

The different types of tourists and their motives when visiting Alaska during the Iditarod.

Paulien Becker

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Titlepage

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during the Iditarod.

UIT – Arctic University of Norway, Finnmark faculty

Institute of Social and Economical Research, University of Alaska Anchorage

Name: Paulien Becker

Student number: 421973

First supervisor: Kari Jæger – UIT Arctic University of Norway

External supervisor: Gunnar Knapp – University of Alaska Anchorage

Acknowledgements

This master thesis is the final step to obtain the Master in Social Science degree of the Master in Tourism Studies at the Arctic University of Norway. The Master in Tourism Studies gains appropriate knowledge in tourism as an industry and as a social phenomenon, insight into the intersection of production, marketing and consumption, as well as society, culture, and nature. The programme places particular emphasis on how nature and culture can be used by a responsible industry. This is what I have found during my research about the different types of tourists and their motives when visiting Alaska during the Iditarod. The Iditarod gave me the perfect platform to gain more knowledge about sports event tourism.

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Abstract

This research investigates the different types of tourists and their motives while visiting Alaska during the Iditarod. According to Getz (2008), sports event tourism has increased over recent years and a clear link between major events, attracting tourists and generating a positive destination image can be seen. In this perspective, the Iditarod is a mix of sporting events and touristic activities that capture the arctic wilderness.

The longest and one of the most popular sled dog races in the world, known as the Iditarod is held in Alaska. The first race was completed in 1973. From 1976, the Iditarod gained national and international credibility by calling the race; “The Last Great Race on Earth.” Now, national and international tourists are visiting Alaska in the wintertime to see the Iditarod. I have been following part of the Iditarod 2014 during my half-year stay in Alaska to conduct this research. The research question is formulated;

“Who are the tourists visiting Alaska during the Iditarod, and what are their motives?”

Understanding the tourists and their motivations is important to understand travellers behaviours, predict future travel patterns and it should help tourism industries to develop effective marketing programs to attract the travellers. (Jang & Wu, 2006)

For this master thesis, mixed methods are used to conduct research. Three in-depth interviews are conducted with different tour operators based in Anchorage and Nome. The sample of tour operators is founded by two main criteria. The first is that tour operators are based in Anchorage and the second is that they are offering tours during the Iditarod. The in-depth interviews give the researcher information about the best locations for conducting the quantitative research. The locations for the quantitative research were the Musher's Drawing Banquet Anchorage, Day before Iditarod 2014 Race Start, Iditarod 2014 Race start, Iditarod 2014 Race Re-Start and the finish in Nome. After conducting a sample of 56 respondents spread over these different locations, four types of tourists could be identified; the casual visitor, the “eye-opening” visitor, the “bucket list” visitor and the experienced visitor. These types of out-of-state visitors can be explained according to the motives and the classification of cultural tourists by McKercher (2000).

The casual visitor is the visitor for who the Iditarod played a limited role in their decision to visit Alaska. Once these visitors were in Alaska, they decided to participate in some activities like the race start in downtown Anchorage. The “eye-opening” visitor is for whom the Iditarod played again a limited role in their decision for Alaska but once they arrived, this

visitor wants to participate in the Iditarod activities, gets extremely interested and ends up having a deep and new experience. The ‘bucket list’ visitor is a person who dreamed about travelling to Alaska and personally witnessing the Iditarod for a long time. This type of visitor wants to have a deep cultural experience. Finally, the experience visitor is hard to identify completely according to McKercher (2000). The experience visitor is an interesting new type of cultural visitor that is retrieved from this master thesis. This out of state visitor has a history with the Iditarod and has made repeated visits. Some of them volunteer, but others follow the race and support the teams along the trail. The experience visitor knows how the race works and is used to the atmosphere. Besides that, they are returning visitors who are spending most money during their visit.

There can be concluded that an international sport event such as the Iditarod is attracting several types of tourists. In this research, the different types of visitors are categorized in four types named the casual visitor, the “eye-opening” visitor, the “bucket list” visitor and the experienced visitor all with their own characteristics. It shows that an international sport event is a new field in the tourism industry, which can attract a new kind of target group. This target group consists of tourists seeking for novelty, socialization, prestige, rest and relaxation, education value and family togetherness by travelling to foreign places for a sport event. A sport event like the Iditarod involves sport, cultural aspects, and adventure. It is organized in a way that it attracts spectators from all over the world eventough the logistics are difficult in an area such as Alaska. Besides that, the Iditarod is having the effect of keeping people at home and it is a reason for visitors, who are already in Alaska, to stay longer. The Iditarod is having a large tourism value when looking at the out of state visitors visiting Alaska during the Iditarod. The Iditarod race is taking care of a positive destination image worldwide because of the cultural aspects involved.

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Chapter 1: Research discription

1.1 Introduction

“Iditarod is truly the last great race. Love the triumph of man and dog. Would love to visit again!”

(Tourist Iditarod Race, 2014)

Dogsledding has played an important role in the history of Alaska. Since nomadic tribes from Siberia around 12.000 years ago first crossed the now-submerged Bering Land Bridge and set foot in Alaska, the people of this area relied heavily on sled dogs. Dogs have played the role of companion, pet, guard, hunter, herder, worker and athlete. They have been used historically by trappers, explorers, mail carriers, gold miners, judges, clergymen and the military. (Bowers, 1998)

Now, the longest and one of the most popular sled dog races in the world, called the Iditarod, is taking place on the Iditarod trail. The Iditarod trail is important for Alaska’s history due to the fact that it was the only way to reach certain communities. Mail and supplies were carried across this way and people used the trail to get from place to place. Priests, ministers and judges travelled between villages by dog teams. Beginning in the 1960s, the use of the airplane and snowmobiles began to replace the dog team as a standard mode of transportation. (Farley, 2004)

Joe Redington Sr. is the founding father of the Iditarod and he never gave up on looking for a way to preserve the history. Redington asked Dorothy Page, to be the editor of an Iditarod Annual. Page was chairman of the committee that was focused on historical events in Alaska. Her enthusiasm, drive, and love of history opened the world’s eyes to the Iditarod. When Redington talked in the early 1970s of a thousand-mile sled dog race across the state, people thought it would never happen. Since then, the Iditarod grew from an idea discussed among friends into an international event. The Iditarod has served to make the Alaskan dog a television friend in a million living rooms and more than ever the Alaska symbol. A total of 737 dog teams has completed the race since 1973 according to Iditarod (2014). (Freedman, 1996)

I have been following part of the Iditarod 2014 during my half year stay in Alaska to conduct this research. The mushers experienced one of the worst trails in history. Dogs pulling mushers and mushers pulling dogs through brutally strong winds and across slippery glare ice

along the southern coast of the Seward Peninsula which is close to the finish line in Nome. Not only was the last part brutal. In the beginning of the trail, dog teams had to pass areas with barely any snow which was extremely dangerous. Finally, 49 out of 69 teams crossed the finish line in Nome. The mushers came from different states of America, Norway, Sweden, Australia, Canada and Jamaica.

1.2 Problem definition

In 1976, Redington took over as president of the Iditarod organization and gained national and international credibility and fame as he called the race “The Last Great Race on earth”. They decided to have a ceremonial start in downtown Anchorage to receive more attention. According to Bergsma (2002), the race is attracting around fifty dog teams and thousands of spectators each year. According to Getz (2008), most festivals and events are dependent on local and regional audiences. Events can have the effect of keeping people and their money at home, rather than travelling outside the region. But whether events are becoming tourist attractions, or a reason for visitors already in an area to stay longer, the event and in this case, the Iditarod, can have a large tourism value.

According to Getz (1999), event tourism has increased over recent years and a clear link between major events, attracting tourists and generating a positive destination image can be seen. In this perspective, the Iditarod of Alaska is a mix of sporting events and touristic activities that capture the arctic wilderness. The economic impacts of events can be large, varied and far-reaching. The motivation of spectators to visit an event such as the Iditarod may be differ. According to Lee and Crompton (1992), these motives can vary from socialization to education, value or novelty.

According to Jang & Wu (2006), understanding motivational variations with regard to social-demographic characteristics should help tourism industries to develop effective marketing programs to attract the travelers. Besides this, Jang and Wu (2006) are mentioning that travel motivation is one of the most important areas of tourism research to better comprehend travellers’ behaviors. Finally, knowledge of travelers’ motivations is also critical to predict future travel patterns.

The Iditarod is held in a part of the world which can be difficult to reach due to the location. There are national and international visitors that I have met on different locations. This research can not capture all tourists visiting Alaska during the Iditarod but it aims to capture most of the different types of visitors. Their motivations to visit Alaska during the Iditarod

and their experiences of being part of this sports event will be discussed. Based on the previous, the following research question is formulated;

‘‘Who are the tourists visiting Alaska during the Iditarod, and what are their motives?’’

This master thesis is part of a larger international research project named; ‘‘Winter: New turns in Arctic winter tourism: Adventuring, romanticizing and exoticising, and demasculinising nature?’’ which will be conducted by de UiT Arctic University of Norway. This research project seeks to understand the potential of winter tourism in the Arctic from different thematic angles, represented in four partly overlapping work packages: 1. Winter tourism activities: soft and hard adventures, 2. Finnmarksløpet and the Iditarod of Alaska: event tourism, 3. Hurtigruten: potentials and barriers in mass tourism developments, 4. Aurora Borealis: tourism performances and symbolic meanings.

This research is of scientific relevance because research shows that event tourism and sports tourism are two relative new fields in social sciences. There is currently no comprehensive study into the motivations of tourists visiting Alaska during the Iditarod. Some authors have written about tourist motivations in different cases like McKercher (2000), Getz (1993), Kim Borges Chon (2005) and Crompton (1979). There is not a lot of information existing about tourist motivations particular in this context of an international event such as the Iditarod. There is a lack in knowledge about the different types of tourists who are attracted by an international sport event and willing to travel for it. Analysis of event motivations helps event managers to better position their events. The research conducted in this master thesis could be of practical relevance because it shows that the different fields; sport, event and tourism are merging together into one field. Sports event tourism can bring a new target group to a specific destination where a particular sport event is organized. (Lee, Lee & Wicks, 2003)

2.3 Thesis structure

Chapter two presents a descriptive platform about the Iditarod. The descriptive platform consists of the history of dogsledding, the history of the Iditarod, the current situation of the Iditarod and the experience from Iditarod 2014. Chapter three continues with a theoretical framework which consists of sport event tourism theories, motivation theories and finally a theory about the classification of tourist types. Chapter four presents the methodology that is used for retrieving the data. Chapter five consists of the analysis of four different types of Iditarod visitors from outside the state of Alaska. Chapter six presents all data which is conducted according to the quantitative research. Chapter seven explains the discussion

retrieved from the theory combined with the data collection and a final conclusion.
(Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2000)

Chapter 2: Descriptive platform Iditarod

2.1 Introduction

In size, Alaska is the largest state of the United States of America, but only has a population of 735,000, according to the 2010 census. It is the least densely populated state with 1.2 persons per square mile compared to 87.4 in the rest of the United States of America. Almost half of Alaska's residents live within the Anchorage metropolitan area. Alaska's economy is dominated by the oil, natural gas and fishing industries. (United States census, 2010)

During winter time, Alaska has some of the coldest, roughest terrain on earth. This is the period of the year that mushers are getting ready for this 1000-mile dogsled race. The journey for these mushers, accompanied only by the huskies they have raised and trained, is unique each time. On the first saturday in March since 1973, men and women gather together on Fourth Avenue in downtown Anchorage before a roaring crowd to see the start of this race. (Freedman, 2004)

According to Bowers (1998), the Iditarod is the longest race on earth and is probably one of the most exotic sporting events in the world. It is much more than a race, it is a memory of a lifestyle that is unique to the northern countries. The roots of dogsledding extend more than a thousand years back into the prehistory of Alaska. Bowers (1998) ran the Iditarod multiple times and published different books about his own experiences on the trail and the history of the trail.

Dan Bowers; 'I am the last person anyone thought could run the race. In fact, I am the last person I thought would run the race, but on the ride back to Montana Creek with Ron, the reality starts to sink in. I'd better learn how to spell m-u-s-h-e-r, because in a few months I am going to be one.'
(Bowers, 1998: 18)

Susan Butcher is one of the first woman who completed the race and quotes her feelings and experience towards the Iditarod.

Susan Butcher; 'My dogs and I have raced it 14 times. It has been the central effort of each year, but it is more than that. It is mountain views, wild animals, old friends, and lonely trails. It is 40 above and sun, or 60 below and blowing. It is not only a test against other dogs and drivers but against the elements themselves. Fatigue, cold, and sleeplessness. The

Iditarod, the haunting name, has caught me, transformed me, and will never let me go.'' (Sherwonit,1991: 17)

There are four different types of races, long-distance, mid-distance, sprint, and stage. Long-distance races or marathons are races that run on trails which are 150 or more miles. A long-distance marathon is usually an overnight race. Besides the Iditarod, the 500-mile John Beargrease race across Minnesota and the Finnmarksløpet in Norway are famous long-distance races. Mid-distance races are usually completed in one day and have a distance of twenty to 150 miles. Sprints are just ten to twenty mile races. Stage races are runs for several days. A dog sled team runs five to forty miles a day during a stage race. All races are organized in different places in the world like North America, Canada, Greenland, Russia, Scandinavia and the Alpes. (Kubesh, McNeil & Bellotto, 2007)

2.2 The origin of the Iditarod Trail

Besides carrying on the tradition of the mail mushers of the early part of this country, the mushers are carrying on the tradition of Alaska's earliest inhabitants who started using dog teams more than a millennium ago. The Alaska natives are the founding fathers of using dogs for winter transportation many centuries ago. The race is a remarkable journey into the past, passing through gold-rush mining districts as well as some of the very native villages where mushing was born. (Bowers, 1998)

According to Bowers (1998), when Russians and eventually Americans arrived in Alaska, they quickly discovered dog teams were the only way to reliably move across long distances in Alaska when rivers were frozen. Dogs have always been ideally suited for winter travel. The sled dog is the most powerful draft animal on earth. Dogs require almost no shelter and can easily live in extreme conditions. Another fact according to Bowers (1990), is that dogs can be fed from the land with moose, fish, or caribou in winter. Perhaps most important, heavy draft animals simply cannot use the snow packed winter trails which are founded in Alaska. By 1900, dog teams were as common in Alaska as cars, ATV's and snow machines are today. Almost every winter photograph of early Alaska includes a dog team.

Bowers (2012) and Briney (2014) states that the Iditarod Trail soon became the major "thoroughfare" through Alaska. Mail was carried across this trail, people used the trail to get from place to place and supplies were transported via the Iditarod Trail. Priests, ministers and judges travelled between villages via dog team. Bowers (1998), explains that the inevitable end for the Iditarod Trail and other long distance winter sled trails in Alaska, was the airplane. In the late 1920s and 1930s, air traffic became economically feasible. Reliable

engines and easy maintainable airplanes made it possible for pilots to reach different airstrips and sandbars along Alaska. (Bowers, 1998: 379)

According to Iditarod (2012), the dog teams had one last taste of glory in early 1925 when the virus diphtheria appeared in the west coast village Nome. The serum against diphtheria was in Anchorage, and the first thought was to fly the serum to Nome. However, the only pilot in the area considered capable of braving the unpredictable weather was Ben Eielson, who was on a trip and not available. Instead, different dog teams were quickly organized. The serum was loaded on the newly completed Alaska Railroad and rushed to Nenana, where the first musher took it westward down the frozen Tanana River to the Yukon. Every village along the route offered its best team and driver to speed the serum towards Nome. The critical part across the treacherous Norton Sound ice from Shaktoolik to Golovin was taken by Leonhard Seppala, the territory's premier musher, and his lead dog Togo. Gunnar Kaasen drove the final two parts into Nome behind his leader Balto through a blizzard hurling 80 mile per hour winds. The serum arrived in time to prevent an epidemic of diphtheria and save hundreds of lives. The twenty mushers and their teams had covered almost 700 miles in around six days in temperatures which rarely rose above 40 below zero and winds which were sometimes strong enough to blow over dogs and sleds. The serum run gained worldwide congress. A statue of Balto, Kaasen's heroic lead dog was erected a year later in New York's Central Park, where it still stands. (Bowers, 1989: 380)

2.3 History of the Iditarod Race

Freedman (2004) states that a lot of people said that it was never possible to race the thousand miles across Alaska again. But a core of believers, led by the man who became known as the Father of Iditarod, Redington, knew that it could and set out to make it happen. The idea of a race along the historic Iditarod Trail had been talked about for years. In 1967, the 100th anniversary of Alaska's purchase from Russia was celebrated. The idea of holding a dog sled race as part of the celebration came up. The race was held on the old Iditarod Trail, but was just 28 miles long. Could dogs race more than 1000 miles along that trail from Anchorage all the way to Nome? The one true believer always was Redington who came to Alaska from Oklahoma, founded a kennel in Knik, and spend most of his life on mushing. (Freedman, 2004)

According to the Iditarod (2012), by 1973, Redington was ready to try out the race. Redington had two reasons for organizing the long-distance Iditarod Race: to save the sled dog culture and Alaskan huskies, which were being phased out of existence due to the introduction of snowmobiles in Alaska; and to preserve the historical Iditarod Trail between

Seward and Nome. According to Freedman (2004), he proposed a race from Anchorage to Iditarod at the first place, the mining ghost town some 500 miles down the trail. Dick Mackey, a sprint musher saw the possibilities for excitement in a long-distance event. ‘‘No one’s heard of Iditarod. Why do you not run to Nome?’’ Done! (Freedman, 2004: 17)

2.4 Current situation of the Iditarod Race

The Iditarod is world famous these days. People from all over the world are joining the festivities. According to Freedman (2004), the race has gone the right way, it should be everyone’s race, and it still is. Back in the beginning, it was just a dream and now it is an international event. The Iditarod is an interesting event because it is getting people on the way to these remote places in Alaska. It causes a yearly spurt of activity, increasing airplane traffic and excitement to areas which are normally quiet and dormant during the long Alaskan winter. Everyone gets involved, from very young school children to the older experienced people. The race is an educational opportunity and an economic stimulus to these small Alaskan places. (Iditarod, 2012 & Freedman, 2004)

The most striking feature of the Iditarod is that everyone competes equally: men and women, young and old, amateur and professional, there are no separate men’s or women’s divisions, nor is there a senior class or a special amateur class. Approximately 20 percent of the mushers are female, and women have won the race five times. (Bowers, 1998)

Running the Iditarod is the ultimate goal of almost every dog musher. It is a huge challenge for both the dogs and the musher. No one who has ever run the race will ever forget a moment of it and the incredible range of emotions and experiences it represents. Especially this year Iditarod experience is an example of a striking race due to the weather conditions. (Bowers, 1998)

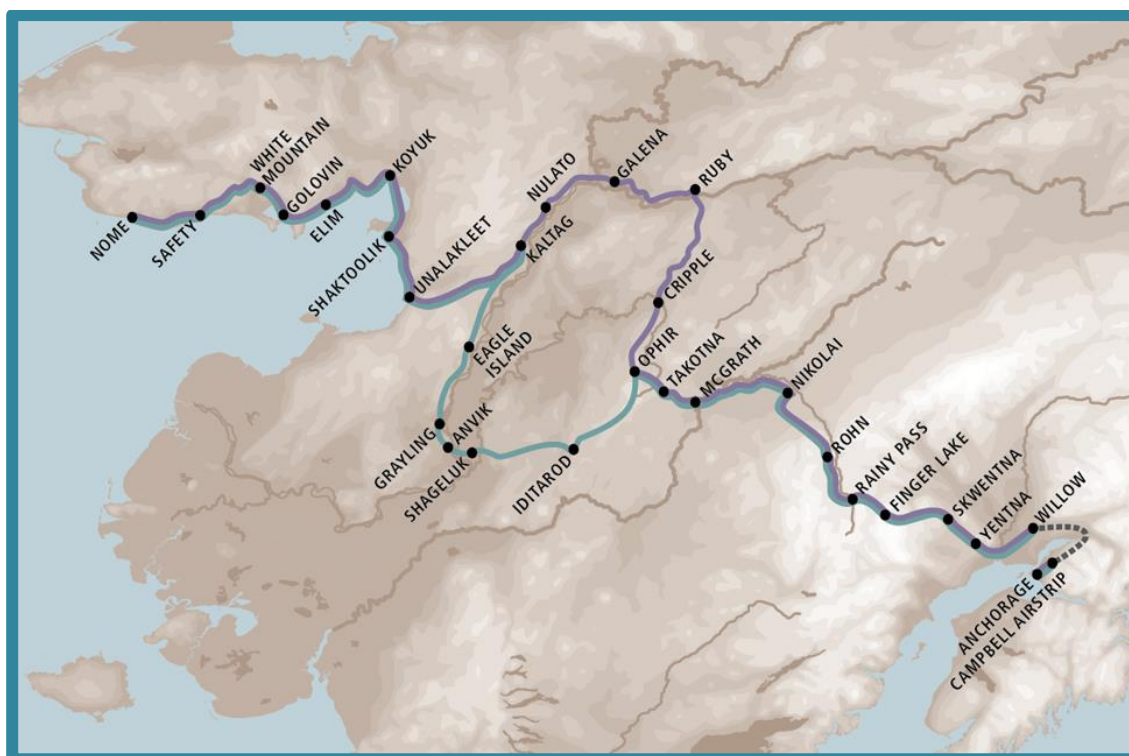
Although the Iditarod is now incorporated, it is a non-profit organization and still relies heavily on volunteers and donations from sponsors to make it happen. The average of volunteers each year is between 1200 and 1500 and the year round organisation consist only out of nine staff members according to the Iditarod (2014). Work on making the next Iditarod possible, starts as soon as the last mushers are crossing the finish line with their dogs. (Bowers, 1998)

The trail is laid down and marked every year by Iditarod trail breakers as well as local volunteers working on sections near their villages. For every mile of trail, someone is helping with a task. Their only memory is often just a successful passage of the race, broken snow machines and chain saws. An enthusiastic crowd of behind the scenes supporters also helps

with the sixty to hundred tons of trail supplies, straw for the dogs, tents, fuel and food for the checkpoints. Every item is handled many times from initial pick-up to final delivery in some of the most remote places in Alaska. Several thousand dog exams are performed, from the pre race at the headquarters, to team checks along the trail, to the final health exam after the finish line. It is remarkable that all people are working together, communicating, flying, driving, shovelling and calculating for one common cause: the dogs. The commitment and hard work to be part of the Iditarod experience, vicariously or real, is almost beyond description. (Freedman, 1996)

Figure 2.1 shows a map of the Iditarod Race trail. There is a Northern and Southern route; both sections of the trail are a part of the Iditarod National Historical Trail that was used in early years for all winter travel. Dog sleds delivered the mail, the preacher, the groceries, hauled out gold and furs all the way to Anchorage or Fairbanks. During the early years of the Iditarod Race, the mushers only traveled the northern trail. After several years, the Iditarod Board of Directors realized that the smaller villages were being heavily impacted by the race coming through their village year after year. They decided to use both sections of the trail. In the even years they are using the Northern route and in the uneven year the Southern route. This had three major effects: One, the northern villages of Ruby, Galena and Nulato had to learn how to deal with the large group of mushers, press, and volunteers every once a year. Two, was that the race was able to pass through the actual ghost town of Iditarod. Finally, the villages of Shageluk, Anvik, and Grayling were able to participate in the race. (Iditarod, 2014 & Briney, 2014)

Figure 2.1: The official map of the Iditarod



(Iditarod, 2014)

2.5 2014 Iditarod experience

The Iditarod 2014 started with 69 mushers in total. Alaska's warm weather almost changed the start from Anchorage to Fairbanks. The Race Start in Anchorage and the Re-Start were a great success like previous years. But once the race started on the Northern route, some problems came along. According to Koronowski (2014), "the warm winter turned the Iditarod race in a 'minefield' with no snow." (Climate progress, 2014)

The Iditarod 2014 was one of the worst trails in history. Dogs pulling mushers and mushers pulling dogs through brutally strong winds and across slippery glare ice around the checkpoints White Mountain and Safety (see figure 2.1) which is close to the finish line in Nome. Not only was the last part brutal. In the beginning of the trail around Rainy Pass and Rohn, dog teams had to pass areas with barely any snow which was extremely dangerous. Finally, 49 mushers crossed the finish line in Nome. (ADN, 2014)

Chapter 3: Literature study

3.1 Introduction

Based on the research question “*who are the tourists visiting Alaska during the Iditarod, and what are their motives?*” literature study about the motivation and experience of event and sports tourists is conducted. The literature study is starting with a brought perspective on event and sports tourism followed by the article of McKercher (2000), which is narrowing down the literature study for this research.

3.2 Event tourism

According to Raj, (2010), in the current economic climate, events play an important role for towns, cities or whole regions. Events are having a major impact on the developmet of cultural tourism to the host communities. The event organisers are now using the historical and cultural themes to develop the annual events to attract visitors and create cultural image in the host cities by holding festivals in the community settings. The hosting of events is often developed because of the tourism and economic opportunities additional to social and cultural benefits. The government now supports and promotes events as part of their strategies for economic development, national building and cultural tourism. Festivals and events are increasingly linked with tourism in order to generate business activity and incomes for the host communitites. According to Mair and Whitford (2013), it was during the 1980s in particular, that governments globally began to realize the potential for events to generate positive impacts. According to Raj (2010), events can lengthen tourist seasons, extend peak season or introduce a “new season” into a community. This can be recognized in Alaska where the Iditarod is taking care of a ‘new season’ for the community of Nome.

According to Mykletun (2009), festival success is defined as the ability of a festival to attract an increasing number of participants, balance its economy, be appreciated by local people and develop as a hallmark event for the region. Several factors may be perceived as immediate reasons for festival failure or success, such as community involvement and support, management, and marketing. According to Mykletun (2009), as time become a commodity, festivals should be more explicitly seen as respites, a way of escaping, slow down or living more in the moment. The interest in the special events such as an extreme sports festival like the Iditarod may rest on a rising fashion trend of enjoying the thrills of adventure, excitement, activity and play in travel, sports and other serious leisure, because everyday life has become safe and predictable.

3.3 Visitor motives

Lee & Lee (2001) are mentioning that special events are one of the fastest growing tourism activities. During the years, special events were appearing in the event industry. These events have prompted researchers to explore the motivations of festival visitors. Getz (1993) emphasized the importance of analyzing visitor's motives for attending festivals and events. Identifying such motivations is a prerequisite for planning event programs effectively and marketing them to visitors. Kim, Borges & Chon (2005), a motivation is often viewed as an internal factor that directs and integrates an individual's behavior. Crompton's (1979) typologies of tourist motivation provided a framework for sport tourism motivation. The typologies of tourist motivations are showed in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Typologies of tourist motivation

Novelty	Seek out new and different experiences through pleasure travel as motivated by a need to experience thrill, adventure and surprise, and alleviate boredom
Socialization	Interact with a group and its members.
Prestige	Desire to have high standing in the eyes of surrounding people.
Rest & relaxation	Refresh one mentally and physically from normal day-to-day stresses.
Education value	Gain knowledge and expand intellectual horizons.
Family togetherness	Enhance family relationships.
Regression	Engage in behavior reminiscent of an adolescent or child.

(Crompton, 1979)

Besides Crompton's (1979), Lee & Lee (2001) are explaining about explored traveler's motivations for attending special events using data from the 1985 Pleasure Travel Market Survey. Twelve motivational items were factor analyzed, resulting in five dimensions of motivation: excitement, external, family, socializing and relaxation. Differences in motivational factors according to demographic variables were tested, and some of them were reported to be statistically different. Other research, such as that by Fairley (2003), found that nostalgia was a motivating factor for sport tourism participation.

Iso-Ahola's model of tourism motivation consists of two motivational forces, seeking and escaping. A tourist may escape the personal world (i.e., personal troubles, problems, difficulties and failures) and/or the interpersonal world (i.e., co-workers, family members,

relatives, friends, and neighbors) and he may seek personal rewards (e.g., feelings of mastery, learning about other cultures, rest and relaxation, recharge and getting renewed, ego-enhancement and prestige) and/or interpersonal rewards (e.g., varied and increased social interaction, interacting with friendly natives or members of the travel group, interacting with old friends in a new place or with new friends in an old place). (Iso-Ahola, 1982)

Studies on festival motives tend to focus more on identifying situation-specific motives from different festivals than on developing general theoretical structures. With the advent of newly launched festivals, festival markets are becoming increasingly diversified and understanding visitor's motives to attend the festival has become critical for festival managers when developing an effective marketing strategy. Crompton and McKay (1997) studied visitor motivation within the festival content for three different reasons: One, it allows matching the festival's program to visitors' needs which is a prerequisite for effectively developing elements of a festival and marketing them. Two, it helps safeguard visitor satisfaction by increasing the chance of meeting the visitors' diverse needs. Motives occur before the experience and satisfaction after it. For visitors to return, they must be relatively satisfied with their previous experience. Finally, identifying and prioritizing motives is a key ingredient in understanding visitor's decisions processes. With knowing this decision process, marketing activities will be more effective. (Crompton & Mc Kay, 1997)

According to Deery at all (2004), the level of intention in the motivation for participation is important. They give the example that a tourist may well attend a sporting event because they happen to be in the right location at that time. On another occasion, this same person may intentionally travel to a sporting event to participate either passively or actively in the event. Both of these types of visitors are recognized during the Iditarod Race.

This paragraph will end with the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) from Funk & James (2001). This model describes how sport and event involvement progressively develops with the corresponding behaviors. This framework proposed that participation in sport event tourism (both active and passive forms) occurs within four different stages: *awareness*, *attraction*, *attachment* or *allegiance*.

Awareness is the stage when a person first learns about the existence of a certain sport event and in this case the out of state visitor about the Iditarod. In this stage, the out of state visitor has not formed preferences about the sport yet. The awareness of the sport event can come from formal and informal channels. People can receive the awareness from for example friends or media. The value placed on the specific sports event from a societal perspective is

important in this stage. An example of a tourist visiting the Iditarod 2014, which illustrates the awareness stage; “I know about the Iditarod and I know some mushers.” (Funk & James, 2001)

In the *attraction* stage, the Iditarod provides the opportunity to satisfy needs and receive benefits. The motives consists of a combination of personal, psychological and environmental factors. The attraction processing creates outcomes of positive affect and intentions, as well as engaging in consumption behavior related to the sport and event. An example of a tourist visiting the Iditarod 2014, which illustrates the attraction stage; “I like the Iditarod, I like the musher Aliy Zirkle.” (Funk & James, 2001)

The *attachment* stage is taking of that the Iditarod is taking on a collective emotional, functional and symbolic meaning. The connection towards the event strengthens. An example of a tourist visiting the Iditarod 2014, which illustrates the attachment stage is; “I am an Iditarod Race fan and will follow the race.”

The *allegiance* stage is when the attachment stage continues and the out of state visitor is getting more and more into the Iditarod. The meaning of the Iditarod becomes more sustainable in terms of persistence and resistance and is having a greater impact on activities and the behavior. An example of a tourist visiting Iditarod 2014, which illustrate the attachment stage is; “I know a lot about the Iditarod and will come back to Alaska to follow the race or even volunteer.”

3.4 Sports event tourism

For this research, events motivation is coming together with sports tourism motivation. Gibson (1989), Weed (2009), Gammon & Robinson (2009) and Deery, Jago & Fredline (2004), are all four talking about the role events are having in sports tourism and a lot of similarities in their writing can be identified. Gibson (1989) talks about Schreiber (1976), who was one of the first that wrote about sport tourism. Gibson (1998), an appropriate definition of sport tourism might read as follows: “leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities, or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities”. This definition corresponds to the Iditarod as a sport event. Getz (1998) suggests that there is a need to understand the sports event tourist in terms of the experiences these tourists seek.

Weed (2009), is talking about the role sport might play in holiday tourism. In 2001, the World Tourism Organization and the International Olympic Committee held a joint conference to discuss the relationship between sport and tourism. To support the event, the

WTO and IOC jointly commissioned an ‘introductory report’ to the conference. It suggested and implied, through its lack of recognition of previous work, that there was no research base from which to understand the relationship between sport and tourism.

Weed (2009) states that the interchangeable use of terminology about sports tourism continued for some time because there are trips where sport is dominant, and trips where tourism is dominant. Weed is saying that skiing and other winter’s sports are amongst the longest standing sports tourism products. Weed is saying that event sports tourism is the highest profile product within sports tourism. Weed (2009) is talking about three distinct types of behavior associated with sport tourism: *Actively participating* (Active Sport Tourism), *spectating* (Event Sport Tourism), and *visiting*. These types of behavior can be compared with Gibson (1998). Gibson (1998), three domains of sport tourism: *active sport tourism*, which refers to people who travel to take part in sport, for example the international mushers joining the Iditarod; *event sport tourism*, which refers to travel to watch a sports event like most of the spectators of the Iditarod; and *nostalgia sport tourism*, which includes visits to sports museums, famous sports venues, and sport themed cruises.

According to Weed (2009), many sports spectators consider themselves to be much more than passive participants, although they are not actively taking part in the sport itself. Such spectators feel that they are interacting with the active participants. This can be compared with the way sports spectators are experiencing their attendance. The spectators of the Iditarod are interacting with the mushers in different ways on different moments.

Besides Weed (2009), Gammon & Robinson (2007) are writing about event sports tourism and if the sports or the tourism is dominating. There seems to be two quite distinct starting points; either from a sporting perspective or a touristic one. If, for example the prime motivation were in sport, then the touristic element would act as a secondary reinforcement, and vice versa if tourism were the main point of interest.

Gibson (1998) states that much of the research on sports event spectators has focused on their spending patterns as an indicator of the economic impact of the event for the local community. One of the issues surrounding much of this work is methodological accuracy. Gibson (1998), found that when event sport tourists were asked to project their expenditures during their visit, they consistently underestimated their spending.

According to Deery et al (2004), a tourism sport event is perceived to be important because of its economic contribution as well as other influences such as the impact on community well being and the sense of pride that sport tourism may engender. Looking at this literature,

the Iditarod can be seen as a tourism sports event, which includes a cultural travel of 1000 miles through small communities, which are mostly without road connections. It is an event, which last for at least two weeks in total. The Iditarod can be compared to the 2014 FIFA world cup in Brazil, which brings besides the participants a lot of other people to the event like sponsors and tourists. The Iditarod has a large economic impact on Alaska and so does the 2014 FIFA world cup on Brazil. (Iditarod, 2014 & FIFA, 2014)

3.5 Classification of tourists

McKercher (2000) is talking in his article about different classification of cultural tourists. These cultural tourists can be compared to the sports event tourists. It is an article, which is narrowing the above literature down to a suitable literature platform for this research. It is an article where the different aspects of motivations in cultural tourism and the different experiences visitors occur is coming together. McKercher is identifying five different types of tourists according to their experience sought and the importance of cultural tourism in the decision to visit a destination. The five types are; the purposeful cultural tourist, the sightseeing cultural tourist, the casual cultural tourist, the incidental cultural tourist and the serendipitous cultural tourist. These types of tourists can be used as a platform for the out of state visitors of the Iditarod.

McKercher (2000) is saying that there is lots of research done in these fields but without considering that different types of cultural tourists may seek qualitatively different experiences or may be capable of engaging attractions at different levels. McKercher paper proposes a model to segment the cultural tourism market according to two dimensions; the importance of cultural motives in the decision to visit a destination and depth of experience. The model is tested empirically using Hong Kong as a case study. The model has been proposed to advance the examination of cultural tourism as a tourism activity. In McKercher paper, terms such as shallow, deep, superficial and meaningful are used to describe different types of experiences engaged by cultural tourists. The terms are used as descriptors only; they are not used in a judgmental sense to imply that one type of activity is preferable to another or that one type of tourist is a more worthy type of cultural tourist than another.

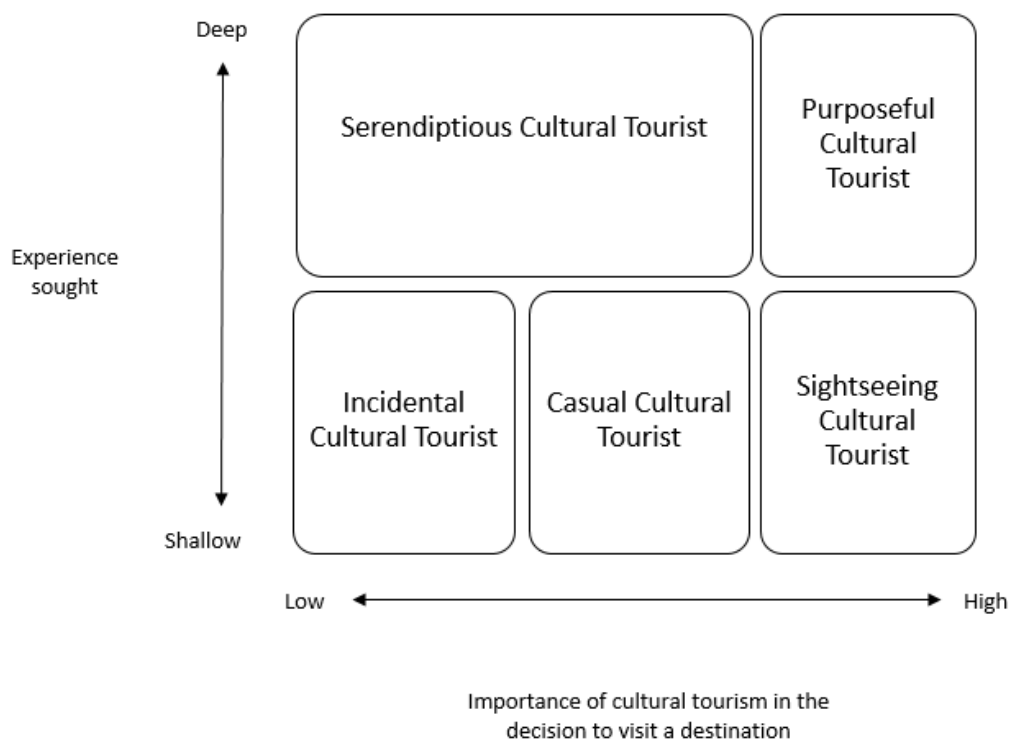
According to McKercher (2000), “a cultural tourist is defined as someone who visits, or intends to visit, a cultural tourism attraction, art gallery, museum or historic site, attend a performance or festival, or participate in a wide range of other activities at any time during their trip, regardless of their main reason for travelling.” A growing body of literature is recognizing that some people are more highly motivated to participate in cultural tourism

than others. There is a fundamental difference, for example, between a group of people who travel to Bhutan for a month-long, in-depth cultural experience organized by the anthropology department of a university and someone visiting Hong Kong on a shopping holiday who happens to visit a temple to escape a rainstorm. Of course, these are extreme examples but it shows that cultural tourists can be recognized in different types of trips.

McKercher (2000) states that the depth of experience, or level of engagement with the attraction, also must be considered when segmenting the cultural tourism market. Different people have different abilities to engage cultural and heritage attractions based on different factors, which include their level of education, awareness of the site prior to the visit, preconceptions of the site, interest in it, its meaning to them, time availability and the presence or absence of competing activities. Different cultural tourists engage sites at different levels, some more intensely than others.

The in-depth experience and the importance of cultural tourism in the decision to visit a destination (centrality) are included in figure 3.1. The importance of cultural tourism can be the main reason someone chooses a destination. According to the official website of the Iditarod (2014), “the Iditarod is a tribute to Alaska’s history and the role the sled dog’ played, it is more than a race, it is the spirit of Alaska” The cultural aspect behind the Iditarod can be a main motivation for tourists to visit Alaska. The importance of cultural tourism can also play a lesser role. In some cases, it may be a secondary reason to visit, whereas in others, it may play no discernible role in destination choice, even though the tourist will participate in cultural tourism activities while on-site. Likewise, the depth of experience will be variable, ranging from a shallow, superficial or sightseeing experience too much deeper, learning orientated experience. Five different types of cultural tourists can be identified which are shown in figure 3.1. (McKercher, 2000)

Figure 3.1: Classification of cultural tourists



(McKercher, 2000)

The purposeful cultural tourist

(High centrality/ deep experience) learning about the other’s culture or heritage is a major reason for visiting a destination and this type of cultural tourist has a deep cultural experience;

The sightseeing cultural tourist

(High centrality/shallow experience) learning about the other’s culture or heritage is a major reason for visiting a destination, but this type of tourist has a more shallow, entertainment-orientated experience;

The casual cultural tourist

(Modest centrality/shallow experience) cultural tourism reasons play a limited role in the decision to visit a destination and this type of cultural tourist engages the destination in a shallow manner;

The incidental cultural tourist

(Low centrality/shallow experience) cultural tourism plays little or no meaningful role in the destination decision-making process, but while at the destination, the person will participate in cultural tourism activities, having a shallow experience;

The serendipitous cultural tourist

(Low centrality/deep experience) cultural tourism plays little or no role in the decision to visit a destination, but while there this type of cultural tourist visits cultural attractions and ends up having a deep experience.

According to McKercher (2000), the four types of tourists capture most of the cultural tourists at any destination and reflect the expected relationship between centrality of purpose and depth of experience. People who are highly motivated to travel for cultural tourism reasons also would be expected to be the group most likely to have deep experience. High motivation is not always automatically equal to a deep experience. Many people who express a strong desire to travel to learn something about another's culture or heritage may only seek or be capable of experiencing a shallow experience like the sightseeing cultural tourist.

The mix of cultural tourists will vary from destination to destination and, indeed, from attraction to attraction within a destination. It will be influenced by a number of factors, including the destination's position in the marketplace, its reputation as a cultural or heritage tourism destination, and the type of tourist attracted. Places known for their cultural or heritage assets would be expected to attract a relatively greater share of purposeful and sightseeing cultural tourists, whereas those without a strong reputation in these areas probably would draw more incidental and casual cultural tourists. (McKercher, 2000)

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter consist of the methodology used for this research. For this master thesis, mixed methods are used to conduct research. The reason for this is that the qualitative research will give usefull information about where and how to conduct the quantitative research. First, three in-dept interviews were conducted followed by a quantative survey with 56 respondents. The survey locations and the types of respondents will be explained in this chapter.

4.2 Mixed methods

Driscoll, L. Appiah-Yeboah, A. Salib, P. & Rupert, J. (2007) are stating that mixed methods are used to expand the scope or breadth of research to offset the weaknesses of either approach alone. In sum, there is no discrete list of mixed methods design options, and so researchers should plan to develop a design that answers their own research questions within the constraints and boundaries of the study context. This chapter will indicate an outline of the methods which are fitting with this research. The way the data is conducted will be explained in detail.

According to Driscoll et al (2007), the term mixed model can be used to differentiate research designs integrating qualitative and quantitative data from those who merely employ both types of data. The mixed model includes transformative designs that change one form of data into another so that the data collected by mixed methods designs can be merged. For this research, first qualitative research will be conducted followed by quantitative research which is the most common form according to Driscoll et al (2007).

4.3 Qualitative approach

Driscoll et al (2007) are explaining that the research design of mixed methods have been differentiated by the level of prioritization of one form of data over the other, by the combination of data forms in the research process, and by the timing of data collection, such as whether the quantitative and qualitative phases take place concurrently or sequentially, and if so, in what order. The reason for this is that the qualitative research helps the researcher with finding the right respondents for the quantitative research. Three in-depth interviews are conducted with different tour operators based in Anchorage and Nome. The sample of tour operators is founded by two main criteria. The tour operators are based in Anchorage and they are offering tours during the Iditarod.

The in-depth interviews gives the researcher information about the best locations for conducting the quantitative research. The tour operators that are selected for this research are operating in the tourism industry for many years so they have existing knowledge about travel patterns from the out of state visitors. The out of state visitors are part of the sample for the quantitative research. The out of state visitors are described as visitors from the states of America except for Alaska and several other countries in the world.

This qualitative study is mainly conducted to help find the out of state respondents and what the best locations are to conduct the quantitative study. Furthermore, the qualitative study is giving background information about the out of state tourism in Alaska. For this research, it is an extra value to get to know the experience from the tour operators about the motivation of their clients. The main questions are including how the winter tourism changed over time and if there are any differences in winter and summer visitors, the nationalities, most popular booked tours and the motivation for tourists to come up to Alaska. This data helps with creating an overall view of the winter tourism in Alaska.

4.4 Quantitative approach

A survey with fifteen questions emerged in order to conduct quantitative data. Examples of subjects are the activities visitors are undertaken, motives of travelling to Alaska, expenses and with who they are travelling. A total of 56 respondents were found for this survey which is showed in table 4.1. The complete survey is attached in appendix one.

Excel is used to collect all quantitative data together. Pivot tables are retrieved to help indicating all findings. The survey is composed to retrieve the same data from different types of out of state visitors in Alaska during the Iditarod. The main questions were about which activities the out of state visitors were undertaken during their stay, if they want to come back to Alaska during the Iditarod, their opinion about the activities, with who they were travelling and for how many days they were staying in Alaska.

Most of the time the out of state visitors were in a group between two and four. The survey was handed over to one of them. While one person was filling in the survey, there was time to start a conversation with the other out of state visitors. The conversation was about their visit and why the respondent was in Alaska, when they arrived, how long they were going to stay and what they were going to do. In this setting, it was possible to retrieve some background information besides the actual survey. Besides this, the small conversation made it possible to identify the type of visitor even better. This research technique is used for all surveys.

4.5 Survey locations

Five different locations related to the Iditarod are used to conducting the quantitative research. The locations are the Musher's Drawing Banquet Anchorage, Day before Iditarod 2014 Race Start, Iditarod 2014 Race start, Iditarod 2014 Race Re-Start and the finish in Nome. It is important to know that the surveys are conducted on five different locations which influences the outcomes. Table 4.1 shows the amount of respondents on the five different locations.

Table 4.1: Survey locations and respondents

Survey location	Total respondents
Musher's Drawing Banquet Anchorage	11
Day before Iditarod 2014 Race Start	7
Iditarod 2014 Race Start	11
Iditarod 2014 Race Re-Start	6
Finish Nome	21
Total respondents	56

Musher's Drawing Banquet Anchorage

On the 27th of February 2014, the Musher's Drawing Banquet is taking place in Denai Centre Anchorage. This is the first official survey day with potential respondents. The banquet is an event for the mushers, sponsors, family, friends, and fans, to get together before the race. The first official moment that is gathering together everyone who is involved in the race according to a tour operator in Anchorage. Fans are able to meet their favourite musher and get his/her autograph. One of the biggest events of the evening is when the mushers pick their starting bib number. The mushers are called to the stage in the order they signed up. Most of the mushers are giving a speech thanking their families and sponsors. "It is a fun night for all involved" according to a tour operator in Anchorage. The banquet is the perfect location for conducting the survey. According to a tour operator in Anchorage, a lot of out of state visitors are participating in the banquet to become part of the Iditarod experience. (Iditarod, 2014)

Day before Iditarod 2014 Race Start

Friday 28th February 2014, the day before the Race Start in downtown Anchorage. Around ten surveys are conducted during the day before the ceremonial start. The Visitor Information Center is located in downtown Anchorage. This center is a place where a lot of different types of out of state visitors are coming to receive information about the region. According to a tour operator from Anchorage, “the visitor centre is busy. Great place to do your survey, that is a place where they go for bathrooms, get the maps etc.”

There is a quite atmosphere and it was hard to imagine that the Iditarod was going to start the next day. Observing people who are walking across the street was part of the research. In this way it was possible to retrieve a first impression about the kind of visitor. Observations showed that the respondents were moving from the Visitor Information Center to the souvenir shops, the Anchorage museum and Fifth avenue mall. They are getting prepared for the next day so that they can pay all the attention to the ceremonial start of the Iditarod.

Iditarod 2014 Race Start

The Race Start of the Iditarod is in downtown Anchorage at Fourth Avenue. Thousands of spectators are gathering together to see the mushers leaving for the Iditarod. The Race Start is also called the ceremonial start because it is mostly organized for the media, sponsors and the spectators.

According to a tour operator in Anchorage, “Downtown Anchorage is a really crowded place during the Race Start and not the best moment to conduct surveys when so much is going on. It makes sense that the visitors are concentrated and focused on the Iditarod. The visitor information centre is again a good location for conducting around ten surveys during the Race Start.”

Iditarod 2014 Race Re-Start

The Re-Start is the moment that the dog teams are starting the Iditarod and the last moment for people to see them. The Re-Start is having a totally different atmosphere than the ceremonial start because from this point on, it is just a matter of waiting for information from the trail about how the mushers are doing. For the out of state visitors, it is a beautiful drive up to Willow. Visiting the re-start can be combined with visiting the official Iditarod headquarters in Wasilla. Both, the headquarters in Wasilla and the official re-start were locations for conducting around ten surveys.

According to a tour operator in Anchorage, “a lot of out of state visitors are booking a day trip with a tour operator up to Willow to see the Re-Start. The Re-Start is taking around four hours so there is enough time to conduct the surveys during the day.”

Finish Nome

One in-depth interview with a tour operator from Nome is conducted. This interview is giving knowledge about the type of visitors in Nome and their travel patterns. A total of 21 surveys spread over different types of visitors are conducted in Nome. Nome is the official finish line from the Iditarod. In Nome, spectators are gathering together along the finish line to welcome the mushers after a long race. These spectators are from many different countries. The out of state visitors are staying in hotels or due to an overflow of tourism, with host families.

According to a tour operator from Nome, “out of state visitors are spending most of their time around downtown Nome to wait for the mushers who are arriving. Downtown Nome is the most important place for conducting the surveys.”

Furthermore, this tour operator was mentioning that a visit to Nome require some planning because there are only a few hotels. You have to be the traveller that is fine with visiting remote Alaska and be flexible and it is just not for everybody.

4.6 Respondents

The respondents for the quantitative research consist of the so called out of state visitors. The reason for this is that this research is focussed on the motivation of people travelling from another state or country to visit the Iditarod in Alaska. The out of state visitors can be grouped in different categories so all kind of out of state visitors are included in this research. The following categories are grouped;

Group visitors

These are the out of state visitors who booked a complete package tour. Everything from the beginning till the end is organized for these visitors. These visitors were found by contacting tour operators who are organizing group tours during the Iditarod Race.

According to a tour operator from Anchorage, “you will recognize the tourists, the locals will be in jeans and they may not even wear a jacket, the tourists are going to

have lots of cameras, they are way bundled up because some of them are not used to the cold, listen for their accents and you will know.”

Individual visitors

Individual visitors consist of everyone who is visiting Alaska on their own. These visitors can be couples or singles who booked their own flight, hotel and dogsled tour for example. It can be possible that once they arrive in Alaska, they book a tour with a tour operator to visit the Iditarod. These visitors are found by contacting tour operators who are organizing day tours during the Iditarod.

Visitors staying with relatives

These visitors were the most challenging category to find. The reason for this is that these visitors were arriving at the airport and picked up by their relatives, staying at their home and their relatives are guiding them around during their visit in Alaska. Most of these visitors were found during the on street surveys in downtown Anchorage.

Volunteers

These visitors are a totally different type of visitor because they are coming with a specific goal. The international volunteers will work for the Iditarod Race so it is already known that they are in Alaska especially for the Iditarod.

4.7 Analysis of data

The analysis consists of two faces: First, four different types of out of state visitors will be identified according to field notes, observation and an overall first impression of the data. Second, the quantitative data will be presented in chapter six according to the four different types of visitors outlined in chapter five. Tables of frequencies, pivot tables, crosstabs and chi square test to proof that the differences in the small group of respondents is statistical significant will be presented. Each table will be explained in a descriptive way.

Chapter 5: Analyses

5.1 Introduction

After the data collection, four types of out of state visitors emerged. According to the field notes, observations and an overall look at the quantitative data; four different types of tourists can be identified. The four types are named as follow: The casual visitor, the “eye-opener” visitor, the “bucket list” visitor and the experienced visitor.

According to a tour operator from Anchorage, “I think the race is most important, making sure you have enough volunteers, making sure they have enough mushers, but honestly, if they do not have enough tourists, or the exposure that some of the tour operators do, there are no people to watch the race and if nobody is watching the race, there are no sponsors, if there are no sponsors, there is no money to organize the Iditarod as it is nowadays.”

Figure 5.1: Worldmap with the place of origin from visitors, headquarters Iditarod Nome



(Photograph Paulien Becker, 2014)

5.2 Casual visitor

The casual visitor planned to visit Alaska for different reasons. The Iditarod was just something interesting that was happening coincidentally. The fact that the Fur Rondy festival is

organized during their time of visit was something exciting and they are seeing the Iditarod race as part of the festival.

The Fur Rondy festival is the nation's premier winter festival since 1935. It is a significant part of the Anchorage's history and tradition with a lot of celebrations. Vern Johnson, the father of Fur Rendezvous, was a likeable, outgoing Anchorage citizen with a keen understanding of social conditions. He and his friends decided to establish a winter festival that would coincide with the time that miners and trappers came to town with their yield. The fur trade was Alaska's third most valuable industry in the early days, incorporating the industry into the celebration was a logical idea. Nowadays, the Iditarod is part of the Fur Rondy festival. (Fur Rondy, 2014)

The casual visitor is interested in the race and the atmosphere but do not have the intention to visit all activities connected to the race like the headquarters in Wasilla or the re-start in Willow. The casual visitors are having another focus while visiting Alaska. One respondent changed the subject from the Iditarod to the downhill skiing in Alyeska and was not interested in talking about the Iditarod. Another couple reacted immediately that they were in Alaska because of the train from Anchorage to Fairbanks.

The following are examples of how casual visitors described their Alaska visit and their Iditarod experience in an interview:

“We would love to see the Northern lights in Fairbanks!”

“The hotel Alyeska was good!”

5.3 “Eye-opener” visitor

The “eye-opener” visitor is the type of visitor who planned a trip to Alaska but not specifically for the Iditarod. Most of them are coming for the ceremonial start in downtown Anchorage followed by the re-start in Willow. During the day of the re-start in Willow, they are visiting the headquarters in Wasilla as well. There are “eye opener” visitors who are visiting Alaska because of relatives who are living in Alaska. Another example are the “eye-opener” visitors who are combining the Iditarod with a dogsled tour, visit to Denali, seeing Fairbanks or go skiing in Aleyska. In the first place, the Iditarod was definitely not the main purpose of their visit. Most of the “eye opener” visitors are first time visitors in Alaska. Some of them have been to Alaska during the summertime and heard about the possibilities to experience Alaska in wintertime. Overall the “eye-opener” visitors are surprised about what the race is doing with them, surprised about how much of an experience it is to be involved in

the race. Some of the respondents were telling that they would love to come back to experience the Iditarod again and more intensive.

According to a tour operator from Anchorage, “people who do not know anything about the Iditarod, they see the dogs they see the love that mushers have for the animals, they see how well care they taking, and they become fanatics of the sport. Some tourists that come and did the Iditarod with me, I know for a fact that they have gone to another dogsled race to other places in Europe.”

One respondent was in Alaska to visit his daughter and he chose especially for the beginning of March so he could watch the Iditarod. Another couple visited Alaska during the summer time with a cruise. Once they were in Alaska they realized that there are opportunities for winter tourism and decided to come back during the Iditarod. A group of Chinese visitors who did not fill in the survey explained that they were visiting Alaska because of the Northern lights. Once they arrived in Alaska, they realized that the Fur Rondy festival took place and became excited about watching the Iditarod.

The following are examples of how “eye-opener” visitors described their Alaska visit and their Iditarod experience in an interview:

“It has been very interesting and a once in a lifetime experience! Simply amazing.”

“This is my second visit to Alaska, the first was a cruise.”

“I was not totally prepared for the cold but soon getting the hang of it.”

“We have visited Alaska many times but this is the first time in winter. We will return in winter again.”

“Have a good friend who lives in Anchorage who will join in the Iditarod celebrations. Staying in a downtown hotel with another friend gives more flexibility to do things, we did a dog sled ride in Denali Park today.”

“Glad you had the race here instead of Fairbanks. Loved being part of the banquet to get involved in the atmosphere.”

“There is so much to do in Alaska that we will have to come again!”

“Great first time experience in Nome and with the Iditarod Trail Committee.”

5.4 “Bucket list” visitor

The next type of visitor is the “bucket list” visitor. The Iditarod is part of their bucket list. It is a long dream to come up to Alaska and watch the dogs and the mushers. They can be described as visitors who are in Alaska especially for the Iditarod. They want to experience as much as possible and get involved as much as possible. Some of the visitors are referring to the costs of the trip. These visitors had the dream about visiting Alaska for a long time but their budget did not allow them to. They are answering the question ‘do you want to come back to see the Iditarod?’ with a big ‘yes’ but do not know if it is financially possible. The “bucket list” visitors are taking part in more than 50 percent of the activities, which includes not only the start but also a visit to a checkpoint along the trail, and the finish in Nome. The “bucket list” visitors are having high expectations about the Iditarod. They watched it on the television in previous years or followed it on the internet. Besides that, they are familiar with the mushers who are participating in the Iditarod. Some of them are even sponsoring a musher and picked a specific musher to cheer for. Some of the first year volunteers are also falling in this category, they don’t have the experience yet as the experience visitor but these visitors are very likely coming back again to volunteer and get more involved in the race. A couple from Ohio is following the Iditarod already for years in a row on the internet. This couple watched all different kind of shows about Alaska and finally got the change to experience Alaska in wintertime this year. Another respondent from Australia had the dream to come up to Alaska and see the Iditarod plus the northern lights. This respondent had a full schedule that included as many activities as possible.

According to a tour operator from Anchorage, “Alaska is one of these most fantastic places on you bucket list, and everyone has to see Alaska. The moment you mention Alaska you can see them they stay quiet and start listening. It is like a true last frontier, the last wilderness in the USA.”

The following are examples of how “bucket list” visitors described their Alaska visit and their Iditarod experience in an interview:

“I have had my dream come true with this trip.”

“It was definitely been an adventure this far. It could only get better. I want to make many memories.”

“We came to Alaska mainly for the Iditarod. The experience has been amazing so far. I would definitely consider coming back to watch again.”

“Once in a lifetime experience.”

“I’m having an outstanding time!”

“Loved being part of the banquet to get involved in the atmosphere.”

“Would love to come again if I win the lotto.”

5.5 Experienced visitor

The experience visitor can be described as the repeating visitor that is visiting Alaska during the Iditarod. They are following the race year after year, the experience visitor wants to be part of the Iditarod, want to have the feeling that they are making the Iditarod happen because of their participation. Some of them are even coming up as a volunteer every year. All of the experienced visitors were interviewed during the finish in Nome. The experience visitor is really well known with the Iditarod race, they are having a lot of knowledge about what the Iditarod is and the organization behind. Besides that, the experienced visitor is extremely interested and well informed in both the phenomenon dogsledding as a sport and event. Other visitors are seeing the Iditarod as an event and do not have that much knowledge about the background of dogsledding. The experienced visitor knows the trail, the dog teams and the effort it takes to participate in the race. The difference with the “bucket list” visitor is that the experienced visitor has seen it before and is used to the atmosphere. The difference can be seen in how both visitors described their visits. The “bucket list” visitors are already dreaming for years about a visit to Alaska and this year they finally got the change. A respondent from Hawaii is a typical example of an experienced visitor. This respondent is coming up to the finish in Nome for several years in a row. This is the same for a respondent from Switzerland who was volunteering in previous years. These visitors are enjoying being part of the ‘Iditarod family’ and working together with the Iditarod Committee as a volunteer is taking care of a lot of experience

The following are examples of how experienced visitors described their Alaska visit and their Iditarod experience in an interview:

“I have been to Alaska two other times. I love talking to the people and learning about what brought them here and why they stayed. Talking to native Alaskans about their traditions and culture is priceless.”

“If you're a volunteer several times in a row, it's like coming home, being part of the Iditarod family!”

“We have visited many times and love the scenery and the people. Iditarod is truly the last great race. Love the triumph of man and dog on the hostile environment.”

Chapter 6: Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of all findings retrieved from 56 surveys, which were conducted for this master thesis. First the table will be presented followed by an interpretation of the data found in this table.

6.2 Quantative data

Table 6.1: Origin of respondents

Origin	US South	US West	Europe	US Midwest	Australia	US Northeast	Asia	Total
Casual visitor			2	1			1	4
“Eye-opening” visitor	11	6	3	2	1	2	1	26
“Bucket list” visitor	5	2	3	3	4	2		19
Experienced visitor	3	2	2					7
Total respondents	19	10	10	6	5	4	2	56

Table 6.1 shows where respondents come from. The largest number of respondents is from the US South (as opposed to more northern states with climates more like Alaska), followed by the US West. The third largest number of respondents is from Europe (Norway, Germany, England, Belgium and Switzerland). The fifth largest groups of respondents are from Australia. According to a tour operator from Anchorage, Australia is an important market for the summer tourism in Alaska. This table shows that Alaska is also a potential winter destination for Australian tourists. Only two respondents were from Asia. According to a tour operator from Anchorage, the Asian market is extremely interested in watching the northern lights in Fairbanks. An interesting question is whether these tourists might also be interested in the Iditarod, and if so how to market this opportunity to Asian tourists.

According to a tour operator in Anchorage, “the travelers that are coming in winter time are staying a little bit longer than the average summer travelers in Alaska. For the Iditarod travelers, we got more adventurous people, the bucket list guests. The average age for my company is from 45 till 55 years old.” Besides that, the tour operator is mentioning that; “the Europeans like to travel on their own, they book a hotel on their own, they book a rental car on their own and you know, honestly they do not like to plan many things so they fly over, they go to the visitor center and they see what is going on.”

Table 6.2: Types of visitors at different survey locations

Survey location	Casual	Eye	Bucket	Exper	Total respondents
Iditarod Musher's Banquet Anchorage		5	6		11
Day before Iditarod in downtown Anchorage	2	4	1		7
Ceremonial start in Anchorage	2	6	3		11
Official re-start in Willow		4	2		6
Nome during the finish		8	6	7	21
Total respondents	4	27	18	7	56

Table 6.2 shows the different locations where the surveys are conducted. More surveys than in any other location were conducted in Nome during the finish and as can be seen in the table, all experienced visitors were found in Nome. All casual visitors were found in Anchorage that was excepted due to the fact that it takes some planning, effort and expenses to get to the Re-Start or another checkpoint. Both the “eye-opening” visitors and the “bucket list” visitors are spread over all locations.

Table 6.3: Amount of days in Alaska

Days Alaska	Casual	Eye	Bucket	Exper	Total respondents
1 to 2 days		1			1
3 to 5 days	1	5	1		7
6 to 10 days	2	10	4		16
10 days or more	1	11	13	7	32
Total respondents	4	27	18	7	56

Table 6.3.1: Percent of visit spent on the Iditarod

Percent of visit spent on the Iditarod	Total Respondents
Less than 10%	7
About 15% to 30%	16
More than 30% but less than 100%	9
100%	24
Total respondents	56

Table 6.3 shows the amount of days that the different visitor types spend in Alaska. A total of 32 out of 56 respondents stayed more than ten days in Alaska. A total of 24 out of 56 respondents spend all their days in Alaska on the Iditarod, which can be seen in table 6.3.1.

According to a tour operator in Anchorage, ‘the average tour in the winter time is a little over nine days which is about 2,5 days longer than a trip in the summertime. The tour operator is referring to that logistics are different in the wintertime so that can be a reason that visitors are spending more days in the wintertime. Besides that, winter tourists are including Fairbanks to see the Northern lights and to increase the chances of seeing the lights they expand their stay in Fairbanks with another day.’

Table 6.4: With whom are the respondents travelling

Type of visitor	Casual	Eye	Bucket	Exper	Total respondents
By myself		5	6	3	14
With business associates	1				1
With one or more family members	1	14	7	4	26
With one or more friends	2	7	5		14
With a church group		1			1
Total respondents	4	27	18	7	56

Table 6.4 shows that most visitors are traveling with one or more family members. Probably this includes those travelling with their husband or wife. The same counts for travelling with one or more friends, which can also includes a husband or wife. Besides that, 14 respondents were travelling by themselves. Some of these respondents travelled by themselves to Alaska but were picked up by a tour operator once they arrived in Alaska. This touroperator was organizing the rest of their trip. Two of the respondents who travelled by themselves explained that they enjoyed being away from friends and family for a while and spend some time on their own. The “eye-opening” visitors are travelling mostly with one or more family members. Furthermore, only one visitor is travelling with business associates which is surprisingly low. The Iditarod is an event with lots of companies involved so it could be possible that more out of state visitors were invited by companies and travelling with business associates. Besides that, this table shows that one respondent was travelling with a church group. This respondent was part of a large group of 15 out of state visitors, all with the same motivation to come up to Alaska. Another church group filled in the survey at the re-start in Willow. The respondent who filled in the survey was together with their family so probably they answered that they were travelling with one or more family members.

According to a tour operator in Anchorage, ‘our tours are typically booked couples, we’ve got two couples that are traveling together which is pretty common,

we had that a couple years in a row now were we had a group of four together but honestly it is still couples. We have some independent lady travelers.’’

Table 6.5: Travelling to Alaska during the Iditarod before

Visit	No, this is my first time	Yes, once	Yes, more than once	Total respondents
Casual visitor	4			4
“Eye-opening” visitor	26		1	27
“Bucket-list” visitor	15	3		18
Experienced visitor		2	5	7
Total respondents	45	5	6	56

Table 6.5 shows that most respondents were travelling for the first time to Alaska during the Iditarod. For all the casual visitors, it was their first time visit and also for almost all “eye-opening” visitors. Some of the “bucket-list” visitors visited Alaska during the Iditarod before. It can be possible that at these previous visits, the bucket list visitors were more the “eye-opening” visitors and decided that they wanted to come back to experience the Iditarod even more intense. All of the experienced visitors were at least once before in Alaska during the Iditarod that is why they these visitors are defined as an experienced visitor. Most of them even more than once, which explains why they are so experienced.

Table 6.6: Activities

Type of visitor	Casual	Eye	Bucket	Exper	Total	Percentage
Watch Iditarod start in Anchorage	4	19	15	6	44	79%
Watch Iditarod re-start in Willow	1	15	11	4	31	55%
Visit Iditarod race central at Millennium Hotel	1	8	10	5	24	43%
Watch Iditarod finish in Nome		7	9	7	23	41%
Watch Iditarod somewhere else along the trail	1	6	7	6	20	36%
Attend Iditarod banquet in Anchorage		6	10	4	20	36%
Visit Iditarod headquarters in Wasilla	1	6	8	1	16	29%
Volunteer for Iditarod		8	3	4	15	27%
Attend Iditarod banquet in Nome		1	3	3	7	13%
Total visitors types	4	26	19	7	56	

Table 6.6 gives an overview about the Iditarod activities in which the respondents participated. Both the ceremonial start and the official re-start are most popular activities. 79 percent of the total amount of respondents watched the ceremonial start and 55 percent

watched the official re-start. Both activities are in general easy accessible for visitors. 36 percent of the respondents visited the banquet in Anchorage, which can be explained by the fact that the banquet was an important location for conducting the surveys. This is the same for the finish in Nome. The fact that only 29 percent of the respondents visited the headquarters in Wasilla according to 55 percent visiting the re-start in Willow is surprisingly low when realizing that both places are located close to each other. 23 respondents were in Nome and only 7 of them were visiting the banquet, which can be seen as a low amount. This can be explained by the fact that the banquet in Nome is organized five days after the first finisher arrives. Most of the respondents were staying less than five days in Nome. The respondents prefer to see the first musher coming into Nome compare to attending the banquet in Nome.

According to a tour operator in Anchorage, “the official re-start is super popular. It is sold out by December and we will start taking reservations this Iditarod 2014 already for next year. The first couple of years, this tour operator included only the Race Start in their program, which they focused on besides a dogsledding trip. Later they expended the trip to five days, which included the Iditarod Banquet in Anchorage. Nowadays, this tour operator is having people for two or three weeks. They include for example the city Fairbanks with their championships in ice carving. The Iditarod is the main reason for my clients but they are extending their trip and add other activities.”

According to a tour operator in Anchorage, “when I started my company everybody told me you are crazy, who is going to Alaska in the middle of the winter? And that first year I organized the Iditarod tour, I was sold out. I combined it with other winter activities such as dogsledding and the northern lights. It is a good mix, they get a good introduction what Alaska is about in the winter”

Table 6.7: Enjoy watching the Iditarod

Type of visitor	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Total
Casual visitor	75%	25%	100%
“Eye-opening” visitor	96%	4%	100%
“Bucket-list” visitor	83%	17%	100%
Experienced visitor	86%	14%	100%
Total	89%	11%	100%

Table 6.7.1: Recommend to friends and family

Type of visitor	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
Casual visitor	50%	50%
Eye opening visitor	93%	7%
Bucket list visitor	67%	33%
Experienced visitor	71%	14%
Total	80%	20%

Table 6.7 shows that all respondents strongly agree or somewhat agree with the statement that they are enjoying watching the Iditarod. Table 6.7.1 shows that all respondents who answered will recommend the Iditarod to friends and family. The casual visitors are not all strongly agreeing which can be related to the fact that they did not come especially for the Iditarod itself. The “bucket-list” visitors are also not all strongly agreeing but for some of these respondents it was a long way to make the “Iditarod dream” happen. Almost all “eye-opening” visitors do recommend the Iditarod to friends and family which is making sense according to the fact that they are surprised about what the Iditarod brought for new experiences to them.

Table 6.8: Do not care about the competition in the Iditarod

Type of visitor	Agree	Disagree	Total
Casual visitor	4	0	4
“Eye-opening” visitor	14	13	27
“Bucket-list” visitor	14	4	18
Experienced visitor	4	3	7
Total	36	20	56

Table 6.8 shows if the respondents are carrying about who will win the Iditarod. More than half of the respondents don’t care about the competition. The Iditarod has so much more to offer than just the excitement about who is winning this year’s race. The casual visitors do not care about the competition, which can be related to the fact that they do not have that, much knowledge about the mushers who are attending the Iditarod race compare to the other visitor types. Half of the “eye-opening” visitors are disagreeing with the statement. This can be related to the fact that they arrived in Alaska and experience the Iditarod as a race instead of an event. The “bucket list” visitors are seeing the Iditarod more as an event instead of a competition. These visitors have high expectations about the cultural aspects and want to be

surrounded by the cultural atmosphere. Besides that, the “bucket list” visitors want to be involved in as many activities as possible according to the race. The experience visitor is following the Iditarod for multiple years and has the knowledge about the mushers and sometimes got to know the mushers. This is the reason that some of them do care about the competition. Another question explains if the respondents are feeling sorry for the sled dogs. All respondents were disagreeing with this statement. Some comments showed that the respondents are agreeing with the fact that these dogs are well trained to run long distances.

Table 6.9: Coming back to Alaska during the Iditarod

Type of visitor	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not likely	Total
Casual visitor	75%	25%	0%	100%
“Eye-opening” visitor	52%	41%	7%	100%
“Bucket list” visitor	56%	28%	17%	100%
Experienced visitor	57%	43%	0%	100%
Total	55%	36%	9%	100%

Table 6.9 gives an overview about the respondents do want to come back to Alaska during the Iditarod. This is an important question which is giving an overall view of the respondent’s opinion. 55 percent of the respondents are very likely to come back. Besides that, 36 percent are somewhat likely to come back. According to the given comments, the 36 percent includes respondents who are not sure about their financial situation in the next years. 17 percent of the “bucket list” respondents are not likely to come back. Some “bucket list” visitors are seeing the Iditarod as a once in a lifetime experience.

Table 6.10: Iditarod activities on a next visit to Alaska

Activities	Very interested	Somewhat interested	Not interested
Watch Iditarod start in Anchorage	42	9	2
Watch Iditarod re-start in Willow	37	14	2
Watch Iditarod finish in Nome	31	16	6
Watch Iditarod somewhere else along the trail	29	21	3
Attend Iditarod banquet in Anchorage	26	17	10
Attend Iditarod banquet in Nome	21	19	13
Visit Iditarod headquarters in Wasilla	23	25	5

Table 6.10 shows the activities that the respondents want to undertake on their next visit to Alaska during the Iditarod. This table is presenting all respondents per row together. Both the

start and re-start are the most popular activities. The reason can be that these activities are easy accessible for all visitors. The finish in Nome can be challenging to visit. There are limited accommodation and flight possibilities, which is the same for watching the Iditarod somewhere else along the trail. Both the banquet in Anchorage in Nome is less popular. The reason can be that the respondents need to buy an entry ticket at least a couple of days before the banquet. Another reason can be that some of the respondents are unfamiliar with the banquet. The headquarters in Wasilla are not extremely popular due to the fact that Anchorage has a lot of information to offer about the Iditarod as well.

6.11: Expenses

Expenses	Less than \$1000	\$1000+	Total respondents
Casual visitor	1	4	5
“Eye-opening” visitor	19	12	31
“Bucket list” visitor	4	9	13
Experienced visitor	1	6	7
Total respondents	25	31	56

Table 6.11 shows that more than half of the respondents are spending more than \$1000 dollar on their trip. This amount of money is excluding the travel expenses to and from Alaska. Most of the casual visitors and the experienced visitors are spending over \$1000 dollar. Most of the “eye-opening” visitor are spending less than \$1000 dollar. A reason can be that they are staying with family and friends.

According to a tour operator in Nome: ‘this is a very nice mid-winter shot in the arm for the Nome economy, big time for the city of Nome, and we are very proud.’

Table 6.12: Experience Alaska

Type of visitor	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Total
<i>Too long trip</i>					
Casual visitor	1	2	1		4
“Eye-opening” visitor	21	4	1	1	27
“Bucket list” visitor	17	1			18
Experienced visitor	6		1		7
Total	45	7	3	1	56

<i>Too expensive</i>					
Casual visitor	1	2	1		4
“Eye-opening” visitor	19	7		1	27
“Bucket list” visitor	15	2		1	18
Experienced visitor	4	3			7
Total	39	14	1	2	56
<i>Too cold for me</i>					
Casual visitor	3		1		4
“Eye-opening” visitor	12	6	7	1	27
“Bucket list” visitor	13	3	1	1	18
Experienced visitor	5	2			7
Total	33	11	9	2	56

Table 6.12 presents how the respondents experienced Alaska. Different statements were present and the respondents could choose if they are agreeing or disagreeing. Besides the statements in table 6.12, one of the statements was if the respondents were enjoying their visit to Alaska in general. All respondents were agreeing with this statement. The table shows the statement if the respondents found the trip up to Alaska too long and are not sure if it was worth it. Only one respondent out of each visitor group is agreeing with this statement. Furthermore, the table shows that all experienced visitors are disagreeing with the statement that their trip to Alaska during the Iditarod was too expensive. Table 6.11 is showing that the experienced visitors are spending the most during their visit. Probably they know where they spend their money on and are satisfied with that. The casual visitors are not completely disagreeing so somehow they found their trip expensive and are not sure if it was worth it. The “eye-opening” and “bucket list” visitor are both content with their expenses. Only one respondent from both visitor groups found it too expensive. Finally, the table shows if the respondents found Alaska too cold during their visit, which could influence their visit. The answer of the “eye-opening” visitor is divided into disagreeing and agreeing. Some of the “eye opening” visitors did not know what to expect from Alaska and this can be seen in this result. It can be possible that the “eye-opening” visitors were not prepared for the Alaska

climate. The experienced visitors are disagreeing with this statement due to the fact that they know what to expect.

Table 6.13: Motives to visit Alaska

Type of visitor	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Total respondents
<i>Seeing Iditarod</i>				
Casual visitor	2	1	1	4
“Eye-opening” visitor	24	2	1	27
“Bucket list” visitor	16	2		18
Experienced visitor	7			7
Total respondents	49	5	2	56
<i>Winter recreational activities</i>				
Casual visitor		2	2	4
“Eye-opening” visitor	7	9	11	27
“Bucket list” visitor	6	5	7	18
Experienced visitor	2	2	3	7
Total respondents	15	18	23	56
<i>Cultural experience</i>				
Casual visitor	2	1	1	4
“Eye-opening” visitor	15	10	2	27
“Bucket list” visitor	11	5	2	18
Experienced visitor	1	4	2	7
Total respondents	29	20	7	56
<i>Visit relatives</i>				
Casual visitor		1	3	4
“Eye-opening” visitor	9	6	12	27
“Bucket list” visitor	6		12	18
Experienced visitor	3		4	7
Total respondents	18	7	31	56
<i>Business</i>				
Casual visitor	1		3	4
“Eye-opening” visitor	2	4	21	27
“Bucket list” visitor	1		17	18
Experienced visitor		1	5	7
Total respondents	4	5	46	56

Table 6.13 is giving an overview of different statements according to the motives to visit Alaska during the Iditarod. The table shows how important it was for the visitors to see the Iditarod. Almost all respondents are saying that it was very important for them. Only one

casual visitor and one “eye-opening” visitor is mentioning that it was not important. Both respondents were visiting Alaska because of business. The respondents were somewhat agreeing that the winter recreational activities were an important reason for their visit. Some of the respondents combined the Iditarod with a winter recreational activities such as a ski trip or a snow mobile tour. The casual visitors were more interested in the cultural experiences. The casual visitors were found in downtown Anchorage so probably they were interested in visiting for example the museums while they were on their business trip. This table shows that nine respondents out of 56 were in Alaska because of business. Table 6.4 shows that only one person was travelling to Alaska with business associates. The other eight respondents are combining their holiday with business. 15 out of 27 “eye-opening” visitors found it important to visit relatives. Some of the respondents choose to visit their relatives during the beginning of March especially for the Iditarod.

According to a tour operator in Anchorage, ‘a festival or activity like the Iditarod is making a focus for visitors to come to Alaska in the winter. I want to say to my friends that I am crazy and come back with all the stories. Most of them are having the Iditarod as a central activity of their trip and they are planning activities around the race either at the beginning or the end of their trip. ‘

Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusion

Tourist motivation

The general aim of this research was to gain information about the tourists visiting Alaska during the Iditarod and their motives. The tourists visiting Alaska during the Iditarod differ in their motivation. Crompton's (1979) typologies of tourist motivation are recognized in the out of state visitors. Some visitors came up for the *novelty*, they heard about the Iditarod and wanted to experience this race by themselves. Others were in Alaska because of *socialization*; they were visiting Alaska on their own but got connected with a tour group. *Prestige* was a typology, which was highly recognized along the visitors. The Iditarod is something they want to be part of. These visitors want to come home with the stories about how adventurous and amazing the Iditarod was in their eyes. Some visitors came up to Alaska to *rest and relax*, be away from normal day-to-day stresses and escape to a new environment to refresh themselves. Some of the out of state volunteers are working for the Iditarod every year just by themselves to be away from the daily life routine. The *education value* is a tourist motivation as well, out of state visitors who want to gain knowledge about the Iditarod and only about the race but also about the way of life in the arctic zone. They learned about the extreme weather, the native culture and the wilderness that Alaska has to offer. *Family togetherness* was an important motivation for visitors from other states in America. A lot of people moved to Alaska and their family chose to visit Alaska during the Iditarod because a lot of activities are taking place during that time.

Four different types of tourists

According to these motives and the classification of cultural tourists by McKercher (2000), four different types of out of state visitors are identified during this research. The casual visitor, the "eye-opening" visitor, the "bucket list" visitor and the experience visitor. The casual visitor is the visitor for who the Iditarod played a limited role in their decision to visit the destination Alaska. Once they were in Alaska they decided to participate in some activities like the Race Start in downtown Anchorage. The "eye-opening" visitor is the visitor for who the Iditarod Race played again a limited role in their decision for Alaska but once they arrived, this visitor wants to participate in the Iditarod activities and get extremely interested and ends up having a deep and new experience. The "bucket list" visitor is having the Iditarod as the major reason for their visit. The Iditarod is something that they always wanted to experience themselves. This type of visitor is having a deep cultural experience. Finally, the experience visitor is hard to identify completely according to McKercher (2000).

The experience visitor is an interesting new type of cultural visitor that is retrieved from this research. This out of state visitor is having a lot of experience with the Iditarod and is coming up to Alaska for several years in a row. Some of them are volunteers and some of them are also just following the race and supporting the teams along the trail. This visitor is shallower in their experience because they are used to the atmosphere but these are the returning visitors and are spending most money compare to the other visitors. Weed (2009) and Gammon & Robinson (2007) are writing about event sports tourism and if the sports or the tourism is dominating. There seems to be two quite distinct starting points; either from a sporting perspective or a touristic one. For all the out of state visitors in this research the tourism aspect was dominating.

Importance of research

The outcomes of this research could be relevant for different reasons. It shows that there can be different types of visitors identified during the time of the Iditarod. These visitors are indicating an overall explanation about the type of visitor that is coming up to Alaska during the wintertime. It is important to realize that there are different types of visitors who are extremely interested in visiting Alaska during the wintertime.

For the Iditarod organization it is interesting to know what kind of out of state visitors are attracted to the event they organize. It can be their job to market the event in a way that the “eye-opening” visitor is willing to come back the next year to experience the race even more. The Iditarod organization can take care of that these visitors are having that eye opening moment and realize how much fun it is to become part of the race, become an insider, support the race etc. The experience visitor is the one who is already connected to the Iditarod. It is the task of the organization to sustain this connection. This experience visitor is having a lot of knowledge about the race and is spreading the word. Besides that, some of them are willing to volunteer for the race.

Furthermore. the outcomes of this research are interesting for the destination marketing organization in Alaska. Due to the fact that Alaska is seasonal, they want to know who their summer and winter tourists are. The outcome of this research is based on the period during the Iditarod but it indicates also the type of tourist that is interested in winter tourism. The casual visitor is having other motives than the Iditarod like visiting Fairbanks and watching the Northern lights. As the DMO you want to get to know this visitor so you can market your destination in a suitable way. The “bucket list” visitor is a type that dreamed about Alaska

for a long time and is seeing the trip as a once in a life time experience. When the DMO has the knowledge about these types of visitors, they can reach them with information that can make them decide to visit Alaska again.

Alternative explanation of the findings

An alternative explanation of the findings is that these four types of visitors are related to an international sport event. The types of tourists can be related to other international sport events in the world and help them with understanding the motives of their visitors. The awareness of having these visitors at your destination because of a sport event is important to realize. It is bringing a new dimension to the tourism industry.

Research limitations

When interpreting the results, some limitations must be taken into account. The survey is conducted spread over several locations but the amount of surveys is not the same at each location. Besides that, the survey is not capturing all out of state visitors visiting Alaska during the Iditarod but it aims to capture most of the different types of visitors. The survey could include more questions about what the visitors are doing besides the Iditarod activities to get a brought perspective. Finally, the survey could include more information about when and how the visitors booked their trip to Alaska. The reason why the survey is not including this question is that the subject was narrowed down to only the motivations of the out of state visitors.

Suggestions for further research

Suggestions for further research could be on how to attract these different types of visitors and make them come back to Alaska. An example could be on how to take care that the “eye opener” visitors are coming back to see more in summer as well in winter? Or how to take care of that the “bucket list” visitor is more able to come again? And how to take care that the experience visitor will keep on coming?

Conclusion

There can be concluded that an international sport event such as the Iditarod is attracting several types of tourists. In this research, the different types of visitors are categorized in four types named the casual visitor, the “eye-opening” visitor, the “bucket list” visitor and the experienced visitor all with their own characteristics. It shows that an international sport event is a new field in the tourism industry, which can attract a new kind of target group. This

target group consists of tourists seeking for novelty, socialization, prestige, rest and relaxation, education value and family togetherness by travelling to foreign places for a sport event. A sport event like the Iditarod involves sport, cultural aspects, and adventure. It is organized in a way that it attracts spectators from all over the world even though the logistics are difficult in an area such as Alaska. Besides that, the Iditarod is having the effect of keeping people at home and it is a reason for visitors already in Alaska to stay longer. The Iditarod is having a large tourism value because of the out of state visitors visiting Alaska during the Iditarod, The Iditarod race is taking care of a positive destination image for Alaska worldwide. The interest in the Iditarod may rest on a rising trend of enjoying the thrills of adventure, excitement, activity, travel, sports and other serious leisure, because everyday life has become more safe and predictable. The Iditarod is a mix of sporting events and touristic activities that capture the arctic wilderness.

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Appendix 1: Survey

The purpose of this survey is to learn why people who are not Alaska residents visit Alaska during the Iditarod Race. I named a few questions that will take only 5 minutes to answer. Good luck!

1. What state or country are you from?

2. How many days during your visit are you going to spend at least part of the day doing something related to the Iditarod (for example, watching the race, visiting race headquarters, attending a banquet, etc.)?

If none, you are done. Thank you for your time!

3. Which of the following did you do or are you planning to do during your visit?

	Yes	No
Watch the Iditarod start in Anchorage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watch the Iditarod re-start in Wasilla	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watch the Iditarod finish in Nome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Watch the Iditarod somewhere else along the trail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend the Iditarod banquet in Anchorage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attend the Iditarod banquet in Nome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer for the Iditarod	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit the Iditarod headquarters in Wasilla	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visit the Iditarod race central at the Millennium Hotel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments:

4. Below are a set of statements about the Iditarod. How much do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I enjoy watching the Iditarod	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would recommend to my friends and family that they should visit Alaska to see the Iditarod	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy watching the dogs and the mushers, but I don't really care about the competition or who finishes in what place	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel sorry for the dogs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments:

5. How likely are you to come back to Alaska during the Iditarod?

Very likely Somewhat likely Not likely, continue to question 7

>

6. If you visit Alaska again during the Iditarod, how interested would you be in doing each of the following?

	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Not interested
Watch the Iditarod start in Anchorage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch the Iditarod re-start in Wasilla	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch the Iditarod finish in Nome	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch the Iditarod somewhere else along the trail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attend the Iditarod banquet in Anchorage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attend the Iditarod banquet in Nome	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visit the Iditarod headquarters in Wasilla	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

7. Below are a set of statements about your experience in Alaska. How much do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I am enjoying my visit to Alaska.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I want to visit Alaska again.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The weather is too cold for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It was such a long trip that I'm not sure it was worth it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is such an expensive trip that I'm not sure it was worth it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

8. How important was each of the following as a reason for your visit to Alaska?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Seeing the Iditarod	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Winter recreational activities (skiing, snowmachining, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visiting friends or family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Another reason (explain below)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments:

9. With whom are you traveling on your visit to Alaska? (choose all that apply)

- By myself
- With one or more family members
- With one or more friends
- With business associates
- With a tour group
- Other (if other, please explain below)

Comments:

10. How many days are you staying in Alaska during your visit?

- 1 to 2 days
- 3 to 5 days
- 6 to 10 days
- 10 days or more

Comments:

11. Have you ever visited Alaska during the Iditarod in previous years?

- No, this is my first time
- Yes, once
- Yes, more than once

12. About how much money do you plan to spend per person during your visit to Alaska (not including travel to and from Alaska)?

- \$0 - \$999
- \$1000 - \$2499
- \$2500 - \$4999
- \$5000 +

Comments:

13. Below are a set of statements about your travel experience. How much do you agree or disagree with each statement?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
I frequently take trips of a week or longer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of my travel is for work (rather than for personal reasons such as vacations or visiting friends or family)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer to take holidays which involve outdoor adventures or recreation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer travelling with a tour group rather than travelling on my own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I prefer to travel to places where friends or family live	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Comments:

14. I would be very interested in any other comments you may have about your visit to Alaska and your experience with the Iditarod.

15. If I have more questions, are you willing to answer them? Please provide a phone number or e-mail so that I can contact you.

Thank you for your time and enjoy the rest of your stay in Alaska!

Kind regards,
Paulien Becker