner (2021)'s suggestion that nature tourism can lead to protection and conservation, as it can be argued that this cannot occur unless this common goal is shared with visitors.

It is in this case hard to grasp the true nature of how these places are protected, without being able to gage the number of physical signs and suggestions present at each location, or the additional policies in place for each region.

Social Sustainability

Gotland is the only outlier across the regions with a focus on social sustainability above environmental. Much of this can be seen to come from their promotion of local businesses and intangible culture relating to local artists, farmers and their core values and practices. Rather than purely encouraging visitors to see the cultural sights and simplifying the culture, there is a focus on nudging visitors who are likely already here for these sites towards engaging with the local community. To a lesser extent, this too can be seen across all regions apart from Öland and Östergötland, where over 10% of units of analysis were related to "Local Businesses" (Figure 29). These regions also promote locally created or designed products and businesses; a holistic way of considering social and economic sustainability, as found by Koumara-Tsitsou and Karachalis (2021). By promoting local farmers and craftsmen, these regions protect the cultural practices and traditions associated whilst creating a unique brand, strengthening the economy and the local culture. For example, Halland's website shows much promotion of sustainable food and local businesses/ products, of which

mostly relate to food and farm shops. This in turn feeds the economy of the region while

preserving the "Hallandian farming legacy".

Figure 29

Percentage of "Local Businesses" Coded Across Regions
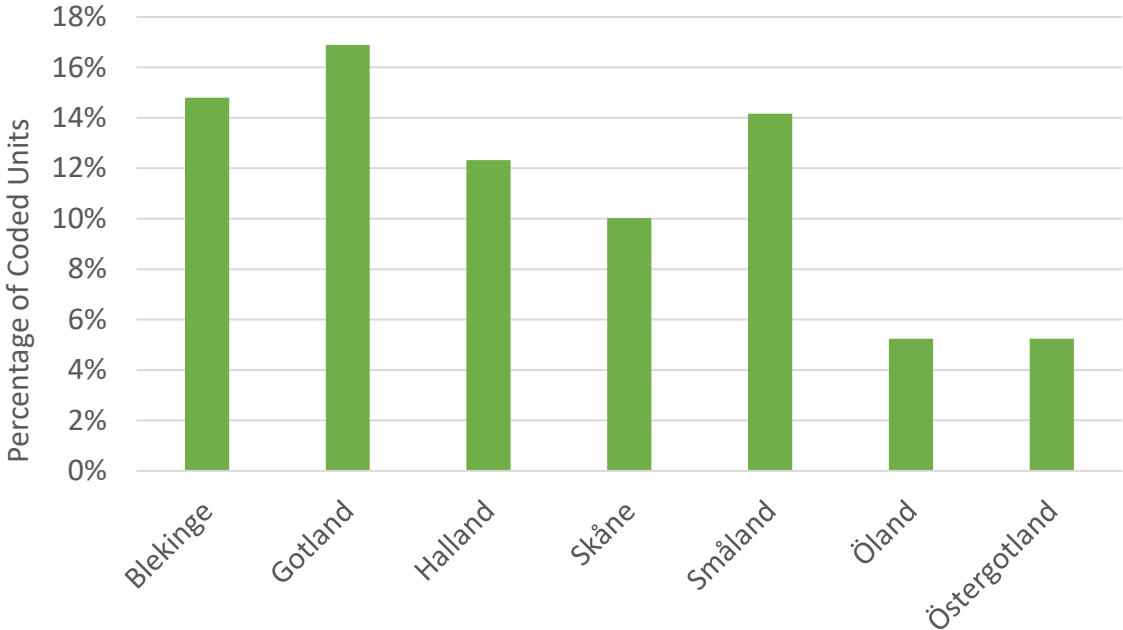
Contrastingly, Öland and Östergötland tend to focus mainly on their natural and

cultural environment and the physical places that are attractive to the visitor rather than the

culture of social aspects that come from the local community. It is possible here that these

regions have a less developed sustainability strategies possibly due to the smaller size of the

regions and their budgets. The focus on promoting places reflects the traditional place

branding strategy of commodifying places and practices for marketing purposes discussed by

Caprioli et al. (2021), Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2015), and Tillotson et al. (2020).

Interesting to note here is that in the region of Östergötland, the third most coded

category is "Accessibility: Digital", which while promoting ease of access for tourists, does

not contribute to the local community in the same way. Meanwhile, their local businesses

include only three small businesses alongside the larger companies Göta Canal AB, Kolmården, Bamse's World and the amusement park of known figure Astrid Lindgren. This begs the question, are there some aspects of sustainability that have more of an overall benefit to the place that should instead be the focus of a strategy? Or is necessary to give space to all aspects of sustainability to maintain a rounded approach?

Economic Sustainability

Worth noting here is the low percentage of "Economic Sustainability" across all regions. There are three possible reasons for this. The first is the dynamic nature of sustainability in which all dimensions are intertwined meaning that while not highlighted here, there are aspects of both social and environmental that are inherently related to the economic. Secondly, the exclusion criteria of the sample used in this study meant that pages on each website not related to tourism were excluded. Had these not been removed, it is possible there would be a stronger presence of economic sustainability overall as some pages were related to life, work, and development in the regions. Lastly is the nature of economic sustainability; being closely related to development and management of the place itself (Tillväxtverket Livesändningar, 2021). While there are aspects that can be communicated, or encouraged through "nudging", such as utilising the sharing economy or the promotion of major events, there are some aspects of economically sustainable tourism that are likely a result of other dimensions rather than something that the traveller can influence. This points to a holistic sustainability strategy (Skinner, 2021) that considers all three aspects of sustainability as outlined in Sweden's tourism strategy and Agenda 2030 (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). For instance, the focus on "Local Businesses" and "Local Products" across most regions, alongside "Sustainable Food" and "Second Hand" are arguably factors that contribute to the local economy.

Regional Sustainability

While this is not generalisable, the findings show a clear distinction here between the regions of Gotland, Småland and Skåne on the one hand and the remaining regions on the other hand. The forementioned regions have examples of almost all sustainability aspects throughout the text and high percentages of sustainability across their websites (Appendix G). This suggests a holistic understanding of sustainability in alignment with the Sweden's strategy and Agenda 2030 (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). This means that it is likely that they have considered all three sustainability dimensions and how they interact with one another to benefit the environment, the economy and the community (Skinner, 2021) . The other regions tend to only display certain aspects. Halland is an outlier here, in that it has a very refined communication of sustainable tourism at a high rate (70%), compared to Öland (36%), Östergötland (34%) and Blekinge (34%). This is likely influenced by the organisation's continual development in this area. Two examples of this being their recent grant for 4.2 Million SEK for sustainable destination development (Visit Halland, 2022), and a previous campaign in which the aim was for Halland to be seen as Sweden's most sustainable destination (Visit Halland, n.d.-a).

The differences between these websites that present more sustainable practices follows the ideas of Taecharungroj et al. (2019), in that being a sustainable place brand does not mean the same thing for every place. A sustainable place brand should in fact be different for each place, reflecting their identity and stakeholders to present the most sustainable version of the region.

Sustainable Place Brand Identities

Comparing the findings from both stages gives insight into how PBI guides the strategy behind the regions' communication of sustainable tourism. Prior to diving deeper, it is worth noting that the words "sustainable", "green", and "eco" were not part of any region's PBI. This points to that they do not directly position themselves as "sustainable" or "green" places, rather any sustainable aspects mentioned are instead part of their overall place branding strategy, like the case of Stockholm by Pedeliento and Kavaratzis (2019). With this in mind, this section will discuss the similarities and differences in ways the communication of sustainable tourism aligns with the PBI of each region (RQ 2b).

Blekinge

The PBI of Blekinge is heavily reliant on its waters, expansive archipelago and lakes that enables fishing. The landscape makes up for their Natural Heritage as part of their archipelago and numerous nature reserves. However, Blekinge also has the lowest presence of sustainability across the website. Of this, there is focus on environmental sustainability, to which majority of examples include nature tourism, by which they continuously refer to online fishing licenses and the responsibility that each visitor has. Respecting the natural environment is of importance to Blekinge and can be seen as an attempt to attract the right type of tourist as Skinner (2021) notes. Environmental sustainability as "Cultural Heritage" is also emphasised, generally in the form of Blekinge's museums. However, less focus is put on the actual exhibitions, traditions, or practices as part of social sustainability. Social sustainability is instead reflected in terms of promoting local businesses and the inclusion of mainly family-friendly activities, however, this is not evident in the PBI of Blekinge.

While some sustainable practices are apparent in the place brand of Blekinge, it shows little presence for a region whose PBI emphasises nature tourism and its' unique natural heritage. Social sustainability focuses mainly on Digital accessibility and inclusion, aspects which bring benefit to the tourist rather than the community, and Economic sustainability focuses on collaboration and equipment rental, encouraging the circular economy as prompted by (Näringsdepartementet, 2021), however, to a small extent. Blekinge's PBI can be seen as the centre of how they communicate sustainable tourism, meaning that what they share is likely authentic and true to place, however the extent to which it is implemented can be improved.

Gotland

Gotland is an interesting case. Its PBI presents a place with a rich culture filled with medieval history and unique nature, while their sustainable communication focuses on local businesses and intangible values. Rather than simply implementing sustainable practices, the DMO has seemingly followed Skinner's (2021) ideas and looked at sustainable place branding as a way to take their current tourism and transform it to benefit the community economically and socially. While their PBI likely guides their sustainable tourism communication; mentions of "medieval", "museum", "church", and "rauk" seen in the strong presence of "Cultural Environment", "art" and "film" in "Tangible Culture", and "history" in "Intangible Culture"; there is a clear consideration of how this affects the community. For example, Gotland has the highest number of mentions of "Diversifying Experience" and "Events" which encourage visitors all year round, likely combatting the possibilities for "over-tourism" and "disruption to communities" that can come when selling only the physical environment (Skinner, 2021, p. 186).

With mentions of every sustainable category apart from "Sami Culture", PBI seems to strategically guide their sustainable tourism communications. The findings suggest that they have adapted the aspects mentioned by (Näringsdepartementet, 2021) not only when it comes to promoting sustainable practices, but also in ensuring that all areas of sustainability are considered and reflective of the place and its history and culture, as well as the community living on Gotland.

Halland

Halland, where "coastal living" meets local produce in a friendly and open environment. Interestingly, out of all regions, Halland has the highest percentage of sustainable tourism across their website (70%) but one of the least holistic strategies at first sight (Figure 19). However, when compared with the findings from Stage 1 of the content analysis, their focus on nature tourism, the cultural environment, local businesses/ products, and sustainable food, seems fitting. Likely guided by a strong PBI, their nudging practices remain true to the local, food driven, coastal experience that the region has to offer. Possessing a great number of restaurants with high standards that use local produce is continuously repeated, and a sustainable mindset is thus endorsed.

The most present categories similar to other regions, Halland's communication shows a strong adaption of Sweden's Strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality industry (Näringsdepartementet, 2021) to reflect their authentic PBI. Rather than focusing on implementing typical sustainable practices, there is an apparent focus on adjusting current tourism, nudging the consumer to make their "vacation a little more sustainable", whilst still nurturing the community and place itself. In line with Skinner's (2021) ideas

whereby successful place branding considers all dimensions in a nuanced manner, this shows a very advanced understanding of the sustainable place brand.

Skåne

Stage 1 found Skåne to have a very "typical" PBI, with no emphasis on unique features or practices associated with the region. Similarly, Stage 2 found Skåne's communication of sustainable tourism to revolve around similar categories as other regions, a focus on the general aspects of nature tourism, the cultural environment, and local businesses. This is, however, a reflection of Skåne's PBI in which present a very inclusive, broad picture of the region with most aspects in the identity seemly considered in a sustainable way. This is seen in place concepts of "art", "design", "farm", "food", "restaurant" and "local" which are then reflected in their communication of "Local Businesses", "Local Products", and the focus on Scandinavian designers of the region. This is not only reflective of the "Swedish brand" but also "Nordic Branding" with a focus on "Nordic Design" (Lerøy Sataøen, 2021). While this is a good example of inter-regional branding, it is difficult to grasp the extent to which this is reflective of the PI and how the community experience the region.

Småland

Nature tourism makes up the most part of the sustainable tourism communicated on Småland's website, however, activities highlighted are not unique to the place. This either highlights a generic implementation of sustainability taken from the strategy or is a reflection of their place brand and slogan "Sweden For Real" (Visit Småland, n.d.-a) which focuses on the more traditional and national "Swedish" activities. Skåne also highlights traditional food, evident in the code "Food Culture", where they share regional and Swedish dishes and food practices.

The inclusion of all aspects of sustainability in alignment with Sweden's tourism strategy (Näringsdepartementet, 2021) suggests effective "nudging" of consumers to engage in certain activities, however, in line with critique from Skinner (2021) it also begs the question whether this is 'sustainable place branding' or whether in implementing these sustainable practices the authentic PBI has been lost. While it is impossible to prove such an acquisition without a deep dive into the PIs held by internal stakeholders and other forms of communication conducted by the DMO. While Småland has a strong presence of sustainable tourism, it lacks a unique identity. A reason for this could be the nature of the DMO, and the website Visit Småland which is managed by three smaller DMOs, all with individual mission statements and values (Visit Småland, n.d.-a). Without a strong PBI, there is no guidelines for implementing the sustainability strategy, and thus there are likely to be misalignments.

Öland

Öland promotes nature experiences and activities with a PBI that emphasises its island climate and unique nature and their slogan, "Love Öland with care" encourages responsible tourism practices. Despite this, Öland's sustainability presence is low, with only a 36% overall presence of sustainability and little mention of "Preserving and Protecting Nature", "Teaching Responsibility", and "Diversifying Experiences" thought to prevent seasonal over-tourism (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). While the majority of Öland's sustainable communication relates to "Environmental sustainability" including "Cultural Environment: Natural Heritage" and "Nature Tourism", it is evident that there is a disparity between the PBI which focuses on "care", and the natural environment, and the way sustainable tourism is communicated. While there is a focus on the environment, the strategy is not nearly as developed as it should be considering their place brand. This is reflective of the statement

from Ripoll Gonzalez and Gale (2023), in which the region's dedication to "care" and responsibility should be viewed sceptically without further proof of practices in place.

Öland's DMO could therefore amend their communication of sustainable practices by implementing more communication of the ways in which tourists and locals can act to help "Love Öland with care". Additionally, there are very few examples of social sustainability, suggesting that they should act to share more of their cultural heritage practices, local businesses or local products in order to create a more rounded sustainability strategy, contributing to the economic, environmental and social sustainability of the place and encourage local participation and pride (Koumara-Tsitsou & Karachalis, 2021).

Östergötland

Östergötland has a one-dimensional PBI that highlights the forest and archipelago, accompanied by generic nature activities such as hiking, cycling, and paddling. This is quite clearly reflected in the sustainable tourism communication of Östergötland with "Nature Tourism" and "Cultural Heritage" repeated throughout. Accessibility: Digital is the second most coded unit of the region but is clearly not visible in its PBI, likely due to it being a sustainable practice in place for the tourist rather than the local community. Based on the findings of Stage 1 and Stage 2, it is fair to say that Östergötland's PBI corresponds with its communication of sustainable tourism.

Interestingly, the slogan of the region is "Östergötland has to be experienced", however it has the smallest website of all regions with only 217 cases. As previously mentioned, the PBI of this region is lacking, so understanding whether the sustainability is guided by the PBI is difficult.

Unique Identities

While it is apparent that there is not one way to create the "sustainable place brand", there it is clear that those regions which use their distinct PBIs to guide the way that they communicate sustainable tourism demonstrate a more authentic and defined strategy. This means relying upon the unique aspects of the place and mirroring the community that live there, rather than focusing on generic practices associated with each element of sustainability.

Conclusion

There are many ways that PBI can guide strategic communication of sustainable tourism, however, the extent to which this is utilised varies across the regions in Southern Sweden. The study found that while the regions present unique PBIs they still reflect the same overarching ideas. Similarities between regions include the natural landscapes, nature-related activities such as hiking and cycling, museums, and high-quality dining. Though, it is argued that these similar PBIs are not detrimental but can rather prove useful as the regions consolidate for Sweden to reach its 2030 tourism goal. Further, it may repair the decrease of tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic. Maintaining a competitive edge in the tourism sector is performed by depending on certain unique characteristics, may it be world-class fishing, surfing, or even *how* the PBI is communicated.

In regard to sustainable tourism, there was a stark contrast between the presence of elements from the Strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality industry (Näringsdepartementet, 2021) on the seven regions' websites. While all three sustainability dimensions were present to some extent, "Environmental Sustainability" remained at the core, focusing on "Nature Tourism" and the "Cultural Environment". The websites, however, show little focus on encouraging the tourist to engage with these activities or places in a responsible manner. Local Businesses too were present across most regions, reflecting some consideration of social sustainability and the local community. The strength of strategies, however, differed greatly, with some regions showing thought out, holistic sustainability strategies, and others presenting little evidence of nudging or following the Strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality industry (Näringsdepartementet, 2021).

The Sustainable Place Brand was found to come in different forms, with some regions focused on a streamlined strategy that reflects their PBI through only a few distinct

sustainability aspects, and others focused on presenting a more well-rounded approach, whereby the place and its community are mirrored in the elements conveyed. Some regions, however, are in need of improvement, due to both the generic aspects that are portrayed likely due to the strategy not being guided by a strong PBI, and the lack of content overall related to sustainability. It is vital this this is improved if Sweden is to meet their 2030 goal.

Limitations and Future Research

Whilst this study was able to present a general overview of how the regions PBIs guide their sustainable tourism communication, there is no way to know whether this is aligned with the PI (as negotiated by stakeholders and visitors). Future research could include an investigation into how PIs align with sustainable tourism communication and/or PBI, looking into user generated media or through interviews with stakeholders. Additionally, this study was unable to gage whether the regions' PBIs aligned with their written sustainability strategies, as well as the possible factors that influence how defined each region's strategy is. Thus, it would be insightful for future research to investigate the relationship between identity and written strategy, taking into account elements such as budget and size of region.

This study excluded the region of West Sweden; however, this would be an interesting extension to this study. The region is home to three larger regions as well as Sweden's second largest City – Gothenburg – whom position themselves as "The world's most sustainable destination" (Göteborg & Co, n.d.). The complexity of this region and size of the DMO, as well as the authenticity in their brand and whether it is reflective of the region's residents and culture would be an insightful future case study.

Practical Implications

This study provides an academic voice to practitioners, suggesting recommendations based on an in-depth analysis of the regions alongside theoretical considerations. With a birds-eye perspective, the findings of this study function as a guide for sustainable place brand development. If Sweden are to reach their 2030 goal, it is fundamental that all regions refine their strategic communication to promote sustainable tourism guided by a unique and authentic PBI. As of now, there is a great disparity between the websites of the regions and how effectively they do this.

Generally, it was noted that there is a tendency to rely on generic elements associated with each dimension of sustainability. To improve this, it is suggested that the regions develop their sustainable tourism communication to reflect the unique and attractive attributes of their place using the 2030 strategy as a guideline rather than relying on the general associations of each component. While creating such an effective strategy can be difficult for regions with smaller budgets, it is vital that this occurs for Sweden to meet their 2030 goal. This may mean shifting the mindset of what sustainability actually is to focus on how current tourism can be made, or communicated, in a better way, rather than striving to implement new "sustainable" practices.

Additionally, it was noted there is a lack of focus on actively engaging the tourist to be more conscious of their impact. It is suggested that the regions consider implementing elements of sustainable tourism that encourage the traveller to act in a responsible manner rather than focusing purely on nudging. This can include more mentions of how travellers can protect the environment when they interact with it or encouraging the selection of eco-

friendly hotels and products with explanation of why. It can also include the promotion of

sustainably focused activities or introducing initiatives with a similar outcome.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Exclusion Criteria

It is important in a content analysis to limit analysis to only those aspects that are relevant to the research (Schreier, 2012). As such, irrelevant textual information will be excluded. The exclusion criteria are as follows:

- Text on the navigational menu.

- Tags to summary pages e.g., "#english", "#restaurant".

- Any pages not written in English. If the website has an inbuilt translator, pages automatically translated will be included.

- Non-descriptive captions to photos e.g., references to the photographer.

- Instructional text displayed on buttons and links such as "read more".

- Widgets that automatically collect and show summaries and links to multiple pages. Examples may include event calendars with 20+ items and summaries of category items. These will be manually examined by the researchers to decide upon their relevance.

- Header and footer text

- Any repeated content

- Promotion of social media e.g., "Follow us on Facebook" and Instagram feeds that display place related Instagram posts. This exclusion is made as it is deemed that they do not add value to the analysis of the PI nor does the study pertain to user generated content.

Appendix B

Background Research

This Appendix contains all the background research pertaining to the mission statement, slogan, values and vision of each region.

Table B1

Overview of the missions, slogans, values and visions of Blekinge

Brand Element	Results
Mission	"Unique experiences in northern Europe's nearest archipelago all year round." (Region Blekinge, n.d.)
Slogan	"Wonderful waters" (Region Blekinge, n.d.)
Values	"Well-being, genuine, thriving, close" (Region Blekinge, n.d.)
Vision	"The company's mission is to increase awareness of Blekinge and contribute to Blekinge by attracting more talent and supporting employers' skills supply, getting more visitors and helping to increase the number of establishments and investments."
	"In the long term, we will establish senders for communication with immigrants and business founders, but the Visit Blekinge is the umbrella under which everything rests." (Visit Blekinge, n.d.-a)

Table B2

Overview of the missions, slogans, values and visions of Gotland

Brand Element	Results
Mission	"Honest inconvenience < great advantage" "Gotland is the only region that is an island. Most other places are devoted to fine painting. We are authentic, genuine, transparent and honest without pretense. That makes us unique." (Region Gotland, n.d.)
Slogan	"Life on the Island" (Region Gotland, n.d.)
Values	"Vitality, closeness, creativity, magic, adaption" (Region Gotland, n.d.)
Vision	"Gotland – a creative island with room for the whole life" "Gotland is full of vitality and creativity. Here can people and businesses develop and contribute to a better world. Here there is proximity and space for all parts of life, at all ages." (Region Gotland, n.d.)

Table B3

Overview of the missions, slogans, values and visions of Halland

Brand Element	Results
Mission	n/a
Slogan	Coastal living
Values	n/a
Vision	"Our vision is to develop Halland to a sustainable destination with accessible and attractive experiences for visitors year-round." "The goal is that Halland, in a sustainable way, shall double the number of international visitors by 2030 and that we over time shall be among Sweden's five most visited regions." (Visit Halland, n.d.-b)

Table B4

Overview of the missions, slogans, values and visions of Skåne

Brand Element	Results
Mission	"We create communication about Skåne that others love to retell. Join us and spread these success stories, interesting travel destinations, all the creativity and positive development that exists in Skåne." (Visit Skåne, n.d.-b)
Slogan	"The best of both worlds" (Skånska Möten, n.d.)
Values	"Versatile, open, close" (Visit Skåne, n.d.-b)
Vision	"Through long-term work with the place brand, we will together put Skåne on the world map." (Visit Skåne, n.d.-b)

Table B5

Overview of the missions, slogans, values and visions of Småland

Brand Element	Results
Mission	n/a
Slogan	"Sweden for real" (Visit Småland, n.d.-a)
Values	n/a
Vision	**Smålands Turism (Kronoberg):** "Smålands Turism AB offers high competence and coordination in the field of tourism and develops platforms for marketing and collaboration and thereby strengthens the region's tourism competitiveness, which generates profitable growth in the region and its companies." (Visit Småland, n.d.-a) **Destination Småland (Jönköping):** "Destination Småland shall carry out development aimed at increasing the number of visitors to Småland as well as increasing the profitability of companies in the hospitality industry and strengthening the Småland brand as a whole." (Visit Småland, n.d.-a)

Table B6

Overview of the missions, slogans, values and visions of Öland

Brand Element	Results
Mission	n/a
Slogan	"The sun and the winds island" (Wilson Creative, 2023)
Values	n/a
Vision	"Öland, a place many associate with summer and swimming. But let us in on a secret - the rest of the year. We who live here know, and it's about time more people found out. The grass is not always green and the chirping of birds sometimes disappears. We want to create new travel stories, new memories to share." (Ölands Turismorganisation, n.d.)

Table B7

Overview of the missions, slogans, values and visions of Östergötland

Brand Element	Results
Mission	"The overarching goal for the hospitality strategy is to focus the work of Region Östergötland so that it may strengthen the hospitality sector of Östergötland and the attractiveness of the region." (Visit Östergötland, 2023)
Slogan	"Östergötland has to be experienced" (Visit Östergötland, 2023)
Values	n/a
Vision	"The three sub-goals focus on increasing the number of overnight visitors between September to May, increased profitability for actors of the hospitality industry, and increasing the attractiveness of Östergötland as a place to visit, live, and work for everyone regardless of background, functional ability, gender and age all year round." (Visit Östergötland, 2023)

Appendix C

Sustainability Categories

Table C1 demonstrates how the categories for Stage 2 of the analysis were formed. All elements have been taken from the Strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality industry. Additionally, the categories of "Certifications", "Events", "Health", "Second Hand", "Sustainable Food", and "Sustainable Products" were added by the researchers so to further specify several categories and ensure that no mention of sustainability was missed. These were inductively coded from visit Sweden's Kunskapsbank (Visit Sweden, n.d.-b). "Equipment Rental" and "Cultural Heritage: Known Figures" were added inductively following the pilot test.

Table C1

The Deductive Coding of Stage 2 Categories.

Category	Excerpt from the text (translated)
Circular and Shared Economy	Fossil-free transport and circular business models in all parts of tourism need to be developed (p.11).
	Sharing services can therefore be both economically beneficial for companies and environmentally sustainable (p. 32).
Collaboration	Rural and coastal rural development can be developed through other forms of local cooperation, for example through the so-called leader method, which is based on the private, non-profit and public sector coming together in a partnership for rural development (p.19).

Category	Excerpt from the text (translated)
Cultural Heritage Practices: Food Culture	… consideration is given to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the Sami culture as well as the local business life and civil society (p.17).
Cultural Heritage Practices: Intangible Culture	
Cultural Heritage Practices: Sami Culture	
Cultural Heritage Practices: Tangible Culture	
Local Businesses	
Civil Society	
Inclusion	Tourism policy must promote equality, integration and diversity (p. 13)
Accessibility: Physical	
Local Products	The part of the hospitality industry that is linked to food production and artisanal products in both urban and rural environments can contribute to change and diversified business, which enables increased resilience and competitiveness for many entrepreneurs around the country (p. 15).
Cultural Environment: Cultural Heritage	Environmentally sustainable tourism also means that destinations that are based on common resources must be protected. National parks, other protected and valuable natural and cultural environments, world heritage sites and trails for, for example, hiking and cycling provide access to unique places. Hunting and fishing tourism and other nature tourism that takes place on public and private land and water needs to be managed in a sustainable way in dialogue with land and water owners (p.17) (p.17)
Cultural Environment: Natural Heritage	
Nature Tourism	
Preserving and protecting nature	

Category	Excerpt from the text (translated)
Teaching responsibility	Visitors need, also as part of a sustainable experience, to show care and responsibility for the destination so that it is not destroyed or depleted, for example through knowledge of and respect for public rights so that this is not abused (p.17)
Diversifying Experience	In addition, some destinations and places have exceptionally high volumes of visitors for a few weeks of the year. Overtourism is a widespread problem in many countries, but by planning for sustainable tourism at all levels and working foresight and prevention, such a development can be avoided in Sweden (p.17)
Transport: Transport to a Place Transport: Transport at a Place	Fossil-free transport and circular business models in all parts of tourism need to be developed (p.11). Tourism cannot develop sustainably without fossil-free and environmentally friendly transport. The transport sector's emissions, like the hospitality industry's emissions in general, need to be reduced at a significantly faster rate and the sector has comparatively good conditions to reduce emissions through increased transport efficiency, more efficient vehicles and ships, electrification and by switching from fossil to sustainable renewable fuels (p.17).

Category	Excerpt from the text (translated)
Accessibility: Digital	Also more stealthy changes that are due to changed customer behaviour, changed consumption, digitisation or other new technology are things that the industry must be aware of in order to act proactively (p. 14)

Appendix D

Coding Manual

Coding Manual

A content analysis of sustainable communication in regional Swedish DMOs websites

By Douglas Berglund and Katherine Driscoll

Table of Contents

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

This coding manual is for use in Stage 2 of the content analysis. Its purpose is to categorise data from destination management organisations (DMOs) websites, based on sustainable tourism, the goal being to highlight the ways in which economic, social and environmental sustainability are communicated. The aim of this content analysis is to both gain a quantitative understanding of which aspects of sustainable tourism are communicated and a qualitative insight into how each aspect is discussed by the different regions.

The Sample

The sample for this content analysis consists of the text from websites of the 8 regional DMOs in Southern Sweden; Blekinge, Halland, Gotland, Skåne, Småland, West Sweden, Öland, and Östergotland. The sample includes all text collected within two clicks of the home page, within in the boundaries of the exclusion criteria.

Sustainable Tourism

The categories used for coding have been created deductively in line with Sweden's strategy for sustainable tourism and a growing hospitality industry (Näringsdepartementet, 2021). These categories have been highlighted in the text as specific measures that promote sustainable tourism under the three pillars of "Economic", "Social", and "Environmental". Sustainability is a very interconnected ecosystem where some aspects play a role in more than one area. Thus the placement of these categories in the three dimensions the

guidelines from the Strategy for Sustainable Tourism and a Growing Hospitality Industry

(Näringsdepartementet, 2021) as this is what guides the DMOs strategies. For more

information, see Appendix C.

General Coding Advice

The coding manual needs to be read through entirely before coding begins. The documents do not need to be read in advance; however, all documents should be paged through before coding in order to gain a general understanding of the structure. The coding sheet with an overview of all codes can be found on page 24 of the coding manual. Data in the document should be coded according to what is visible in the text. The coder should not code based on knowledge that is not written. For example, the mention of a location should not be coded as "3.1.2 Natural Heritage" if it is not specifically referred to as such in the data. However, if interpretation is required to some extent so the coder shall ideally consider surrounding sentences of the same paragraph to ensure that the coding is just.

All data in the document should be coded. During data collection, any duplicate information such as repeated content in excepts should have been excluded. However, if any duplicate content happens to appear in the data set, it should be coded to ensure consistency between coders.

Please code chronologically. The documents should be coded line by line. Each category should be considered for each line. Following initial coding, the document should be reread and checked in order to catch any mistakes.

Coding with ATLAS.ti. All content will be coded with the software ATLAS.ti. The researchers should be familiar with the program and its' functions before coding. Coded units should be one full sentence and include full-stops (.) at the end of the sentence.

The coding manual serves as a guide for coding all data sets. **If a coding unit fits under multiple categories, it should be coded as such.**

Categories

Economic Sustainability

This refers to all aspects relevant to economic sustainability. Economic sustainability in travel and tourism means having a competitive, responsible and has long-term and adaptive resource management (Näringsdepartementet, 2021, p. 17). The categories within Economic Sustainability therefore are "Certifications", "Circular and Shared Economy", "Collaboration" and "Equipment Rental", and "Events".

1.1 Certifications	
Coding instructions	This category includes any mentions of sustainability certifications. This may be regarding eco-tourism or ecological food, as well as protected sites. **Positive examples:** • Certifications specifically related to sustainability - ecological food, eco-travel, sustainable products etc. For example, Rainforest alliance, Ekologisk mat stamped by Livsmedelsverket, KRAV • Certifications for protection of sites; UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the instance that it is referred to as "World Heritage Site" this is still included. **Negative examples:** Not environmentally focused: The white guide, Michelin star
1.2 Circular and Shared Economy	
Coding instructions	This is any instances of private people giving consumers access to under used resources. This may include ride sharing, using recycled material and staying in accommodation rented out by private individuals through Airbnb, cabin rental or couch surfing. **Positive examples:** • Using businesses that facilitate circular economy; Uber, Airbnb • Events which allow producers to sell directly to the consumer; farmers markets, flea markets, reko-ring. **Negative examples:** Private rental accommodation; hotels, camp sites.

Notes:
This category is similar to 1.4 Equipment Rental.
- If there is a mention of rental from a company or organisation, code only as 1.4 equipment rental.

If there is mention of rental from a private individual, code as 1.2 Circular and Shared Economy, and 1.4 Equipment Rental.

1.3 Collaboration	

Coding instructions	This category aims to capture any examples of collaboration. This can be collaboration between the DMO and an external business or organisation, or collaboration between the region and an external business or organisation. These businesses or organisations may be at a regional, governmental, or local level. The collaboration should stimulate the development of a place or improve the tourism experience in some way.
	
	It **must** mention a collaboration of some sort, it cannot just be the mention of the place. For example, "Visit Naturum to find out about local nature" would be coded as collaboration but "park next to Naturum" would not.
	
	Types of collaboration to consider:
	
	• Collaboration between the DMO and a corporation.
	
	    This is any bigger business that is run on a country-wide of global level. They are chain stores or big businesses. The collaboration can include joint work that they carry out or working together for tourism purposes. Ideally, it should bring mutual benefit for both parties.
	
	    Positive examples:
	    Private transport agencies such as SJ or Flixbus, whereby tourists are encouraged to use their services to visit the destination.
	
	    Negative examples:
	    Encouraged to visit or purchase something from a business, local or country-wide whereby the product doesn't contribute to the visit of the destination

- Collaboration between the DMO and the government or region

  Any examples of government or regional government corporation. This can include grants, infrastructure, and funding, as well as government run organisations or funded places. It can also include references to regional agencies and public transportation.

  Positive examples:
  - Mentions of the Swedish Government; This was achieved by funding from the Swedish Government, this was implemented by the Swedish government in 2010.
  - Mentions of government run organisation or funded projects; Naturum is an initiative created by Naturvårdsverket and thus all mentions of visiting Naturum will be classified as "Collaboration". Visit Sweden is also counted as such.
  - Mentions of regional public transport or infrastructure; you can find the timetable on our local transport website, see all times on Länstraffiken, the hiking guide is available on Lansstyrelsen

  Negative examples:
  Mention of a Government agency or policy but without reference to its contribution to the region; Skatteverket is here, here you will find the government offices

- Collaboration between the DMO on a local level

  This includes any collaboration between the DMO and local businesses, non-profit organisations, private organisations, or people. It should refer specifically to collaboration, not just mention of the business

  Positive examples:
  Contacting organisations or people for information; we suggest visiting this shop for information on kayaking before you begin, you can find maps in this hotel, contact Stina here for her tips, this organisation gives ski lessons.

  Negative examples:
  Mention of a business for renting services or purchasing goods.

- Inter-Regional Collaboration

  This includes any collaboration between the DMO and another regional DMO or promotion of another region through their communication.

  Positive examples:

  Promotion of places or activities in neighbouring regions; If you want to extend your trip make sure to head north to Stockholm, this section of the hiking trail goes from Malmö to Gothenburg.

  Negative examples:
  Examples that do not encourage a visit to another region, for example, information about transport; trains to this region are direct from Oslo and Copenhagen.

  Notes:
  This category is similar to 2.7 Local Businesses;
    - If there is mention of a business that works with the DMO to enhance the tourism experience, code as 1.3 Collaboration
    - If there is a mention of a local business that visitors are encouraged to visit, code as 2.7 Local Businesses

1.4 Equipment Rental	
Coding Instructions	This category refers to any examples or equipment rental. This includes bikes, kayaks and other equipment used in nature tourism. It also includes any examples of "car rental". **Positive examples:** • Equipment rental; hire bikes, the hotel have bikes you can borrow, this business do canoe rental • Car rental; hire a car from… **Negative examples:** Examples of accommodation; rent a room at Hotel Smoke, hire a private summer cabin **Notes:** This category is similar to 2.7 Local Businesses; • If there is a mention of rental equipment from a specific local business, code as both 2.7 Local Businesses and 1.4 Equipment Rental • If there is a mention of renting accommodation from a local business, code only as 2.7 Local Businesses

1.5 Events	
Coding Instructions	This category includes any major events that are promoted on the website. They should be open to the public and tourists. It can include seasonal events such as markets. Events **must** be referred to specifically, not as just "events". **Positive examples:** Major events; a music festival, sporting event, an international conference, food festivals, film festivals, concerts. **Negative examples:** • Small events for locals; Watch the football final O'Leary's, a wedding. • Non-specific; events are held in the spring, see the event schedule, all events.

Social Sustainability

This refers to all aspects relevant to social sustainability. A socially sustainable tourism and hospitality industry contributes to viable cities, urban areas as well as rural areas where consideration is given to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, the Sami culture as well as the local business life and civil society (Näringsdepartementet, 2021, p.17) It therefore aims to collect all examples of "Accessibility", "Civil Society", "Cultural Heritage", "Health", "Inclusion", "Local businesses", and "Local products".

2.1 Accessibility	
Coding Instructions	This category is about capturing the communicated accessibility of a region, both digitally and physically. It refers to all features of a place or the website which enable more accessible travel for visitors.
2.1.1 Accessibility: Digital	
Coding Instructions	This category includes all examples of an ease of access via digitalisation, i.e., possibility to access information or similar online. It should refer to accessing or booking something specific, for example, "book this tour through this website" rather than "book now". It includes references to maps, timetables, downloadable apps, booking websites, information on opening hours and other place specific information. It can include digital contact details such as email. It must refer to specific information or reference digital usage.
	Positive examples:
	- Mentioning the possibility to find specific information online; visiting websites to see timetables, downloading apps, booking activities, find opening hours, get a fishing license, download this PDF. - Mentioning being able to access of use something using technology; downloadable maps, virtual tours, interactive guides, hiking trails on your smartphone

	Negative examples:
	• Reference to technology that is not in place specifically for ease of travel, for example "Wi-Fi is available"
	Vague references such as "read more about it here" or "find more information here".

2.1.2 Accessibility: Physical

Coding Instructions	This category includes any examples of accessibility in relation to material and physical elements. It must reference to a specific example. This can include elements to create accessibility for certain groups, e.g. ramps for wheelchairs and strollers. It can also include information points, physical maps, and ease of access when purchasing tickets.
	Positive examples: • Reference to structures in place to increase physical accessibility for different groups; ramps, handrails, wider paths, disabled toilets. • Reference to places where visitors can find information; InfoPoints, visitors centres, physical maps. • Reference to ease of travel; buying tickets on the bus or train, booking in person.
	Negative examples: Mention of people only; this place is family friendly
	Notes: This category is similar to 2.6 Inclusion; • If there is a mention of a place being accessible or open to certain groups, code as 2.6 inclusion • If there is a mention of a place being accessible due to its physicality, code as 2.1.2 Accessibility: Physical • If there is a mention of physical accessibility and a certain group; code as both 2.6 and 2.1.2.

2.3 Civil Society

Coding Instructions	This category encompasses any mentions of local. They are not local businesses or staff at tourism attractions. It can include specific people but does not include notable or famous figures. This category refers specifically to local people and not places considered "public" or references to the "general public". They cannot be people with commercial intent e.g. artists. This category also captures all examples of respecting the local community, for example, private property.

Positive examples:
- Mentions of a person or group of people as locals; Fika with a local, head down to the bar where locals hang out, see the island through Stina's eyes.
- Mentions of people in the local area; a place where people meet, popular with the locals
- Mentions of respecting private land; Please leave the privately-owned cabins in peace

Negative examples:

Commercial Intent: Take a tour with a local guide, meet local fishermen

Notes:

This category can be confused with 2.4.3 Known Figures and 2.7 Local Businesses. If;
- There is a mention of a local individual or group of individuals, code as 2.3 Civil Society
- There is a mention of a local known figure, celebrity, historical figure etc. Code as 2.4.3 Known Figures

There is a mention of individuals or a group associated with a business or organisation run for commercial reasons, code as 2.7 Local Businesses

2.4 Cultural Heritage Practices

This category includes all examples of cultural heritage which are referred to as such. This will include all Swedish customs, traditions, practices but NOT places or locations. Cultural heritage also includes art, music and performance.

2.4.1 Food Culture

Coding instructions	All examples that refer to food culture. This includes specific dishes and flavours specific to Sweden or the region. These must be well known foods or specifically referred to as a cultural or traditional dish. This also includes any cultural practices associated with food; styles of eating and traditions. It also includes any history associated with a certain cultural food or practice. Examples here can consider context outside of the coding unit. However, the unit with the dish is the only one that should be coded. For example; "Do you want to live like a real Swede? Top your bread with Caviar". In this case, the second sentence would be coded as Food Culture.

Positive examples:
- Well-known Swedish or regional dishes; Surströmming, Sill, Meatballs, Smögåstårta, pytt-i-panna
  It is referred to as "Swedish", "traditional", "classic", "typical" or similar; a classic pastry, a typical Swedish breakfast, a classic "Dagens Lunch"
- It is a cultural practice or tradition related to food; Fika, Kanelbullensdag, Semladagen

Negative examples:
- Foods not referred to as traditionally Swedish; Apple crumble, cupcakes, try Japanese cuisine, contemporary flavours
- Foods that are local but not referred to as a local delicacy or locally specific dish; they serve local fish from the lake

Notes:
This category is similar to 3.8 Sustainable Food and 2.8 Local Products. If:
- There is a mention of "local" ingredients, code as 2.8 Local Products
- There is a mention of "local" ingredients used to make a cultural dish, code as 2.8 and 2.4.1
- There is a mention of "organic" produce, code as 3.8 Sustainable Food
- There is a mention of "organic" produce to create a local cultural dish, code as 3.8 and 2.4.1

2.4.2 Intangible Culture	
Coding instructions	All aspects of cultural heritage that are intangible. This includes traditions and practices, both old and new. These are culturally significant but do not exist as an object. It also involves any examples of cultural history, storytelling and customs or ways of life from the past.

Positive examples:
- Cultural practices; mushroom picking, traditional craftsmanship, traditional techniques
- Cultural traditions; crayfish party, Valborg, midsummer, Lucia.
- Swedish ways of life; As good Swedes…, as a Swede, Swede's usually…, our __ (when talking about a Swedish tradition or practice from a Swedish point of view), In Sweden, people like to…, for many Swedes, a real Swedish…
- Customs or ways of life that come from the past; shaped by those who once lived there.

	Negative examples: Cultural objects used as part of practices - e.g., Midsummer pole
2.4.3 Known Figures	
Coding instructions	Any examples and references to known figures, contemporary or historical. This can include celebrities, historical figures, athletes and similar. They should be significant to the area in some way. They **must** be mentioned by name. **Positive examples:** • Notable figures that grew up in the area; Agneta from ABBA was born here, visit Alfred Nobels' last residence, Astrid Lingren • Known local figures; ski on the same slopes as Marget Svensson **Negative examples:** Notable figures not related to the area; Will Ferrell once at this restaurant, almost at famous as Pippi Longstocking
2.4.4 Sami Culture	
Coding instructions	All examples of Sami culture. These are intangible and tangible but are specific to the Sami's history or current practices and traditions. **Positive examples:** Traditions, artifacts or practices specific to the Sami culture. Referred to as part of Sami cultural heritage.
2.4.5 Tangible Culture	
Coding instructions	Examples of tangible culture. These are any cultural elements that exist as objects. This can include significant objects for celebrations, or objects used in traditional practices. It also includes culture such as art, music and performance. **Positive examples:** • Objects used or referred to as culturally or historically significant; midsummer pole, folk dress, sculptures. • The history of significance of a cultural or historically relevant object; This spear was created in the 1650s. • Any mention of artwork, music or performance. **Negative examples:** • A culturally significant place: A museum exhibition or cultural centre • Food: Any cultural food or food practice or tradition Practices and traditions: Cultural aspects that are not physical or able to be consumed or used

2.5 Health	
Coding instructions	This category includes examples related to sustainable health practices. This includes slow living, wellbeing and relaxation. **Positive examples:** • The mention of an activity as a way to relax or slow down; relax by the fire, wind down in the spa, stop and breath in the sea air, take time and enjoy yourself • Activities done for wellbeing; a visit to the spa, a yoga class, visiting the gym **Negative examples:** Mention of health facilities such as "close to the hospital"
2.6 Inclusion	
Coding instructions	All people shall ideally be welcomed at an attraction or event no matter the gender, age, race or similar, i.e., no discrimination takes place. It can include examples as to specific groups or people and languages. **Positive examples:** • Activities for different ages or being ___-friendly; there is something for everyone, family activities, for the whole family, for all. • Mentioning of different language options; we have guided tours in three languages **Negative examples:** • Restrictions; Children are not allowed at a certain attraction • Facilities and physical structures to ease access for different groups **Notes:** This category is similar to 2.1.2 Accessibility: Physical. If: • There is a mention of accessibility related to the physical environment, code as 2.1.2 • There is a mention of physical accessibility for a specific group then code as 2.6 and 2.1.2 • There is a mention of only a specific group then code as 2.6

2.7 Local Businesses	
Coding instructions	This category includes any examples that relate to local businesses, specifically small businesses or individuals working for commercial intent. They should mention specific businesses or businesspersons by name. These should not be big companies, but local businesses or businesspersons. This can include craftsmen, shops, B&Bs, restaurants, fishermen etc. The business is **local** and only present in this place or region; If not, are there only a few around Sweden? If it is a large, countrywide chain then do not code. **Positive examples:** • A local business such as a hotel, shop, tour company, restaurant, small locally owned ski slopes, resorts, spas. • A local artist mentioned by name. **Negative examples:** • Unnamed references to local businesses; There is a cafe by the lake, visit one of the restaurants in the area, buy fish from a local fisherman, local artists Local shopping centres or commercial centres. • Larger chain stores such as IKEA, Clas Ohlson, H&M
2.8 Local Products	
Coding instructions	This category captures all examples of local products and services. It does not include the business, but a mention of "locally made" or "locally produced" goods. When it is a mention of consumable products, these should be available for purchase by visitors. This category also includes local produce, both available for purchase and mentioned as used by businesses. **Positive examples:** • Products referred to as local; Locally made crafts, locally designed clothing. • Products known to be made by a local; buy clothes from the local artists at the market, browse artworks from local artists, local produce, from local ingredients. • Products referred to as hand made by someone in the region; For example; buy homemade spoons at the local farm shop • Local produce or locally sourced ingredient for sale or used by restaurants; their ingredients all come from local farms, they sell home-grown vegetables.

Negative examples:
- Local cultural products; they make traditional dresses from the local region
- Local businesses and craftspeople.

Environmental Sustainability

This refers to all aspects relevant to environmental sustainability. An environmentally

sustainable tourism and hospitality industry reduces its climate impact and takes

responsibility for resource management and for the ecosystems of places

(Näringsdepartementet, 2021, p. 17). The categories are thus as follows; "Cultural

Environment", "Diversifying Experiences", "Sustainable Food", "Nature Tourism",

"Preserving and Protecting Nature", "Second Hand", "Transport", and "Sustainable

Products".

3.1 Cultural Environment
This category captures all examples of environmental cultural heritage. This is tangible sites or places that are valued due to their historical, natural or cultural significance. They should be specific to the area and relate to the place.

3.1.1 Cultural Heritage	
Coding instructions	This captures all examples of cultural heritage present in the environment. This includes the mention of all sites which are referred to as culturally significant to any group of people over time. This includes cultural places, such as museums, opera houses, as well as historical or significant architecture and buildings. It also includes culturally significant sites such as petroglyphs, rune stones and other historical man-made areas.
	Positive examples: • It is referred to as a cultural, historical, traditional or significant place; the historical hotel building, boat houses typically seen in this area, adds to the city's profile, the cultural quarter It is a significant historical or cultural site; traditional villages, ruins, rock carvings, a religious site, churches • Reference to the past significance of a place; remnants of the past, it is as if time stood still in this fishing village • Current places of culture; museums, opera houses, art galleries. Museum exhibitions are included, however, reference to specific artifacts should also be coded as 2.2.3.5 Tangible Culture. Similarly, if it is an exhibition that discusses natural heritage, it should be coded as both 3.1.1 Cultural Heritage and 3.1.2 Natural Heritage

	Negative examples:
	- Areas of natural significance; Rocks were formed during the ice age, national parks and nature reserves
	- Cultural objects; Arrows from the iron age, art works Museums that are not culturally of historically specific to Sweden: The Disgusting Food Museum, the Ice Cream Museum, the Car Museum
	- Privately owned places where culture exists if they are not always open to the public for the purpose of viewing the culture e.g. art studios
3.1.2 Natural Heritage	
	This captures all examples of natural heritage. These are natural sites that reflect the uniqueness or history of a specific area's environment as well as any mention of national parks or nature reserves. These places should be historically or naturally significant, have unique features of aspects, or be places where natural events occur. If the text is discussing the history or significance of these places, it should also be coded.

Positive examples:
- Naturally, historically significant places: beaches formed by melting glaciers, our land was formed 10,000 years ago.
- Unique natural aspects (should have a telling adjective and mention something specific); magical forests, the otherworldly beach, the unique nature, known for its smooth rocks, natural wonder
- Reference to a national park or nature reserve; Söderåsens National Park, the nature reserve. If mentioned, "nature reserve" or "national park" is **always** included.
- Natural events occur here; a lake where birds migrate to each spring, a stream where salmon pass through in the autumn

Negative examples:
- Mention of a place but not why it is unique or significant - Examples may include place names, or generic references; beautiful island, the archipelago.
- Mention of culturally significant places; natural sites with cultural significance to a group of people through history or religion for example petroglyphs |

3.2 Diversifying Experiences	
Coding instructions	• Efforts that may extend the season and not just promoting a place for its typical season dependent attractions. I.e., it may note that an attraction is open all-year around or opens earlier or later in the season. **Positive examples:** • Mentions of a place open or available all year round; the inn is open all year round, if you miss the event, the artwork is accessible permanently • Mentions of an alternative option to the most popular time to visit; "This is popular in the summer. However, in the winter you can also...", "In the spring, it is a popular time for bird watchers. In the summer you can also...". In these cases, only the second sentences should be coded as "3.2 Diversifying Experiences" **Negative example:** • Examples that include the most common time to visit; Come to Åre for skiing, this is most popular in summer • Alternative experiences and promotion of hidden gems, detours or places off the beaten track.
3.3 Nature Tourism	
Coding instructions	This category captures all examples of activities that can be performed outdoors and may utilise the natural environment. This may include hiking, (wild)camping, cycling, fishing, hunting, swimming in nature among other outdoor activities. It includes all mention of these activities when mentioned as verbs unless referred to as not taking place in nature e.g. "paddling", "cycling", and "swimming" would be included but not "swimming in a leisure centre". This category also includes mentions of the "outdoors" and any mention of trails, routes and paths. It can be the mention of the word "trail" or a specific trail name. **Positive examples:** • Activities that utilise the natural environment and take place outdoors; kayaking, hiking, paddling, canoeing, wild camping, walking through the forest, skiing, hunting, fishing

	• Mention of a trail; this hiking trail, this is a popular kayaking route, section 101 takes you from, the Kattegattleden. • Mentions of "nature and outdoor"
	Negative example: • Physical activity done indoors or not in nature; swimming at the paradise bath, walking through the city, playing volleyball • Mention of the activities but not for nature tourism promotion purposes; Hunting is illegal in the spring
3.4 Preserving and Protecting Nature	
Coding instructions	Activities or practices that are done so to not harm, or to promote the wellbeing of, the environment/nature and does not violate guidelines or the environment. They should be specific guidelines or rules, or activities to encourage responsible behaviour. This category also includes any tips for a sustainable vacation and encouraging activities or practices that promote sustainable tourism. **Positive examples:** • Rules or suggestions that are in place to preserve the environment; pick up your trash, do not make a fire here, stay on the path • Activities in place to encourage people to preserve the environment; plocking, pladdling • Examples of facilities available for protecting and preserving the environment; there are bins available, there are signs where it is ok to camp • Examples of protected areas, animals or plants? For example; wild garlic is red listed here **Negative examples:** Mention of national parks and nature reserves **Notes:** This category is similar to 3.6 Teaching responsibility. If: • There is a mention of why it is important to do these practices, code as 3.6 • If there is a mention only of the practice, code as 3.4 Preservating and Protecting Nature

3.5 Second Hand	
Coding instructions	Any examples that include the promotion of second-hand shopping. **Positive examples:** • The mention of visiting a place where one can buy second hand products; loppis, an antique shop. • The mention of something as "second hand", "vintage", "antique", "used" or similar.

3.6 Teaching Responsibility	
Coding instructions	Anything regarding teaching responsibility and respect towards the natural environment. This includes the rules of allemänsratten, as well as elements that provide knowledge as to how to treat the nature, including animals and plants, responsibly. **Positive examples:** • Mentions of **why** a behaviour or activity should not be done; Touching the plants can damage them, birds are breeding at this time, so walking is forbidden, do not pick the wild garlic as it is red listed and endangered. • Information to help tourists learn more about respecting nature; This could be a link to learn more about the right of public access, or a section about Leave No Trace. This information should be specific. **Negative examples:** Rules or suggestions; Do not pick flowers, do not touch the stones. These should be coded as 3.4 Preserving and Protecting Nature

3.7 Transport	
All examples of transport that is known to be or mentioned as sustainable. This can be a sustainable method of transport or a mention of using public transport. This includes transport to the area, and transport around the area. This may include examples such as "flixbus" and "flixtrain" where the transport is not necessarily mentioned but is inferred through the name of the company, as well as public transport such as local buses, ferries of cycling as transport.	

3.7.1 Transport to a place	
Coding instructions	Any mentions of sustainable transport to get to a place. This includes sustainable methods of transport such electric cars and trains, or promoting public transport to get to the place, for example buses, trains or ferries. **Positive examples:** • Mentions of using a sustainable method of transport to reach the place; you can catch a bus from Stockholm, buses run from all of Sweden's biggest cities • In the case of being unsure, is this method referred to as "green" or "sustainable"? For example; "Travel by green ferry from Denmark" **Negative examples:** Mention of flying or driving.

3.7.2 Transport at a place	
Coding instructions	Any mention of using sustainable transport methods while at a place. This can include encouraging cycling, catching the bus or train, and walking, as opposed to driving. It also includes any mentions of public transport. This can be regionally owned, or a private company that work in collaboration with the region to provide routes. **Positive examples:** • Transport a part of the regional or local transport system; take the ferry to the islands, local buses run into town, travel by train to..., trains arrive at the central station, ferries depart at…, • Sustainable transport methods used to reach a place; cycling to the lake, walking into town **Negative examples:** Methods of transport at a place not promoted for travel purposes; "visit the steam train museum", "take a tour bus", go on a river cruise

3.8 Sustainable Food	
Coding instructions	All examples that refer to food sustainability. This includes all foods that are referred to as ecological, local and sustainable as well as promotion of vegan and vegetarian options. **Positive examples:** • Food item mentioned to be ecological or sustainable produce; ecological meat, sustainably sourced flour • Vegan or vegetarian food items. Can also include phrasing such as "not an animal product" • Local or homemade products from the area; local fish caught from the lake, homemade jams from a farm shop **Negative examples:** Locally grown food that is not mentioned as organic, eco-friendly or equivalent.
3.9 Sustainable Products	
Coding instructions	Includes all examples of sustainable products. These can be made with sustainable resources and relate specifically to environmental sustainability, and they have a lesser impact on the climate environment. They must be referred to as sustainable products. **Positive examples:** Products referred to as being sustainable or made from sustainably sourced goods? For example; sustainable clothing, made from sustainable cotton, biodegradable cups **Negative examples:** Hand-made, or locally made products that are not specifically referred to as being sustainable or eco-friendly

Coding Sheet

Category	Sub-Category
1. Economic Sustainability	1.1 Certifications
	1.2 Circular and Shared Economy
	1.3 Collaboration
	1.4 Equipment Rental
	1.5 Events
2. Social Sustainability	2.1 Accessibility
	2.1.1 Accessibility: Digital
	2.1.2 Accessibility: Physical
	2.3 Civil Society
	2.4 Cultural Heritage Practices
	2.4.1 Food Culture
	2.4.2 Intangible Culture
	2.4.3 Known Figures
	2.4.4 Sami Culture
	2.4.5 Tangible Culture
	2.5 Health
	2.6 Inclusion
	2.7 Local Businesses
	2.8 Local Products
3. Environmental Sustainability	3.1 Cultural Environment
	3.1.1 Cultural Heritage
	3.1.2 Natural Heritage
	3.2 Diversifying Experiences
	3.3 Nature Tourism
	3.4 Preserving and Protecting Nature
	3.5 Second Hand
	3.6 Teaching Responsibility
	3.7 Transport
	3.7.1 Transport to a place
	3.7.2 Transport at a place
	3.8 Sustainable Food
	3.9 Sustainable Products

Appendix E

Stop Word List from ATLAS.ti

The list of stop words used in Stage 1 included the automatic English stop word list included the ATLAS.ti software. The researchers manually added words to this list following analysis. The list included all prepositions as well as generic words used in instruction and marketing communications such as "want", "go", "stay", "book", and "read". The context of each word was considered before adding to the stop list. The additional stop words are as follows:

's, can, also, find, one, take, want, get, go, stay, book, along, day, visit, well, just, way, make, see, read, tips, many, come, two, choose, km, call, today, around, runs, link, seexternal, +46, mail, telephone, pack, 're, www, information, kilometre, emails, look, share, map, website, use, se

Appendix F

Pilot Study Findings

The results from the pilot studies can be seen below. Figures F1 and F2 visualise the differences in place brand identity communicated by the two regions, Örebro focused on the traditional Swedish experience, with "Swedish", "experience", "fika", and "coffee" being among the top words. Contrastingly, Höga Kusten focuses on the naturepresent, with "trail", "fishing" "island" and "park" being among the top words. This is furthered in Table 19, whereby Örebro's unique personality features "real" and "Swedish" while Höga Kusten identifies itself as "unique" and "outdoor". The same can be seen in "Place Physics" where Örebro highlights "tradition", "fika", "coffee" as unique aspects while Höga Kusten focuses on "beaches", "bay", the "archipelago" and the natural aspects that make the area unique.

Following this pilot test, it was decided that the first stage of analysis could give an adequate insight into the PBIs of the different regions, with the possibility to look closer at any specific elements through an automatic text search using ATLAS.ti during the discussion stage.

Figure F1

Pilot Test Örebro: Word Cloud from Stage 1

Figure F2

Pilot Test Höga Kusten: Word Cloud from Stage 1
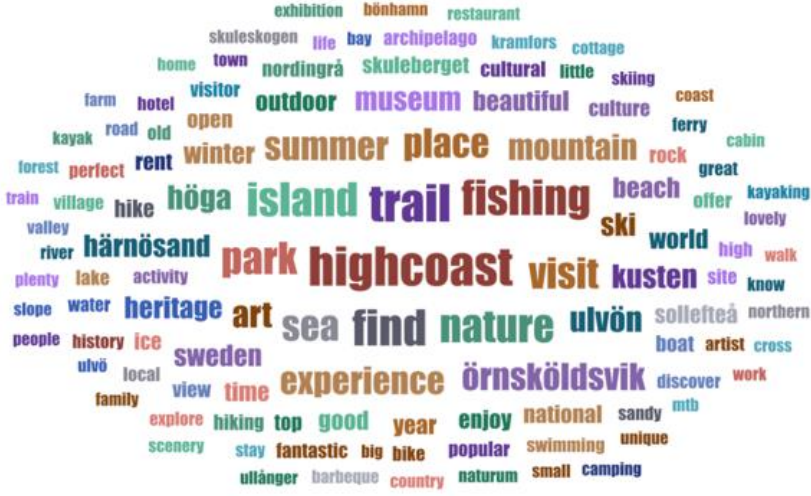
Table F1

Pilot Study 1: Results from Stage 1

Category	Örebro	Höga Kusten
Name Concepts	**Stockholm**, **Örebro**	**Bönhamn**, **Härnösand**, **High Coast**, **Höga Kusten**, **kramfors**, **nordingrå**, **örnsköldsvik**, **skuleberget,**

			skuleskogen, **sollefteå**, **Sweden**, **ullånger**, **ulvön**
Place Physics	Art, **cake, café, castle, city, coffee, country, fika, food,** home, **hour,** lake, **lunch,** museum, nature, place, restaurant, summer, **tip,** town, **tradition,** trail, train, **trip**		**Activities**, **archipelago**, art, **barbeque**, **bay**, **beach**, **boat**, **cabin**, **coast**, **cottage**, **culture**, **exhibition**, **farm**, **ferry**, **forest**, **heritage**, **high**, **history**, home, **hotel**, **ice**, **island**, lake, **life**, **mountain**, museum, **national park**, nature, **naturum**, place, restaurant, **river**, **road**, **rock**, **scenery**, **sea**, **site**, **slope**, **summer**, **time**, **top**, town, trail, train, **valley**, **view**, **village**, **water**, **winter**, **world**, **year**

Category	Örebro	Höga Kusten
Place Practices (verbs)	Enjoy, experience, offer, **go**, **shop**, **take**, **taste**, **travel**	**Bike**, **camping**, **discover**, enjoy, experience, explore, **find**, **fishing**, **hike**, **kayaking**, **mtb**, offer, **rent**, **ski**, **stay**, **swimming**, **visit**, **walk**, **work**
Place Practices (persons)	**swede**	**artist**, **family**, **people**, **visitor**
Place Personality	Beautiful, **different,** good, **nice, real,** small, Swedish	Beautiful, **big**, **fantastic**, good, **great**, **known**, **little**, **local**, **lovely**, **northern**, **old**, **open**, **outdoor**, **perfect**, **plenty**, **popular**, **sandy**, small, **unique**

The second stage of the analysis shows that the two regions sustainability communication share a similarly low percentage of the economic elements, while there is a difference in social and environmental sustainability. Linking this to the place brand identity, it could be suggested that Höga Kusten identify more with their natural heritage and the natural features of their landscape, and thus environmental sustainability communication is both more in-line with their identity and more relevant to their visitors. Similarly, Örebro's identity is very much about the real Swedish experience, and thus the focus on social sustainability might reflect not only their identity, but their want to preserve the cultural heritage of the region. From just this brief analysis of the overview of results it was noted that the study gives sufficient data to be able to begin understanding the role identity plays in communicating sustainability.

Figure F3

Pilot Study Results from Stage 2

Stage 2: Sustainability Communication
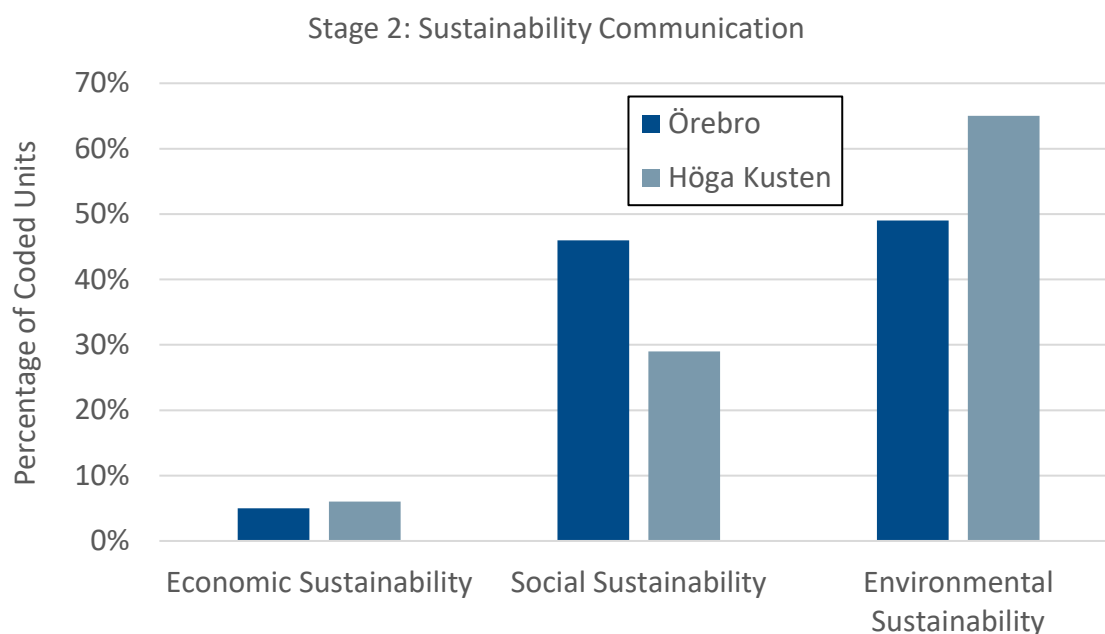
Table F2

Percentage of Similarity Test for Örebro Analysis

Code	Coder	Applied	Units	Total Units	Total Coverage
Accessibility					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Transport: Bus					
	Coder 1	6	661	30326	2.18%
	Coder 2	7	723	30326	2.38%
Certifications					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Civil society					
	Coder 1	1	55	30326	0.18%
	Coder 2	1	55	30326	0.18%
Collaboration					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Collaboration: Corporate collaboration					
	Coder 1	4	422	30326	1.39%
	Coder 2	7	586	30326	1.93%

Code	Coder	Applied	Units	Total Units	Total Coverage
Cultural Environment					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Cultural heritage					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Cultural Environment: Cultural heritage (2)					
	Coder 1	27	2659	30326	8.77%
	Coder 2	38	3870	30326	12.76%
Transport: Cycling					
	Coder 1	1	19	30326	0.06%
	Coder 2	1	19	30326	0.06%
Accesibility: Digital					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Diversifying experiences					
	Coder 1	9	702	30326	2.31%
	Coder 2	14	1212	30326	4.00%
Equality					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Events					
	Coder 1	1	61	30326	0.20%
	Coder 2	3	147	30326	0.48%
Transport: Ferry					
	Coder 1	1	81	30326	0.27%
	Coder 2	1	81	30326	0.27%
Cultural heritage: food culture					
	Coder 1	17	1767	30326	5.83%
	Coder 2	22	1792	30326	5.91%
Collaboration: Government collaboration					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Health					
	Coder 1	1	90	30326	0.30%
	Coder 2	1	90	30326	0.30%
Inclusion					
	Coder 1	2	231	30326	0.76%
	Coder 2	1	65	30326	0.21%

Code	Coder	Applied	Units	Total Units	Total Coverage
Cultural heritage: intangible culture					
	Coder 1	31	2568	30326	8.47%
	Coder 2	25	1936	30326	6.38%
Local businesses					
	Coder 1	33	2423	30326	7.99%
	Coder 2	34	2198	30326	7.25%
Collaboration: Local collaboration					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	2	142	30326	0.47%
Local products					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Cultural Environment: Natural heritage					
	Coder 1	9	1046	30326	3.45%
	Coder 2	4	627	30326	2.07%
Nature tourism					
	Coder 1	14	1299	30326	4.28%
	Coder 2	23	2122	30326	7.00%
Collaboration: Non-profit collaboration					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Accesibility: People					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Preserving and Protecting Nature					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Protected areas					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Collaboration: Regional collaboration					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	2	197	30326	0.65%
Cultural heritage: Sami culture					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%

Code	Coder	Applied	Units	Total Units	Total Coverage
Second hand					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Shared- and circular economy					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Sustainable food					
	Coder 1	7	482	30326	1.59%
	Coder 2	10	643	30326	2.12%
Sustainable products					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Cultural heritage: tangible culture					
	Coder 1	17	1527	30326	5.04%
	Coder 2	15	1228	30326	4.05%
Teaching responsibility					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%
Trails					
	Coder 1	11	1283	30326	4.23%
	Coder 2	13	1561	30326	5.15%
Transport: Train					
	Coder 1	6	562	30326	1.85%
	Coder 2	7	607	30326	2.00%
Transport					
	Coder 1	0	0	30326	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	30326	0.00%

Agreement Coefficient

Simple Percent Agreement: 49.9 %

Total

Simple Percent Agreement: 49.9 %

Table F3

Percentage of Similarity Test for Höga Kusten Analysis

Code	Coder	Applied	Units	Total Units	Total Coverage
Accessibility					
	Coder 1	0	0	80169	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	80169	0.00%
Certifications					
	Coder 1	12	1652	80169	2.06%
	Coder 2	12	1652	80169	2.06%
Civil society					
	Coder 1	14	1753	80169	2.19%
	Coder 2	14	1753	80169	2.19%
Cultural Environment: Cultural heritage					
	Coder 1	99	10254	80169	12.79%
	Coder 2	100	10776	80169	13.44%
Accesibility: Digital					
	Coder 1	33	2192	80169	2.73%
	Coder 2	34	2233	80169	2.79%
Diversifying experiences					
	Coder 1	12	1088	80169	1.36%
	Coder 2	11	971	80169	1.21%
Events					
	Coder 1	7	1193	80169	1.49%
	Coder 2	8	1256	80169	1.57%
Cultural heritage: food culture					
	Coder 1	7	803	80169	1.00%
	Coder 2	12	1161	80169	1.45%

Code	Coder	Applied	Units	Total Units	Total Coverage
Health					
	Coder 1	6	654	80169	0.82%
	Coder 2	5	572	80169	0.71%
Cultural heritage:					
intangible culture					
	Coder 1	6	752	80169	0.94%
	Coder 2	8	969	80169	1.21%
Local businesses					
	Coder 1	72	4602	80169	5.74%
	Coder 2	73	4367	80169	5.45%
Local products					
	Coder 1	1	130	80169	0.16%
	Coder 2	3	250	80169	0.31%
Cultural Environment:					
Natural heritage					
	Coder 1	64	8249	80169	10.29%
	Coder 2	89	10343	80169	12.90%
Nature tourism					
	Coder 1	200	16568	80169	20.67%
	Coder 2	229	19001	80169	23.70%
Accesibility: Physical					
	Coder 1	12	1067	80169	1.33%
	Coder 2	12	1067	80169	1.33%
Preserving and Protecting					
Nature					
	Coder 1	7	431	80169	0.54%
	Coder 2	9	617	80169	0.77%

Code	Coder	Applied	Units	Total Units	Total Coverage
Cultural heritage: Sami culture					
	Coder 1	0	0	80169	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	80169	0.00%
Second hand					
	Coder 1	0	0	80169	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	80169	0.00%
Shared- and circular economy					
	Coder 1	2	200	80169	0.25%
	Coder 2	2	200	80169	0.25%
Sustainable food					
	Coder 1	6	519	80169	0.65%
	Coder 2	7	675	80169	0.84%
Sustainable products					
	Coder 1	0	0	80169	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	80169	0.00%
Cultural heritage: tangible culture					
	Coder 1	15	1757	80169	2.19%
	Coder 2	29	3256	80169	4.06%
Teaching responsibility					
	Coder 1	2	199	80169	0.25%
	Coder 2	0	0	80169	0.00%
Transport					
	Coder 1	0	0	80169	0.00%
	Coder 2	0	0	80169	0.00%

Code	Coder	Applied	Units	Total Units	Total Coverage
Transport: Transport at a place					
	Coder 1	22	2726	80169	3.40%
	Coder 2	24	3202	80169	3.99%
Transport: Transport to a place					
	Coder 1	5	296	80169	0.37%
	Coder 2	7	497	80169	0.62%
			Agreement Coefficient		
				Simple Percent Agreement: 68.3 %	
			Total		
				Simple Percent Agreement: 68.3 %	

Appendix G

Code Comparison Between Regions

This Appendix contains figures depicting the presence of each code across the seven regional websites. The codes are divided by the three sustainability pillars.

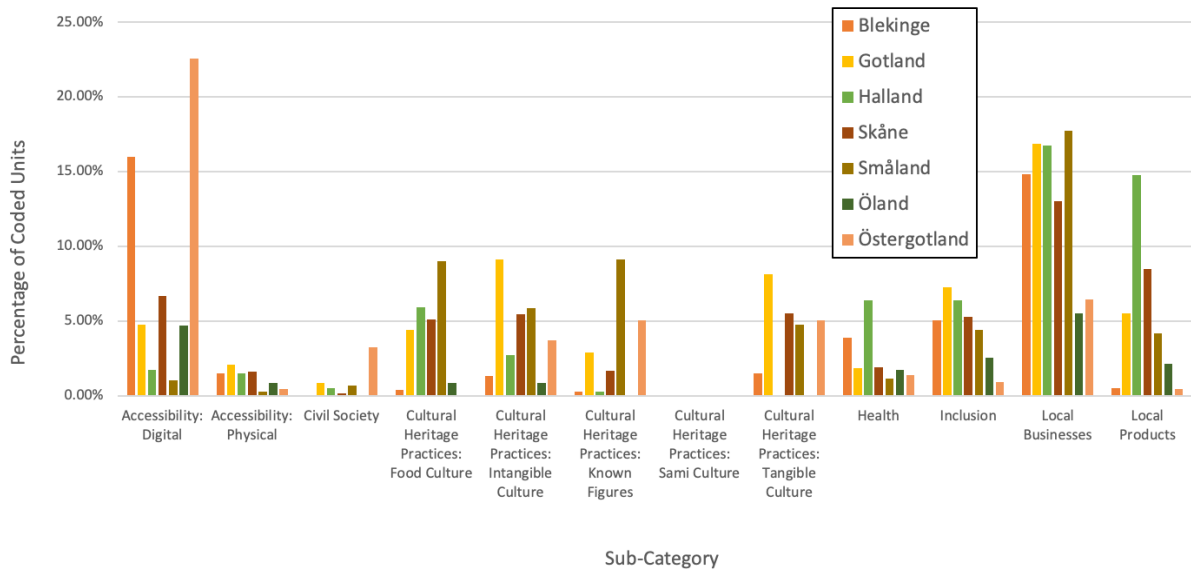**Figure G1**

Social Sustainability Categories by Region
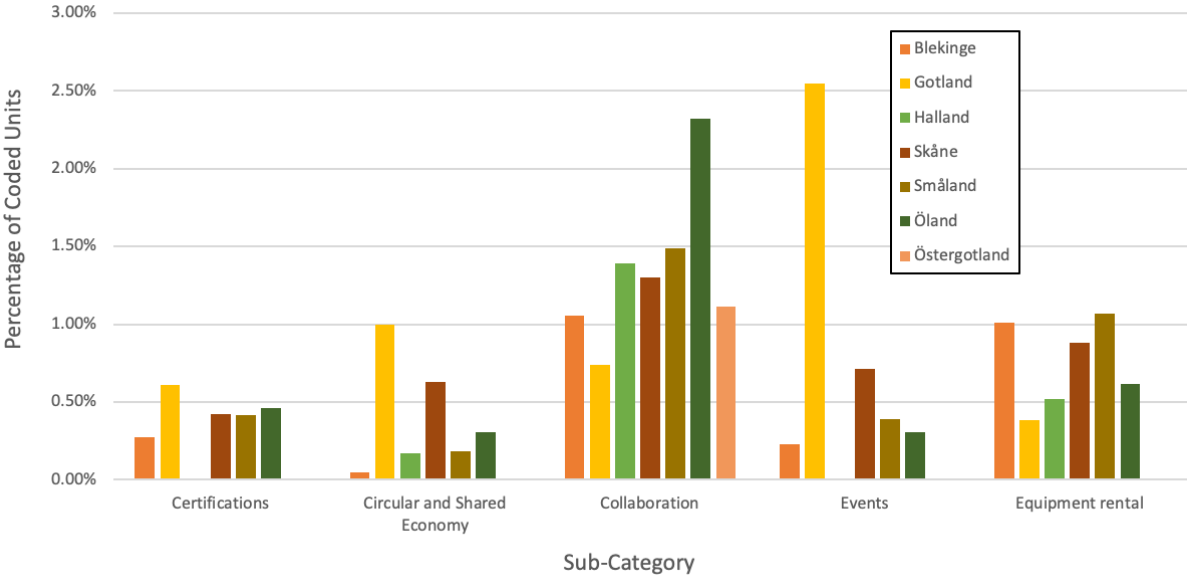
Figure G2

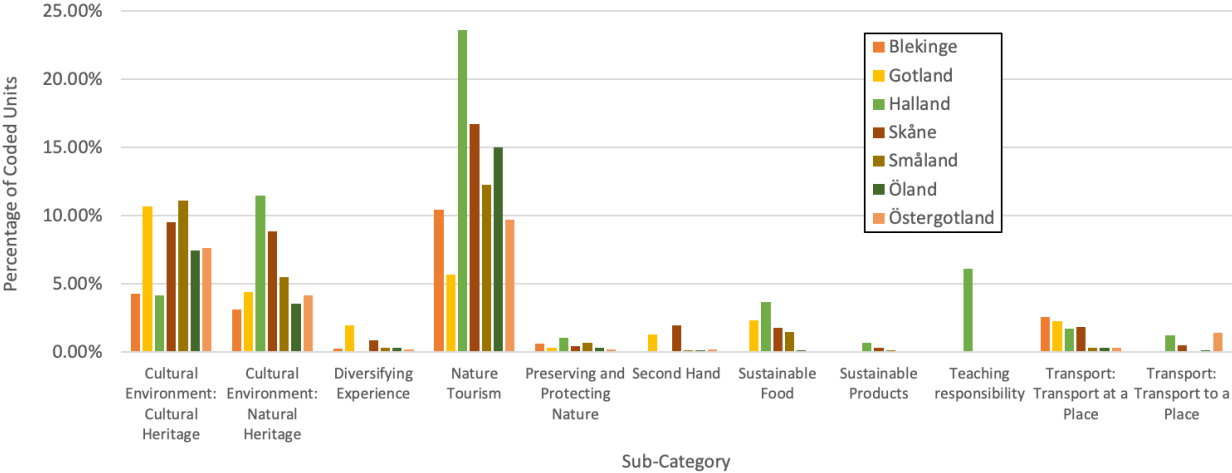*Economic Sustainability Categories by Region*

Figure G3

Environmental Sustainability Categories by Region

Statement of Division of Work

We are two students who have been working on this thesis together. Both of us have been part of all steps in the process, both in the theoretical and practical sections. However, Douglas Berglund has been putting slightly more effort into the Abstract, Introduction and Stage 1 Findings and Discussion, whereas Katherine Driscoll has put somewhat more effort into the Literature Review, the content analysis, Stage 2 Findings and Discussion and the conclusion. However, in general the workload has been more or less even between the two of us.