

The Multi-Legged Team:

A study of the unique elements of sled dog racing



Master Thesis

by

Maria Torheim

June 2012

International Hotel and Tourism Leadership

The Norwegian School of Hotel Management



**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
NORWEGIAN SCHOOL OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT**

MASTER'S THESIS

<p>STUDY PROGRAM:</p> <p>Master of Science in International Hotel and Tourism Leadership</p>	<p>THESIS IS WRITTEN IN THE FOLLOWING SPECIALIZATION/SUBJECT:</p> <p>Adventure tourism</p> <p>IS THE ASSIGNMENT CONFIDENTIAL?</p> <p>No</p>
--	---

<p>TITLE:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The multi-legged team: A study of the unique elements of sled dog racing</p>

<p>AUTHOR</p>		<p>ADVISOR:</p> <p>Ph.D. Reidar J. Mykletun</p>
<p>Student number:</p> <p>212534</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>Name:</p> <p>Maria Torheim</p> <p>.....</p>	

<p>ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF 2 BOUND COPIES OF THESIS</p> <p>Stavanger,/..... 2012</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Signature administration:.....</p>	
---	--

A dog is your best friend,

I have many best friends!

Respondent 5.

Acknowledgments

After two years as a student at the Norwegian School of Hotel Management this thesis symbolizes the end of my studies. The process of writing has been both challenging and educational, and there are several people who I would like to express my gratitude towards. Without these people this thesis would never have been possible to conduct and certainly would not have been completed. Firstly, I want to thank Reidar J. Mykletun, my supervisor, who has been one of the most important persons during this process. He has inspired me and believed in me throughout the whole process, especially when I have been questioning my own ability to complete this thesis, thank you Reidar. Secondly, I want to express my thankfulness towards the respondents who have willingly agreed to be interviewed and each one of them opened up their homes for me. Additionally, I would like to thank Mia Willman, one of my dearest friend, who let me live in her home and use her car for more then 4 weeks when being in Alta for the data collection. Last, but not least, I want to express my gratitude towards Tonje, Lise, and Ann Karin, my fellow students and best friends, these girls have made the last two years fun, enjoyable, and possible.

Abstract

Every year, more than 100 mushers use a great extent of their leisure time to prepare themselves, their handlers, and their dogs for the biggest event in Europe within dogsledding; Finnmarksløpet. Finnmarksløpet is the northernmost sled dog race in the world and the longest in Europe, taking place in Alta, Northern Norway. This thesis aims at describing the unique elements of participating in sled dog racing, especially focusing on the interactions between the humans and the dogs, using Finnmarksløpet as a base for the research. A qualitative method was used in order to acquire the most comprehensive detailed description and interpretation of the various relations, and participant observation and in-depth interviews was used as the research tools. The research identified several important elements of sled dog racing, where the musher-sled dog relation was found to be the most important. Further, the research indicates the dogs' role as the most important element in participating and completing the race, contributing to the feeling of accomplishment and having a unique experience. The research also implied a possibility for defining sled dog racing as both serious leisure and adventure tourism due to the extensive training necessary in advance and the various effects sled dog racing has on absorption and feeling of accomplishment. In addition, the results indicated that the handlers, even though not having direct contact with the dogs during the race, play an important role in assessing the conditions of the dogs and the capability of the team to continue.

Table of content

Introduction.....	10
Background.....	10
Research purpose.....	11
Dog sledding	12
History.....	12
The Serum Run.....	12
Important Norwegian heroes.....	13
Seppala.....	13
Nansen.....	13
Amundsen.....	13
Sled dog racing today.....	14
Finnmarksløpet.....	14
Theoretical foundations of the research	15
Leisure.....	15
Adventure tourism.....	17
Tourism.....	17
Adventure.....	18
Experience.....	20
Defining experience.....	20
Meaningful experience.....	21
Extraordinary experience.....	22
Optimal experience.....	22

THE MULTI-LEGGED TEAM	7
Teamwork	23
The world of dogs	24
Human-dog relations.....	24
Dogs in leisure.....	26
Sled dog racing.....	27
Methodology	30
Method, design, and approach	30
Sample.....	32
Data collection	33
Field observation.....	33
In-depth interview.....	33
Data analysis	34
Validity and reliability	35
Limitations	36
Results	37
Equipment.....	37
Training.....	38
Motivation.....	41
Staying positive.....	42
Communication.....	44
Musher – Dogs.....	45
Musher – Handler.....	46
Handler – Dog.....	47

THE MULTI-LEGGED TEAM	8
Trust	48
Safety	51
Emotions	53
Discussion	56
The unique world of sled dog racing (R1)	56
The experience of sled dog racing (R2)	60
Sled dog racing as serious leisure (R3)	63
Sled dog racing as adventure tourism (R4)	65
Implications	68
Conclusion	70
References	73
Appendix	78

Table of pictures

Photo 1: Preparing equipment.....	37
Photo 2: Mandatory equipment.....	37
Photo 3: Equipped sled	37
Photo 4: Talking dog.....	38
Photo 5: Helping handler	38
Photo 6: Friendship	38
Photo 7: Start line.....	41
Photo 8: Meeting a friend.....	41
Photo 9: Finish line	41
Photo 10: Smiling musher.....	42
Photo 11: Positive handler	42
Photo 12: Eager dogs	42
Photo 13: Affection.....	44
Photo 14: Exhausted handler.....	46
Photo 15: Warming musher's jacket.....	46
Photo 16: A handlers view	47
Photo 17: Care and attention.....	48
Photo 18: Taken out of the race	48
Photo 19: Light in the night	51
Photo 20: Vet-team	51
Photo 21: In the trail.....	51
Photo 22: Ready dogs	53
Photo 23: Achievement.....	53
Photo 24: Reward.....	53

Introduction

The field of experiences shared by humans and animals has not been researched much despite the rapid increase of experiences with animals (Kuhl, 2011). One example of activities where human and animals share experiences is sled dog racing, which is a competitive sport where the participants spend large amounts of time, money, and energy in preparation to participate (Kemp, 1999). Taking part in sled dog racing involves traveling to the different sled dog racing events around the world to gain experience. Every year more than 100 mushers (drivers of the sled) from around 15 nations spend a large part of their leisure time to prepare themselves, their handlers, and their dogs to take part in what is considered as ‘the most beautiful winter adventure’; Finnmarksløpet. Taking part in this winter adventure requires unique teamwork between humans and dogs, and depends highly on specialized competences and a set of skills.

Background

One might ask; why study human-sled dog relations when studying hotel and tourism? The reason for why I have chosen this topic for my thesis is my own interest in dogs and sled dog racing combined with an interest in tourism. I have always had a special interest in dogs; however, it was not until I moved to Alta, in 2007 due to studies, that I got introduced to the sport of sled dog racing and Finnmarksløpet. Eventually I got the chance to try dog sledding, which was the starting point for an addiction and fascination for the sport. In 2010 I was given the opportunity to take part in Finnmarksløpet as a handler for the first time, not directly knowing what I was putting myself up to. This first up-close experience with being a part of a sled dog team gave knowledge of what being a handler implies and was one of the best experiences of my life. At the same time it was tough, with little and unregularly sleep, low temperatures, and a lot of trials. Despite these challenging elements, seeing my team arriving at

the finish line was an emotionally strong moment for me, and for the rest of the members of my team. When I two years later started searching for topics for my master thesis I early discovered that I wanted to write about Finnmarksløpet and with help from my supervisor, Reidar J. Mykletun, the topic became clear.

Research purpose

The aim of this thesis is to study the interactions and relations within a sled dog team participating in Finnmarksløpet. The interesting element of taking part in this teamwork is the dependency of interacting with animals in order to be able to participate, compete, and accomplish the challenge of participating. This research will describe and interpret the important elements of participating in sled dog racing and how sled dog racing can be defined within tourism. In addition, the prerequisites for participating in a race of this kind will be included as a part of the research to illustrate how sled dog racing can be defined as serious leisure.

The research has focused on these four research problems:

R1. What are the most important elements of sled dog racing?

R2. What are the most crucial elements for creating a unique experience?

R3. How can sled dog racing be defined as serious leisure?

R4. How can sled dog racing be defined as adventure tourism?

Dog sledding

The aim of this chapter is to give an insight to the history of dog sledding and present the sled dog race Finnmarksløpet.

History

Dog sledding is one of the oldest way of travelling and has existed in parts of our world for over 4000 years now (White, 2012). Dogs were used as transportation in most of our northern regions of the world like Siberia, North America, and Greenland. During this time dog sledding was one of the most important tools for the people, especial the hunters. The dogs played an crucial part in peoples fight for survival (Gunnestad, 2002) and some even claim that people would not have survived in the Artic world without the sled dogs (White, 2012). With the advances of transportation technology, dog sledding became less common as a tool for survival and people started using other forms of transportation. Even though dog sledding was not crucial for survival, it remained the best and safest way of traveling in the northernmost areas and there have been episodes where people in the later years have been dependent on their dogs in order to survive.

The Serum Run

In 1925 in Nome, Alaska, there was a breakout of a diphtheria epidemic (respiratory illness) threatening the health of the population in the city of Nome. Due to the city's location and weather conditions there were no possibilities to use ships to get to the nearest city with diphtheria serum, 1000 miles away. The solution became sled dogs and among 20 mushers with about 150 dogs, volunteered for the task, taking turns on delivering the serum along the trail under extreme weather conditions. This was the start of sled dog racing becoming known for people around the world (Salisbury & Salisbury, 2003).

Important Norwegian heroes

Seppala. In 1900 Leonhard Seppala moved to Nome due to the gold mining. He quickly became known as a respected man, getting the nickname ‘King of the Trail’, and he was well known for his unique talent with the dogs and experience in the trail. For Seppala his dogs were as important as his family and he devoted a lot of time, effort, and resources into each of his dogs. Seppala was one of the most known racers in ‘The Serum Run’ as he drove the longest, and perhaps the hardest distance with extreme weather conditions and hardly any sleep. Seppala was also the breeder and owner of Balto, the lead dog of Gunnar Kaasen’s dog team at the last distance in The Serum Race and famous for his efforts during the race (Salisbury & Salisbury, 2003).

Nansen. Fridtjof Nansen was an explorer and scientist who started his expedition to the North Pole in 1893, along side with his companion Hjalmar Johansen and a team of dogs. Nansen’s expedition to the North Pole became a struggle for survival for both humans and dogs. As nature and the environment became more rough and tough and the dogs became more exhausted, they eventually had to start killing the dogs in order to have food for themselves and the rest of the dogs. The dogs, giving the circumstances, were seen as the easiest way to travel into this landscape because of their strength and brave courage (Nansen & Huntford, 1999).

Amundsen. Roald Amundsen originally set out to conquer the task that Nansen did not achieve, getting to the North Pole. However, when Amundsen discovered that other explorers had beaten him to the task, he changed the course of his expedition to the South Pole. In 1911 Amundsen and his companions set out for the South Pole, using Nansen’s ship ‘Fram’, skis, and sled dogs as transportation. During the expedition Amundsen and his team were dependent on the dog teams pulling heavy loads of supplies necessary for the survival of the whole team. In his

notes from the trip, the dogs are mentioned at several occasions where Amundsen describes how the dogs are working, how dependent they are of the dogs, and how the dogs as well were having ups and downs in the extreme conditions (Huntford, 2010).

Sled dog racing today

It is difficult to determine when sled dog racing started in Norway, but it is no doubt that these Norwegian heroes have played a big part in introducing the sport to the Norwegian people (Gunnestad, 2002). Sled dog racing is not a traditional anchored sport in Norway, but has gained much popularity in the recent years. There are several different sled dog races in Norway and biggest of them all is Finnmarksløpet, as the northernmost sled dog race in Europe.

Finnmarksløpet. The sled dog race Finnmarksløpet started in 1981 and has since then developed to become one of the biggest happenings in the county of Finnmark today (Arctander, 2005). The race consists of two different classes: 500km (FL-500) and 1000km (FL-1000).

When participating in the FL-500 mushers use eight dogs and the trail goes from Alta to Karasjok and back (Finnmarksløpet, 2012a). Everyone can take part in the class of FL-500, the only criteria is the entry fee of 4500 NOK (Finnmarksløpet, 2012b). In the FL-1000, which is considered to be the longest sled dog race in Europe, the mushers use 14 dogs racing across the county of Finnmark from Alta to Kirkenes and back (Finnmarksløpet, 2012a). To be able to participate in this class requires mushers to have successfully completed a long-distance race of at least 400 km or longer in advance, and the entry fee is 8000 NOK (Finnmarksløpet, 2012b).

A team competing in the sled dog race normally consists of (a) the musher, the person standing on the sled being out in the trail with the dogs; (b) the dogs, the ones pulling the sled, running and struggling to get to the next checkpoint and eventually to the finish line; and (c) the handlers (often three people), provide assistance with equipment and food for the musher and

drives from checkpoints to checkpoint by car. The dogs' food is in advanced driven out by Finnmarksløpet to the various checkpoints, in so-called 'depot' bags. Depending on the race class, it takes between three to eight days of being in the wilderness, competing against other participants, and nature. During this time the trail goes through different checkpoints along the trail where the musher and the dogs stop to rest and recover. At these checkpoints, handlers also meet the team and assist in providing revitalization support and provide equipment if needed, from outside of a fenced area.

Theoretical foundations of the research

This chapter aims at presenting the theoretical framework for this thesis and will review theories and earlier research important in this context

Leisure

The term leisure descends from the Latin word 'licere' meaning 'be allowed' and is in dictionaries defined as the time free from work or duties, a time when one can rest and enjoy hobbies such as sports (Leisure, 2012). For most people leisure is an important aspect of their life and people are engaging in different activities in their free time, some even devote all their free time and resources to one specific activity (Stebbins, 1992). Leisure is described by Stebbins (2007) as a "uncoerced activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, in an either satisfying or fulfilling way (or both), use their abilities and resources to succeed at this" (p. 4). Leisure can be divided into three different categories: (a) project-based leisure, (b) casual leisure, and (c) serious leisure. For all these categories a core activity is central, but what distinguish these from each other are the different levels of involvement required, duration and knowledge needed (Stebbins, 2007).

Leisure becomes defined as serious when people are greatly absorbed in the core activity where skills and knowledge is a necessity and some times crucial in order for the outcome to become fulfilling and meaningful (Stebbins, 2007). Stebbins (1992) defines serious leisure as: “The systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge” (p. 3). For defining the level of engagement Stebbins (1992, 2001, 2007) describes three different types that can be found within serious leisure. The first type described by Stebbins (1992) is amateurism, where people engage in the core activity in the same sense as paid professionals. The difference between the amateurs and the professional is the financial part, as well as the time devoted to the activity. The amateurs in serious leisure are participating in various activities on a part-time basis and do not, generally, have any financial benefits of participating. Professionals on the other hand, pursue the activity as a livelihood and will therefore have other activities that can be seen as leisure activities (Stebbins, 1992). Amateurs within serious leisure are often found pursuing activities in sport, art, and entertainment, and if looking apart from paid professionals, the amateurs can be defined as the professionals of serious leisure. The second type is the hobbyist, who is serious about pursuing the activity to the same extent as the amateurs. The main feature of a hobbyist is not feeling a personal obligation or see it as a social necessity to participate (Stebbins, 1992). Volunteers are seen as the third type within serious leisure and participates out of interest to help (Stebbins, 1992).

Further, there are six qualities that constitutes serious leisure: (a) the need to persevere, (b) developing a career, (c) effort based on knowledge, skills, and training; (d) durable benefits and outcomes, (e) growing unique ethos, and (f) identification with the core activity (Stebbins,

1992, 2001, 2007). As one of the six qualities of serious leisure the durable benefits is one of the reasons why people continue in their leisure activities. Stebbins (1992) describes eight different benefits: (a) self-actualization, (b) self-enrichment, (c) self-expression (d) recreation or renewal of self, (e) feeling of accomplishment, (f) enhancement of self-image, (g) social interaction and belongingness, and (h) lasting physical products of the activity. All these benefits can be seen as motivation for pursuing serious leisure and as positive effects and rewards by pursuing serious leisure.

Adventure tourism

As the tourism industry has developed, the term adventure tourism has evolved from the many terms in tourism. In theory, all tourism can be defined as adventure tourism because of the motives of escape and quest in all tourism activities (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2004). Even though most tourism activities can be regarded as adventure tourism, there are some definitions and framework describing the category. Adventure tourism is a complex and somewhat difficult to categorize and according to Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie, & Pomfret (2003) it is necessary to look at the definition of both tourism and adventure in order to acquire an understanding of what the term contains.

Tourism. Tourism is described as an activity for leisure or recreational motives and involves traveling, which is different from our normal behavior and daily routines (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003). A main motive of tourism is to experience enjoyment in the activity and tourism is often considered a way of expressing oneself, giving satisfaction through activities that sets aside our daily life and obligations. Additionally, tourism is defined as being voluntary, something people wish or even dream of doing (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003).

Adventure. The use of the word adventure can be found in many different contexts and the definitions of adventure are often many and wide. Swarbrooke et al. (2003) summarize ten core characteristics of adventure: (a) uncertain outcome, (b) danger and risk, (c) challenge, (d) anticipated rewards, (e) novelty, (f) stimulation and excitement, (g) escapism and separation, (h) exploration and discovery, (i) absorption and focus, and (j) contrasting emotions. All of these ten characteristics are closely related and somewhat dependent of each other. Some characteristics might be more important in describing the experience of adventure and some are a result of other characteristics. The uncertain outcomes of an adventure contributes at creating a form of commitment, where the participants develops a need to complete the adventure in order to see the outcomes (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003). Danger and risk are the characteristic often associated with adventure and there are differences in peoples' ability to tolerate risk and danger; situations inducing fear for one person can induce excitement and stimulation for another (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003). The degree of the challenge is dependent both on the circumstances and the people engaging in the activity. A persons skills, knowledge, and experience are factors determining the level of challenge (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003). If skills and knowledge is high the experience can be described as easy and enjoyable (play), but if skills and knowledge is low the experience might be described as challenging or even a disaster (misadventure) (Mortlock, 1984).

Mortlock (1984) further argues the element of positivity and an expectation of accomplishment as essential in adventure. These expectations can be closely linked with the anticipated rewards, which can be both physical and psychological. A reward often becomes (a) a goal to accomplish, (b) a desire to complete, (c) testing ones skills, or even (d) a trophy. According to Swarbrooke et al. (2003) an adventure needs an element of novelty, which occurs from doing or experiencing something new. The level of novelty can vary from experiencing

something for the first time, to elements of novelty in a previous experienced activity. Adventure is additionally closely related to stimulation and excitement; an adventure expose people for environments and situations stimulating their emotions, senses, and their intellect (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003). The element of escaping can likewise be found as a characteristic of an adventure and contribute to leaving our everyday life and concerns behind, and creates a feeling of separation (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003). Exploration and discovery contributes to increasing the participants' skills and self-awareness in the way it creates a desire to learn (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003). The absorption and focus is important in order to be able to complete the task or accomplishing the challenge. During an adventure there will be different levels of absorption and focus dependent on both the extent of the adventure and the levels of skills and knowledge of the participants. Because of these different characteristics participants might feel contrasting emotions during the adventure. These emotions might in a short period of time go from being positive emotions, making one feel that the adventure is going well, to having negative emotions, making one question the ability to complete the adventure or even in extreme adventures questioning the likelihood of survival (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003).

Based on these definitions, adventure tourism can be said to be the search for experiencing something new and escape the obligations and stress from our daily life. Involving travel and leisure activities, adventure tourism experiences will create: (a) a range of emotions, including excitement; (b) have an absorbing effect on participants created by the challenges, risks, and dangers that might occur; and (c) being rewarding, providing participants enjoyment, self-development, and learning (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003).

Experience

There are several different definitions of experience and its' meaning, but most definitions agrees to experiences being a subjective matter and whether an experience is considered positive as dependent on the person participating (Andersson, 2007; S. Larsen, 2007; Slåtten, Mehmetoglu, Svensson, & Sværi, 2009; Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2009).

Defining experience. Carlson (as cited in Mossberg, 2007a) describes an experience as being a continuous flow of feelings and thoughts occurring while conscious. This is also coherent with how Tarssanen and Kylänen (2007) describes an experience as being multi-sensorial, positive, and memorable, with the possibility to contribute to a personal change. Andersson (2007) claims the experience cannot be bought, but can only be created in the mind of the person. There is no possible saying in advance if the creation of a good experience will be successful, it all depends on the person and his/her resources. Larsen (2007) describes how an experience can be divided in to three aspects: (a) expectation, (b) events, and (c) memories, describing how the tourist goes to several cognitive stages in order to be able to carry out the experience. Pine and Gilmore (1999) argues an experience of engaging people in two dimensions; (a) the level of participation; active and passive as being the two opposite extreme points and (b) the level of connection; absorption and immersion as extreme points. These two dimensions defines the realm of an experience in the four categories: (a) entertainment, using senses to passively absorb the experience; (b) education, absorbing the experience by being actively participating; (c) escape, immersing into the experience by being actively participating; and (d) estheticism, immersing into the experience but still being passive participating. Pine and Gilmore (1998) also emphasizes that an experience including all four of these categories will be

perceived as the most holistic experience and would easier be perceived as meaningful to the person experiencing it.

Meaningful experience. Creating an experience that is meaningful is dependent on both the organization providing the experience and the person participating in the experience (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2009). However, there are limitations for how much the organization can contribute with in securing a meaningful experience, since much is dependent on the participant's skills, knowledge, and previous experience. As well as the term experience is well known and described, it has also become a common term being used in all industries, even as a substitute for the term service. As a result of this, it has become difficult to distinguish what is, as Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) describes it, an meaningful experience from an, for example, pleasant experience. In the search for defining a meaningful experience Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) explains how a holistic experience is dependent on the person participating, in five different levels. The first level is the motivational level, where the interest for the experience occurs and expectation is created in the mind of the participant. The second level is the physical level where the participant becomes aware of the experience through their senses. On this level a good experience provides security and a feeling of safety. However, an exception is so called 'extreme experience', where safety and security is not necessarily present, but at the same time might not be expected to be by the participant. During these extreme experiences it is curtail that the participant does not feel the danger and risk as higher than they can handle, because it would provide the participant with an unpleasant experience, inducing feelings of fear and uncertainty on a higher level than expected. The third level is the intellectual level where the evaluation of the experience occurs much dependent on the elements of the physical level and the ability to learn something new from the experience. At the emotional level, the fourth level, the

meaningful experience is created. If the previous levels are fulfilled and satisfying, the participant will at this level experience evoking emotions such as (a) enthusiasm, (b) enjoyment, (c) accomplishment, (d) thrill, and (e) joy. The last level is the mental level; where the participant of a meaningful experience might find it as having influenced and change them. This might also result in the pursuit of the experience as a hobby (Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2009).

Extraordinary experience. How Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) describes a meaningful experience could also be seen in close relation to what Mossberg (2007b, 2008) refers to as an extraordinary experience. For an experience to be extraordinary it needs to (a) be an active and dynamic process, (b) contain a strong social dimension, (c) give meaning and a feeling of joy, (d) produce involvement through absorption and personal control, (e) influence of context, uncertainty, and novelty; and (f) be merged with lifestyle satisfaction.

Optimal experience. Csikszentmihályi (2005) stresses that ‘flow’ is important for what he refers to as an optimal experience. Flow is achieved when a person are completely absorbed and immersed in the activity or experience. In this state everything outside the activity or experience becomes irrelevant and elements such as time, food, and oneself is typically ignored. In order to achieve a state of flow there must be a balance between the challenges of the experience and the skills of the participant. If the challenge of the experience is too easy, a feeling of boredom and apathy can quickly arise. On the other hand, if the challenge is too hard, a feeling of fear and anxiety can occur. The ideal is when the challenge of the experience and the skillset are in balance, which will give the feeling of flow and generate absorption and immersion, giving a optimal experience with feelings of joy, thrill, accomplishment, and etcetera (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005).

Teamwork

Teamwork is central in many kinds of sports and is in some contexts essential in order to complete the activity. Gilbert (2005) defines a team as "... a social group dedicated to the pursuit of a particular, persisting goal: the sports team to winning, perhaps with some proviso as to how this comes about ...” (p. 22). Teamwork can be a complex and comprehensive task to achieve and there are several elements taking part in setting the framework for the team.

One of the most important element is the creation of a common goal (Dunin-Keplicz & Verbrugge, 2010). The purpose of having a common goal is to create motivation in the team, as well as forming a vision and direction for the whole group, making it easier for every member to at all time know what to work towards (Levi, 2001). A second important element is the team’s effort and progress (Dunin-Keplicz & Verbrugge, 2010), which can be seen in relation to the team’s effectiveness and efficiency. The team’s effectiveness is dependent on the team’s ability to perform and complete the task, and the progress’ efficiency is often determined by the team’s capability to complete the task within the set timeframe (Levi, 2001). The third element of teamwork is assisting each other during the process (Dunin-Keplicz & Verbrugge, 2010), every member of the team has a set off different skills and knowledge, when other members of the team faces challenges it is important that the whole team assist in solving the task (Levi, 2001). Defining tasks and roles in the teamwork is essential in order for the teamwork to function well (Dunin-Keplicz & Verbrugge, 2010). Members of the team knowing their own roles and tasks, as well as other members roles, contributes to the whole team being better prepared to perform (Levi, 2001). Communication is likewise an important element of teamwork (Dunin-Keplicz & Verbrugge, 2010), and communication between the members of the team is essential in order to being able to preform. Trust is seen as the key to good communication, and members of the team

must trust each other in order for the team to function. Trust is based on relationships between the team members and takes a long time to develop, but can quickly be broken (Levi, 2001).

The world of dogs

To the best of my knowledge there is no earlier research done on interactions between all the members of a sled dog team participating in a sled dog race and on how interactions between the humans and sled dogs take part in creating the experience. However, the literature research has resulted in finding a few studies, which can be seen in relations to the research done in this thesis. The following section will provide a review of these studies and their findings.

Human-dog relations. The findings amongst the different studies illustrate several areas as important and among these, the relations between dogs and humans are perhaps the most researched field. Previous research are often conducted in a context where the animals play a role as companions to the humans and can be used as a basis for understanding the relationships between humans and what Shannon (1997) refers to as ‘non-human persons’, in this context the sled dogs.

Research conducted on the relations between humans and their pets reveals several benefits of being a pet owner. McConnell, Brown, Shoda, Stayton, and Martin (2011) found evidence, in their three parts study, suggesting owners of pets experiencing better well-being than non-owners. The results of the first study indicated people owning pets as (a) having better self-esteem, (b) more fit, (c) less lonely, (d) less fearful, and (e) more extraverted than non-owners. The findings also exposed pets as providers of support to the same extent as a sibling or ones parents, which indicates that people create strong attachments to their pets. The second study were conducted on people owning dogs and the results revealed dogs functioning as a provider of social support, not as an replacement of human support, but as a supplement. The

research likewise revealed the dogs as being a social recourse for owners: “people ascribed more humanlike emotions to pets when they addressed one’s needs better” (McConnell, et al., 2011, p. 1248). The third study showed results indicating pets contributing to stave off negativity caused by social rejection. The research of McConnell et al. (2011) illustrates well-being benefits from pet ownership and the benefits of being stronger when the social needs are fulfilled: “Pets benefit the lives of their owners, both psychologically and physically, by serving as an important source of social support” (McConnell, et al., 2011, p. 1250).

Beck and Katcher (1996) have done extensive research on the effect of animals and the human-animal bond. In their book “Between pets and people” they have summarized many of the different research done on this unique bond, supporting the research of McConnell et al. (2011). People are spending a lot of time and money on their ‘non-human’ friends and the benefits of having a pet are many. The evidence indicates pets as having a positive affect on peoples health and people owning pets having a lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure (Beck & Katcher, 1996). Strang (2007) looked at the meaning of the human-dog relationship for cancer patients and found the dogs functioning as both a conversation partner and as a motivator for the patients to get in movement despite their illness. He likewise found dogs as being a psychological support, a loving support, and able to read people’s body language, even when the human suffered from death anxiety (Strang, 2007). Beck and Katcher (1996) additionally found people considering their pets as a part of their family by giving them names and looking at them as siblings or children. This way of perceiving pets as family additionally means that pets serve as a form of social support, in the same way as other humans can. The researchers also found pets contributing to keeping humans in an emotional balance, giving their life a meaning, and pet owners considering their pets as an extension of themselves (Beck & Katcher, 1996). Research

also revealed that humans communicate with their pets as if they were humans, some even confessed to their animals. This illustrates how humans have a way of trusting their animals and giving them human-like abilities when communicating with them, some even believing that the pets understand the owners' feelings, moods, and words (Beck & Katcher, 1996). Beck and Katcher (1996) further highlights the ability pets have on getting people to laugh and play, regardless of age and that playing with dogs would benefit both the humans and dogs involved. The human gets an opportunity to escape from their daily lives and creates a closer bond with their companion animals, the dog gets benefits like enjoyment of the game, exercise, and stimulation (Beck & Katcher, 1996).

Dogs in leisure. The use of dogs in leisure activities is likewise a field where little research is conducted even though many dog owners include their dogs in their leisure activities. Baldwin and Norris (1999) examined the meaning of the leisure activities of the members of the American Kennel Club and found people unable to describe the cause of getting involved in serious leisure including dogs, some even described it as a disease; something that just evolved from owning dogs. In addition they revealed some benefits from participating in serious leisure activities including dogs: (a) fun and enjoyment, the dogs functioned as a positive affect; (b) strengthening their feeling of companionship with their dogs, (c) social inclusion, being a part of a society; (d) living with the dogs has positive effects on exercising and relaxation, and (e) competitive factor and testing skills. As a last factor for the meaning of participating in serious leisure including dogs, was the element of identification; participants had a desire to be identified as a dog person and as a part of the society (Baldwin & Norris, 1999). These findings are to some extent supported by research done on the contradicting expectations of being involved in two different societies: the one of serious leisure and the 'real' world (Gillespie, Leffler, &

Lerner, 2002). The researchers found people being passionately involved in dog sport as facing conflicting expectation from the two societies, due to the level of involvement and the recourses needed to participate. They also found that people involved in dog sport often are viewed as crazy by people outside the society due to their lack of understanding the seriousness of the sport and the great relations people build with their dogs. Further, the research revealed that considering pets as family sometimes caused conflict with other family members (Gillespie, et al., 2002).

Sled dog racing. Even though there are, to the best of my knowledge, not conducted any research on the interactions between all the members of a dog sled team participating in an adventure race, there are some studies done on this type of adventure looking at different parts of the team. Jæger (2005) used the sled dog race Finnmarksløpet as a basis for her research on how Finnmarksløpet creates temporal and social framework for experiences and found the desire to escape as one of the motivational factors for mushers, handlers, and volunteers. The study also revealed the social aspect with participating in the race as one of the most important motivational reasons; the relations people built during the race was seen as important when taking part in the race, independent of which role one had in the race. In addition, the results indicated the competitive element of the race functioning as an driving force giving meaning to participating, and the nature and scenery as a contributor to giving the participants strong experiences (Jæger, 2005).

Similar results were likewise found by Neumann (2009) when studying the world of dog sledding and its society. He found the competitive factor and the nature as elements giving meaning with participating in dog sledding as a sport. In addition, the research revealed that these were not the only motivational factors giving meaning to the sport, but the meaning was

founded in being a part of a community, a community which is special because it blurs the boundaries of species (Neumann, 2009). On the basis of this, it is argued that taking part in dog sledding and dog sledding competitions is taking part in, what Neumann (2009) refers to as an ‘multi-legged’ community and being a part of this community is not only a celebration of the interaction with the dogs, but a celebration of humans and dogs constitute a species-breaking, multi-legged community. Kemp (1999) found that people engaging in the world of sled dog racing stepped into a “out of time experience” and during this experience people changed their values and norms in order to better fit the race; values of co-operation and adaption to the different roles of the community. Kemp (1999) argued the co-operation in the sled dog racing society as an important factor and receiving rewards for best dog care were often given higher status than winning the race. In addition the research portrayed the seriousness of sled dog racing and that it demands a substantial amount of preparations in order to achieve a competitive advantage. What distinguishes competing in sports where dogs are used as a part of the team, is the fact that in addition to having to compete against others, the participants are competing with external factors affecting the ability to compete due to the use of animals and the elements of the nature: “the mediation of human competition through the use of animals, and the sometimes life-threatening struggle which exists between humans and wild or raw nature” (Kemp, 1999, p. 93). The element of co-operation exists in connection with the struggles of the dangerous factors of competing in a sled dog race, which consist of the environmental conditions. The ability to overcome these dangerous factors and competing in the race is connected directly to the dogs performance (Kemp, 1999).

Shannon (1997) found, when studying the role of the sled dogs in the Inuit culture and their relationship, the dogs still played an important part in their culture. Based on the study,

Shannon (1997) argued sled dogs not being pets, not only animals of domination, and more than equivocal: “they are non-human persons who have entered into and continue a longstanding culturally based relationship with humans” (Shannon, 1997, p. 109). Further the study portrayed the different functions of sled dogs, some of them being the use of sled dogs as (a) transportation, people still preferred to use the dogs instead of snowmobiles; (b) as a release of emotions for the owners, respondents stressed the dogs as a object for getting out their frustration and anger; (c) fun and enjoyment, people get energy from driving dogs; (d) as racing, even though highlighted that the working dogs used in the Inuit culture differs from the dogs normally used in racing; (e) as something to do, giving personal challenges, a feeling of mastering and accomplishment; (f) as safety, the dogs provides a feeling of safety when traveling due to their abilities in rough environments; and (g) as protection from other animals (Shannon, 1997).

The findings in Shannon’s (1997) study is comparable to what Kuhl (2011) found when researching on the human-sled dog relationship. By interviewing eight mushers encouraging them to share experiences and stories about working with dogs, Kuhl (2011) found several elements crucial in the human-sled dog relationship and the relationship as being complex, rich, and deep in quality. In addition the study supported the idea that animals and human can have interspecies relationships, similar to the arguments of Neumann (2009). The research revealed six important themes, highlighted by the mushers in the study, as important elements of the relationship. The first element was getting to know their dogs, which can be divided into three different areas: (a) distinctive personalities and characters, the dogs are different from each other; (b) bonding by spending time with their dogs, and (c) speaking for the dogs, illustrating the feelings, preferences, and thought of the dogs (Kuhl, 2011). Secondly, the element of respect was emphasized as an important element of the human-sled dog relationship. Respect lied in the

mushers acknowledging the dog's abilities in form of (a) power, (b) endurance, (c) work ethics, (d) enthusiasm, (e) toughness, and (f) navigation skills. Two-way communication emerged as a third theme in the study and consisted of: (a) the ability to read each other's body language, (b) interpret cues, and (c) the dogs 'sensing' the musher. In addition, the research discovered the mushers' responsibility to communicate and understand the dogs as an important factor in communicating with the dogs and that the mushers had to adapt to the sled dogs in order to understand them (Kuhl, 2011). The fourth theme was trust, all the mushers highlighted that trust went both ways in the relationship and if trust were lacking for one of them it could lead into dangerous situations. The fifth theme emerging from the study was the importance of having partnership, a partnership between two beings capable of thinking and feeling. In this partnership the mushers role constituted of being (a) responsible, (b) committed, and (c) a coach in relation to the dogs. The dogs' role in this partnership was related to working for the musher, pulling the sled. Kuhl (2011) likewise found that companionship played an important role in the partnership between humans and the dogs; the mushers described being alone with the dogs in the wilderness as enjoyment. The last theme emerging as important in the human-sled dog relationship was learning; the mushers described what they had learned by working with the sled dogs and that the most important learning was seeing the dogs working and their abilities (Kuhl, 2011).

Methodology

This chapter aims at providing a description of the chosen research method applied in this thesis, as well as giving a description of the approach utilized in order to obtain the results.

Method, design, and approach

Since there is little research conducted on the experience of participating in a sled dog race, the interactions between the humans and dogs in the team, and how the relations function in

being able to participate in the race, a qualitative research method with both a descriptive and interpretive design were chosen. The choice of what method to use is dependent on the chosen topic, the purpose, and the research question (Thagaard, 2009). A qualitative method was chosen because of its aim to retrieve knowledge about experiences and interactions in a natural context (Angrosino, 2007), in this thesis being sled dog racing. In addition, the method's ability to obtain rich and in-depth data during the collection (Thagaard, 2009) served as a factor for choosing it. Combining the descriptive and interpretive designs allowed me to present a describing and interpretive picture of the elements of sled dog racing. The aim of the descriptive design is to: "present a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship" (Neuman, 2009, p. 13) and the aim of the interpretive design is to provide data from the respondents "own explanations to their situation or behavior" (Veal, 2006, p. 37) Using the qualitative method with a mix of descriptive and interpretive design allowed me to get in-depth of the phenomena of sled dog racing, and describe the elements involved in this activity based on the interpretation from myself and the respondents. It additionally provided me with the opportunity to collect data while taking part in the experience, which gave the most detailed and rich descriptions of being a part of a sled dog team in the quest for adventure.

Because of my own participation in the sled dog race Finnmarksløpet as a handler using ethnography as the approach provided me with a unique opportunity to study the race while being a part of it. "Ethnographic methods are of particular use when researchers need to enter a field situation in which the social issues or behaviors are not yet clearly understood" (Angrosino, 2007, p. 26). Ethnography is a form of research that cannot be programmed in advance, it is full of surprises and unpredictability (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2004) and accurately means giving a description of people by using observations in the field (Angrosino, 2007).

Sample

Sampling in the world of ethnography is a complex and difficult matter because of the essence of studying people's behavior (Angrosino, 2007). The sample in this thesis can be seen in scoops since I have chosen to use both participant observation and interviews. The sample for the participant observation included my self, as a handler, and every one else taking part in Finnmarksløpet, especially focusing on the musher, the dogs (non-human persons), and the handlers of my team. Regarding the interviews, the sample consist of mushers that all have participated in Finnmarksløpet more than once. The respondents was chosen by using the "snow-ball" method (Thagaard, 2009) were I contacted a musher well familiar with the sled dog society and asked the musher to give me recommendations of people to contact for the interviews, as well as asking the musher to be a respondent for the research. This resulted in five mushers agreeing to take part in the research and being interviewed. Because the sled dog society in Norway is small, where most people know each other, it would be easy to identify the respondents on the basis of their gender and their experience in the race. Therefore I chose to refer to the respondents as male and divided the experience level in two categories, 'experienced and expert', instead of identifying the number of times they participated.

Respondent 1 was the first musher interviewed for this thesis. He is experienced in the field of sled dog racing and is a well-known person in the sled dog society. The respondent started with dog sledding due to contact with another musher, resulting in him buying the first dog.

Respondent 2 is an experienced musher and describes the beginning of sled dog driving as, equal to Respondent 1, due to contact with another musher.

Respondent 3 can be defined as an expert in the field of sled dog racing and has competed several times in Finnmarksløpet. He explains the beginning of sled dog driving as an interest for outdoor activities and hunting, and that the sled dog racing evolved from this.

Respondent 4 can also be defined as an expert in sled dog racing and has participated in Finnmarksløpet at several occasions. He similarly explained how sled dog racing evolved from an interest for outdoor activities.

Respondent 5 falls in the category of experienced musher and started his sled dog racing career as a result of using dogs in outdoor activities and for skiing.

Data collection

Field observation. The main research tool of ethnography is observation, which can be distinguished between the perspectives of participant or non-participant, where the main difference are the degree of involvement of the researcher (Angrosino, 2007). Based on my own knowledge from taking part in a sled dog race previously and the chance to be a part of this year's race, while studying it, the participant observation was chosen as the research tool. This gave me a deeper insight of the challenges and elements constituting being a participant in this adventure race, as well gave me easier access to people I could interview after the race. During the race I was conscious of my surroundings and at every available moment I used my time to observe other teams and especially focusing on the mushers and dogs stationed at the various checkpoints. Additionally, I was active in engaging in conversations with other handlers, volunteers and judges of the race to better obtain a grip of the race.

In-depth interview. Conducting interviews might seem as an easy task, but in fact it is more complex than it seems (Fontana & Frey, 1994). In addition to using participant observation, interviews with mushers were used as a tool for collecting data. The use of interviews

contributed to giving the research a more solid base than if only participant observation was used (Angrosino, 2007). There are several different ways to conduct interviews (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Mehmetoglu, 2004) and for this research I chose to use semi-structured interviews, making an interview-guide to help me if the interviews stopped up. The interview-guide (Appendix) consisted of key words with different topics to talk about and some pre-formulated questions in case the conversation stopped up.

The interviews were conducted after the actual participation of Finnmarksløpet and each musher kindly invited me into their homes, where they passionately described sled dog racing. The interviews lasted one to two hours each and were digitally recorded, the interview-guide was minimally used and the conversations went smoothly and naturally. The reason for why the interviews were conducted after Finnmarksløpet were the mushers' involvement in the race, making them occupied during the race. The second reason was my own participation as a handler, needing to fulfill my task left little room for interviewing the musher during the race, and the last factor was the desire to interview mushers who had the race fresh in memory and still were in the 'state' of Finnmarksløpet.

Data analysis

Analyzing the collected data in qualitative research is mainly done through the three stages of (a) description, (b) analysis and (c) interpretation (Wolcott, 1994). After the data collection, the digital recordings were transcribed, leaving out irrelevant information. The similarities between the interviews and the important elements were possible to detect even at this early stage. After transcribing the interviews, the material was thoroughly analyzed to detect the similarities into relevant categories; the data from the observation was supplemented to the interview material to see the differences and similarities. Due to the respondents' passion

towards sled dog racing the material had rich and detailed information, causing this stage to be time-consuming. After identifying the important elements the material was interpreted in order to be able compare it to previous research and the theoretical foundation of this research.

Validity and reliability

When doing qualitative research it is difficult to achieve total objectivity due to the researcher's influence of earlier experiences and background, but still the researcher should be as objective as possible when doing ethnographic research (Angrosino, 2007). The use of participant observations and interviews creates challenges in determining the reliability and validity of the research, as normally done in quantitative research (Angrosino, 2007).

Within qualitative methods the reliability of the research refers to the dependability of how the data collection is done and the researchers ability to consistently collect the necessary data (A. K. Larsen, 2007; Mehmetoglu, 2004; Neuman, 2009; Thagaard, 2009). For establishing reliability in my research I was conscious of my role as a researcher using participant observation by keeping a low status as a researcher and immersing in the role as a handler. In addition, I supplemented my own observation with the thoughts of five mushers, which makes the research become more reliable because of the expertise and knowledge of these mushers. All the interviews were conducted with the same interview-guide and were recorded digitally. The use of both primary data and secondary data also contributes to increase the reliability of my thesis, by giving me the opportunity to compare some of the earlier findings with my own.

The validity of qualitative studies refers to the research's (a) ability to measure what was intended, (b) ability to reflect the reality, and (c) the truthfulness of the research (Angrosino, 2007; A. K. Larsen, 2007; Mehmetoglu, 2004; Neuman, 2009). There are several factors contributing to strengthening the validity of my research. The validity of my research is

especially strengthen by using both observations and interviewing techniques. Additionally, by comparing the observations made with the answers from the respondents helped me with confirming the findings. Including direct quotes from the respondents in the results strengthens the validity by highlighting the truthfulness of my interpretations and the research as a whole. The pictures included in the results additionally contribute to strengthening the validity of this research because it reflects the reality and gives the reader a visual illustration. My own knowledge correspondingly contributed to strengthening the research's validity, both in advance of the data collection and during. My understanding of sled dog racing made it easier when preparing for the research, both in finding theory and constructing the questions. In addition, my own knowledge was useful when participating in the race; if I did not know what I was up for, I would have had less time focusing on the research because of the seriousness of being a part of sled dog racing.

Limitations

Like many other researches and theses, this thesis also has its limitations. Ethnographic studies are often conducted over a longer period of time; from weeks to years (Angrosino, 2007), but his study is conducted within a smaller timeframe because of the sled dog race's duration and the extent of this thesis. Idealistically my research might have had a larger time frame and the research of sled dog teams might also have been grounded in observations beyond Finnmarksløpets frames. The timeframe for completing my thesis also function as a limitation. Ideally this type of research should have been done with a much bigger timeframe, included other races in Norway, and followed the teams for several years. Though, it might be argued that my own experiences and understanding of the area, and dog sledding as a sport, can function as a replacement for these limitations. I acknowledge that this research has its' limitations for being

considered in other context, although it do not intend to do so. All the interviews were conducted, transcribed, and interpreted in Norwegian, followed by being translated into English when written in this thesis. This may have influenced the results, giving them another meaning than they originally had, but since I have been conscious of this in the translation, the differences in the meanings should be minimal.

Results

This chapter aims at presenting the results from this research and will provide a summary of the observation and interviews. Additionally, pictures have been included in this chapter to supplement the collected data and provide the reader with an opportunity to ‘experience’ some of the race visually.

Equipment



Photo 1: Preparing equipment



Photo 2: Mandatory equipment

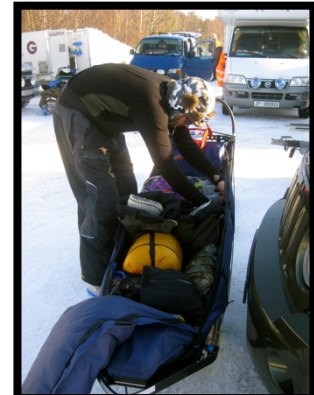


Photo 3: Equipped sled

Participating in Finnmarksløpet requires equipment such as (a) a sled, (b) center line, connecting the dogs to the sled; (c) harnesses for the dogs, and etcetera. Even at this stage the dogs becomes important: Firstly, when buying the equipment the musher always has the different dogs in mind, making sure the equipment will be suitable for dog team. Secondly, the dogs are

important during testing the equipment; if the dogs do not function with the equipment they would not perform at maximum. This could for instance be (a) the center line being too short, causing the dogs to tangle up with each other and bumping their backs into the sled; (b) the harnesses being too small or too big, causing the dogs to get injuries or slipping out of the harnesses; or (c) the sled being too big and heavy for the dogs to pull. Additionally, Finnmarksløpet has a long list of equipment mandatory to have in the sled, functioning as an assurance for the team being able to survive under any conditions and situation they might face. This mandatory equipment consists of: (a) maps of the trail, (b) compass, (c) reserve food for both the dogs and the musher, (d) extreme winter clothing, (e) sleeping bag, (f) survival bag, (g) first aid kit, and etcetera.

Training

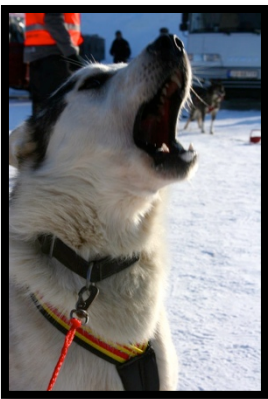


Photo 4: Talking dog



Photo 5: Helping handler



Photo 6: Friendship

All the respondents highlighted training as the most important element in order to be able to participate in Finnmarksløpet: “I would like to say that the driving part of Finnmarksløpet is easy. Yes, you are tired, but what is tough with Finnmarksløpet is the extensive training in advance” (Respondent 3). The training of the dogs is an ongoing necessity during the whole year

and mostly consists of getting the dogs psychical and mentally fit for the race, and building a team of dogs able to perform together with their musher.

In the spring, after the sled dog racing season is overtraining is often seen as trips for enjoyment and fun: “The training towards races often starts in the spring, after we have done some easy trips, enjoyed each others company and made some bonfires and things like that” (Respondent 1). During the summer the training often includes alternative forms of training: “In June and July the dogs have time off from training and we let them run loose and play with them, like throwing ball ” (Respondent 4). Further, all the respondents agreed that the training becomes more targeted towards participating in Finnmarksløpet in the fall: “In August, we start using four-wheelers and start thinking of Finnmarksløpet” (Respondent 4).

Even though all the respondents argued the training as crucial for the performance, there were some distinctive differences in training methods. Some highlighted the importance of keeping track of the dogs’ running distance, functioning as an indicator for their physical conditions. While one of the respondents focused on being consistent with training every day, another of the respondents focused on the dogs’ expressions during training: “During training I evaluate the dogs’ performance and I’m not necessarily so strict on the amount of miles, I’m more focused on whether the dogs are walking good and if they are enjoying the training” (Respondent 2). Three of the respondents argued the importance of training being as similar to the race as possible and the dogs needing to have experienced the routines on the checkpoints, the different weather conditions that might appear, and the distances between the checkpoints: “You must never start with something new in the race, stick to what the dogs are familiar with” (Respondent 1).

All the respondents referred to ‘we ‘ and ‘us’ when talking about training, indicating the importance of help from others with in training. This was further highlighted by one of the respondents: “Mushers must have help, I have people helping me with the training two to three times a week” (Respondent 2), and additionally supported by Respondent 1:

“You need helpers while training the dogs, you wouldn’t manage alone. If you want to be able to do it alone it becomes a full time job and even then you need some time off. If you don’t take time off, you will become tired and a bit fed up. You need people you trust and know, who does the same as you when they are training the dogs”.

The importance of training was additionally observed during the race, not only between handlers as they discussed their team’s training history throughout the year, but also through conversations across the teams or with judges of the race, where questions about training was brought up. It also became common subject when waiting for the team at the different checkpoints, not only in order to find out what others had done, but also to give advices and recommendations.

Besides standing on the sled, a normal activity for the musher is to help the dogs along the way and use their own legs to gain speed by kicking. Respondent 2 specified participating in Finnmarksløpet as physically demanding for the mushers and that at times this might be the most challenging part of participating. Respondent 3, who argued that participating in Finnmarksløpet would make mushers tired and exhausted, regardless of their physical shape, further confirmed this. Respondent 2 highlighted the importance of learning by doing and talking to other mushers as important for developing skills and knowledge. Likewise, Respondent 3 emphasized learning as going hand in hand with experience and participating in races increases the teams’ knowledge and skills.

Motivation



Photo 7: Start line



Photo 8: Meeting a friend

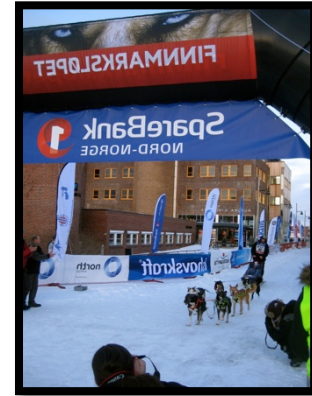


Photo 9: Finish line

Talking to other co-handlers illustrated that many of them have a desire to be a part of the sled dog society and to take part in what some of them referred to as ‘the most beautiful winter adventure’. This was also claimed by one of the respondents: “I started racing because I wanted to drive the sled with more dogs, it is social, and a bit because of the competition” (Respondent 5). Another musher also supported this way of thinking: “Finnmarksløpet has become big. It’s an amazing experience to be part of” (Respondent 3).

Although more important for some, all of the respondents claimed the race being a competition as an element for their participation. Respondent 3 even expressed the desire for developing knowledge and skills as an important factor: “The more races I participated in, the more knowledge I felt I needed. Because the results did not match the effort put in to training. So then I needed to train more, and more frequent”. Respondent 1, on the other hand, focused more on the race being fun: “To compete is really fun. I don’t have to win and I tolerate well to get a low placing”. Also, even though Respondent 5 emphasized the social factor as important for participating in the race, he also emphasized how the competitive factor became important during the race: “During the race my competitive instinct increases”. The competitiveness in not

only found among the mushers, it is clearly identified among the handlers as well. Through observations it became clear that simultaneously as the handlers track their own team, they also spend a large amount of time discussing their own and other teams' performance and positions. Further, one respondent explained how participating in Finnmarksløpet brought resistance from other people and that he was considered as crazy when starting sled dog racing. However, he continued with sled dog racing, but could not clearly define why: "It was just something about Finnmarksløpet, the fact that someone had started it ... it was a calling" (Respondent 4). One of the respondents even talked about participating in the race as a sort of addiction and to quit sled dog racing would not be easy: "I do not know how to quit, it has become a part of me" (Respondent 3). Additionally, he highlighted identification with the society as one of the motivational reasons for participation:

"I believe it's related to identification. Everybody has their own thing, even if it's in the climbing or skiing society, all people around, including the handlers, wants to bask in an identity one can stand for. People can bask in the light of a known musher, or through a position given in the event, and there is a trust one is given which people think of as important. This is what creates solidarity and strong experiences" (Respondent 3).

Staying positive



Photo 10: Smiling musher



Photo 11: Positive handler



Photo 12: Eager dogs

Having a positive mood was highlighted as a key element in competing and for completing the race and Respondent 2 explained how he uses singing and humming as a way of showing the dogs his good mood: “I do not know if they run because I sing bad or if they like it, but the dogs senses that I’m in a good mood and know they can give a little bit extra”. The respondent also stressed that a good mood spreads to the rest of the team, and helps your own optimism. Respondent 3 explained how the dogs could contribute to achieve a good mood: “It helps you when you are tired, feeling down, to see the dogs waving their tails and eating well”. This correspondently applies to the handlers; nothing is better than to see your team with happy and satisfied dogs. Observations showed that staying positive was also important among the mushers when entering the checkpoint area and despite the limited time, the mushers found time to talk to each other, sharing their good attitude and mood by telling jokes or encouraging each other.

One of the respondents explained how staying positive functions as motivation for the dogs: “One cannot motivate the dogs the same way as humans, which is why one is totally dependent on having a good mood” (Respondent 5). This was also supported by Respondent 2 who stressed that participating in the race is supposed to be fun: “Sometimes I get irritated. Then I have learned that I need to breathe calmly, not stress, be calm, and stay positive, or else the dogs will be negatively affected”. Additionally, the dogs’ remarkable ability to sense the mushers’ mood was highlighted: “It’s impossible to fool a dog. You can be as angry as you want, acting happy and pleased, but the dogs will still not believe you” (Respondent 4). Respondent 5 argued the mood of being the reason for never having problems getting out of the checkpoint: “I have never had problems in getting the dogs started and I believe it’s connected to my positive mood”. Observation confirmed the respondents’ arguments about good mood transferring to the

dogs; the mushers have their own way of interacting with the dogs, but a common denominator for all is the positive mood. Regardless of how tired or exhausted the mushers were all of them had a positive mood making the dogs happy when interacting with them.

Being in a good mood is also important for the handlers: “If the handlers do not have a positive attitude it’s no fun arriving at the checkpoints” (Respondent 5). Respondent 5 also expressed how having someone familiar that knew him as important. Respondent 2 likewise highlighted the importance of handlers being in a good mood:

“I do not believe the handlers are just there to keep track of the weather and other teams. It has to be people that I get along with, having ‘bundle’ of good mood, and are on the same level as me”.

Furthermore, observation illustrated the importance of a good mood within the handlers of the team; handlers also get tired and exhausted due to lack of sleep and need to stay positive towards each other. In addition, observation illustrated the importance of the musher being in a good mood towards their handlers. I experienced my musher's mood as an important element for the whole experience; the musher always had a positive attitude when arriving to the checkpoint regardless of his condition and performance in the trail. A negative attitude would have affected me to be more negative.

Communication



Photo 13: Affection

Musher – Dogs. In order for the musher and the dogs to keep moving, communication between them is crucial and at the checkpoint observations were made that one of the first things almost all mushers did was to praise the dogs. Praising includes giving the dogs a snack, stroking them, and gives each dog attention by massaging the dogs' muscles and shoulders. The respondents confirmed these observations during interviews: "We take care of the dogs at the checkpoints so they can perform their best when we are out in the trail" (Respondent 4). Further, he expressed how checkpoints were the dogs' time to relax and recover in order to be ready to run again. Respondent 2 also emphasized the importance of praising the dogs during the race: "I stopped a lot during the race to run in front to the dogs and praised each one of them for the good job they were doing, making the dogs happy and eager to continue" (Respondent 2).

Additionally, when taking care of the dogs at the checkpoints the musher always communicate with their dogs, not only in a verbal way. Respondent 1 emphasized that communicating with the dogs occurs through interaction and that the training function as way of learning the dogs what to do during the race, making verbal communication during the race as minimal as possible: "I'm actually pretty quiet on the sled, yelling and screaming at the dogs is not necessary. If they don't do as I want I talk with a quiet voice, then they start wondering what is happening and pay attention". Respondent 5 expressed a similar view on communicating with the dogs: "I don't communicate a lot verbally with the dogs, what am I going to say? However, if they do something wrong you must let them know". The respondent also stressed that if you have a good lead dog and a good team, verbal communication during the race is minimal. Correspondently, Respondent 2 argued how the verbal communications is less needed during the race: "You shouldn't talk to the dogs at all times, you have to read their body language". He explained how the dogs' body language functions as their way of communicating to the musher

and that the dogs also read the body language of the mushers. One of the respondents expressed how communicating with the dogs is almost a form of telepathy: “It’s a form of telepathy that is difficult to explain. You can stand on the sled deciding where you are going and the dogs just go where you thought, you do not need to say anything” (Respondent 4). Additionally, Respondent 3 argued communication to occur through interaction: “You communicate with a dog through your actions”. He further highlighted the importance of the dogs learning the codes and cues from the musher, which is established through training, and that these codes and cues functions as communication during the race.

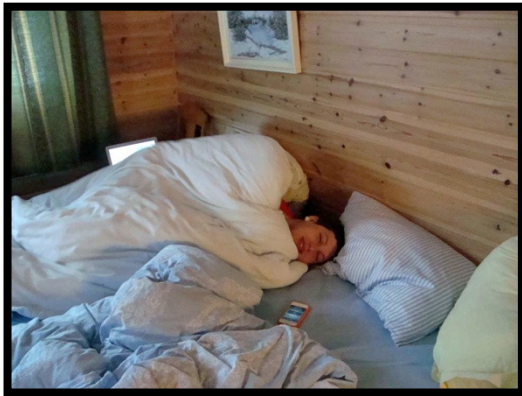


Photo 14: Exhausted handler



Photo 15: Warming musher’s jacket

Musher – Handler. Most of the communication between musher and handlers occurs when the musher arrives at the checkpoints. The feedback the handlers give the mushers were both observed during the race and highlighted during the interviews as the most important task of the handlers; their position in the race, the time used between the checkpoints, speed of the team, and other competing teams position. Another important factor is the planning of how the rest of the race will proceed, which further was confirmed by Respondent 4: “A proper handler makes sure you don’t make bad choices”. The perhaps most important task handlers have are

motivating and encouraging the musher to continue even though they feel tired, which is in line with observations; they keep the spirit up through inspirational pep talk.

Additionally, it is important that the musher give positive feedback and encouragement to the handlers, even though most of the focus is on the musher and the dogs. Observations showed that the handlers, as well, becomes tired and need the musher to confirm their good performance, making them feel as an important part of the team. Further, Respondent 4 explained how there are three types of handlers the (a) cloth and food handler, which help the musher change clothes and eat when at the checkpoint; (b) driver of the car, and (c) coach handler, a handler with knowledge and experience from sled dog racing. Giving the handlers different tasks makes the team function well; the handlers know what to do and decreases confusion of who is doing what, especially important when they become tired. Further the respondent explained the importance of having a coach handler: “The rational thinking is gone, therefore it’s important to have a handler who knows what to do and how to proceed. Without that you might end up with making bad choices your self” (Respondent 4).



Photo 16: A handlers view

Handler – Dog. Due to the strict rules and fenced area at the checkpoint during the race, the handlers do not have direct contact with the dogs. Despite this, observations revealed the

handlers as being an important role regarding the assessment of the dogs, since it might be difficult for the musher to detect potential injuries and irregular behavior due to the amount of time they spend with the dogs. When arriving at the checkpoint the handlers make an immediate assessment of the dogs and give recommendations to the musher, based on the dogs' behavior. Further, when the musher rest, the handlers often watch the dogs' sleeping routine and if they wake up earlier than they should, the handlers might give the musher notice and get the team out in the trail earlier than planned. For the handlers to be able to assess the dogs they need some knowledge about them, which the respondent highlighted: "It's important that the handlers have knowledge about the dogs if they are going to be able to assess them" (Respondent 4).

Respondent 2 referred to a happening during this years race that illustrated the importance of having the handlers asses the dogs: "My handlers were out watching the dogs and when they started to wake up, ready to continue, the handlers woke me up and sent me out in the trail".

Trust



Photo 17: Care and attention



Photo 18: Taken out of the race

Trust was highlighted as important for the respondents, as well as observed by taking part in the race. Trust between the members of the team is important, but appeared to be most important in relation to the dogs. During the interviews this emerged as a theme: "I have

experienced to lose the race because I lost my lights when trails were dividing, leading to the dogs taking the wrong trail. Then you have to trust them and let them run, it happens and it's not their fault" (Respondent 4). The respondent added that during the race this is rarely the case because of good markings of trails. He continued by explaining how trusting the dogs' intuition is an important factor if challenges like this occurred: "I cannot stand on the back of the sled trying to find the trail, I have to trust that the dogs know where the trail is and at the same time they will learn that I trust them" (Respondent 4). Further, the respondent also stressed a delicate balance between trusting the dogs and the dogs trusting the musher when racing; if the musher makes bad choices it might go on the expenses of the dogs' ability to trust the musher.

Respondent 2 argued that establishing trust with the dogs as crucial: "It's about creating trust and making the dogs feel safe with you. It's extremely essential that the dogs know they can trust you". Additionally, the respondent believed the dogs and the musher have to complement each other and that trust was built through interaction. Respondent 5 stated that an element of friendship had to be present in order to develop trust and that he considered his dogs as friends: "A dog is your best friend, I have many best friends" (Respondent 5). Even though the respondents stressed all the dogs as important, the love towards their lead dogs was evident and observations showed the mushers dedicating much of their accomplishment to their lead dogs. In addition, people at the checkpoints still talked about the lead dogs from last year's race, remembering their strength, endurance, and bravery. This likewise became a topic during the interviews: "If the weather is bad and the dogs are tired it is important to have a dog you know will lead and keep the whole team moving. You need to have a lead dog you can trust" (Respondent 5). Further, the respondent explains how a good lead dog should have the ability to lead the whole team when necessary, including the mushers as a part of the team. A good lead

dog is described as an experienced dog with a good instinct of what to do. Respondent 2 expressed how the lead dogs needs to have a strong psyche in order to be able to lead the team, which was supported by Respondent 4 who emphasized that as a musher you always have to make sure that the lead dog is mentally strong enough to handle the different challenges, especially referring to the distances between the checkpoints. If the lead dog, and the rest of the dogs, are not used to run long distances without longer breaks, a musher might experience a 'parking', the dogs stops: "It has nothing to do with them being tired, it is mentally. The dogs think they have run far enough" (Respondent 4). Respondent 1 also stressed the seriousness of being a lead dog: "It's a strain to go in lead, you walk first and has to front, face, and pass other teams and it's assumed as rough for the dog".

Further, there has to be trust between the handlers and the musher, and it goes both ways. Firstly, the handlers have to trust the musher, this trust mostly relays on the handlers trusting that the musher know what to do and are making the right decisions during the race and if they have different opinions the handlers must trust the decision of the mushers. As well as the handlers need to trust the mushers; the mushers need to trust their handlers. It is important for the mushers that the handlers know what they are supposed to do, both when the whole team is gathered at the checkpoint and in between. Respondent 5 highlighted this: "One of my handler knows that I forget to drink during the race, she nags at me about it, and I know she is right".

Some of the respondents argued the importance of the handlers in order to complete the race, while others claimed that the handlers had a slightly less important role, depending of the handlers' knowledge: "For the musher to perform well the handlers need to function in their task" (Respondent 1). Respondent 2 stressed the handlers being a part of the team: "It's you and the dogs, but you cannot manage without the handlers". One of the respondents argued it as

possible to participate without handlers, but at the same time he acknowledge the handlers tasks as important if they possessed knowledge: “The term handler is dependent on knowledge, some have experience from working with dogs, some are inexperienced and has less to contribute with” (Respondent 3). Even though the respondents had different opinions of the importance of the handlers, they all agreed that mushers had to trust their handlers: “Trust is important, for instance I have to trust that they can take care of the dogs that are taken out from the race” (Respondent 5).

Safety



Photo 19: Light in the night



Photo 20: Vet-team



Photo 21: In the trail

Observation showed that feeling safe is important for the team members, but perhaps most important for the mushers. Besides the dogs, the mushers are out in the trail alone compared to the handlers who always are in contact with other people, making them feel safe. When the musher arrived at the checkpoint the topic firstly talked about was the status of the dogs. If everything was going well the musher expressed a confidence in continuing, which also portrayed a feeling in safety when in the trail. During interviewing the mushers the feeling of safety was brought up and all the respondents expressed safety as dependent on the dogs. Respondent 1 expressed how he always can rely on his dogs knowing what to do if facing

trouble in the trail and that turning around always helped him: “If you turn the dogs around from where you came from, they will run in the same trail back again...” and this contributed to feeling safe: “... and then you do not have to think, so really it is quite safe. I would feel much more lost on a snowmobile in bad weather” (Respondent 1). Respondent 2 also described safety as based in the dogs: “They know where to run and I have learned to trust them. You are not alone and that creates a form of safety when you are out in the trail”. Further, Respondent 3 explained the feeling of safety as dependent on the dogs’ responsibility:

“Some dogs have provided me with a feeling of safety because they have experience and knowledge, while other dogs have completely failed in taking responsibility. That is not a security, it is a feeling of some dogs not taking responsibility and that does not make me feel safe”.

Respondent 4 expressed always feeling safe around the dogs, but added that safety likewise is dependent on knowing one’s own abilities:

“You always feel safe with the dogs, but if something happens you need to be able to handle it. It can be anything from bad weather, to going the wrong way, or getting wet. Then you have to be able to make a fire and change clothes, but it is never dangerous”.

Respondent 5 also expressed the feeling of safety as based in the dogs and their abilities, but also highlighted the framework around Finnmarksløpet as a contributor: “In the race you are never alone, it is very safe. The trail is marked and you just have to stay on it”.

The fact that the race is an event and that there are hundreds of people along the trail contributes to the feeling of safety for the handlers as well. First of all, the fact that there are more or less always more than one handler functions as a safety, you can always rely on somebody to help you and someone to discuss with. Another factor contributing to the handlers

feeling of safety is that there are always volunteers at the checkpoint helping and making sure that nothing bad happens and that everything is working smoothly. Additionally as a factor for my own feeling of safety were the knowing that my co-handlers and myself are familiar with sled dog racing and the nature of Finnmark.

Emotions



Photo 22: Ready dogs



Photo 23: Achievement



Photo 24: Reward

During the interviews there were several topics that emerged explaining the emotions related to participating in Finnmarksløpet. Respondent 1 explained standing on the sled as a rush: “You get an adrenaline rush that makes you a bit addicted”. Further he explained the fascination of taking part in the race: “One become fascinated when standing on the sled looking at the dogs working and functioning, and by the excitement of seeing the team improving”. He additionally described how nature is a part of the creation of a positive experience and highlighted standing on the sled in the dark as a beautiful moment: “To drive in the moonlight without headlight is absolutely amazing. It is an incredible experience!” He further added that challenges are not necessarily something bad, but contributed to a sense of achievement:

“Sled dog racing is teamwork. You are constantly on the move and you need to be able to restrain the elements and the driving of the sled. The different challenges which

comes along gives a little kick. You for example get good at being out in the dark and this gives a feeling of achievement” (Respondent 1).

Respondent 2 explained happiness and receiving energy from the dogs as emotions during the race: “You see them keeping an eye on you and wanting to work for you, which makes you happy and gives a lot of energy to continue”. He further described the feeling of living in the moment when being out in the trail: “When I’m in the trail my head is empty and nothing else matters. It’s only the dogs and me and if the phone rings I almost become irritated and I don’t bother to answer” (Respondent 2). Likewise, Respondent 3 had done some reflections on the emotions occurring during the race: “You get a kind of release when you start and find yourself above the forest line”. Respondent 5 stressed the feeling of joy when everything is proceeding smoothly, there are no sick dogs, and they express a willingness to continue: “When the dogs are happy and just wants to continue, you get a feeling of joy. That is positive and like a dream”. Respondent 4 described a feeling of happiness occurring when the dogs are performing well:

“It’s like one mass that moves forward, double lines that goes straight a head.

Many times I turn of the headlights during the night and then I see this tube of dogs in front of me. It’s amazing, when you have managed to create a good team of co-operating and stick together through anything, it’s only dependent on what I can keep up with on the back of the sled”.

Furthermore, observation revealed that the handlers’ feeling of happiness was based in the seeing their team arriving and leaving the checkpoints. As a handler you get a feeling of accomplishment when you manage to send the team out in the trail again, it gives you a thrill and it is a highly discussed topic amongst the handlers across teams.

Additionally, being a part of a sled dog team participating in Finnmarksløpet creates a feeling of being in a state of mind where only factors concerning the race matters and you, in a way, lose the sense of time. The respondents emphasized this:

“You spend several days alone with the dogs and the interaction with other people is minimal. Even though you interact with your handlers, the vet-team, volunteers, and other mushers, you enter a world consisting of only you and the dogs. In one way you are living in a dream” (Respondent 5).

Respondent 1 explained being in this state of mind as living in a ‘bubble’: “You are in a bubble, this also applies to the handlers. The world could fall apart around you without you even noticing it” (Respondent 1). Further he explained Finnmarksløpet as an arena where people come together, creating a sense of community, and that leaving the community is wistful: “When you reach the finish line you need some time to adjust, it is a bit wistful since the race is over, but at the same time you are happy to be finished and have completed the race” (Respondent 1). Both Respondent 3 and Respondent 5 supported this:

“It is a disappointment, the feeling you get the last miles on the river is a kind of anticlimax, it’s over. You get a good feeling when arriving at the last checkpoint, when you are tired and exhausted, since you know that soon it will all be over, but when you see the finish line you become sad because it’s already over” (Respondent 3).

“You live in your own dream and when you arrive to Alta everything is over and you get back to reality. It is good feeling to complete, but it is also a bit sad. It is a lot of emotions around completing the race” (Respondent 5).

Similarly, the feeling of being in a ‘bubble’ and conflicting emotions applies to the handlers. Observations illustrated that they get the same attachment to the competition and creates

strong bonds with the members of the team and when the end of the competition is near they know that their daily life is waiting.

Discussion

This chapter aims at discussing the results of this research in relation to the theoretical framework presented in this thesis.

The unique world of sled dog racing (R1)

One of the most important elements evident in the results is the co-operation, which exists on the basis of a common goal. Having a common goal is highlighted by Dunin-Keplicz and Verbrugge (2010) and Levi (2001) as one of the most important elements of teamwork and the results highlight that the completion and enjoyment of the race are more important goals than winning the race. The co-operation, in this context, can be seen as unique because it exist between humans and animals, consistent with what Neumann (2009) describe as the unique element of dog sledding; being equals despite being of different species. The results implies the dogs being considered as equal contributors, rather than a prerequisites for participating, which is consistent with the arguments of Shannon (1997). Likewise, this is one of the effects making the entire research unique because it looks at an experience that involves what Shannon (1997) refers to as ‘non-human persons’; the dogs, in a context of tourism. The reason for considering dogs as equals might be founded in their unique abilities; they run for miles, while pulling a heavy load and with much enthusiasm. This can also to some extent be seen in relation with how pets often are considered as a member of the family, found in the research of Beck and Katcher (1996). However, in this context the teamwork is far more goal-oriented and advanced than in the daily life of families.

Although the results indicate all the team members as important, it is evident that the dogs serve as the most important element in the ability to participate and complete the race; the dogs undertake the most comprehensive and demanding task of the teamwork. Previous research correspondingly highlights the dogs as an important element (Kemp, 1999; Kuhl, 2011; Shannon, 1997), but at the same time Kemp (1999) argues co-operation with the dogs as a part of the challenges included in sled dog racing, whereas the results in this research indicates differently. Although, I do not claim that working with dogs is not challenging, but the results suggest co-operation with dogs as a benefit, rather than a challenge. This might be because these dogs have an ability to contribute to the whole team performance, which is coherent with what Kuhl (2011) argues as one of the important element of sled dog racing. Further the results illustrate the dogs as more important than the competition itself; the dogs' well-being and happiness are more important than winning. This is in accordance with what Kemp (1999) found as more important than winning the race, winning the prize for best dog care. It is evident that people involved in sled dog racing have, in addition to a competitive instinct, a profound love for dogs. The dogs receive most of the honor of the team's performance and are regarded as the heroes of the race, similar to the way the Norwegian heroes Seppala, Nansen, and Amundsen acknowledge their dogs as important during their expeditions (Huntford, 2010; Nansen & Huntford, 1999; Salisbury & Salisbury, 2003).

The third, and perhaps the most unique element, is the relations between humans and sled dogs, where the musher-sled dog relationship is found as the most essential, supported by Kuhl (2011). The ability to communicate with each other, despite having different ways of communicating, was discovered to be the most unique factor of the musher-sled dog relation. Communication mainly consists of reading each other's body language and interpreting cues,

consistent with what Kuhl (2011) found as an important factor in the human-sled dog relationship. Furthermore the results indicate communication as being silence; both the musher and the dogs interpret the silence as an indicator for everything being in order and functioning well. This silent communication is important for describing the relation, indicating a deeper understanding for each other and a form of telepathy between the musher and the dogs, which was highlighted by one of the respondents. Although previous research lacks to highlight this as a factor, it can be seen in the light of how Beck and Katcher (1996) found people considering their pets as an extension to themselves. Further, the results revealed an additional element, which can be seen in the light of Beck and Katcher (1996) findings; the more unanimous the musher and dogs are the greater is the ability to complete the race and function as one being an extension of each other.

A second factor making the musher-sled dog relation unique is their mood and the affect it has on them, coherent with the research of Baldwin and Norris (1999), illustrating the musher and dogs as being an extension of each other. The results indicated that the musher's positive mood affects the dogs and therefore illustrates the importance of humans being conscious about this when interacting with the dogs. Keeping a good mood is not necessarily always easy when competing against nature and time, but the results suggests that the mushers and handlers utilize the dogs as a source of energy and this ways keeps the good mood. This can be seen in relation with Beck and Katcher's (1996) arguments of dogs' abilities in making people laugh and play. Furthermore, it can be seen in similarity with research supporting pets having a positive affect on sick peoples well-being (Beck & Katcher, 1996; Strang, 2007). Although the mushers are not sick, they can be tired and exhausted from time to time during the race and express that when being tired the dogs often function as a source of energy.

Trust and safety were evident as an additional unique factor in the relationship between the musher and the dogs; trusting the dogs are linked with the dogs' knowledge and abilities, consistent with the findings of Kuhl (2011). Trusting the dogs' knowledge and abilities can also be seen in relation with how Dunin-Keplicz and Verbrugge (2010) and Levi (2001) explain knowledge, skills, and defined tasks as essential in teamwork. Further, the results indicate trust as a criterion for the feeling of safety, as illustrated by one of the respondents claiming to never feel unsafe as long as the dogs can be trusted. This can be seen in relation with how McConnell et al. (2011) describes pets as contributing to people feeling less lonely and fearful.

Correspondingly, the results indicate a handler-sled dog relation, even though they do not have direct interactions during the race. Despite no direct interactions, the results revealed the dogs having a positive affect on the handlers' mood; the handler gets energy and a positive mood when seeing the dogs working well and enjoying the race. Additionally, the handlers have an important role in assessing the conditions of the dogs, indicating an existing handler-sled dog relation on the premises of having knowledge about the dogs and their behavior. This also illustrates how communicating with the dogs, for the handlers, goes through the musher and that the dogs might benefit from this handler-sled dog relation. Trust and safety were also evident as an important factor in the handler-sled dog relation; both the handlers and the dogs have to trust each other's performance in order to feel safe in the race. Even though the focus on the handler-sled dog relations in the context of sled dog racing is absent in previous research, the results are comparable to findings suggesting dogs having a positive affect on humans (Baldwin & Norris, 1999; Beck & Katcher, 1996; McConnell, et al., 2011; Strang, 2007) and the findings done on the sled dogs relation with mushers (Kemp, 1999; Kuhl, 2011; Shannon, 1997).

The experience of sled dog racing (R2)

The theoretical chapter of this thesis illustrates how the word of experience are given various definitions to explain its' positive effects on the tourist, participant or guest. Researchers emphasizes that an experience can be (a) meaningful (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2009), (b) extraordinary (Mossberg, 2007b, 2008), or (c) optimal (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005). I have chosen to define the experience of Finnmarksløpet as a 'unique experience' aiming at illustrating how sled dog racing includes elements from all these definitions of experience.

The results indicate teamwork as a crucial element for sled dog racing being a unique experience. Theory argues the experience as a subjective matter (Andersson, 2007; S. Larsen, 2007; Slåtten, et al., 2009; Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2007), which is present in the results; all the team members experience are based in their own knowledge and skills, consistent with theory of experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005; Mossberg, 2007b, 2008; Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2009). Although, the results indicates the experience as being additionally influenced by the members of the team and their performance: (a) the musher's experience is dependent both on the dogs and the handlers' performance, (b) the handlers' experience is dependent on the musher and dogs' performance, and (c) the dogs' experience is dependent on both the musher and the handlers. The dependency of team members illustrates the importance of a functioning teamwork, coherent with the arguments of Levi (2001) and Dunin-Keplicz and Verbrugge (2010); if the elements of teamwork are not present, neither will the unique experience. Even though the dogs do not have the ability to communicate their assessment of the experience, the results showed a possibility to interpret the dogs experience through their actions. One of the respondents emphasized how the dogs expressed dissatisfaction in several ways, among one of these were undertaking a so called 'parking'; the dogs would stop running if they did not enjoy the race. If the dogs do not express

joy and excitement this will affect both the musher and the handler, because both members seek energy from the dogs' happiness. This illustrates how each member of the team is dependent on each other in order to have a unique experience, and the importance of teamwork and relations between the humans and the dogs. If the team members do not function in their task, teamwork will not function, which results in influencing the whole experience. Furthermore, as mentioned above, if the teamwork is not functioning and there is a lack of skills and knowledge, the feeling of trust and safety will not be present. This is consistent with what Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) explain as crucial in the motivational level; the participants must have skills and knowledge that fits the level of challenge in order to have a meaningful experience, and coherent with the findings of Kemp (1999). This demonstrates how important the teamwork is between the members of the team in order to have a unique experience.

When teamwork is optimal it creates room for positive emotions that might, based on the results, be considered as an important element for the experience. This is coherent with how theory describes emotions as an important element of the experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005; Mossberg, 2007b; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2009). The results illustrate joy and happiness as the most important emotions during the race and can be seen in several connections, mostly linked in with the feeling of accomplishment for the team, coherent with the elements creating a unique experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005; Mossberg, 2007b, 2008; Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2009). There were different factors evoking the emotions of joy and happiness: (a) the respondents explained how joy and happiness originated from seeing the dogs working and running, indicating the training in advance as successful; (b) the handlers appeared to feel joy and happiness from managing to get their team in and out of the various checkpoints, and (c) the dogs from the interaction with the musher, snacking, praise, and, according to one of

the respondents, from running. This supports the findings of previous research which highlights joy and happiness as important elements of interactions with dogs (Baldwin & Norris, 1999; Beck & Katcher, 1996) and participating in sled dog races (Kuhl, 2011; Shannon, 1997).

Furthermore, the results imply the social aspect as an important element, which according to Mossberg (2007b, 2008) is necessary for the experience to be extraordinary. The social aspect might not serve as the most evident factor for the experience, since sled dog racing basically consists of being alone with the dogs in the wilderness, but despite this the results indicate differently. The feeling of community, that consists of being a part of sled dog racing, could be considered as an influence of the social aspect and is in accordance with the arguments of Neumann (2009). In addition, the musher's relationship with his or her dogs might contribute to the importance of the social aspect; the dogs contribute to reducing the feeling of loneliness of mushers in the trail. This supports the findings done both on the interaction with dogs and sled dog racing, which all claim the dog serving as a form of social support (Baldwin & Norris, 1999; Beck & Katcher, 1996; Kuhl, 2011; McConnell, et al., 2011; Shannon, 1997; Strang, 2007). This supports the findings suggesting that human and sled dogs are equals, as mentioned earlier (Kuhl, 2011; Neumann, 2009; Shannon, 1997).

In addition, the results illustrate how Finnmarksløpet becomes its own time, place, and community; being a part of Finnmarksløpet is explained as being in a 'bubble'. This is in accordance with previous research done on leisure including dogs, emphasizing the activity as a way of escaping into another world (Gillespie, et al., 2002; Jæger, 2005; Kemp, 1999; Neumann, 2009). Suggesting the team being deeply immersed in the activity and in a way escaping from the 'real world' is coherent with what Pine and Gilmore (1998) explain as a necessity for having a meaningful experience and Mossberg (2007b, 2008) defines as part of an

extraordinary experience. Further this indicates that Finnmarksløpet has managed to create an arena where, in combination with the teams competence, takes part in creating the unique experience, which is in accordance with how Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) claims that both the organization and the participant takes part in creating a meaningful experience. Interestingly, the results indicate the feeling of being in a ‘bubble’ does not exist on the premises of the team’s performance itself, but is rather founded in the seriousness of participating in Finnmarksløpet which is reflected in the levels of concentration and devotion that is contributed to the team during the competition.

Sled dog racing as serious leisure (R3)

Results indicate that it is realistic to describe sled dog racing as serious leisure, according to how Stebbins (1992, 2001, 2007) defines it. Firstly, all of the respondents indicated a strong desire to participate in the race, which is coherent with what Stebbins (2007) argues as a prerequisite for serious leisure. Even though the results imply participation as a sort of addiction, it still is an activity pursued based on free will, the addiction functions as a way of describing the seriousness of sled dog racing. On the basis of the addiction, it is also possible to define the members of the sled dog team as amateurs, as Stebbins (1992) describes amateurs in serious leisure. Secondly, taking part in Finnmarksløpet demands extensive training and preparation of all members of the team, especially in relation to the musher and the dogs. The training aims at enquiring skills and knowledge and is coherent with how Stebbins (1992) explains skills and knowledge as crucial in serious leisure. All of the team members need a set of skills and knowledge in order to compete and fulfill their role in the team, as mentioned above, which additionally can be seen in relation to what Dunin-Keplicz and Verbrugge (2010) identify

as important factors in the teamwork; every member needs to know their role and the tasks attached to their role in the team.

Further, the results revealed some of the qualities constituting serious leisure, according to Stebbins (1992, 2001, 2007), as present in sled dog racing and the most important quality being perseverance, both in training and during the race. The results revealed the training of the dogs as unpredictable and patience as important for becoming better and being able to participate. This also applied during the actual race and one of the respondents highlighted that unforeseen challenges might occur and therefore the ability to handle these challenges is important. The need for perseverance in sled dog racing is further coherent with the findings of Kemp (1999). The results also indicates that being involved with sled dog racing might lead to developing a career for both the mushers and the handlers, which is in accordance with Stebbins (1992, 2001, 2007). All of the respondents have participated in the race more than once and the way the respondents described sled dog racing as an addiction and a desire to become better, climbing the result list, was evident as a motivational reason to continue racing. This furthermore indicates that sled dog racing might lead to personal change, which is coherent with how Tarssanen and Kylänen (2009) argues a meaningful experience as leading to personal change and a pursuit of the experience as a hobby. The results also revealed identification with sled dog racing as one of the motivational factors and Finnmarksløpet as an arena where people meet and creates bonds with others, resulting in being identified with the society of sled dog racing. This is coherent with what Stebbins (1992, 2001, 2007) describes as a quality of serious leisure and in addition coherent with what Jæger (2005) and Baldwin and Norris (1999) found as an important motivational element.

The research furthermore revealed some benefits of sled dog racing, coherent with the benefits of serious leisure as Stebbins (1992) describes them. The social aspect, mentioned as important for the experience, where evident as important for nearly all of the respondents, as well observed as important for the handlers. Implying that the even though sled dog racing might be perceived as a lonely activity, there seems to be a sense of belonging to the society, consistent with the findings of Neumann (2009). The anticipation towards the training being adequate was described as important by one of the respondent, who explained a release of the anticipation when the race starts and the team is functioning and moving forward. The release of anticipation can be seen in relation to how Stebbins (1992) describe accomplishment as one of the benefits; when the sled dog team are able to start it confirms their training being a success, and this might even be stronger when completing the race. This also applied to the handlers, who expressed a feeling of accomplishment when the team left the checkpoint and continued in the race.

Additionally, the results indicate a conflictive aspect of being involved in sled dog racing and one of the respondent expressed being seen as crazy. This is coherent with the research done on serious leisure involving dogs by Gillespie, Leffler, and Lerner (2002). The reason for why people involved in sled dog racing is considered crazy might be found in outsiders' lack of understanding, who most likely never have been involved in sled dog racing.

Sled dog racing as adventure tourism (R4)

The results indicates that it is possible to define sled dog racing in accordance with how Swarbrooke et al. (2003) defines adventure tourism. There are several elements making this possible and this section will highlight some of the most crucial elements. Firstly, several of the participants in Finnmarksløpet, including myself, travels in order for being able to participate in the race, coherent with what Swarbrooke et al. (2003) claims to be a necessity in order to be

defined as tourism. Even though many of the teams are based in Alta, where Finnmarksløpet starts, they are during the race traveling across the county of Finnmark, making it possible to also define this group as tourism. Secondly, participating in Finnmarksløpet can be perceived as a escape from the normal life's because it is not an daily activity, which is coherent with both the findings of previous research on sled dog racing (Jæger, 2005; Kemp, 1999) and on adventure tourism (Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2004; Swarbrooke, et al., 2003). Additionally, the results indicate participating in Finnmarksløpet as fun for all the team members, coherent with the definitions of Swarbrooke et al. (2003). The fun in sled dog racing might be explained in the teams having the necessary skills to be able to participate. Possessing the necessary skills and knowledge contributes to a feeling of joy, enjoyment, and accomplishment which is supported by the results and consistent with the arguments of Swarbrooke et al. (2003) and Mortlock (1984). This can also be seen in relation with how Csíkszentmihályi (2005) describe an experience as being optimal when achieving flow, which is based on the level of skills and knowledge in relation to the level of challenge.

An interesting element revealed by the research is the participants own perception of Finnmarksløpet as an adventure and that they referred to the race as 'the most beautiful winter adventure'. There are several elements that might explain why the participants perceive Finnmarksløpet as an adventure; the competitive nature of the race contributes to the existent of unpredictable of the outcome. This means that Finnmarksløpet, as a race, consist of uncertain outcomes, which is argued by Swarbrooke et al. (2003) as one of the core characteristics of adventure tourism. The results indicates the outcome of participating in Finnmarksløpet as dependent on both internal and external factors; the internal factors being the team's own performance and the teamwork, and the external factors being other participating teams and the

nature it self. This is also supported by the findings of Kemp (1999) who found that competing in sled dog races not only consists of competing against other participants, but also competing against the challenges of using animals and nature.

The challenges of participating in Finnmarksløpet further makes it possible to define sled dog racing as adventure tourism, since the element of challenge must be present in adventure tourism (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003). The results illustrate how challenges are present during the race and the team's co-operation, combined with knowledge and skills, makes coping with these challenges possible. One of the respondents argued the challenges as not necessarily being negative, but actually contributing to a feeling of mastering of the elements, which is coherent with how Mortlock (1984) describe an adventure experience as being seen at play when the skills and challenges match. Furthermore, danger and risk is highlighted as an core characteristic of adventure tourism (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003), but the results explains danger and risk as more or less nonexistent in Finnmarksløpet. The reason for the absence of danger and risk in the results might be related to the participants' knowledge and skills. This likewise indicates that if people lack skills and knowledge the race will contain an element of risk and danger, which was equally highlighted by some of the respondents. Additionally, the element of novelty is a criterion for an activity being classified as an adventure tourism (Swarbrooke, et al., 2003) and the results demonstrates that working with dogs as a factor in creating the novelty element of Finnmarksløpet. This is due to impossibility to predict all the dogs' performance and actions, despite the training in advance being good and extensive. Likewise, the results illustrates nature as an factor for novelty, where one does not have the ability to either control or accurately predict how the weather will be, which were highlighted by one of the respondent as a factor important to consider in the strategy.

As established earlier in the discussion, participating in Finnmarksløpet is perceived as being in a 'bubble', where only elements concerning the race are important. The level of engagement in sled dog racing serves as an element when defining it as adventure tourism. Swarbrooke et al. (2003) argues that in order for an activity to be adventure tourism it needs to have an absorbing effect on the participants, something that Finnmarksløpet seems to have.

Even though the results indicate emotions like joy, happiness, and accomplishment as important in sled dog racing these are connected to the team's ability to perform as expected. If factors making the race take a negative turn, these emotions rapidly can be changed into negative emotions, which according to Swarbrooke et al. (2003) is a part of the emotional journey of participating in adventure tourism.

Implications

Undertaking research on the important elements of a sled dog racing team, including the relations between humans and animals, have to the best of my knowledge not been conducted previously; this constitutes some of this study's research value. In addition the research has highlighted how sled dog racing can be defined as both serious leisure and adventure tourism, attempting to demonstrate how activities including interactions between humans and animals can be seen as a possible potential market in tourism and what the important factors are. Although the research is not applicable for generalization, it can be used as an indicator for understanding sled dog racing and as a source for further development of dog sledding and sled dog racing as a tourism attraction and product. The organizations of sled dog races can use the results for further development of the framework around the races, making sure the race creates an arena where the sled dog racing team can have a unique experience by focusing on the elements mentioned as important for the experience, like for instance the social factors and the dog's well being.

The results points out the important factors in the different relations and can therefore be used to enhance the framework for understanding experiences in adventure tourism and particularly races depending upon teamwork where the “animal team” are crucial partners. Additionally, the results can be used as an indicator for developing dog sledding, demanding races, and other activities including similar animal relations like horseback riding as tourism attractions. The results implies that development of activities like these firstly needs to focus on the interaction between the tourist and the animal and creating a framework where both the tourist and the animal have a dependency towards each other, this is were the unique experience is created. Secondly, the results demonstrate the social factor as important and should therefore be considered in the development of similar tourist experiences. With regards to adventure tourism, this research additionally indicates a possibility for development of more activities including animals and that opening up for people to use their own pets in these activities could be a possible marked. This research highlights the importance of the participants’ animals in the creating of the experience indicating a possibility to develop more similar races with the use of animals as a possibility, which might contribute to bringing experiences in adventure tourism to a new level. The research indicates that the animals is an important element of the experience when participating in sled dog races, this should be taken into consideration of the tourism industry in developing products based in interactions between humans and animals. Other tourist sectors providing animal-based products, like farm tourism, animal safari tourism, and etcetera, might use the results to enhance their products and in a bigger scale include interactions with animals, in order to create unique experiences.

Further research would benefit from including a lager sample and should focus on investigating several sled dog teams participating in Finnmarksløpet and in other races, including

a longer time period than used in this research. The results additionally indicated an existing handler-sled dog relation, despite no direct interaction during the race, which should be supplementary investigated to reveal a more detailed description of the important elements in the relation. In addition, research should focus on investigating other team based activities including animals to see if some of the elements highlighted in this study can be found in other contexts than sled dog racing, and to investigate if some of the element of the relations between humans and sled dogs can be applicable for interacting with other species. Furthermore, research could also benefit from investigating other types of serious leisure to see if there are possibilities for developing these into tourism activities. Regarding the methodology, further research might benefit from thinking innovative in their use of methods. For instance, it would be beneficial to obtain even more detailed data about the musher-sled dog relation from when they are out in the trail. A video analysis of their communications and interactions could further confirm and supplement this research. An experimental design could also be applicable in order to test the communications between humans and sled dogs, giving data about how the communication between humans and sled dogs occurs and develop.

Conclusion

This thesis has provided a description and interpretation of the important elements of sled dog racing and described how this activity can be defined as both serious leisure and adventure tourism. Qualitative methods with an ethnographic approach were used in order to collect the necessary data for describing the phenomena of sled dog racing, combining the use of participant observation and interviews. The research revealed several important elements, which will be summed up in the following section.

The research revealed three important elements of sled dog racing: (a) co-operation, (b) the dogs, and (c) the musher-sled dog relation. The unique factor in this co-operation can be found in the interspecies relations; the dogs are considered as equal members of the team and have abilities to perform and communicate, which is seen as crucial in sled dog racing. The dogs are additionally seen as the most important element in sled dog racing and as the most important member of the team. The research confirmed this notion through evidence found suggesting the dogs as more important than the competition itself. Further, the research found the musher-sled dog relation as the most important relationship in the sled dog racing team, but also indicated an existing handler-sled dog relation as important for the team's performance.

Further, the research revealed the (a) teamwork, (b) positive emotions, and (c) social aspect as the most crucial for having a unique experience. Interestingly, the research indicated the experience as not being dependent on the external factors like the extreme conditions of nature, but dependent on the relations between the team members and the members' skills and knowledge. The research also revealed the positive emotions as important in two distinct ways: As crucial for the performance of the whole team, but also as a result of the team's performance, indicating a dependent relation between all the members of the team. Even though the dogs can be seen as the most important element of sled dog racing, it is clear that the unique element can be found in the relation between the humans and animals, the attachments they have to each other, and the unique ability to function as one team despite being of different species, crucial for the experience.

Moreover, the research revealed that participating in sled dog racing requires extensive preparation and training of both the humans and the dogs, and this meets the requirement of being defined as serious leisure. The research likewise revealed sled dog racing as having several

qualities like (a) the need for perseverance, (b) development of a sled dog racing career, and (c) identification with the society, all present in serious leisure. The research also found several benefits with participating in sled dog racing making it possible to define it as serious leisure. Among these accomplishment was seen as the most important, which was more related to achieving good co-operation and completing the race, than winning the race.

Additionally, sled dog racing appears to contain several of the characteristics of adventure tourism, making it possible to define it as such. The research implied participating in Finnmarksløpet as containing elements of (a) traveling, (b) escaping, and (c) enjoyment, which is some of the most important elements of adventure tourism. Additionally, participating in Finnmarksløpet includes elements of novelty and challenges, similar to adventure tourism.

In sum, the research illustrates how the dogs are the most important element in sled dog racing, not only for the ability to participate, but also creating a unique experience. Additionally the research illustrates that it is realistic to define the sport of sled dog racing in the context of tourism. Even though relation with the dogs can be seen in relation to research conducted on pets, it is important to notice the difference between dogs as pets and sled dogs. The sled dogs, through training acquire skills and knowledge, which distinguish them from dogs serving as companions and pets in daily activities. The research illustrates how tourism involving peoples' own animals can contribute to create unique experience because of the profound relation between humans and animals, relations that requires time to develop. This would probably not exist in experiences where animals are a part of the product and the interaction only occurs during the experience, which further indicates a potential 'new' market for touristic experiences involving the use of ones own animals.

References

- Andersson, T. D. (2007). The tourist in the experience economy. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 7, 46 - 58.
- Angrosino, M. (2007). *Doing ethnographic and observational research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Arctander, S.-M. (2005). *Finnmarksløpet: The world's northernmost sled dog race*: Norsk Bokforlag.
- Baldwin, C. K., & Norris, P. A. (1999). Exploring the dimensions of serious leisure: "Love me-love my dog!". *Journal of Leisure Research*, 31(1), 1-17.
- Beck, A., & Katcher, A. (1996). *Between pets and people*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2005). *Flow: Optimaloplevelsens psykologi* (B. Bjerre, Trans.). København: Dansk Psykologisk Forlag.
- Dunin-Keplicz, B., & Verbrugge, R. (2010). *Teamwork in multi-agent systems*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Ltd. .
- Finnmarksløpet. (2012a). About Finnmarksløpet Retrieved May 10, 2012, from <http://www.finnmarkslopet.no/page.jsp?ref=about-us&lang=en>
- Finnmarksløpet. (2012b). Entry info Retrieved May 10, 2012, from <http://www.finnmarkslopet.no/page.jsp?ref=entry-info&lang=en>
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1994). Interviewing: The art of science. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Ltd.

- Gilbert, M. (2005). A theoretical framework for the understanding of teams. In N. Gold (Ed.), *Teamwork: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 22-32). Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillian.
- Gillespie, D. L., Leffler, A., & Lerner, E. (2002). If it weren't for my hobby, I'd have a life: dog sports, serious leisure, and boundary negotiations. *Leisure Studies*, 21(3-4), 285-304.
- Gunnestad, H. (2002). Slik begynte det... Retrieved April 18, 2012, from <http://www.sleddog.no/t2.asp?p=27869>
- Gyimóthy, S., & Mykletun, R. J. (2004). Play in adventure tourism: The case of arctic trekking. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(4), 855-878.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2004). *Feltmetodikk: Grunnlaget for feltarbeid og feltforskning*. Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag AS.
- Huntford, R. (2010). *Race for the South Pole : The expedition diaries of Scott and Amundsen*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Jæger, K. (2005). *I handlingens tid: Hvordan Finnmarksløpet skaper tidsmessige og sosiale rammer for opplevelser*. Master, Høgskolen i Finnmark, Alta.
- Kemp, S. F. (1999). Sled dog racing: The celebration of co-operation in a competitive sport. *Ethnology*, 38(1), 81-95.
- Kuhl, G. (2011). Human-sled dog relations: What can we learn from the stories and experiences of mushers? *Society & Animals*, 19(1), 22-37.
- Larsen, A. K. (2007). *En enklere metode*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget Vigmostad & Bjørke AS.
- Larsen, S. (2007). Aspects of a psychology of the tourist experience. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 7, 7 - 18.

- Leisure. (2012). The American Heritage. Dictionary of Idioms by Christine Ammer. Retrieved February 20, 2012, from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/leisure>
- Levi, D. (2001). *Group dynamics for teams*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- McConnell, A. R., Brown, C. M., Shoda, T. M., Stayton, L. E., & Martin, C. E. (2011). Friends with benefits: On the positive consequences of pet ownership. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.
- Mehmetoglu, M. (2004). *Kvalitativ metode for merkanfile fag*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget Vigmostad og Bjørke AS.
- Mortlock, C. (1984). *The adventure alternative*. Cumbria: Cicerone Press.
- Mossberg, L. (2007a). A marketing approach to the tourist experience. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 7(1), 59-74.
- Mossberg, L. (2007b). *Å skape opplevelser: Fra OK til WOW!* Bergen: Fagbokforlaget Vigmostad & Bjørke AS.
- Mossberg, L. (2008). Extraordinary experiences through storytelling. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 8(3), 195-210.
- Nansen, F., & Huntford, R. (1999). *Farthest North*. New York: Modern Library.
- Neuman, W. L. (2009). *Understanding research*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Neumann, I. B. (2009). Meningen med hundekjøringen sprenger artsgrensene. In K. Steen-Johnsen & I. B. Neumann (Eds.), *Meningen med idretten* (pp. 91-113). Oslo: Unipub.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(4), 97-105.
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

- Salisbury, G., & Salisbury, L. (2003). *The cruelest mile: The heroic story of gods and man in a race against an epidemic*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Shannon, K. A. (1997). *The unique role of sled dogs in Inuit culture: An examination of the relationship between Inuit and sled dogs in the changing north*. Master of Arts, University of Alberta, Edmonton.
- Slåtten, T., Mehmetoglu, M., Svensson, G., & Sværi, S. (2009). Atmospheric experiences that emotionally touch customers: A case study from a winter park. *Managing Service Quality, 19*(6), 721-746.
- Stebbins, R. A. (1992). *Amateurs, professionals, and serious leisure*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Stebbins, R. A. (2001). *New directions in the theory of serious leisure*. New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Stebbins, R. A. (2007). *A perspective for our time: Serious leisure*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.
- Strang, P. (2007). Hundens betydelse vid svår cancersjukdom. In B. Beck-Friis, P. Strang & A. Beck-Friis (Eds.), *Hundens betydelse i vården: Erfarenhet och praktiska råd*. Stockholm: Gothia Förlag AB.
- Swarbrooke, J., Beard, C., Leckie, S., & Pomfret, G. (2003). *Adventure tourism: The new frontier*. Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd.
- Tarssanen, S., & Kylänen, M. (2007). A theoretical model for producing experiences - A touristic perspective. In M. Kylänen (Ed.), *Articles on experiences 2*. Rovaniemi: Lapland Centre of Expertise for Experience Industry.

- Tarssanen, S., & Kylänen, M. (2009). What is an experience? In S. Tarssanen (Ed.), *Handbook for experience stagers* (pp. 8-23). Rovaniemi: Lapland Center of Expertise for the Experience Industry.
- Thagaard, T. (2009). *Systematikk og innlevelse: En innføring i kvalitaiv metode* (3rd ed.). Bergen: Fagbokforlaget Vigmostad & Bjørke AS.
- Veal, A. J. (2006). *Research methods for leisure and tourism: A practical guide* (3rd ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- White, T. (2012). A history of mushing before we knew it Retrieved April 18, 2012, from http://sleddogsport.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=29
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Appendix

Interview-guide

OPENING QUESTION:

- *How and why did you start with sled dog racing?*

THEMES:

- *Training*
- *Teamwork*
- *Communication*
- *The experience*

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

- How important are the training in advance of the race?
- How does the training proceed?
- How do the dogs know what to do?
- How important are teamwork for being able to complete or win the race?
- What are the different members' tasks?
- Who of the team members are the most important?
- How do you communicate with your dogs, both in training and during the race?
- Does the dogs provide you with a feeling of safety? How?

FINAL QUESTION:

- How many times have you participated?
- Are you going to continue?