

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences
Faculty of Business Administration, Lappeenranta
Bachelor Degree Programme in International Business

Dmitrii Borodin

Sustainability value assessment for very small businesses in tourism

Thesis 2015

Abstract

Dmitrii Borodin

Sustainability value assessment for very small businesses in tourism, 46 pages,
1 appendix

Saimaa University of Applied Sciences

Faculty of Business Administrations, Lappeenranta

Degree Programme in International Business

Thesis 2015

Instructors: Senior Lecturer Timo Saarainen, Saimaa University of Applied Sciences

The thesis is a supplementary work for a business plan of a youth hostel in Central America. The paper's core objective is to investigate consumer attitudes toward a sustainable tourism and whether a green certification can be a competitive advantage.

For an empirical research data was collected through a questionnaire handed out to 182 respondents on Lappeenranta university campus. It was later analyzed using IBM Statistics software. The results defined a further research direction, so a quality assessment was made to evaluate an existing eco labels supply. Results of this investigation revealed that existing certification programs in mass are oversimplified and generalized. Therefore, concluding part of the present thesis describes possible solutions from a business owner and manager prospective.

Keywords: eco labeling, environmental certification, sustainable tourism

Table of contents

1	Introduction	5
1.1	Background.....	5
1.2	Objectives	5
1.3	Importance of study	5
1.4	Research method, limitation and delimitations.....	7
2	Empirical research	7
2.1	Conceptual framework and literature review	8
2.2	Summary of Research Questions and Hypotheses	10
2.3	Limitations.....	10
2.4	Methods.....	11
2.4.1	Sample and data collection	11
2.4.2	Measurement	11
2.4.3	Survey Instrument	12
2.5	Trustworthiness	12
2.6	Analysis and Results.....	12
2.6.1	Research Question 1 (R1): Do young adult travellers have environmental concerns about tourism attributes such as destination, accommodation etc.?.....	13
2.6.2	Research Question 2 (R2): What tools do travellers recognize? ...	14
2.6.3	Research Question 3 (R3): Do green attributes affect the purchase decision?	15
2.7	Socio-Demographic Hypotheses	16
2.7.1	Hypothesis 1: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to gender; 16	
2.7.2	H2: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to income;....	19
2.7.3	H3: Environmental friendly behavior will differ due to country of origin 20	
2.8	Summary	21
3	Quality Analysis of Tourism Ecolabels.....	23
3.1	Delimitations	23
3.2	Conceptual framework	23
3.3	Procedures	24
3.4	Criteria	25
3.4.1	Benefits	25
3.4.2	Process	25
3.4.3	Sustainability	26
3.4.4	Quality	27
3.4.5	A selection of eco labels.....	28
3.5	Test Results.....	29
3.5.1	Biosphere Responsible Tourism	30
3.5.2	Earth Check	30
3.5.3	Green Globe.....	31
3.5.4	Q certification tourism.....	31
3.5.5	Impact Monitoring System (IMS)	31
3.5.6	Travel Life Accommodation	32
3.6	Summary	32
4	Research implications.....	34
4.1	Self-claimed environmental certification.....	34

4.1.1	Guidelines and voluntary regulations for appropriate environmental representation.....	35
4.1.2	Enforcement.....	36
4.1.3	Visual representation and personnel involvement.....	36
4.2	Eco label as framework.....	37
4.3	Alternatives for eco label approach.....	37
4.4	Summary	38
5	Discussion and Conclusion.....	38
	Appendix.....	40
	List of figures.....	41
	References list	43

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The author of this paper is currently involved in preparation of a business plan for a hostel in Central America. While working on it, the decision was made to evaluate a possibility to utilize a green trend as a competitive advantage. The investigation was to be made in two particular fields: modular construction, which is out of scope in the present paper, and consumer attitudes toward green trend in tourism industry, which is a starting point for current research.

1.2 Objectives

Accommodation facilities are regarded among the least efficient buildings "because of their use of disposable amenities and products, heated pools, great amounts of daily laundering, and a number of other factors which impact the environment" (Gustin & Weaver, 1996). Owners and management companies observed the trend and have begun to incorporate environmentally friendly practices into their operations partly because they are viewed to be cost efficient methods and partly because more and more business entities and entrepreneurs have concerns not only with environmental issue but with a more broad topic of corporate social responsibility. However, it remains somewhat unclear whether there is a demand for sustainable tourism on a customers' side. The scholar research on the topic is very limited (Kasim, 2004), whereas studies indicates that location, price, and cleanliness are the highest rated attributes to most tourists (Shanka & Taylor, 2003).

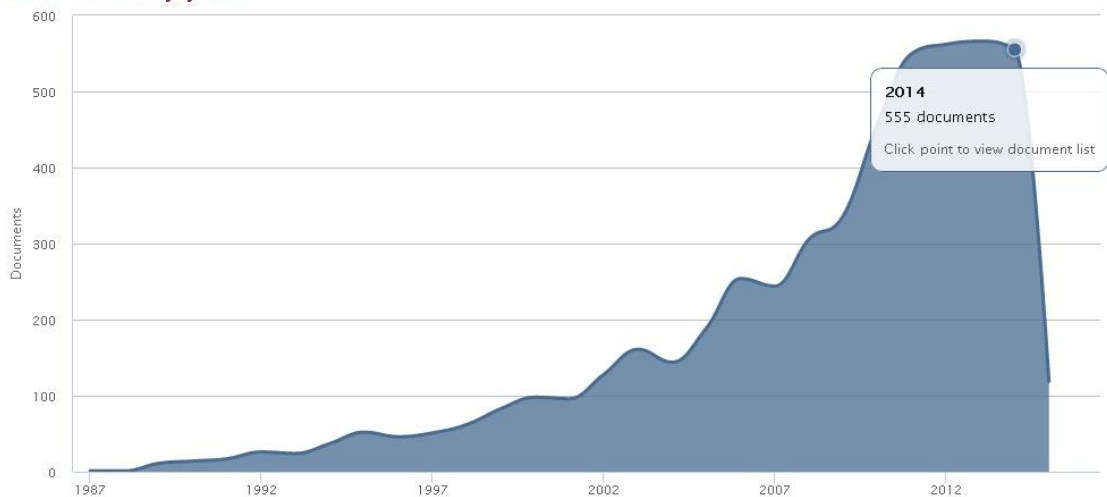
Consequently, the core objective of this paper is to investigate whether utilizing a green trend might be a competitive advantage and worth considering for a very small tourism business at all.

1.3 Importance of study

The topic for the current research is not only valuable for a particular business plan, but is of current interest in academic world. There was an exposure of interest toward green technologies in 2000s, hence one can get an impression

that nowadays not so much attention given to the topic, however that is not particularly true. Graph 1 retrieved from SCOPUS database represents the number of documents containing the keyword “sustainable tourism”. It clearly shows continuous growth, reaching impressive amount of 555 scholar works written on the topic in 2014.

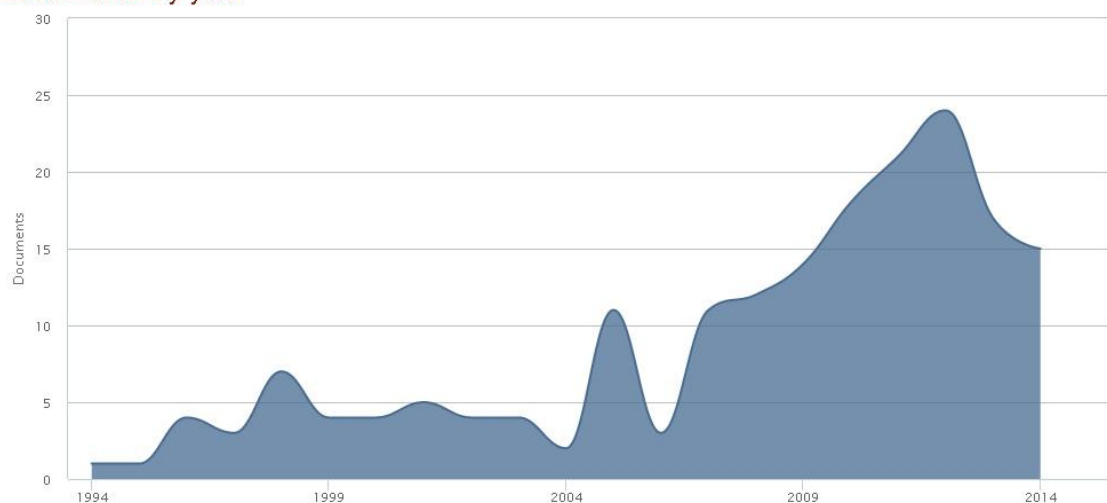
Documents by year



Graph 1 Number of scholar papers containing “sustainable tourism” keyword. Retrieved from SCOPUS database

The Graph 2 shows the same exponent for the keyword “eco label”. The growth is not as stable as for “sustainable tourism” phrase, but we a tendency is clearly visible.

Documents by year



Graph 2 Number of scholar papers containing “eco label” keyword. Retrieved from SCOPUS database

1.4 Research method, limitation and delimitations

A business plan needs for a youth hostel in Central America define the context of the present research. First of all, only tourism very small businesses (VSB) in tourism industry are considered. Although no precise definition exists, the one by Travel Life Accommodation (2010) was adapted, where lowest segment means accommodation facilities under 100 guests, which fall into category of very small businesses quite well.

A second delimitation is that of geographical nature, this will be further discussed in the second chapter evaluating existing eco label supply in Central America region. The assessment was made according to a framework developed relying on information gathered through academic books and Internet portals of various environmental activists.

The empirical research in the first chapter was undertaken in form of questionnaire to gain some insights about attitudes toward green technologies in tourism. The sample was collected in Finland, which might affect the overall result and should be considered as limitation. One should note that throughout the questionnaire no emphasize on geographical area was made. Then, data collected throughout this semi-structured survey was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software. Based on this theoretical foundation third chapter discusses the further research direction and implications.

2 Empirical research

Over recent decades, an on-going interest in green technologies and continuous improvement of environmental legislation can be seen all around the globe. However, in these developments there are problems with articulated definitions and standards similar to those caused by paradigm shift from goods oriented production toward service oriented economy. It is not clear also how an environmental impact should be measured or how to build environmental concerned

supply chain. In response a poll of voluntary environmental tools has been developed. A brief summary is given in Table 1. However, it is somewhat dubious that consumers in general are aware or capable of using these tools. This chapter aims to examine consumer attitudes toward sustainability and environmental consciousness in the tourism sector.

Table no. 1. Voluntary environment tools applied to the hotel industry

Tools	Purpose	Examples
Codes of conduct	In order to show observance of the basic principles by a sustainable and environment friendly business	Agenda 21 for the tourism and travels industry; WTTC environment Guidebook
Best environment practice in this area	In order to take actual steps for improving the company's ecologic performance	Electricity and water saving approaches; diminishing the quantity of waste and its adequate management
Ecolabels	In order to ensure the ecologic performance of business in close connection to the set out criteria and for informing the client	European ecolabel, Green Globe 21, Öko-Proof-Betrieb, Spanish ecolabeling systems
Environment Management Systems (EMSs)	In order to guide the company's environment performance and for its continuous improvement in close connection to the planned strategy	ISO 14001; European Regulation EMAS
Ecologic performance indicators	In order to set out and communicate the company's ecologic performance	Total electricity and water consumption; resulting quantities of waste per type

Table 1. Voluntary environment tools applied to the hotel industry. Source: Ayushi, S. 2006. Adoption of Voluntary Environmental Tools for Sustainable Tourism: Analyzing the Experience of Spanish Hotels. Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, p. 209.

2.1 Conceptual framework and literature review

The conceptual framework of this chapter is set on research questions and working hypotheses supported with deductive reasoning (Shields & Ranqarjan, 2013). Research direction is derived primary from author's continuous interaction with secondary information sources related to the topic. Questions were

developed using a systematic approach of constructing the theory through data analysis. This approach is known as grounded theory (GT) (Faggiolani, 2011).

Aside from research questions relying on author's personal expertise, there is also a sub-set of hypotheses to be tested. They deal primary with correlation between demographics and environmentally friendly behavior (EFB). Literature review suggests controversial results here, so this chapter tends to investigate this relationship even though it is of a less importance than the research questions.

First, it would be of interest to test a correlation between age and EFB, because some recent scholar works suggest that a significant and positive link exists. (D'Souza et al., 2007), however others try to prove opposite (Zimmer, Stafford, & Safford, 1994) and thus it is natural that some findings suggest no correlation at all (Rowlands, Scott, & Parker, 2003). Unfortunately, even when facing such inconsistency it is not possible to test such a relationship in the present study due to very homogeneous sample consisting primary from students aged between 18 and 26.

Second, it is usually assumed that women are more environmentally conscious than men are. In the modern studies there is no a strong scientific evidence for this (Firat, 2009); whereas earlier it was proven by a number of scholars (Laroche et al., 2001; Smith, 2001), while few argue that no significant differences between genders exist (Arbuthnot, 1977; Samdahl & Robertson, 1989). Consequently, following hypothesizes derived:

Hypothesis 1a and 1b: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to gender;

The third demographic hypothesis is related to income. Common knowledge dictates that people with a higher income tend to be more concerned with an environment (Firat, 2009). It should be noted as well that in context of this paper the income is expressed as average traveller's expense on the accommodation per night.

Hypothesis 2a and 2b: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to income;

The fourth demographic hypothesis comes from author's empirical knowledge:

Hypothesis 3a and 3b: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to country of origin.

2.2 Summary of Research Questions and Hypotheses

On the ground of the conceptual framework and research objectives the following set of questions and hypotheses are proposed for this chapter:

Research Question 1 (R1): Do young adult travellers have environmental concerns about tourism attributes such as destination, accommodation etc.?

Research Question 2 (R2): What environment protection tools do travellers recognize?

Research Question 3 (R3): Do green attributes affect the purchase decision?

A Summary of Socio-Demographic Hypotheses

Beyond those research questions a correlation between various demographic groups and variables should be examined:

H1: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to gender;

H2: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to income;

H3: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to country of origin.

2.3 Limitations

As Patton (1990) notes, "There are no perfect research designs. There are always trade-offs" (p. 162). First, following a common practice of research in the environmental attitudes field, it would be an asset to use New Ecological Paradigm (NEP), however due to time and a resource constraint of the study such scale measurement has been rejected. The issue will be discussed in more details in the following section.

Also, it should be noted, that the research deals with young adult leisure travelers and therefore the result should not be extrapolated on the whole population.

2.4 Methods

2.4.1 Sample and data collection

Because this paper is a supplementary work for a youth hostel business plan, the target audience was generalized as young adults with average and above average income and who have spent at least one night at an accommodation facility over the last 12 months. The next issue to define was a number of respondents needed, albeit there is no consensus on appropriate sample size for such studies (Orme, 2006). Some (Quester & Smart, 1998) argue that a minimum of 100-200 respondents is essential. The sample size of this study was 193 in total and 182 respondents were approved for statistical analyze which seems appropriate for the case. Some were excluded from the sample because they did not travel over the last 12 months.

Many degree programs in Finland require international experience and furthermore, the country incorporates high living standards. Therefore the university campus of Saimaa UAS and Lappeenranta University of Technology were chosen for interviews in person. A questionnaire paper was given out to random people at the university campus during spring 2015.

Limitations of the present survey contain the fact that not all respondents can be rigidly regarded as travellers fitting the criteria. To address the concern respondents were asked whether they stayed at an accommodation facility over the last 12 months while travelling for leisure purposes. Consequently, only surveys with positive response were processed. In addition, even though the questionnaire was available in English and Finnish, there is a possibility of respondent misunderstanding because of the survey design.

2.4.2 Measurement

The initial incentive was to use a New Environmental Paradigm Scale designed by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) and redeveloped in 2000 as New Ecological Paradigm (NEP). It is a broadly used tool to measure environmental attitudes

and concerns (Dunlap, 2008). There are fifteen statements which focus on attitudes about "reality of limits to growth, anti-anthropocentrism, the fragility of nature's balance, rejection of exceptionalism and the possibility of an eco-crisis" (Dunlap et al., 2000, p. 432).

However, later on due to foreseeing difficulties with approaching a large number of respondents with a complex survey design, it was decided not to implement NEP scale in order to avoid cognitive load and get a higher response rates. Consequently, few nominal scales were utilized.

2.4.3 Survey Instrument

General question groups might be defined as follow:

- Questions dealing primarily with **demographics**. In particular it is country of origin (EU citizen or not), age and average level of expenses.
- Questions examining **attitudes**, and
- **Recognition** of voluntary environment protection tools.

There also was a question "Would you like to improve you environmental awareness?" See Appendix for a complete copy of the survey.

2.5 Trustworthiness

The prevalent point of view in the academia world is that qualitative method is subjective and biased. However, Kalinowski (2010) justly notes that it is not subjectivity that matters, but rather disclosure of potential bias and the transparency. Research assertion is a vital part for both methods. Naturally, bias can be incorporated in all research. To ensure robustness in the present study, guidelines for qualitative research developed by Elliott et al. (1999) have been followed.

2.6 Analysis and Results

This section presents findings and examines their impact upon the research. Several statistical methods were used to analyze the data. Frequencies, means

and standards deviations were run for all demographic data, as well as the importance placed on the individual environmental attributes.

By understanding the importance placed on each attribute alone, along with the effect of socio-demographic characteristics, management can have a better indication of the specific environmentally friendly attributes that are most important to different individuals, and merge them with other hotel attributes.

2.6.1 Research Question 1 (R1): Do young adult travellers have environmental concerns about tourism attributes such as destination, accommodation etc.?

Q: When travelling, I have environmental concerns about		Travel Destination		Accommodation		Food		Mode of Transportation		Other	
		Frequency	Percent	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Valid	yes	102	56,0	89	48,9	109	59,9	85	46,7	50	27,5
	no	74	40,7	87	47,8	69	37,9	93	51,1	99	54,4
	Total	176	96,7	176	96,7	178	97,8	178	97,8	149	81,9
Missing	System	6	3,3	6	3,3	4	2,2	4	2,2	33	18,1
Total		182	100,0	182	100,0	182	100,0	182	100,0	182	100,0

Table 2. Results for a set of questions dealing with respondents' environment concerns

Travellers consciously chose travel destination, accommodation facilities and which food to consume while the mode of transportation is somewhat given by default. Did anyone reject a flight carrier because company operating it doesn't make enough effort to reduce carbon footprint? Around 80% of aviation CO2 emissions are emitted from flights of over 1,500 kilometers, for which there is no practical alternative mode of transportation. Here is another justification there is no railroad transport in Panama and only three airports in the whole country, so there is no alternative mode of transportation except horseback riding or walking. Yet, 46.7% of respondents said they have concerns about mode of transportation.

Not surprisingly, the biggest issue for respondents was food where only 37,9% said they do not possess any concerns. This variable was then followed by travel destination where the gap between polar opinions was also quite significant and accounted for about 15%. While it is clear how one can evaluate these two variables against ecofriendly behavior, the case of accommodation is somewhat similar to mode of transportation and remains unclear how one can ensure accommodation facility is implementing ecofriendly practice. Slightly more (1.1%) than half of respondents said they care at all. The highest level of indifference by the respondents was shown toward the variable “other”.

2.6.2 Research Question 2 (R2): What tools do travellers recognize?

Q: I recognize the following voluntary environment protection tools		Code of conduct		Best environmental practices		Eco labels		Environmental Management Systems (EMS)		Ecologic performance indicators	
		Frequency	Percent	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Valid	what is it?	107	58,8%	81	44,5%	50	27,5%	101	55,5%	116	63,7%
	I usually check it out	31	17,0%	38	20,9%	37	20,3%	23	12,8%	15	8,2%
	I know what it is	42	23,1%	60	33,0%	92	50,5%	55	30,2%	47	25,8%
	Total	180	98,9%	179	98,4%	179	98,4%	179	98,4%	178	97,8%
Missing	System	2	1,1%	3	1,6%	3	1,6%	3	1,6%	4	2,2%
Total		182	100%	182	100%	182	100%	182	100%	182	100%

Table 3. Results for a set of questions dealing with recognition of environment protection tools

Discussion of previous question contained terms such as “half of”, “slightly more than 50%”, whereas when speaking about recognition given to environment protection tools a woefully big portion of respondents had not heard clue about those tools, as Table 3 represents.

The data also supports the statement about eco labels being most recognized way to address environmental issue. Only 27.5% of respondents had never heard of eco label, but the number of people utilizing the tool was slightly more

than 20%. The best result had variable “best environmental practices” (BEP) but according to The Coastal Wiki’s definition it is “application of the most appropriate combination of environmental control measures and strategies”

Therefore it is unclear how those 20.9% of respondents interact with it, since this tool is strictly utilized on the business side. This moment also questions the credibility of all results in Table Number or at least results assigned to BEP variable.

On the bright side, a good portion of respondents showed a latent knowledge for variables mentioned, it can be said that a large amount of work for making consumers environmentally conscious has already been done and despite all the criticism to the industry of environment, NGOs and organizations development over past few decades is significant. Now the industry faces the necessity to shift the paradigm of its work from bringing passive recognition toward enhancing consumers for active interaction with environmental tools and practices developed.

2.6.3 Research Question 3 (R3): Do green attributes affect the purchase decision?

As described earlier, the strongest incentive for business owners is profit. This is not a surprise, since primary purpose of any business entity is to generate income and show a good Return on Investment.

Q: For “green” accommodation I am willing to pay		Frequency	Percent
Valid	more	29	15,9
	same	117	64,3
	less	5	2,7
	I dont know	27	14,8
	Total	178	97,8
Missing	System	4	2,2
Total		182	100,0

Table 4. Results for a questions examining respondents’ willingness to pay more for “green” accommodation.

Keeping that in mind no wonder environmental initiatives slip. Table 4 indicates that only 15.9% of respondents expressed willingness to stimulate ecofriendly business by paying more. 64.3% said that they are not ready to overpay, however it is interesting to combine results with those in Table 5. It is clear that while respondents are not willing to overpay for “green” accommodation, they would prefer an option with an Eco label mark given that the price is the same (79.7%). Almost the same impressive number (80.2%) indicated that they trust more those notions with eco label.

Q: Two notions are presented, whereas first one contains plain text “We care for environment. We recycle and enhance best environmental practices”, the second notions contains exactly the same text AND eco labels mark		I trust more		If price were the same	
		Frequency	Percent	F	P
Valid	Option without eco label mark	13	7,1	11	6,0
	Option with eco label mark	146	80,2	145	79,7
	It is not important	22	12,1	25	13,7
	Total	181	99,5	181	99,5
Missing	System	1	,5	1	,5
Total		182	100,0	182	100,0

Table 5. Comparison of options with and without eco label sign

2.7 Socio-Demographic Hypotheses

2.7.1 Hypothesis 1: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to gender;

This section discusses data in a cutaway of gender perspective. Chart 1 represents attitudes towards the mode of transportation. Slightly more than half of female respondents tend to think about environment impact that transport make. The gap between male respondents is more significant and accounts for 9%.

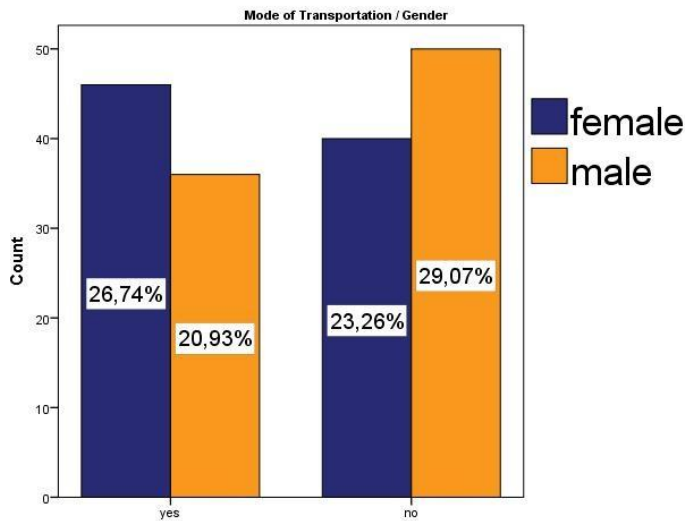


Chart 1. Correlation between gender and attitude toward mode of transportation variable

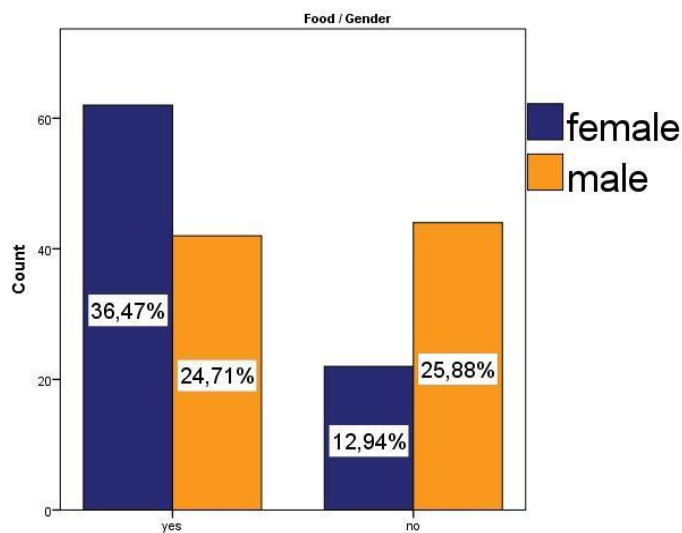


Chart 2. Correlation between gender and attitude toward food variable

Chart 2 deals with travellers concerns about food. It should be noted that no particular attributes of ecofriendly food were specified which means that the respondents face a broad question where they had to define "ecofriendly food" and what kind of concerns one can have about it. Whereas in previous case of transportation mode differences were moderate, food seems to be of a biggest importance for travellers, because 36.5% of females were positive as contrary to 13% being non-concerned. Male respondents splinted into almost even halves with a 1% difference.

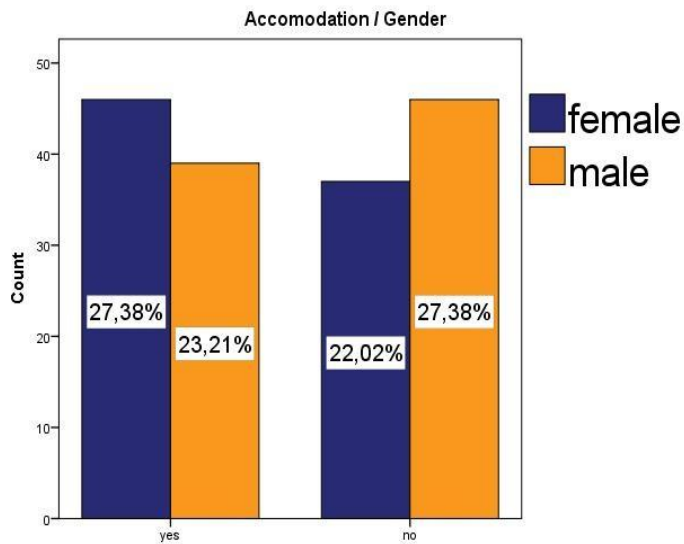


Chart 3. Correlation between gender and attitude toward accommodation variable

Chart 3 presents respondents' concerns for accommodation facilities while travelling. Results are very similar to those in Chart 1.

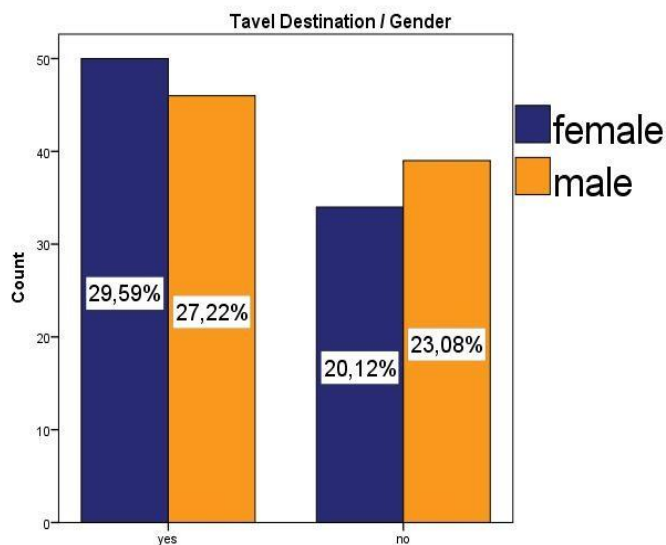


Chart 4. Correlation between gender and attitude toward travel destination variable

Chart 4 reflects attitudes toward travel destination variable and is the only case when more than half of male respondents expressed a concern. The difference with those who did not is not that impressive though and accounts only for 4%. What is interesting is that less women worried about travel destination than about food.

Chart 5 is the fifth question in the questionnaire with vaguely defined “other” variable. While there is not enough evidence for making any legible claims from scholar prospective it can be speculated that respondents expressed environmental concerns simply due to values imposed by society nowadays. Variables such as “recycling”, “energy and water consumption”, “social responsibility” etc. were left out of scope and well fitted to this “other” category, nevertheless only 19.5% female and 14.5% male respondents were positive.

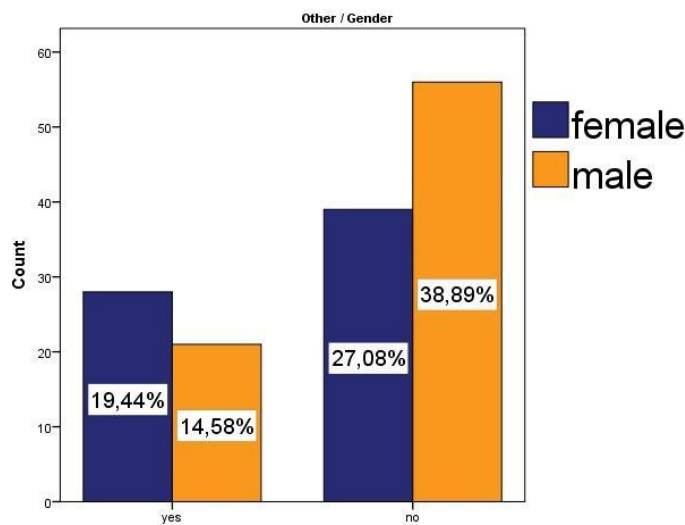


Chart 5. Correlation between gender and attitude toward “other” variable.

To sum up, every chart shows that women tend to worry about aspects of travel more often than men do. While in some cases the gap is not that significant (e.g. travel destination variable) in others a distinction is much bigger (e.g. food variable).

Therefore hypothesis that environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to gender is proven to be true.

2.7.2 H2: Environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to income;

Symmetric Measures		Travel destination / income		Accommodation / income		Food / income		Mode of transportation / income		Other / income	
		Value	Approx. Sig.	Value	Sig.	Value	Sig.	Value	Sig.	Value	Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	,251	,010	,135	,370	,155	,237	,271	,003	,176	,198
N of Valid Cases		169		169		173		172		146	

Table 6. Results for income-related hypothesis

In order to test a correlation between income and eco-friendly behavior symmetric measures were used. One such measure of association is contingency coefficient (C). To simplify, when there is no relationship between two variables, $C=0$; if the measure is different enough from 0, the test shows that there is a significant relationship between the two variables. The value cannot exceed "1".

Based on values in a Table 6, it is clear that no correlation exist between level of income and variables "travel destination" and "mode of transportation". Values of contingency coefficient for "food" and "other" variables are also insufficient to assume any correlation. Most correlation appears to be between the accommodation facility variable and income. Number of 0,37 shows that some correlation exists here, but nevertheless, is insignificant. One can assume that it is partly because in questionnaire income was associated with average expenditure upon accommodation facilities. Therefore, findings are consistent with other research (Rowlands, Scott, & Parker, 2003) and the hypothesis was proven to be false.

2.7.3 H3: Environmental friendly behavior will differ due to country of origin

Because the data was collected at a campus of two Finnish universities, it is natural that numbers for respondents of different origin are not equal. Therefore, the core metric is a proportion within each demographic group.

Results themselves are quite homogeneous. For example, in each variable more than half of respondents from EU expressed no concerns, as contrary to results among respondents from non-EU origin.

Consequently, the hypothesis that environmentally friendly behavior will differ due to country of origin was proven to be true.

		EU country		Non-EU country	
		count	% within a group	count	% within a group
travel destination	yes	57	53.7%	39	61.9%
	no	49	46.3%	24	38.1%
Accommodation facility	yes	41	38.6%	44	69.8%
	no	65	61.4%	19	30.2%
food	yes	57	51.8%	46	74.1%
	no	53	48.2%	16	25.9%
mode of transportation	yes	48	44.4%	33	51.5%
	no	60	55.6%	31	48.5%
other	yes	48	44.4%	33	51.5%
	no	60	55.6%	31	48.5%

Table 7. Correlation between country of origin and environment concerns

2.8 Summary

More than a half of the respondents had some concerns about travel destination and food variables, which seems to be a promising result because a travel destination is something that does not change overnight and therefore can be a subject for a mid- and long-term planning on a business side. In addition, food variable might be seen the same way as destination, but also as something that can be affected within single business operations frame.

Then, half of respondents indicated accommodation facility itself as an important attribute of sustainable travel. However, the third research question brings in alarming results: roughly 16% of the respondents are willing to en-

courage businesses' green behavior by monetary terms. That would end up the whole discussion about whether or not there is a demand for sustainable travel on a consumer side if only there was not a follow up question which revealed that 80% expressed trust and willing to choose an option with eco label mark given the price is the same.

Consequently, at this point it can be stated that while green attribute does not affect the buyers' decision directly, it might be a competitive advantage given that the top three attributes as location, price, and cleanliness are the same. Furthermore, according to review by Association of Youth Travel Accommodation (2010) only 8% of hostel operators participated in green certification schemes in 2010.

The second research question about what environment protection tools travelers do recognize has the same weighting factor as the previous one and it clearly indicated that eco labels are pretty much the only tool respondents are aware of. This finding is supported with insights gained through author's continuous interaction with various secondary information sources. The following chapter the examines existing eco labels supply.

In conclusion: three socio-demographic hypotheses were proven to be true: environmentally conscious behavior differs between males and females, as well as between people from EU and non-EU countries. At the same time, there is no a strong correlation between respondents level of income and their attitudes toward environment.

3 Quality Analysis of Tourism Ecolabels

As revealed in the previous chapter, eco labeling is most recognizable tool among consumers, and therefore the most suitable for building communication between business and its customers. There are quite many labels available on a local and worldwide basis. Therefore to gain a deeper insight, it was decided to evaluate the existing supply of eco labels against a legible framework.

There is a large number of environmental programs of various kinds. The total number of such programs seems impossible to count, though Delmas et al., 2012 name 427 programs. Thus, it is not surprising that very little quality control is applied to these environmental tools (Font and Buckley, 2001; Delmas et al., 2012).

3.1 Delimitations

This chapter takes into account only eco labels available for Central America and Caribbean regions only. Since there is only one local eco label in Costa Rica exists, the pull of label examined consists of programs available on international scale. None of local European or North American labels were included.

3.2 Conceptual framework

The labels were evaluated against a framework developed according to Font and Buckley (2001). They emphasize that this particular framework “has a value in itself” and might be used to evaluate the performance of newer labels that have entered the market after 1998. Unfortunately, final users of the research findings are not defined, which affected the whole course of the research. Thus, the framework was redefined in present research. An outline is given in Table 8.

WF = 40				WF = 10		WF = 40				WF = 10	
BENEFITS Does it help my business?				Process Is it easy to get?		Sustainability areas Do I help the environment?				Quality Is it good enough?	
C u s t o m e r s	E m p l o y e e s	C a s h f l o w	V i s i b l e r e s u l t	A c q u i s i t i o n	M a i n t e n a n c e	E n v i r o n m e n t	S o c i a l	E c o n o m y	C u l t u r e	R e c o g n i t i o n	D e v e l o p m e n t
WF = 10				WF = 5	WF = 5	WF = 20	WF = 10	WF = 5		WF = 5	WF = 5

An impact of these 3 factors cannot be measured in any way, therefore it is assumed that they are virtually the same

WF = weighting factor

Table 8. Framework for eco labels quality assessment. (Developed by the author based on Font and Buckley, 2001, Chapter 14 and various sources)

3.3 Procedures

There are four groups of criteria which are consequently divided into smaller sections. The difference in significance is described by the weighting factor (WF), which indicates the relative value of the certain criteria. Therefore, in total the weighting factor is 100%. This means that if all criteria carried the same value, each would have a WF of 10%, and under normal conditions, a criterion is actually classified as having WF of 10%. It is doubled (20%) in case of a great importance, and reduced to 5% if it is less important. In the case of criteria determining “sustainability” their total weight is 40% whereas impact on the environment has 20% as an issue of a great importance. Economic consequences criteria is not that important and thus have only 5%.

Each criteria is judged in terms of positive (+1) or negative (-1). Depending on the WF, the grade might be transformed into (+2/-2) or (+0.5/-0.5). Original model of Font and Buckley (2001) also contained grade “average” with score “0”, but in that case it is unclear how to calculate an impact of weighting factor given “0” points.

The best possible score in present framework is 7 points. It is hard to tell, however, what an expected average level is. Let us assume at least 5 points is nec-

essary to pass the test. All criteria are discussed in details and summarized in tabular forms in the following section.

3.4 Criteria

A top-notch eco label for a high standard of environmental practices presupposes a high quality set of criteria, of which the quality is always protected and can be regarded as a trust worthy and innovative testing method used by 3rd party inspection body.

3.4.1 Benefits

One of the weaknesses of Font & Buckley’s (2001) model was not defining the end user of the research outcomes. Since in this paper one of the core objectives is to assess eco labels in a business context, the group of criteria dealing with benefits of business owner and manager has the same value as sustainability group. Then, there are three core elements in tourism VSBs which can be broadly defined as customers, employees and cash flow. Surprisingly, impact of none of them can be measured. (Frieder and Frankl, 2005) Therefore, a fourth criteria “visible results” was introduced. It is not measurable in numerical equivalent either but rather is a subject for personal assessment. The outline is given in a Table 9 below.

Criteria	+2	-2
Visible results	Acquiring the eco labels is clearly benefiting the business in terms of media exposure, broadening the network, reducing the electricity and water consumption etc. Cases studies are great	Implementation of the eco label standard gives vague business prospective in unclearly defined terms and without any specific metrics.

Table 9. Evaluation criteria for business benefits. (Developed by the author based on the Font & Buckley, 2001, Chapter 14 and various sources)

3.4.2 Process

The process group divided into two parts: acquisition and maintenance. The first one deals with awarding procedures and financial and timing costs. The second

one examines the further costs of maintaining the certification. The outline is given in a Table 10 below.

Criteria	+0.5	-0.5
Acquisition	<p>High participation by environmental organizations and governmental bodies. 3rd party trained investigators on a periodical basis carry out inspection at least every 2 years.</p> <p>Initial investment in monetary and time terms are reasonably justified for VSB.</p> <p>Transparent and published awarding criteria.</p>	<p>Little or no participation by environmental organizations and governmental bodies. Only written inspections or self-assessment procedures on irregular basis.</p> <p>Initial investment in monetary and time terms cannot be justified in context VSB.</p> <p>Partially or not published awarding criteria.</p>
Maintenance	Costs of maintaining the certification measured against perceived improvements due to eco label introduction shows positive effect	Costs of maintaining the certification measured against perceived improvements due to eco label introduction shows negative effect

Table 10. Evaluation criteria for process criteria. (Developed by the author based on the Font and Buckley, 2001, Chapter 14 and various sources)

3.4.3 Sustainability

There are various models developed for measuring tourism sustainability impact on economy, society and the environment. For example, da Cunha and da Cunha's (2005), systemic model measures an impact of tourism on local development. Results obtained from the application of their model are tools for the reconciliation of environmental preservation, social justice and the conservation of culture and diversity.

Thus, eco labels awarding bodies should not lack a theoretical framework at a very least. Having their own approach is considered to be an advantage. The outline is given in a Table 11 below.

Criteria	+	-

Environment	In (almost) all relevant areas, there exist prerequisites for measures to decrease the consumption of resources and to protect the quality of the environment, which go beyond the legal requirements. The entry level of standard for environmental compatibility is at a high level.	Only in some areas there exist prerequisites for measures to decrease the consumption of resources and to protect the quality of the environment which go beyond the legal requirements
Social	All-important aspects such as entity participation in community life, creating jobs for local people etc. are considered in an appropriate framework.	None or very little are considered.
Economy		
Culture	At least some strategic guidelines developed in sense of supporting and enhancing the local culture	None or very little are considered

Table 11. Evaluation criteria for sustainability criteria. (Developed by the author based on the Font & Buckley, 2001, Chapter 14 and various sources)

3.4.4 Quality

However, the chapter dealing with quality issue, in this particular case is defined by two criteria: global recognition on one hand, and dynamics and innovation on the other. Under global recognition it is understood standard recognized by Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) which is independent, neutral and mostly a volunteer organization, consisting of experts in sustainable tourism and supported by organizations and individuals with a passion for ensuring that meaningful standards are available globally for sustainability in travel and tourism. Financial support from donations, sponsorship, and membership fees are their sources of finance.

The development issue is concerned with constant improvement of compatibility standards. Also, it should be superimposed on legal specifications so that a high inherent quality is always and continuously guaranteed. In order to do so, evaluation and update of the criteria should be done on regular basis. If this aspect of “dynamics” is neglected, the eco label will lose its value over the years.

The innovation aspect is somewhat self-explanatory. The outline is given in a Table 12 below.

Criteria	+0.5	-0.5
Recognition	GSTC recognized standard	Not harmonized with GSTC standards
Development	Innovative projects in the area of environmental and social compatibility, which possess a pioneer character, are considered. At least every 2 years the criteria are updated	No innovative projects The criteria are not reassessed and updated on regular basis

Table 12. Evaluation criteria for quality criteria. (Developed by the author based on the Font and Buckley, 2001, Chapter 14 and various sources)

3.4.5 A selection of eco labels

Even though in the beginning it was stated that the supply side of eco labels is around 400 (Rusnak, 2010) it is surprising how little of them fit the simple criteria of international scale and tourism industry with an accent on accommodation facilities. After all, six environmental programs were chosen from a list of 50 top eco labels according to ECOTRANS and DestiNet portal (ECOTRANS et al., 2014). Over the past two decades, these organizations have published and regularly updated a global list of eco labels aiming to promote transparency.

3.5 Test Results

Test results are summarized in Table 13. Sustainability issue's scores rely on research carried out by group of environmental organizations (ECOTRANS et al., 2014). Since the last update was year 2014 the data considered up to date.

For other criteria such as benefits, process and quality secondary and primary data were collected and based on author's very own opinion score was given. A case of each label explained in more details in the following section.

	Benefits	Process		Sustainability			Quality		total score	
	Visible results	Acquisition	Maintenance	Environment	Social	Economy	Culture	Recognition	Development	
Biosphere Responsible Tourism	- 2	- 0,5	0,5	2	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	3
Earth Check	- 2	- 0,5	- 0,5	2	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	- 0,5	1,5
Green Globe	2	- 0,5	- 0,5	2	1	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	6 (4)
Q certification tourism	- 2	- 0,5	- 0,5	2	1	0,5	0,5	- 0,5	- 0,5	0
Impact Monitoring System (by STI)	- 2	- 0,5	- 0,5	2	1	0,5	- 0,5	0,5	0,5	1
Travel life Accommodation	2	0,5	0,5	2	1	0,5	- 0,5	0,5	-0,5	6

Table 13. Eco label quality assessment results. (Developed by the author based on the ECOTRANS et al., 2014 report and various sources)

3.5.1 Biosphere Responsible Tourism

Instituto de Turismo Responsable (ITR) was established after World Conference on Sustainable Tourism: Towards a New Tourist Culture sponsored by UNESCO in 1995. ITR created and developed the Responsible Tourism System (STR) which is recognized by BIOSPHERE RESPONSIBLE TOURISM label. At present, the ITR maintain a Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCO and is affiliated to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and it is a member of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

Consequently, there is a strong set of criteria behind the label. It is based on personal ITR's frameworks and ISO family standards. As a result, the label scores the maximum points in "sustainability" and "quality" fields; however, the costs associated with certification process are not that reasonable, especially in comparison with the other five labels examined in this paper. In addition, there is a section "benefits" on ITR's web site where no concrete business cases are present. There are only vague phrases such as "*The protection of heritage and cultural diversity*" and "*The improvement of the quality of life for the local community*".

3.5.2 Earth Check

Without being too extreme, one can say that the official website of Earth Check consists of two sections: the organization related to environment and sustainability and product pricing which ranges from few hundred to 40 thousand dollars. From the open resource, one can learn that parent company for Earth Check eco label is EC3 Global a profit organization which commenced operations in 1987 as the National Centre for Studies in Travel and Tourism, Australia's first national tourism research center.

Due to expert opinion of ECOTRANS and DestiNet value defined by their research will not be adjusted.

3.5.3 Green Globe

The good looking official website of Green Globe eco label offers seemingly extensive information about evaluation criteria, label acquiring process and business cases. The benefits are quite tangible and represented by interview with business owners and executives who implemented the framework.

However, the pricing is not transparent, certification process starts with fee invoice, and further cooperation goes upon payment. Therefore the “process” set of criteria rated with negative points. The overall score is written as 6(4), because it appears that the program is oriented toward medium and large enterprises or SMEs at the very least. Hence, in context of VSBs the score is 4.

3.5.4 Q certification tourism

Spanish Government Tourist Authority created Spanish Tourist Quality standard in 1996 than a macro project known as the SPANISH TOURIST QUALITY SYSTEM (STQS) emerged, which is a synonymous to Q quality mark.

The basic document of the Q for Tourist Quality Mark certification is, in the case of hotels, UNE 182001 Standard Tourist hotels and apartments. The only page available in English refers to this document as a source of all the requirements for both management and for providing the service and tangible elements that any hotel establishment must have in order to obtain the Q Mark for tourist hotels and apartments.

From one hand, having only secondary data available requires to exclude the label from quality assessment, however, it appears to be quite spread over Spanish speaking regions as Central America, and thus should be considered by entrepreneurs aiming at the region.

3.5.5 Impact Monitoring System (IMS)

Impact Monitoring System is a broad concept developed by non-profit organization “Sustainable Travel International” (STI). There are no business cases avail-

able about program implementation, however in Responsible Travel Report magazine a short note says STI is undertaking a research project in collaboration with The Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management's Center for Sustainable Global Enterprise at Cornell University to define the benefits of destination monitoring for businesses, governments, and communities. Results might be considered reliable to a certain extent, since the research was performed by a team of second year MBA students under the oversight of Dr. Louise Twining Ward, President of Sustainable Travel International and under the direction of Senior Professional Fellow Megan Epler Wood. The query sent to people in charge for the project revealed that it was abandoned for unknown reason and no results are present.

It is noteworthy that IMS scored 1 point, meaning that even in case of positive grade for "visible results", the overall score still will not exceed 5 points of minimum requirement.

3.5.6 Travel Life Accommodation

This is an eco-label with significant number of case studies and benefits. Awarding procedure is transparent and costs are reasonable, and what is most appealing Travel life differentiates accommodation properties according to maximum number of guests.

3.6 Summary

Out of the six labels analyzed, only one seems to meet certain standards with a score of 6 out of 7. However, one should keep in mind that analysis framework is quite generalized and might miss important variables applicable in certain conditions and circumstances. Moreover, there is no scholar evidence supporting the direct dependence of environmental certification and increase in viable business metrics such as customer satisfaction or revenues.

As could clearly be seen in SCOPUS Graph 1 and Graph 2, sustainability is clearly a trend nowadays. It is also supported by common knowledge and of market conjectures. While eco labels are most universal tool fitting interests of all parties involved there is also a trend of so called "green washing" (Peattie &

Crane, 2005). Therefore, every business owner looking to acquire a certain environmental certification should be concerned with its quality and judge it against certain framework or metrics.

Quality assessment of the existing supply of eco labels supply revealed that despite a huge amount of programs available very few are reliable and worth considering to implement. Moreover, in tourism industry where the certification is rarely compulsory, the necessity of certification and possible benefits should be measured with certain level of skepticism. This observation was also indirectly supported by a case of Hostelling International (HI) Association which is probably the biggest nonprofit network in youth hostel industry representing over 4500 Youth Hostels in over 80 countries. Although they have a sustainability program as a whole, they do not incorporate any particular environmental certification for its members. It is stated on their website that “*356 of HI hostels certified by an established environmental, social or sustainability label*” meaning that such certification is not compulsory to acquire membership.

4 Research implications

Due to huge amount of environmental programs available it requires a fair amount of time to get acquainted with them to make a conscious decision as a business owner. Another option is to hire or outsource this to a sustainability expert but this will dramatically raise expenses. Consequently, a core objective for this chapter is to determine a solution direction for implementing a sustainability strategy for VSB in tourism sector. It should be noted that at this point, the premise is that such program has to be implemented for both monetary and moral benefits.

4.1 Self-claimed environmental certification

In order to have a full control over the process, a business owner might consider an opportunity to implement a self-awarded eco-label. Let us have a look at three types of eco labels:

1. Type I is certification gained from third-party organization that verifies that a product contributes to environment conservation. Labels of this type were examined in the previous chapter.
2. Type II is self-declared environmental information.
3. Type III based on Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and is quantitative assessment of environmental data.

It is common knowledge that it is hard to adopt standardized solutions (e.g. framework or CRM) for non-standard business. It was stated in the beginning that in order to utilize the sustainability trend for youth hostels, two things should be investigated: modular construction and consumer attitudes. So, in regard of modular construction it was revealed that it is quite worthy because of dramatically reduced construction waste, time to proceed and overall environmental footprint. On the down side however is a challenge to get construction approval from the local legislative body. Whereas in developed regions as Europe and North America government officials have some experience with examining modular construction projects, it is reported that in Central America and some

other developing regions it has taken a lot of time to proceed such application, consequently demolishing reduced construction time benefit.

While there are some obstacles with construction, what is totally missing is an approach to integrate a modular construction in sustainability strategy. Third party organizations simply aim at much broader market with rigid services and rigid set of way too generalized criteria.

What is suggested herein is to use a self-claimed eco label. Most probably, it takes longer to implement than a standardized one, but then it is not green washing. Also, one should be not misled by the name “self-claimed”, because it still requires collaboration with government officials. For example, in Canada, The Competition Bureau issued a solid document to guide business seeking to adopt eco label themselves. This guide reflects best practices, but businesses are free to adopt any approach or framework they choose, as long as the claims they are making are not false or misleading, because those claims are subject for governmental audit.

4.1.1 Guidelines and voluntary regulations for appropriate environmental representation

There are dozens of established guidelines and criteria sets issued by government officials and third-party organizations. Those documents can be obtained from open sources and might be a good starting point for practioners looking to implement sustainability strategy. Examples are including but not limited to US Federal Trade Commission which in 1992 issued “Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims” as criteria set to examine eligibility of environmental claims used in marketing and packaging. The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) established “ICC International Code of Environmental Advertising” in 1991 as evaluation criteria for voluntary assessment. In 2001 an updated followed to compile with ISO 14021 standards. EU followed with “Guidelines for Making and Assessing Environmental Claims” in 2000 which also complies with ISO 14021. Japanese Ministry of Environment issued “Guidelines for Environmental Representations (Eco-labeling)” in 2008 which is described as

”framework for providing the appropriate and easily recognizable environmental information”.

However, these guides’ biggest concern is fair representation of environmental claims and not the sustainability strategy by itself.

4.1.2 Enforcement

What is noteworthy is that state officials do not have a direct way to influence businesses utilizing eco-labeling of Type II. All guidelines are solely recommendations and cannot be enforced except if some sort of a fraud is taking place. A poorly implemented sustainability strategy is indistinguishable from an intentional fraud.

4.1.3 Visual representation and personnel involvement

A business should be able to deliver its sustainability strategy to end customers because they are a vital component of success. There are two vital tools to do so. The first is visual representation and the second is employee involvement. Consider following case: a famous restaurant chain in Saint-Petersburg implemented a sustainability program which apart from standard solutions included some unusual one as placing two toilet seats in one cubicle and making a handbook with illustrated instructions upon other environmental conscious actions one could undertake in this restaurant. What is noteworthy is not the effort itself but employees involvement, because every worker was able to explain why the actions were applicable to environment and what kind of impact they made.

The visual component is not of a least importance, because there are many situations where there is not much communication between personnel and customers. Consider a King Cross station in London. Every morning hundreds of people arrive in the city center by train and head to work. Many of them stop to pick up a sandwich and a coffee to go. Most of the products marked with all kinds of eco labels and sustainability marks to secure this competitive advantage appeal to people. They can decide to encourage sustainable companies and up to state official to ensure those claims are legible.

The term “visual representation” in this chapter refers to logos and various labels. Each business entity decides on its own how to use those and how they comply with criteria and framework being implemented, nevertheless some provisions are laid out by Type II standard (Japanese Ministry of Environment, 2008). The following is a brief summary:

1. Use of visual representation is optional
2. Marks and symbols used should be clearly distinguishable, in particular not to imitate any existing ones
3. Natural objects should be used only in case of a direct and verifiable link between the object and the benefit claimed
4. Representation of non-environmental claim should not be present in manner that can be misunderstood as making an environmental one

4.2 Eco label as framework

The current development of eco labels as tool is not sufficient to make outcome-based environmentally broad solution. Some of these limitations can be handled by businesses, third party entities and governmental bodies joint efforts, but a label will not achieve substantial result on its own. As de Boer (2003) noted in his work “...labeling will be insufficient ... if it is merely an isolated action”. It requires incorporation of environmentally conscious behavior throughout organization, and as part of this wider context, an eco-label might be viewed as a framework to guide and stimulate a change. However, it is out of scope for a present paper to discuss such a framework in details since the core objective was to identify a starting point and direction for implementing a sustainability strategy. Some generalized issues to consider are the following: water consumption, alternative energy sources, carbon footprint, recycling management, encouraging environmentally conscious behavior by personnel and customers.

4.3 Alternatives for eco label approach

The previous two chapters of current research implied that eco labeling is most appropriate way to build communication with consumer. Naturally, the level of effort to put into sustainability strategy varies depending on objectives, budgeting. An alternatives for this is to incorporate environmentally friendly behavior

and image into brand from the very beginning. Examples of such brands are Tom's of Maine and Seventh Generation.

4.4 Summary

No worldwide homogeneous standard is applicable in regard of environmental certification. Basically, there are two options for business owners and managers seeking to adopt environmental certification. The first is to find a niche third-party organization whose evaluation criteria is useful for a particular business and whose framework is good enough to guide business entity's sustainability efforts. However, as the research has indicated despite a huge supply of various environmental programs only few are of a decent quality. The second option is to implement a sustainability strategy within a self-claimed environmental certification based on open source guidelines as a starting point.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis is a supplementary work for a business plan of a youth hostel in Central America. In search for competitive advantages it was decided to investigate a green trend in tourism industry. One of the objectives derived was to examine a consumer attitudes, because the academic research on the topic is very limited (Kasim, 2004), whereas studies indicates that location, price, and cleanliness were rated the top three attributes for most tourists (Dolnicar & Otter, 2003; Shanka & Taylor, 2003).

With a semi-structured questionnaire, an empirical research was carried out to investigate whether young adult leisure travellers have environmental concerns about various tourism attributes such as destination, accommodation. The results show that 1 out of 2 travellers possess any concerns at all. The second research question presented environment protection tools to test the awareness level among travellers. As a result, eco label was marked as most trusted and recognizable one. Then, it was found that while respondents are not willing to overpay for "green" accommodation, however 79.7% of them would prefer an option with an Eco label mark given that the price was the same (Table 5). 80.2% of respondents indicated that they trust a notion with eco label more.

These are promising results because it means that while green attributes have no direct impact on a consumer purchase decision, it might matter given other attributes are the same. Only 8% of youth hostels worldwide have an environmental certification (Youth Travel Accommodation, 2010), which makes eco friendliness a good competitive advantage. Therefore, sustainability trend in general and environmental certification in particular can be used as a competitive advantage.

The socio-demographic hypothesis did not bring any unexpected results: women tend to be a little bit more environmentally conscious than men. Also, no strong correlation between income level and a green behavior has been revealed.

Following the conclusion that an eco-label might be a competitive advantage the most obvious way of obtaining such certification through third-party organization was examined. A set of eco labels were been selected according to research objectives and limitations and then examined against a modified framework of Font and Buckley (2001). This evaluation resulted in two major observations: green washing is a big issue in the industry of environmental certification, meaning that very few labels stand to testify against a third-party criteria set. The second observation is more subject to the author's bias. However, it appears that it is practically impossible to make a framework applicable to the industry in general, because every business operation environment is quite unique. Thus, as soon as there is some deviation from normal course it makes less sense to implement a generalized and oversimplified solution.

Throughout the third chapter, at least one solution was derived for non-standard businesses: a self-claimed eco labeling certificate gain. This way business owners and managers have full control over implementation of sustainability strategy and a way of further communication with a consumer. There are many open source guides to follow in a path of self-adopted eco label, so only main areas have been outlined in the present paper. In particular, as a result of this thesis paper it was decided to use a self-claimed eco label for a youth hostel in question.


Appendix

Survey

As one student to another.

This is questioner for Bachelor thesis "Eco labels in tourism".

- 1. My age is _____** **2. I am** female male
- 3. I am from** EU country non-EU country
- 4. When travelling, I have environmental concerns about:**
- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|----|--|--|
| Destination | yes | no | | |
| Accommodation | yes | no | | |
| Food | yes | no | | |
| Mode of transportation | yes | no | | |
| Other | yes | no | | |
- 5. Over the last 12 month I stayed at a lodging facility (Hotels, hostel, AirBnb apartment)** Yes No
- 6. During my trips I am spending on accommodation**
- | | | | | |
|--|------------|---------|---------------|-------------|
| | Economy | Average | Above-average | Luxury |
| | under 25 € | 25-50 € | 50-100 € | above 100 € |
- 7. I recognize the following voluntary environment protection tools:**
- | | | | |
|---|------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Codes of conduct | wtf? | I usually check it out | I know what it is |
| Best environmental practices | wtf? | I usually check it out | I know what it is |
| Eco labels | wtf? | I usually check it out | I know what it is |
| Environmental Management Systems | wtf? | I usually check it out | I know what it is |
| Ecologic performance indicators | wtf? | I usually check it out | I know what it is |
- 8. For "green" accommodation I am willing to pay** more same less don't know
- 9. I would like to improve my environmental awareness** yes no
- 10. From options below I trust more** A B is not important
- 11. If price were the same, I would choose** A B is not important

<p>A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">We care for the environment. We recycle and enhance best environment practices</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">We care for the environment. We recycle and enhance best environment practices</p> <p style="text-align: center;">B</p> 
---	--

Hej, you helped a lot! You just earned +5 points to you karma and slight increase in your own Thesis grade! If you want to get a 3-page summary of my work to gain insight on the topic, write you email below. No spam.

List of figures

Graph 1. Number of scholar papers containing “sustainable tourism” keyword, p.5

Graph 2. Number of scholar papers containing “eco label” keyword, p.5

Table 1. Voluntary environment tools applied to the hotel industry, p.7

Table 2. Results for a set of questions dealing with respondents’ environment concerns, p.12

Table 3. Results for a set of questions dealing with recognition of environment protection tools, p.13

Table 4. Results for a questions examining respondents’ willingness to pay more for “green” accommodation, p.15

Table 5. Comparison of options with and without eco label sign, p. 15

Chart 1. Correlation between gender and attitude toward mode of transportation variable, p. 16

Chart 2. Correlation between gender and attitude toward food variable, p. 16

Chart 3. Correlation between gender and attitude toward accommodation variable., p. 17

Chart 4. Correlation between gender and attitude toward travel destination variable., p. 17

Chart 5. Correlation between gender and attitude toward “other” variable, p. 18

Table 6. Results for income-related hypothesis, p. 19

Table 7. Correlation between country of origin and environment concerns, p.20

Table 8. Framework for eco labels quality assessment, p.23

Table 9. Evaluation criteria for business benefits, p.24

Table 10. Evaluation criteria for process criteria, p.25

Table 11. Evaluation criteria for sustainability criteria, p.26

Table 12. Evaluation criteria for quality criteria, p.27

Table 13. Eco label quality assessment results, p.28

References list

Arbuthnot, J. 1977. The role of attitudinal and personality variables in the prediction of environmental behavior and knowledge. *Environment and Behavior*, 9, 217-232.

Ayushi, S. 2006. Adoption of Voluntary Environmental Tools for Sustainable Tourism: Analyzing the Experience of Spanish Hotels. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, p. 209.

Buckley, R. 2003. *Case Studies in Ecotourism*. Cambridge, MA, USA: CABI Publishing.

Da Cunha, S. K., & da Cunha, J. C. 2005. Tourism cluster competitiveness and sustainability: Proposal for a systemic model to measure the impact of tourism on local development. *Brazilian Administration Review*, 2(2), 47-62.

Delmas, M., Nairn-Birch, N., Balzarova, M., 2007. Lost in a sea of green: Navigating the eco-label labyrinth. Lincoln University

Dolnicar, S., & Otter, T. 2003. Which hotel attributes matter? A review of previous and a framework for further research, in Griffin, T. and Harris, R. (Eds.), *Asia Pacific Tourism Association 91 Annual Conference*, Sydney, 176-188.

D'Souza, C, Taghian, M., Lamb, P., & Peretiatko, R. 2007. Green decisions: Demographics and consumer understanding of environmental labels. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 31(4), 317-376.

Dunlap, R. 2008. The new environmental paradigm scale: From marginality to worldwide use. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 40(), 3-18.

Dunlap, R. & Van Liere, K. 1978. A proposed measuring instrument and preliminary results. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 9, 10-19.

Dunlap, R., Van Liere, K., Mertig, A., & Jones, R. 2000. Measuring endorsement of the new ecological paradigm: a revised NEP scale. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(3), 425-442.

de Boer J. 2003. Sustainability labelling schemes: The logic of their claims and their functions for stakeholders. *Business Strategy and the Environment*. 12(4):254-64

ECOTRANS, NFI, AKTE, Tourism Watch, 2014: Guide through the Label Jungle, retrieved from destinet.eu/News/2013/5/ecotrans-gives-insight-to-50-certificates-worldwide

Elliott, R., Fischer, C., & Rennie, D. 1999. Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 38(3), 215–229.

Faggiolani, C. 2011. *Perceived Identity: applying Grounded Theory in Libraries*. University of Florence

Firat, D. 2009. Demographic and psychographic factors that affect environmentally conscious consumer behavior: A study at Kocaeli University in Turkey. *The Journal of American Academy of Business*, 14(2), 323-329.

Font, X., & Buckley, R. C. 2001. *Tourism Ecolabelling: Certification and Promotion of Sustainable Management*. Cambridge, MA, USA: CABI Publishing

Frieder R., & Frankl, P. 2005. *Future of Eco-labelling: Making Environmental Product Information Systems Effective*. Sheffield, South Yorkshire, GBR: Greenleaf Publishing

Gustin, M. & Weaver, P. 1996. Are hotels prepared for the environmental consumer? *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 20(2), 1-14

Japanese Ministry of Environment, 2008. *Guidelines for Environmental Representations (Eco-labeling)*.

Kalinowski, P. 2010. Qualitative research: an essential part of statistical cognition research, *Statistics Education Research Journal*, 9(2)

Kasim, A. 2004. Socio-environmentally responsible hotel business: Do tourists to Penang Island, Malaysia care? *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 11(4), 5-28.

Laroche, M., Bergeron, J., & Barbaro-Forleo, G. 2001. Targeting consumers who are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 18(6), 503-520.

Orme, B. 2006. *Getting started with conjoint analysis: strategies for product design and pricing research*. Madison, WI: Research Publishers LLC.

Patton, M.Q. 1990. *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Peattie, K., & Crane, A. 2005. Green marketing: Legend, myth, farce or prophecy? *Qualitative Market Research*, 8(4), 357-370.

Quester, P., & Smart, J. 1998. The influence of consumption situation and product involvement over consumers' use of product attribute. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 15(3), 220-238.

Rowlands, I., Scott, D., & Parker, P. 2003. Consumers and green electricity: Profiling potential purchasers. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 12(1), 36-48.

Rusnak, K. 2010. Navigating the sea of eco-labels. *Purchasing B2B*, 52(6), 18.

Shanka, T., & Taylor, R. 2003. An investigation into the perceived importance of service and facility attributes to hotel satisfaction. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 4(3/4), 119-134.

Shields, P. and Ranqarjan, N. 2013. *A Playbook for Research Methods: Integrating Conceptual Frameworks and Project Management*. Stillwater, OK: New Forums Press.

Youth Travel Accommodation, 2010. Annual Survey

Zimmer, M., Stafford, T., & Stafford, M. 1994. Green issues: Dimensions of environmental concern. *Journal of Business Research*, 30, 63-74.