

# Sustainability and Travel Experience

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## ABSTRACT

*Tourism is a major contributor for economic growth and employment, and is a sector that is expected to grow rapidly. Since the early 90's tourism service providers and policy makers have become increasingly aware of the problems that come with tourism. The degradation of the environment, eradication of culture and exploitation of the workforce increased the need for more sustainable tourism activities. In addition to this customers increasingly demand more unique and memorable experiences and tourism service providers must be able to deliver those. The value that tourism service providers can deliver comes therefore mainly by providing those experiences. These seem to be two diverging trends. This paper provides a model that captures both of the trends by seeking to understand how both can be integrated. The main question we are trying to answer with this paper is how sustainability affects customer experience. Next to that the model also proposes that an increased customer experience leads to a better competitiveness of the destination and therefore to higher economic returns. The model offers the possibility to serve as reference to the tourism service providers and policy makers to invest on projects associated to sustainability. This study shows that sustainability can contribute to increasing the customer experience which can be seen as a competitive factor for a touristic destination.*

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## Keywords

Sustainable Tourism, Customer Experience, Experience Management, Destination Competitiveness

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors worldwide and has grown for the fourth consecutive year in 2015, raising tourism's share in world's exports to 7% in 2015 ("UNWTO World Tourism Barometer", 2016). The contribution of tourism amounts to a total of US\$ 1,4 trillion. Various drivers of globalization have led to a rapid growth of tourism on a global scale (Mihajlović & Čolović, 2014). These include a growing interconnectedness by cheaper travel offers and more accessible infrastructure. Access to information has improved through digitalization, diffusion of IT and telecommunications (Mihajlović, 2014 & Mihajlović, 2012). With the numbers highlighted above the importance of tourism as a contributor to the global and local economy becomes evident. However there is a growing awareness of the negative sides of tourism, affecting economic, environmental and social aspects (Brohman, 1996, Collins, 1999 and Bâc). It firstly becomes evident that the current form of most tourism is unsustainable and will therefore not be a source of income for future generations. Secondly, given unsustainable tourism destroys natural and cultural resources many destinations rely upon, the future competitiveness will decrease. The need to implement sustainability procedures in tourism becomes increasingly important, as it provides a method to preserve resources and therefore the source of income for future generations and the competitive advantage (Saarinen, 2006 and Pomeroy, Noble, & Johnson, 2011). Since thus the service providers in tourism need to aim for sustainability we want to understand how those processes contribute to improving the traveler's experience and in return contribute to sustainable local economic growth.

The presented paper will explain the role and importance of tourism as an enabler for economic growth. We address the growing trends of sustainability and importance of customer experience. Also by highlighting the problems associated with tourism, we will show why there is a need to strive towards sustainability in tourism and how sustainability can contribute at simultaneously to improving customer experience. An improved experience leads as a logical consequence to a better competitiveness of the destinations that embrace sustainability.

# 2 TOURISM AND ITS EFFECTS

The following section will give a brief insight about the positive and negative effects that tourism can have on a local and global scale. Assessing all effects of tourism activity lies far beyond the extent of this paper. The aim is therefore to give a general overview of the most important areas that are affected and show why there is a need to implement and increase sustainability practices in tourism. There seems to be general consent about three different impact areas (e.g. Bâc; Britton, 1982; Brohman, 1996; Pomeroy, Noble, & Johnson, 2011 and Pulido-Fernández, Andrades-Caldito, & Sánchez-Rivero, 2015): economic, environmental and sociocultural issues.

Several researchers have found that tourism can contribute to economic growth by investments in new emerging businesses that create employment, enabling the development of infrastructure and increasing overall wealth (e.g. Gursoy &

Rutherford, 2004; Fayissa, Nsiah & Tadasse 2007; Pulido-Fernández, Cárdenas-García, & Sánchez-Rivero, 2014; Balaguer & Cantavell-Jordá, 2002; Lee & Chang, 2008 and Ashley, Brine, Lehr, & Wilde, 2007). Tourism has been found to create "new patterns for production and trade" (Durbarry, 2004). This is particularly the case for developing countries and more remote areas that are otherwise of less value (Gössling 2000): Here growth from tourism can have a more significant meaning (Durbarry, 2004) which means that tourism serves as a centerpiece to create economic growth. The growth from tourism is particularly important for developing countries, that often are dependent on traditional exports based on agriculture and monocrops like sugar, rice or corn (Durbarry, 2004). Moreover there seems to be evidence that tourism is subject to multiplier effects, an indirect or unintended effect of a region's tourism industry on other regions, industries or sectors of the economy (Bâc, Horváth & Frechtling, 1999 and Yang & Wong, 2012). This effect manifests itself for example with the establishments of hotels that have to buy food from local farmers which in turn creates demand and therefore employment in a different sector than tourism (Rusu, 2011).

## 2.1 The Problems of Tourism – Three Impact Areas

However, after having primarily focused on economic measures in tourism development (Archer, Cooper, & Ruhanen, 2012), there has been a growing awareness for the negative impacts that come along with tourism growth. Sinclair (1998) outlines, that economic contribution from tourism and the above introduced cultural benefits is only one side. There are negative effects implied within the link between tourism and economic activity.

In terms of economic impact, research indicates that the capital introduced by tourism often stems from outside sources, meaning that multinational corporations invest in the development of tourism in developing countries (Britton, 1982). The consequence is oftentimes foreign ownership (Sinclair, 1998) which merely reinforces the dependency and inequality between highly-developed industrial countries and under-developed hosting countries (Walpole & Goodwin, 2000 & Britton, 1982). The scale of foreign ownership can be as high as 78 per cent, for example in the coastal streaks of Nairobi, Kenya (Sinclair, 1998). This is a result of various types of integration with multinational corporations and airlines that invest in the local development of tourism. The consequence: Around 55-75% of tourism receipts leak back to developed countries (Cater, 1993 & Teerakapibal, 2016). Due to the seasonality of tourism prices can fluctuate significantly and also increase according to speculations (Crouch & Brent Ritchie, 1999).

As for the environmental impacts there is a general consent that tourism, especially mass tourism, has direct and indirect negative impact on natural resources (Cohen, 1978; Collins, 1999; Gössling, 2012; Romeril, 1989). Brohman (1996) finds that especially tropical, southern hemisphere countries need to make use of and rely on their natural resources, like warm weather, costal streaks, mountains and cultural heritage sites.

These environmental resources are demanded by tourists from high income nations, who are willing to pay premium prices (Teerakapibal, 2016). However the use of those natural resources are often subject to over-use and degradation due to various forms of tourism activities, and are rarely optimally used (Sinclair, 1998). It is important to understand that these changes occur locally, but go beyond local level due to the globalization effects (Mihajlović, 2014). The threats that tourism can impose on the environment can be diverse: Romeril (1989) finds that tourism can create scientific concern about extinction of species and human life threat. The latter has for example been observed in alpine regions, where deforestation leads to an increased risk of avalanches. Davenport & Davenport (2005) identified the infrastructure and transport arrangements as the “greatest ecological threats” that mass tourism imposes on the environment. Several researchers point out the long-term effect that environmental destruction associated with tourism has on climate change, as well. Smith (1990) suggests that in the face of climate change customer satisfaction, experience and behavior in tourism, and safety in a given environment are very likely to change. In fact Simpson et al. (2008) state that is not a remote future event happening, but that climate change is already now affecting decision-making in the tourism sector. The case study conducted by Pickering (2011) shows how demand for Australian ski resorts is affected by changing seasonality due to climate change.

The social impacts of tourism is another relevant field of investigation, in which most researchers have focused on the changing attitude of host communities towards tourism (King, Pizam, & Milman, 1993). Research shows contradicting results on the issue, while most researchers emphasize the negative impacts. It seems logical however to consider both, positive and negative outcomes of intercultural exchange in tourism (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002). A general effect, so it seems is, that a previously homogeneous group becomes more diversified as a reaction towards tourism development (Dogan, 1989). In other words, the host community’s attitudes and feelings towards tourism and their own cultural change. This can happen for instance by adoption or rejection of western culture (Dogan, 1989). There seems to be also evidence that the higher the intensity of the social relationship between the hosts and tourists, the more positive has been the changes in attitudes (Pizam, Uriely, & Reichel, 2000). On the one hand tourism was associated with positive impacts and creating new opportunities, especially in connection to social and cultural factors (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002), while others associate it with negative impacts (Brunt & Courtney, 1999). Reported benefits for the host community are community pride, tolerance, a stronger sense of ethnical identity, and “helping the host community about, sharing/preserving their culture” (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002). Major sociocultural problems associated with tourism are associated to the decline of local’s traditions and identity, dominance of materialism, overcrowding populations, rise of social conflicts and crime rates (Dogan, 1989).

## 2.2 A Need for Sustainability in Tourism

Since the problems that arise from tourism affect the three areas that conform sustainability (economy, environment and sociocultural), some scholars like Saarinen (2006) and Hall (2011a) advocate sustainability strategies as a way to address these problems. Even further, Saarinen (2006) and Hassan (2000) suggests that due to the increased awareness of those problems, the demand for sustainability practices in tourism has grown rapidly.

Most destinations however still pursue maximizing and expanding the value of their economic activities by increasing the number of (international) tourist arrivals (Teerakapibal, 2016). There are only few that seek to enhance existing tourism entities to make them more profitable, efficient and sustainable (Gössling, Ring, Dwyer, Andersson, & Hall, 2016). These quantitative maximization strategies can obviously not be pursued without compromising sustainability in the above stated impact areas, and have become subject to an increasing amount of critique. The reason why there is such a high resistance to sustainability practices lies in the belief that sustainability requires a profitability tradeoff (Nickerson, Jorgenson, & Boley, 2016). Sustainability practices are thus associated with additional costs that do not pay off in higher economic returns, and therefore minimize the overall revenue. A recent study by Pulido-Fernández et al. (2015) provides empirical evidence for the contrary. The authors found that “countries that improve their sustainability do not do so at the cost of worsening their main economic indicators of tourism” (Pulido-Fernández, Andrades-Caldito, & Sánchez-Rivero, 2015). The study highlights the need of a new economic paradigm that allows for economic growth and opportunities for investment and employment without compromising environmental and cultural resources. Next to that the study also shows that many poor countries were able to improve sustainability without hindering economic growth. Given those findings there might be an incentive for policy makers and service providers to increase sustainability.

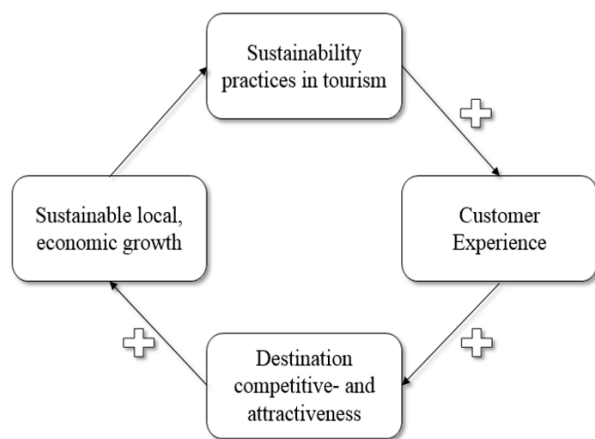
In general there seems to be a growing trend to move towards sustainability and people becoming increasingly aware of their impacts (Chen, 2015). Many tourist destinations, especially those in the southern hemisphere, rely on their natural and cultural resources to attract tourists (Brohman, 1996 and Hassan, 2000). Their aim should therefore be to preserve and protect their natural resources to ensure their competitive advantage as an attractive touristic destination (Cater, 1993 & Sinclair, 1998). Gössling et al. (2016) have also found that in the face of the 2008 financial crisis economic systems are not necessarily stable and touristic destinations should not heavily rely on outside investments. In the other hand, the customers’ satisfaction level can bring additional information with the purpose to engage them on innovative sustainable tourism patterns.

## 3 RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY

There has been done a large amount of research addressing sustainable development in tourism but little in regard to how

sustainability affects customer experience. So far we have seen that there is a need to increase sustainability for a variety of reasons here above explained. Given the fact that it has already grown and changed the industry for the last two decades, we can assume that in the future sustainability will in general increase (Torres-Delgado & Palomeque, 2012).

It is a primary concern for tourism service providers to ensure unique, memorable experiences (Kim, 2014; Otto & Ritchie, 1996 & Ritchie & Crouch, 2010) – in fact some might even consider it the core product of tourism (Prentice, Witt & Hamer, 1998). We can see how important the experiential component is in tourism and recognized by the academic world. The growing trend and need for sustainability is likely to change the policies and landscapes of tourism destinations (McKercher, 1993). Given those two trends, the importance of unique experiences and growing need for sustainability, this paper seeks to understand how sustainability affects the tourists' experience. The findings from this study might then give policy makers and tourism service providers important insights for future planning for development and market analysis. When compared with other topics it seems that sustainability still attracts little attention (Buckley, 2012). Also there seems to be a missing link between the implementation of sustainable development in tourism practices and the effect on customer experience, as stated before. Therefore this research which has the intention to explore the link between sustainable development with local sustainable growth in tourism and customer experience. Those elements and their interconnections are displayed in figure 1.



**Figure 1: The self-supporting cycle of sustainable tourism (developed by the author)**

Figure 1 illustrates the interconnectedness of the concepts priorly presented. The idea behind the model is that by investing and implementing sustainability practices in tourism the tourists can have better experiences and then more positive memories of their vacations. If, therefore, a destination can conserve and improve their resources through sustainability practices. Consequently tourists will return with memorable and unique experiences. The literature suggests that there is a trend towards a growing interest in authentic and sustainable holiday experiences (Buffa, 2015). Destinations should

therefore aim at creating those unique experiences. Those experiences have namely been found to form an integral part of the attractiveness and competitiveness of a destination (Vengesai, 2003). Competitiveness of the destination can contribute to growth. The economic benefits of being more competitive can then be reinvested to increase and maintain the sustainability practices. The last step can in principle close the cycle shown in figure 1. Without a doubt figure 1 represents a theoretical model that tries to simplify the complex processes that happen in the touristic sector. The model's aim to provide then a means to understand from the customer experience perspective the effects of sustainability practices. Nevertheless, the model has some limitations that are further described in the discussion part. Moreover we will firstly focus on the link between sustainability and customer experience.

### 3.1 Research Questions

According to the purpose of this research, the research questions and sub-questions were elaborated as following:

*"In the face of an increasing need for sustainability practices in tourism, how does sustainability affect the traveler's experience?"*

In order to approach this research question appropriately it was divided into three sub-questions. By doing so it enabled us to explore the theoretical constructs, presented in figure 1. There are four research sub-questions associated to the main question.

- a) *What is sustainable development in tourism?*
- b) *Why should sustainability in tourism be addressed?*
- c) *What role does customer experience play in tourism?*
- d) *How does customer experience contribute to destination competitiveness?*

We formed the following hypothesis:

**H1:** *People visiting sustainable touristic destinations will have a better experience than those visiting traditional touristic destinations.*

**H2:** *A better experience will contribute to the destination's competitiveness.*

The research questions and the hypotheses provide the guideline through the research. As stated above, we focused primarily on the link between sustainability and customer experience and how they are related. For this the quantitative research was applied. This is explained in more detail the Research Methodology part. Section 4 is dedicated to a deeper literature revision on the topics and theories already reported by recognized scholars.

## 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following section provides an explanation of the theoretical constructs and concepts that are used in this paper.

### 4.1 The Concept of Sustainable Tourism

In an early stage of a sustainable alternative way of developing tourism, many academics and the tourism industry itself

considered it to be impossible, “intellectually arrogant”, and unrealistic (Bac). It was classified as unrealistic because conventional mass tourism brought them many benefits. Since there are various definitions for and ambiguity about the concepts (Saarinen, 2006 & Clarke, 1997), in this section the most important findings are summarized to be able to work with the concept.

As mentioned in the introduction, in the 90s the touristic destinations became increasingly concerned with the environmental, economic and sociocultural problems associated with tourism (Saarinen, 2006). Therefore, a new way of thinking about tourism emerged: Sustainable tourism. As a new form of tourism, it has been created by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (Neto, 2003) by transferring the idea of sustainable development to tourism (Saarinen, 2006). In fact, it has been called in different ways, one of them is “*Alternative Tourism*”, implying the opposition of conventional mass tourism (Clarke, 1997). Cater (1993) finds that the characteristics of alternative and more sustainable tourism should take into account the various negative effects on economy, environment and culture. Since sustainable development is the overarching paradigm for sustainable tourism (Sharpley, 2000), it naturally should reflect the intentions of sustainable development. While sustainable tourism does not necessarily always reflect and contribute to the principles of sustainable development (Hunter, 1997), it can contribute to the conservation of natural resources and sociocultural heritage (Hardy, Beeton, & Pearson, 2002). Given the nature of the problems, as explained above, there seems to be a consent that sustainable tourism should have a balanced approach between conserving the environment and natural resources, maintaining cultural heritage and promoting economic growth (Hardy, Beeton, & Pearson, 2002; Hunter, 1997; Zolfani, Sedaghat, Maknoon, & Zavadskas, 2015).

Especially in the face of the environmental aspect of tourism, the assumption that the natural environment provides an unlimited number of resources has been challenged (Hardy, Beeton, & Pearson, 2002). However focusing on the environmental problems only, would ignore the complexity of the problems (Buckley, 2012) that sustainability should address. In fact, Bramwell and Lane (2008) propose that “a truly sustainable society is one where wider questions of social needs and welfare, and economic opportunity are integrally related to the environmental constraints imposed by the supporting ecosystems and climate” (Bramwell & Lane, 2008, p.1). This approach to sustainability again shows the threefold nature of the problems that should be addressed.

Buckley (2012) identifies sustainability as the human and planetary future. He finds that even though it has crucial importance, it is merely treated as a subdiscipline in both the academic world and the tourism industry. One priority for research so it seems, is the development of environmental and social accounting measures.

## 4.2 Customer Experience in Tourism

Customer experience plays an important role in the modern consumption. The ‘product’ is nowadays not only seen as the physical entity of the core product, but also the whole experience associated with the product. The view on the product as evolved into a more holistic approach with some

people even claiming that customer experience is likely to be the “next major source for competitive advantage” (Woodruff, 1997). Customer Experience has been studied in more detail since the early 1980s and has been recognized as a “new and exciting concept [in] marketing, academia and practice” (Schmitt, 2010). Holbrook and Hirschman introduced a new approach against the prevailing information processing perspective, since it was “neglecting an important portion of the consumption experience”. They argued that human behavior cannot simply be reduced to a simplistic model, and emphasized the importance of customer emotions, leisure activities, symbolic meanings, fantasies and subconscious processes. Schmitt (1999) who proposes a new approach called Experiential Marketing, provides a strategic framework that stands in contrast to the traditional marketing perspective of that time. This approach emphasized the customer experience and replacing purely functional values by focusing on consumption as a holistic experience. The customer has since then been considered as rationally and emotionally driven. Under the experiential setting, Pine and Gilmore (1998) introduced the term Experience Economy arguing that economy has moved to a stage where the “competitive battleground lies in staging experiences”. This means that “customer experience itself will be the only truly competitive advantage” (“Gartner surveys confirm customer experience is the new battlefield”, 2014) and that customer experience becomes product entity itself (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). They classified experience according to the level of customer involvement and customer participation. The result were 4 realms of customer experience: Entertainment, Educational, Esthetic and Escapist.

Otto and Ritchie (1996) describe the experience in leisure and tourism as “the subjective mental state felt by the participants” (Otto & Ritchie, 1996). Andersson refers to the tourist experience as “the moment when tourism consumption and tourism production meet” (Andersson, 2007). Adhikari and Bhattacharya (2016) reviewed the relevant literature and provided a comprehensive analysis and framework of the vast amount of literature on the topic of customer experience. The authors found that trends in tourism and hospitality largely rely on marketing theories and concepts and are therefore strongly influenced by them. They divide the creation of customer experience into two different but interrelated streams: (1) the first stream regards customer experience as a product attribute or complete product, while; (2) the second stream approaches customer experience creation as a result from customer interaction with the physical environment or people. Customer experience management generally has been associated with building customer loyalty and memorable experiences (Srivastava & Kaul, 2016). These two later characteristics are well represented in the tourism sector. Since tourists buy experiences rather than a product, it is essential for tourist destinations to provide high quality memorable experiences (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007 & Ritchie & Crouch, 2010).

### 4.3 The Interconnectedness of the Constructs

Obviously the causalities in tourism and the interconnectedness of the concepts are subject to various forces and influences. The above concepts and backgrounds however indicate some possible connections and mutual influences. It shows how sustainability might contribute to customer experience if the tourists can extract the value of a clean natural environment with fair deals for the local people. This might be a great opportunity especially in countries with a less developed industry, where people rely on their natural and cultural resources. Scholars have furthermore seen that customer experience and sustainability play an important role in the competitiveness of a destination by associating the benefits of sustainability and customer loyalty.

Buhalis (2000) finds that even though there is a large number of publications on destination planning, development and marketing, there is little research done in the field of how destinations can be experience providers for tourists and locals. Zolfani et al. (2015) however recognize the importance of sustainability in contributing to the customer experience: "Sustainability covers all elements that constitute to a complete tourism experience. [...] 'Sustainable tourism development' concerns an economic, social and environmental tourism development that aims at the continuous improvement of the tourists' experience" (Zolfani, Sedaghat, Maknoon, & Zavadskas, 2015). This shows the importance of customer experience in the context of sustainability. This research aims at examining the link more closely. It has previously been mentioned that firms are often afraid of investing in sustainability, as doing so might affect profits. The results of this study may provide policy makers and tourism service providers with important insights that might assist them in the decision making process of implementing more sustainable policies and processes. Especially because the model suggests that sustainability may increase customer experience that in the long run leads to a better economic performance.

## 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following section provides a description of the approach and research methods used to carry out this research. The research is partly conducted as a literature review, i.e. qualitative and desk research, and partly as quantitative research through the application of an online survey. For hypothesis 1 (H1) which demanded the main effort of this research, a survey was used. The questions can be found in Appendix 6. The survey is based on a measurement scale developed by Oh et al. (2007) that has been designed to measure the customer experience. In doing so we distinguished two groups and compare the mean scores of customer experience of each group. The two groups will be distinguished by whether a person has visited a sustainable touristic destination or not. By doing so, we were able to see which of the two groups had a better experience in accordance with the Oh et al (2007) measurement scale which is explained in section 5.2. Indeed, the survey questionnaire was adopted from the Oh et al. (2007) framework with 7-point scales.

For the second hypothesis H2 a literature research was conducted. The results provide evidence on how better customer experience contributes to a higher attractiveness and

competitiveness of the destination. The qualitative research, in this case through literature review, is especially useful because there is a large number of publications in that field of research. However as this kind of research might be more ambiguous because it is based on different results, its generalizability might be limited.

We chose the proposed method by Oh et al (2007) because it is based on the Experience Economy paradigm of Pine and Gilmore (1999), of which a visualization can be found in Appendix 1. The Experience Economy (1999) concept has, by many, been seen as a "key forerunner" in the research of customer experience and has strongly influenced the research in this particular field (Ferreira & Teixeira, 2013). There are quite a few concepts that adopt the idea of the importance of experiences in the context of the market, referred to as 'attention economy', 'dream society' or 'market of emotions' (Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009). However the popularity of Pine and Gilmore's Experience Economy model remains unprecedented (e.g. Hosany & Witham, 2009 & Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012). The popularity of the framework gives indication for the importance of the Experience Economy concept in the context of customer experience research. Oh's et al (2007) scale does not only adopt the idea of the Experience Economy, but the authors emphasize that the scale has been created by extensively discussing the application of the Experience Economy concept to tourism with the authors Pine and Gilmore. The result is a scale that is "applicable to tourism research across various destinations" and provides a "practical measurement framework for the study of tourist experiences" (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). Moreover Morgan et al (2008) have found that the concept of Experience Economy is closely related to tourism in both its origins and its implications (Morgan, Elbe, & Curiel, 2009). The measurement scale itself is found to have to have strong internal validity due to repeated refinement of the measurement items (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). Another point one might consider in regard to the use of the method is that we mainly want to propose the results of this study to tourism service providers and policy makers. Those are the ones able to make steps towards a more sustainable tourism development. Oh et al. (2007) emphasize the ease of use of their scale of destination evaluations. Since in this study we try to evaluate two types destinations in regard to how they differ in the degree of customer experience this scale seems to make sense.

### 5.1 Sampling

Our sample consisted of 84 persons. The unit of analysis in this research are the individual persons that make up the two groups that we are going to compare. In the context of this research we made use of convenience sampling. The reason we chose the proposed method was mostly due to the limited amount of time and the need to quickly and easily get respondents. Another point is that we considered this study to be more of exploratory study, since the effect of sustainability on customer experience in tourism has yet to be explored in more detail. Given the limited time and resources, and the exploratory nature of this study, the insights that can be drawn from this study can provide a gross estimate of the results. Since convenience sampling is a non-probability method, there are some drawbacks that might reduce the generalizability of the results. However given that the sample had some inherent

characteristics that were similar, like age and location, it might be representative for the sub-population, but not for the whole travelers population. More on the limitations of the research design can be found in the discussion part of this paper.

To collect the data we used an online survey created with Google Forms. This allowed us to spread the form quickly and efficiently, without having to consider the location of the respondents. Google Forms already counts the data and gives simple statistics. However we used SPSS for further statistical inference and carrying out the statistical tests. The pool of respondents mainly consisted of young between 20 and 30 years, with a few exceptions of respondents that were above that age range. However we did not take into consideration the specific demographics and gender, as we wanted to give a general overview of the target group. The distinction was done by dividing the population of traveling people into people that have traveled to a sustainable touristic destination and people that have not.

Again, the unit of analysis in this research are the individual persons surveyed. We primarily focus on young adult travelers because they are likely to travel to more alternative locations, as they are more risk-taking and sensation-seeking than older travelers (Pizam, et al., 2004). The group we focus has an age range of approximately 18-30 years and all respondents were from Western-European countries. By focusing on young adults we also consider the group's market potential for innovation and change. A study by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) finds that "youth travel is an important market for the future, not just because of the economic benefits it can generate, but also because it can make a real difference to the destination in cultural, social and development terms" (World Tourism Organization, 2016). Also young people are one of the main target groups of the EU "Europe 2020 strategy". The initiative 'Youth on the Move' encourages young people to work and/or study abroad. Bowser et al (2014) especially emphasize the importance of the educational component in regard to the future generation of travelers. The authors find that future global sustainability is depends on educating all involved stakeholders of the travel industry (Bowser, Gretzel, Davis, & Brown, 2014). The role of education in the context of sustainability in tourism can be also found in the results of this study.

## 5.2 Operationalization

To operationalize, i.e. be able to measure a concept such as customer experience, a measurement scale for customer experience developed by Oh et al (2007) has been used. The scale operationalizes customer experience along a 1-7 Likert scale. The questions used in the measurement scale and the survey used for this research have been designed by Oh et al (2007) to measure all of the experience's dimensions proposed by Pine and Gilmore. This means that in the survey there will be several questions to measure each of the components that, as a sum, make up the whole customer experience according to Pine and Gilmore's conceptualization of experience. The authors developed questions and the measurement scale to assess customer experience in tourism. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), there are four categories differentiated by two dimensions: The level of customer participation (active vs. passive) and customer involvement (absorption vs. immersion). The active customer can be seen as one that has an influence on

and creates the experience itself. On the other side, the passive customer can rather be seen as an observer or listener. Along the involvement we can differentiate between absorptive and immersive events. Watching sports events at home on TV is rather absorptive. Watching the same event in a stadium with fans around and all the senses being engaged can be seen as more immersive. Pine and Gilmore (1999) define immersion as "becoming physically (or virtually) a part of the experience itself". Whereas absorption is defined as "occupying a person's attention by bringing the experience into the mind" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p.31).

An experience that is absorptive and where the customer participates passively is seen as *Entertainment*. In *Educational* events, like taking a ski class or visiting cultural heritage, the customer participates actively, but rather absorbs the events unfolding before him. Educational events, as the name suggests, often imply that the customer (or tourist as you will) acquires new skills and knowledge. *Esthetic experiences* are those where the tourist is fully immersed in the experience and can passively appreciate them, while just *being* there. The esthetic component apply to many sightseeing attractions (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007) and for example national parks or natural reservoirs. The *escapist experience* is also immersive but requires the tourist to be more actively involved. Escaping the complex and hectic society (Lew, Hall, & Williams, 2004) and the desire to experience something different (Dann, 1981) has been found to largely influence tourist motivation. When looking more closely one can see that the escapist experience includes three components: The getting-away, immersing-into-destination and partaking-a-different-character (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). Pine and Gilmore (1999) state, that generally the richest of experiences are those that, encompass all of the above stated realms into a 'sweet spot' (see *Figure 1*). Next to that the experience will be more effective and memorable, the more senses are engaged. Alongside the four realms of customer experience according to Pine and Gilmore (1999), Oh et al (2007) have included 4 more factors to assess the overall customer experience. *arousal*, *memory*, *overall perceived quality* and *customer satisfaction*. Memory is an important factor of customer experience as being able to recall a particular event will influence the tourist's attitude toward the destination positively (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). Arousal, the physiological reaction to a stimulus, has in various studies also been associated with a positive effect on attitude formation (e.g. Bagozzi, 1996 & Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2003). According to Oh et al (2007) the factors *overall perceived quality* and *customer satisfaction* have been added as global evaluations. The arousal, memory, overall perceived quality and customer satisfaction is part of the customer experience as well as a consequence of the first four experience economy dimensions. In other words

## 6 FINDINGS

This section presents the results from the quantitative and qualitative research methods here deployed. For the interconnections between sustainability and customer experience a statistical analysis of the collected data through the survey.



## 6.1 Sustainability and Customer Experience

The main focus of this study was to find out how customer experience is affected by sustainability. Two groups were asked to respond the survey, people traveling to sustainable touristic destinations and those traveling to traditional touristic ones. The difference in terms of their responds could be attributed to the sustainability practices, then.

A total of 84 persons took part in the survey. These were from a fairly large population of young adults approximately aged between 18 and 30 years that go on vacation more or less regularly. As previously mentioned, the total sample has been divided into two groups: People that **have** previously visited a sustainable touristic destination and people that **have not** previously visited a sustainable touristic destination. Of the total group the majority, i.e. 58 persons or 69% of the sample have previously visited a sustainable touristic destination. Only 26 persons, or 31% of the sample have not visited a sustainable touristic destination. From the 58 persons that visited a sustainable touristic destination 57 preferred it in comparison to a traditional touristic destination. The measurement of the complete customer experience has been done with a total of 28 questions. These covered the topics Education, Esthetics, Entertainment and Escapism (the Experience Economy dimensions), as well as Arousal, Memory, Overall perceived quality and Satisfaction.

In the statistical analysis we first compared the mean values (1-7, with 7 always being the higher, better or more positive score) for every question independently. For this purpose we conducted multiple t-tests to compare the means of the two independent groups. All comparisons have been made on a significance level of  $\alpha=0,05$ . The analysis showed that for all

questions the mean differences were (highly) significant. A graphic visualization of this can be found in Appendix 3. To compare the different sections more accurately, the values of the sections have been summed up and the means have been calculated. By doing so we were able to compare the sections: Logically the differences here were also (highly) significant with the highest p-value being 0,011. All other p-values were  $p<0,001$ . Again the differences were tested on a significance level of  $\alpha=0,05$ . However by comparing the means of the different sections, we can see more accurately, which part of the experience is affected most and which least. The results suggest that the Entertainment component is least affected ( $\mu_1 - \mu_2 = 0,73342$ ) whether someone visits a sustainable or traditional touristic destination. The highest difference can be found in the Education component ( $\mu_1 - \mu_2 = 1,97646$ ) and Memories component ( $\mu_1 - \mu_2 = 1,87843$ ). In Figure 2 (below) we can see the mean differences of the mean scores of the different sections. The figure corresponds with the findings above and we can see the differences in the mean experience for each section for people that have visited a sustainable destination (blue) and people that have not visited a sustainable destination (green). Moreover we can also notice that for the entertainment component the difference is the smallest, while the difference is much larger for the education component. Comparing the overall means (see Appendix 5) we see that the mean for the overall experience score for sustainable touristic destinations is 5,870, whereas the mean score for traditional touristic destination is 4,372. This is a mean difference of 1,498. However we can also see that the standard deviation for the traditional touristic destinations (0,844) are much higher than the ones for sustainable destinations (0,583). This might be due to the fact that sustainable touristic destinations represent only a small fraction of the whole touristic destinations. Traditional, i.e. ‘non-sustainable’ destinations, logically represent all other destinations. The higher standard deviation in the sample might therefore also be due to differences in quality of traditional destinations.

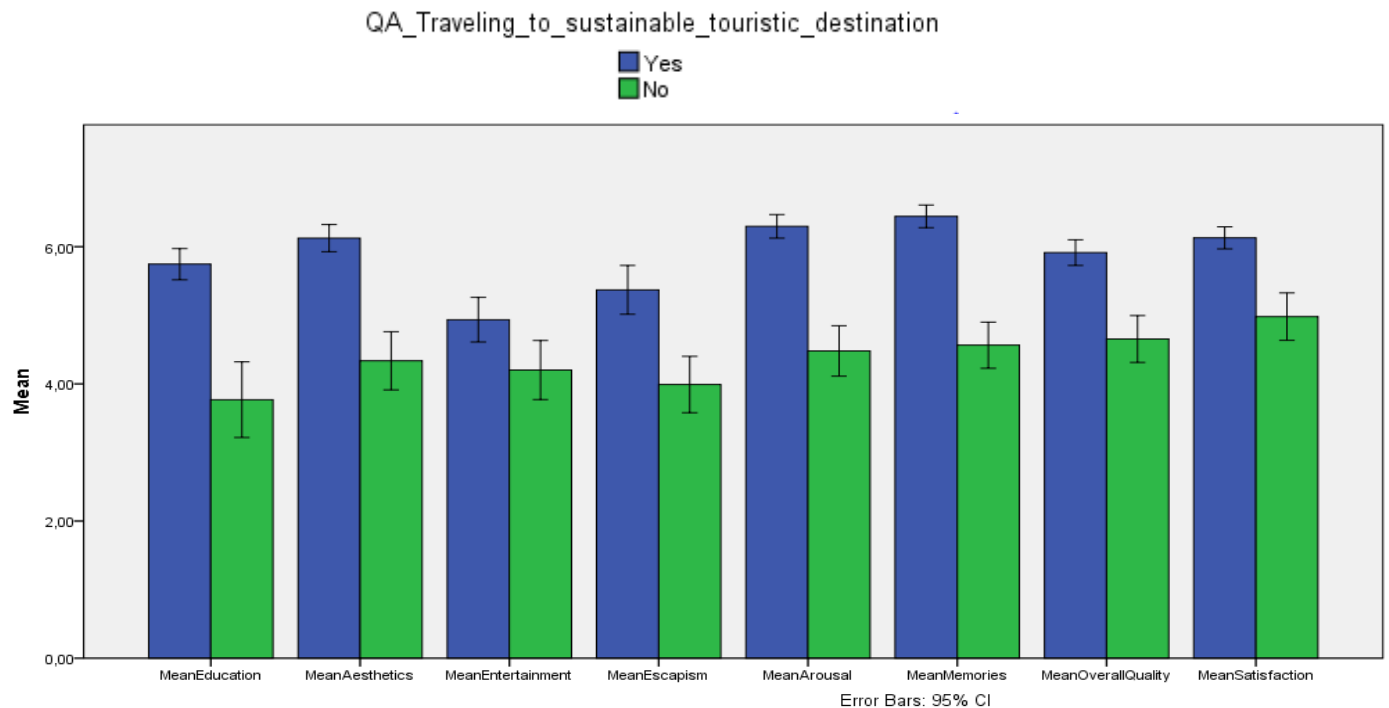


Figure 2 – Section Means Bar Chart

Another way of looking at the overall means is by examining their distribution on a histogram. In Figure 3 we can see how the distribution for the overall mean differ between the two groups: The overall mean for people not traveling to a sustainable destination (green bars) lie on the lower end of the scale, whereas people traveling to a sustainable destination (blue bars) lie much higher on the scale, i.e. on the right side of the graph. This makes sense as it is in line with the numerical analysis of overall means we have done, where we have found a mean difference of 1,498 with a Standard Error Difference of 0,182 and  $p > 0,001$ .

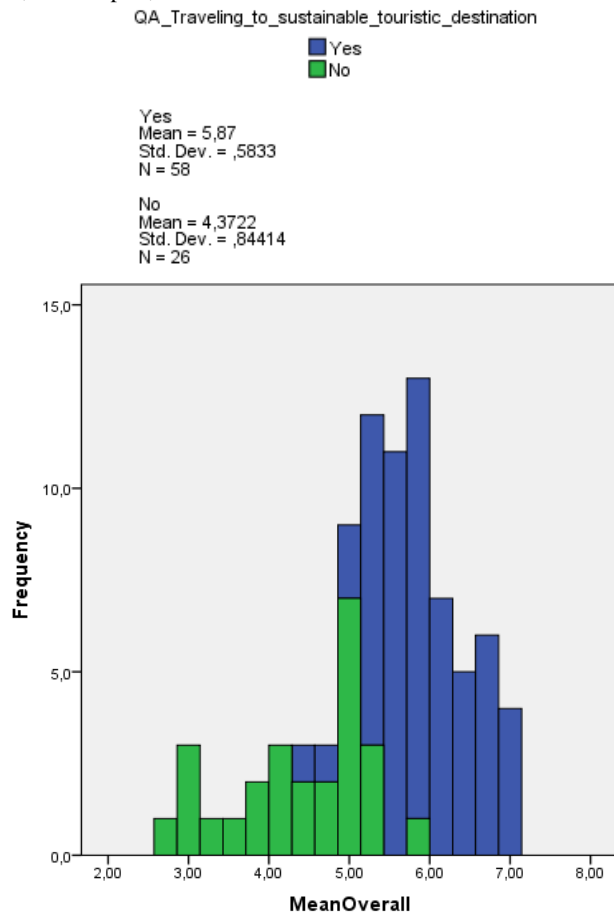


Figure 3 – Overall Mean Distribution

In addition to only comparing the means we have also run a regression analysis on the two groups. Oh et al (2007) refer to the group of arousal, memory, overall perceived quality and customer satisfaction as “plausible consequences” (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007, p. 127). To see to which degree the experience component, i.e. Education, Entertainment, Esthetics and Escapism, is correlated to the ‘consequence’ component, i.e. Arousal, Memory, Overall perceived quality and Customer satisfaction, we split the groups and have run a regression analysis for each of the groups. Figure 4 (right) shows the regression line for the sustainable destinations. From the analysis (see Appendix 6) we can see that the correlation is 0,718. However as  $R^2 = 0,515$ , it means that only about 51,5% of the variation in ‘MeanConsequences’ can be explained by our independent variable, the means of the Experience Economy components. Given that  $p > 0,001$  we can conclude that there is at least a relationship between the two, even though only 51,5% is explained by our independent variable. The remaining 48,5% remain unexplained.

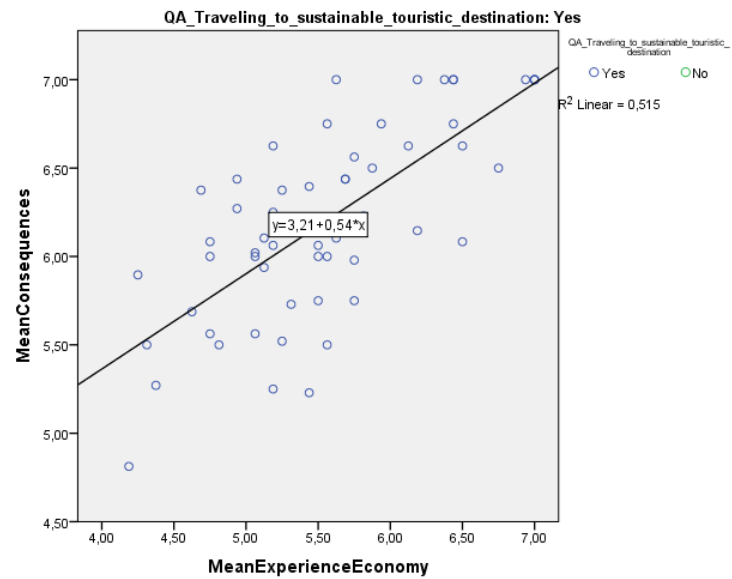


Figure 4 – Regression Line Sustainable Destinations

For the group not traveling to sustainable destinations on the other hand we have found a much greater correlation ( $R = 0,883$ ) and a greater coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0,780$ ). This means the linear relationship is much stronger than for the other group. The graph of the regression line can be seen in Figure 5 (below). Also the group not traveling to sustainable destinations has a low p-value ( $p > 0,001$ ) from which we can conclude that the mean for the experience economy is a good predictor for the mean consequences. This is even more so true for the second group, since the relationship is much stronger than the first group. We found that the group traveling to sustainable destinations has a weaker relationship between the experience economy dimensions and the ‘consequences’. However we must keep in mind that “the relationships of the individual experience economy dimensions with plausible consequences of tourist experience, such as satisfaction, arousal, memory, and overall quality, may be difficult to predict because they may depend heavily on the salience of experience offerings of the destination.” (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007, p.127).

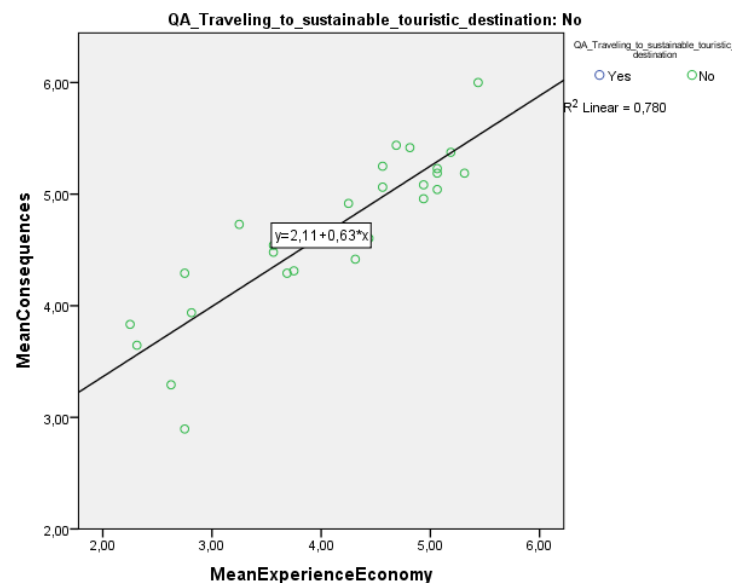


Figure 5 – Regression Line Non-Sustainable Destinations

## 6.2 Customer Experience and Destination Competitiveness

From the literature review it can be said that a better customer experience is often associated to a greater level of competitiveness. For instance, Dede (2013) suggests that “unique experiences provided to customers directly determine a business’ competitiveness”. The author especially emphasizes the importance of past experiences to understand the present ones. Enright and Newton (2004) find that the “relative competitiveness” directly influences the success of a tourist destination (Enright & Newton, 2004). It is therefore a priority to identify the factors that contribute to the competitiveness and therefore to the success of a touristic destination. Liu (2003) found that “natural, environmental assets are the foundation upon which all tourism relies on and those assets are usually the most successful in attracting tourists”. Enright and Newton (2004) also found that factors such as climate, scenery and accommodation are those that are seen to attract visitors most successfully. The importance of sustainability and environmental quality is reflected in both the amount of research being done and the increasing demand of tourists for better environmental quality, and should be addressed by societal marketing (Mihalic, 2000). Moreover it is of crucial importance to maintaining those qualities in order to keep the destination competitiveness level (Mihalic, 2000) and their valuable assets (Buhalis, 2000). Local resources can become a central asset for a destination, since customers are willing to pay premium prices (Buhalis, 2000; Teerakapibal, 2016), and sustainability can support this in the destination’s marketing. In fact, it has been found that a destination’s competitiveness is closely related to its sustainability and strongly influenced by its natural and cultural resources (M., Popescu, & Badita, 2014). Another recent case study of the Great Barrier Reef Area in Australia by Esparon et al. (2015) showed that, not only for the area at hand, but for natural areas in general, environmental values were found to be the most important contributor to destination competitiveness. This is due to the fact that tourism competitiveness arises from the experience and memories that a tourist makes during the travel (Angelokova, Koteski, Jakovlev, & Mitrevska, 2012).

## 7 DISCUSSION

As said earlier the results of this study give an exploration of how sustainability relates to customer experience in the tourism context. The results of this study do suggest that sustainable destinations do provide better experiences to the visitors. However as the presented study is of exploratory nature it gives an initial hint of the ‘truth’. The results must be seen as a suggestions rather than the actual state of being.

There is a significant amount of literature on customer experience and how this relates to the product. Research on customer experience and its implication for marketing and strategy are becoming increasingly important. Customer experience is becoming a major source of competitive advantage and way to distinguish from the competition. The results address two emerging trends: Identifying customer experience as a product itself (especially in tourism) and responding to the ever increasing need for sustainable development. Moreover it gives direction and recommendations towards future studies in this field. The

results of this study suggest that sustainability increases customer experience. If tourism service providers and policy makers are able to improve sustainability it also means increasing customer experience and finally being more competitive. This study provides empirical evidence, that sustainability positively affects customer experience – at least for the population at hand. Moreover we have seen by reviewing relevant literature that an enhanced customer experience makes the destination more competitive. However there are a few points to considerate within this study.

First of all by using a non-probability method we did not use a random selection of respondents. Due to the method we cannot rely on the rationale of probability theory and cannot estimate the sampling error. The consequence is that it might be risky to project the results to the whole population. In other words the generalizability of the results is limited. Another point to consider is that people might have a bias towards sustainability and automatically think that sustainability is generally better. This bias might influence the whole perception of their travels and therefore also their experience. Moreover people had to decide on their own, whether the place they went to was a sustainable touristic destination or not. Even though they were given a short introduction the line is quite arbitrary. Especially because the concept itself is fuzzy and lacks a general agreement. Additionally there are a few other factors that need to be taken into consideration that might affect the customer experience in sustainable touristic destinations. We have for instance not taken into account which place people traveled to, that might have affected their experience. For example someone traveling to a sustainable touristic destination in Bali might have a better experience than someone traveling to a traditional touristic destination in Spain, not only because of sustainability, but also because of the naturally given circumstances in the two different places.

A recommendation for further research would therefore be to study the effect of sustainability on customer experience and focusing on one region or area. Developing a scale for the grade/maturity of sustainability in tourism practices would give the possibility to examine the regression of the maturity of sustainability in a specific place and the extent to which customer experience is affected. That is essentially taking this study one step further and being able to design an experiment to make linear regression. A more sophisticated study would examine a destination over a longer period of time. It would then be possible to examine the effects of sustainability on customer experience on the same location over an extend period of time. Furthermore, given the research would be done on one destination, one could also examine how this affects the destination’s competitiveness. Reversing the approach would mean to do a cross-cultural study and see in how far customer experience is differently affected by sustainability. This is essentially taking another variable in the equation.

Recommendations for practice would involve the stakeholders that we address with this study, i.e. tourism service providers and policy makers to take initiative and implement sustainability. This study gives an initial outline that sustainability might be positively influencing customer experience and lead to a better competitiveness. Due to vertical and horizontal integration of the activities of stakeholders their sustainability practices and efforts could amplify and achieve

sustainability on a much larger scale. Practically and more specifically collaboration where the involved parties interact together to find a solution to a common problem or issues play an important role (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). An important practice that is already being promoted and can help the tourist itself to make a conscious choice for sustainability are certification systems. Providing a general guideline for the tourist and the practices of the service provider, the downside

## 8 CONCLUSION

Given the results of our statistical analysis, we can conclude that sustainability practices – within the context of this research – in regard of a tourist destination affects the travel experience positively. We have therefore empirical evidence to support our first hypothesis (H1), i.e. sustainability positively influences the customer experience as this was indicated by the survey respondents.

Due to the fact that tourism is an “experience-intensive” sector (Barnes, Mattsson, & Sørensen, 2016), i.e. people pay and seek above everything else for the experience, it is important to know how sustainability affects experience. Given also, that there is a growing demand and need for sustainability, policy makers and tourism service providers can consider the results of this study to find an incentive to increase their sustainability practices.

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with this may be the lack of regulation due to the vagueness of sustainability (Font, 2002). An aim might therefore be to introduce a universally accepted certification system that is congruent with legislation. Sustainability in terms of sociocultural factors can be improved by involving local residents and communities in tourism planning. This is for example the case in rural tourism.

We found through the literature that an increased customer experience has a positive influence on the destination's competitiveness. Therefore we can conclude that also our second hypothesis – an increased customer experience leads to a better destination competitiveness – is supported by our findings. This means that our model holds to the extent of the conditions and limitations of this study. In any case, it can be fair to state that investments in sustainability can lead to a better customer experience, as it was here tested. A better customer experience in turn can increase the destination's competitiveness. And by increasing competitiveness, this can rise the economic profits while maintaining sustainability, simultaneously. The profits can be used to pay the initial investments in sustainability and part of the profits can be used to invest again in sustainability. The circle closes and becomes self-sustaining.

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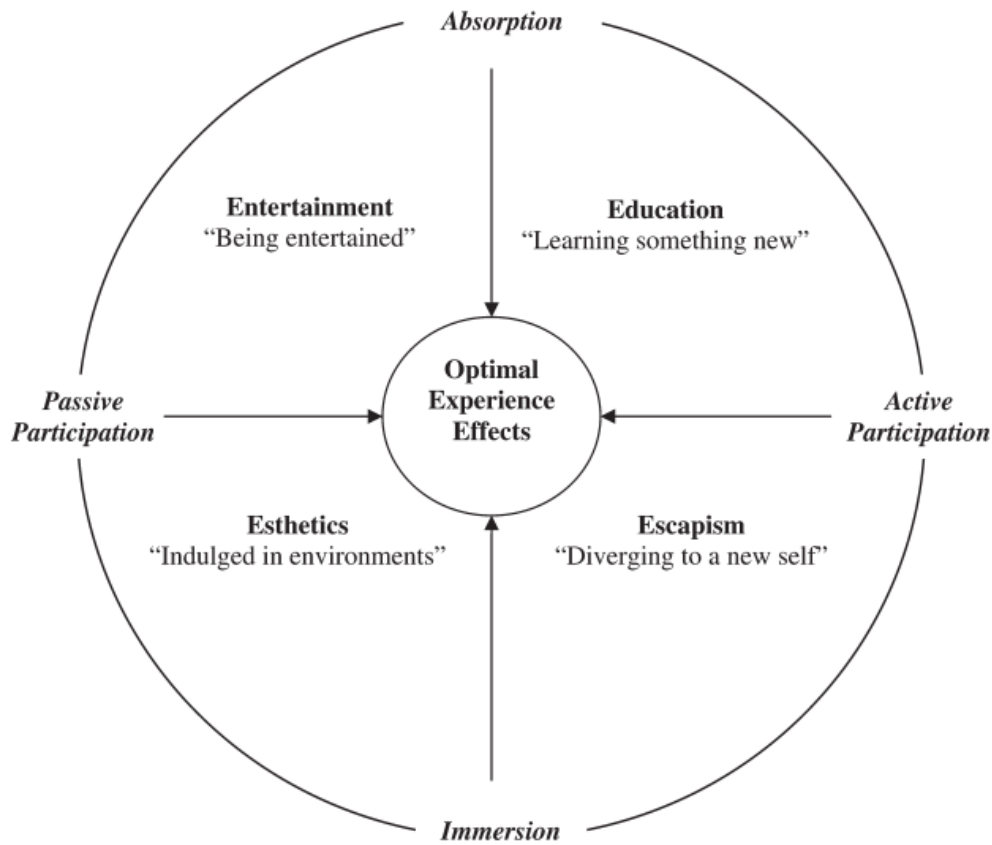
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## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1 - The Four Realms of Experience by Pine and Gilmore (1999), adapted by Oh et al. (2007)



### Appendix 2 – Independent Samples Test for every single question

#### Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				t-test for Equality of Means				
						Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df				Lower	Upper
Q1.1_The_experience_has _made_me_more_knowled gable	Equal variances assumed	7,122	,009	6,694	82	,000	1,780	,266	1,251	2,309
	Equal variances not assumed			5,948	37,448	,000	1,780	,299	1,174	2,386

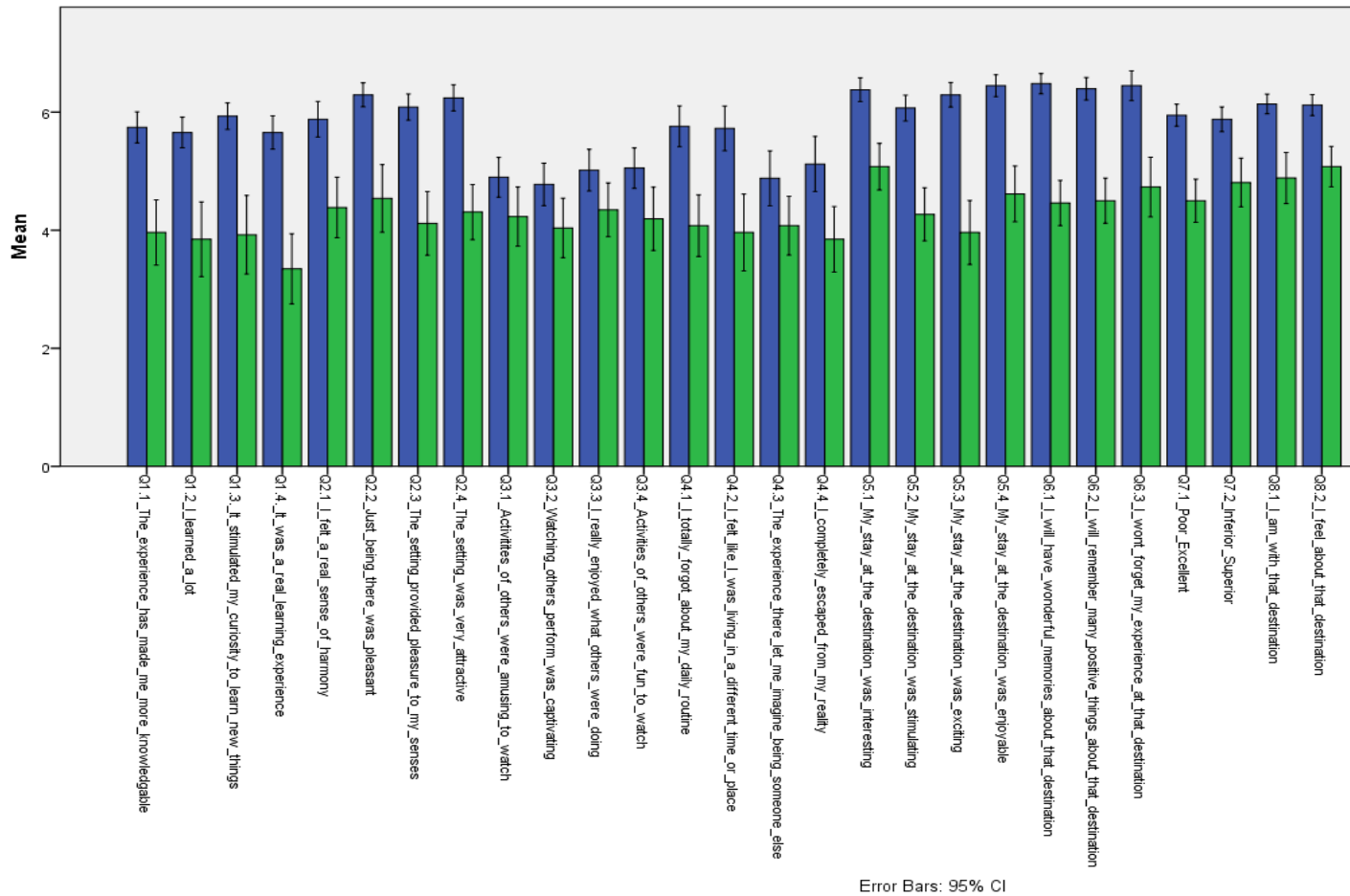
Q1.2_I_learned_a_lot	Equal variances assumed	7,736	,007	6,431	82	,000	1,809	,281	1,249	2,369
	Equal variances not assumed			5,427	34,137	,000	1,809	,333	1,132	2,486
Q1.3_It_stimulated_my_curiosity_to_learn_new_things	Equal variances assumed	23,213	,000	7,360	82	,000	2,008	,273	1,465	2,551
	Equal variances not assumed			5,870	31,211	,000	2,008	,342	1,311	2,705
Q1.4_It_was_a_real_learning_experience	Equal variances assumed	8,287	,005	8,122	82	,000	2,309	,284	1,743	2,875
	Equal variances not assumed			7,209	37,363	,000	2,309	,320	1,660	2,958
Q2.1_I_felt_a_real_sense_of_harmony	Equal variances assumed	1,338	,251	5,364	82	,000	1,495	,279	,940	2,049
	Equal variances not assumed			5,151	43,912	,000	1,495	,290	,910	2,080
Q2.2_Just_being_there_was_pleasant	Equal variances assumed	15,406	,000	7,325	82	,000	1,755	,240	1,278	2,231
	Equal variances not assumed			5,917	31,821	,000	1,755	,297	1,151	2,359
Q2.3_The_setting_provided_pleasure_to_my_senses	Equal variances assumed	4,007	,049	8,191	82	,000	1,971	,241	1,492	2,449
	Equal variances not assumed			6,926	34,250	,000	1,971	,285	1,393	2,549
Q2.4_The_setting_was_very_attractive	Equal variances assumed	3,425	,068	8,615	82	,000	1,934	,224	1,487	2,380
	Equal variances not assumed			7,650	37,394	,000	1,934	,253	1,422	2,446
Q3.1_Activities_of_others_were_amusing_to_watch	Equal variances assumed	,006	,936	2,223	82	,029	,666	,299	,070	1,261
	Equal variances not assumed			2,249	49,514	,029	,666	,296	,071	1,261
Q3.2_Watching_others_perform_was_captivating	Equal variances assumed	,760	,386	2,349	82	,021	,737	,314	,113	1,362
	Equal variances not assumed			2,431	52,352	,019	,737	,303	,129	1,346
Q3.3_I_really_enjoyed_what_others_were_doing	Equal variances assumed	,443	,507	2,217	82	,029	,671	,303	,069	1,273

	Equal variances not assumed			2,370	56,789	,021	,671	,283	,104	1,238
Q3.4_Activities_of_others_ were_fun_to_watch	Equal variances assumed	,058	,810	2,778	82	,007	,859	,309	,244	1,475
	Equal variances not assumed			2,759	47,405	,008	,859	,312	,233	1,486
Q4.1_I_totally_forgot_abo ut_my_daily_routine	Equal variances assumed	,002	,961	5,444	82	,000	1,682	,309	1,067	2,296
	Equal variances not assumed			5,479	48,928	,000	1,682	,307	1,065	2,299
Q4.2_I_felt_like_I_was_liv ing_in_a_different_time_or _place	Equal variances assumed	1,403	,240	5,005	82	,000	1,763	,352	1,062	2,463
	Equal variances not assumed			4,788	43,542	,000	1,763	,368	1,020	2,505
Q4.3_The_experience_ther e_let_me_imagine_being_s omeone_else	Equal variances assumed	5,926	,017	2,095	82	,039	,802	,383	,040	1,564
	Equal variances not assumed			2,396	67,377	,019	,802	,335	,134	1,471
Q4.4_I_completely_escape d_from_my_reality	Equal variances assumed	2,417	,124	3,242	82	,002	1,275	,393	,492	2,057
	Equal variances not assumed			3,571	61,318	,001	1,275	,357	,561	1,988
Q5.1_My_stay_at_the_dest ination_was_interesting	Equal variances assumed	1,263	,264	6,590	82	,000	1,302	,198	,909	1,696
	Equal variances not assumed			6,016	39,467	,000	1,302	,216	,865	1,740
Q5.2_My_stay_at_the_dest ination_was_stimulating	Equal variances assumed	4,209	,043	8,204	82	,000	1,800	,219	1,363	2,236
	Equal variances not assumed			7,354	38,073	,000	1,800	,245	1,304	2,295
Q5.3_My_stay_at_the_dest ination_was_exciting	Equal variances assumed	7,529	,007	9,941	82	,000	2,332	,235	1,865	2,798
	Equal variances not assumed			8,240	33,135	,000	2,332	,283	1,756	2,907
Q5.4_My_stay_at_the_dest ination_was_enjoyable	Equal variances assumed	12,70	,001	8,895	82	,000	1,833	,206	1,423	2,243
	Equal variances not assumed			7,414	33,434	,000	1,833	,247	1,330	2,336
Q6.1_I_will_have_wonderf ul_memories_about_that_d estination	Equal variances assumed	3,841	,053	11,31	82	,000	2,021	,179	1,666	2,376
	Equal variances not assumed			9,867	36,136	,000	2,021	,205	1,606	2,437

Q6.2_I_will_remember_may_positive_things_about_that_destination	Equal variances assumed	3,450	,067	10,054	82	,000	1,897	,189	1,521	2,272
	Equal variances not assumed			9,077	38,605	,000	1,897	,209	1,474	2,319
Q6.3_I_wont_forget_my_experience_at_that_destination	Equal variances assumed	3,927	,051	6,890	82	,000	1,718	,249	1,222	2,213
	Equal variances not assumed			6,230	38,711	,000	1,718	,276	1,160	2,275
Q7.1_Poor_Excellent	Equal variances assumed	3,912	,051	7,910	82	,000	1,448	,183	1,084	1,812
	Equal variances not assumed			7,218	39,422	,000	1,448	,201	1,043	1,854
Q7.2_Inferior_Superior	Equal variances assumed	1,935	,168	5,214	82	,000	1,072	,206	,663	1,481
	Equal variances not assumed			4,745	39,231	,000	1,072	,226	,615	1,528
Q8.1_I_am_with_that_destination	Equal variances assumed	5,791	,018	6,697	82	,000	1,253	,187	,881	1,626
	Equal variances not assumed			5,549	33,114	,000	1,253	,226	,794	1,713
Q8.2_I_feel_about_that_destination	Equal variances assumed	1,251	,267	6,037	82	,000	1,044	,173	,700	1,388
	Equal variances not assumed			5,550	40,026	,000	1,044	,188	,664	1,424

■ Yes  
■ No

### Appendix 3 – Question Means Bar Chart



### Appendix 4 - Independent Samples Test for the means of the different sections

#### Independent Samples Test

##### Levene's Test

##### for Equality of

##### Variances

##### t-test for Equality of Means

##### 95% Confidence

##### Interval of the

##### Difference

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
MeanEducation	Equal variances assumed	19,528	,000	8,036	82	,000	1,97646	,24595	1,48718	2,46574
	Equal variances not assumed			6,797	34,269	,000	1,97646	,29078	1,38570	2,56722
MeanAesthetics	Equal variances assumed	3,253	,075	8,894	82	,000	1,78846	,20108	1,38844	2,18848

	Equal variances not assumed			7,844	36,916	,000	1,78846	,22800	1,32645	2,25048
MeanEntertain ment	Equal variances assumed	,463	,498	2,615	82	,011	,73342	,28050	,17542	1,29142
	Equal variances not assumed			2,767	55,376	,008	,73342	,26507	,20229	1,26455
MeanEscapism	Equal variances assumed	1,571	,214	4,643	82	,000	1,38031	,29727	,78894	1,97167
	Equal variances not assumed			5,165	62,874	,000	1,38031	,26722	,84629	1,91432
MeanArousal	Equal variances assumed	6,288	,014	10,37	82	,000	1,81664	,17517	1,46817	2,16512
	Equal variances not assumed			9,164	37,050	,000	1,81664	,19824	1,41499	2,21830
MeanMemories	Equal variances assumed	1,405	,239	11,39	82	,000	1,87843	,16491	1,55036	2,20649
	Equal variances not assumed			10,26	38,487	,000	1,87843	,18295	1,50822	2,24863
MeanOverallQ uality	Equal variances assumed	,512	,476	7,055	82	,000	1,25995	,17859	,90467	1,61523
	Equal variances not assumed			6,612	41,665	,000	1,25995	,19055	,87532	1,64457
MeanSatisfacti on	Equal variances assumed	4,178	,044	7,010	82	,000	1,14854	,16385	,82259	1,47449
	Equal variances not assumed			6,184	36,932	,000	1,14854	,18574	,77217	1,52491

## Appendix 5 – Overall mean comparison

### Group Statistics

	<i>Traveling_to_sustainable_touristic_destination</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
Mean Overall	Yes	58	5,8700	,58330	,07659
	No	26	4,3722	,84414	,16555

### Independent Samples Test

		<i>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</i>		<i>t-test for Equality of Means</i>						
								<i>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</i>		
		<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2- tailed)</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error Difference</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
MeanOverall	Equal variances assumed	8,213	,005	9,421	82	,000	1,49778	,15898	1,18151	1,81404
	Equal variances not assumed			8,211	36,122	,000	1,49778	,18241	1,12788	1,86767

## Appendix 6 – Linear regression analysis and correlation for sustainable destinations

### Correlations<sup>a</sup>

		<i>MeanExperienceEconomy</i>	<i>MeanConsequences</i>
MeanExperienceEconomy	Pearson Correlation	1	,718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	58	58
MeanConsequences	Pearson Correlation	,718**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	58	58

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

a. QA\_Traveling\_to\_sustainable\_touristic\_destination = Yes

### Model Summary<sup>a</sup>

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
1	,718 <sup>b</sup>	,515	,507	,37855

a. QA\_Traveling\_to\_sustainable\_touristic\_destination = Yes

b. Predictors: (Constant), MeanExperienceEconomy

### Coefficients<sup>a,b</sup>

		<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>		
Model		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	(Constant)	3,208	,390		8,216	,000
	MeanExperienceEconomy	,539	,070	,718	7,715	,000

a. QA\_Traveling\_to\_sustainable\_touristic\_destination = Yes

b. Dependent Variable: MeanConsequences

ANOVA<sup>a,b</sup>

Model		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	Regression	8,529	1	8,529	59,521	,000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	8,025	56	,143		
	Total	16,554	57			

a. QA\_Traveling\_to\_sustainable\_touristic\_destination = Yes

b. Dependent Variable: MeanConsequences

c. Predictors: (Constant), MeanExperienceEconomy

## Appendix 7 - Linear regression analysis and correlation for non-sustainable destinations

Correlations<sup>a</sup>

		<i>MeanExperienceEconomy</i>	<i>MeanConsequences</i>
MeanExperienceEconomy	Pearson Correlation	1	,883**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	26	26
MeanConsequences	Pearson Correlation	,883**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	26	26

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

a. QA\_Traveling\_to\_sustainable\_touristic\_destination = No

Model Summary<sup>a</sup>

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
1	,883 <sup>b</sup>	,780	,771	,34601

a. QA\_Traveling\_to\_sustainable\_touristic\_destination = No

b. Predictors: (Constant), MeanExperienceEconomy

Coefficients<sup>a,b</sup>

Model		<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
		<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
1	(Constant)	2,105	,286		7,363	,000
	MeanExperienceEconomy	,629	,068	,883	9,232	,000

a. QA\_Traveling\_to\_sustainable\_touristic\_destination = No

b. Dependent Variable: MeanConsequences



ANOVA<sup>a,b</sup>

Model		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1	Regression	10,203	1	10,203	85,222	,000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	2,873	24	,120		
	Total	13,076	25			

a. QA\_Traveling\_to\_sustainable\_touristic\_destination = No

b. Dependent Variable: MeanConsequences

c. Predictors: (Constant), MeanExperienceEconomy

## Appendix 8 – Survey Questionnaire

### Destination choice

I have traveled to a sustainable tourism destination? \*

Elige ▼

If yes, which destination did you prefer?

- ☐ Traditional touristic destination
- ☐ Sustainable touristic destination

## Education

The next sections will ask your opinion on different topics regarding your experience.

The experience has made me more knowledgeable. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I learned a lot. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

It was a real learning experience. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

## Aesthetics

I felt a real sense of harmony \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

Just being there was pleasant \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

The setting provided pleasure to my senses \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

The setting was very attractive \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

## Entertainment

Activities of others were amusing to watch. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Watching others perform was captivating. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I really enjoyed watching what others were doing. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Activities of others were fun to watch. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

## Escapism

I totally forgot about my daily routine. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I felt like I was living in a different time or place. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

The experience there let me imagine being someone else. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I completely escaped from my reality. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

## Arousal

How interesting was your stay at the destination? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

How stimulating was your stay at the destination? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

How exciting was your stay at the destination? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

How enjoyable was your stay at the destination? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

## Arousal

My stay at the destination was interesting. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

My stay at the destination was stimulating. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

My stay at the destination was exciting. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

My stay at the destination was enjoyable. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

## Memory

I will have wonderful memories about that destination. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I will remember many positive things about that destination. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I won't forget my experience at that destination. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

## Overall perceived quality

Poor...Excellent \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Poor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Excellent

Inferior...Superior \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Inferior	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Superior



## Satisfaction

I am ... with that destination. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Very dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very satisfied

I feel ... about that destination \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Terrible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Delighted