

# CLUB MED'S JOURNEY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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## ABSTRACT

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The aim of this thesis is to analyse the sustainability in the tourism industry, and how this form of tourism is emerging throughout the years and will be more present for the post-covid tourism. The thesis described the tourism impacts on our planet, positive and negative, and how tourism can contribute to sustainable development. Tourists actors, tours operators or even travellers have a huge role in the sustainable development of the tourism industry, therefore this thesis is analysing and describing what actions are in place and what actions need to be implemented to secure this development and the environment. This thesis is using the company Club Med as a case study: as the pioneer in the all-inclusive offer and one of the biggest tour operator in the tourism industry, Club Med has a huge impact on sustainable development and need to be a model by respecting the environment and local communities where there sending tourists. This thesis is therefore analysing their sustainable practices and how Club Med integrates sustainable development on its resorts around the world and how they can have a bigger impact on eco-friendly holidays to be part of the new responsible tourism movement.

The study case was conducted through quantitative methods. The research was carried out using a questionnaire combining close-ended and open-ended questions, that were send to people and travellers. The questions were focusing on the travel behaviour of the respondents (post travel mainly), on-site travel, motivations to travel of the respondents, as well as their perception of travelling eco-friendlier and their feelings and insights about travelling with Club Med.

The outcome of the research indicates that people are increasingly interested in responsible holidays and their impact on the environment is becoming a concern when they travel, intending to behave more sustainable. The study also shows the post-covid tourism might be a tourism more local, people intent to discover more their home countries rather than going on long destination holidays. Moreover, with the results we find out that most of the people think that Club Med holidays aren't sustainable at all. Therefore, the autor of this thesis analysed the sustainable practices implemented by Club Med and how it's perceive by travellers.

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Keywords: tourism, sustainable tourism, local tourism, post-covid tourism, Club Med

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

As ecological concerns are growing in society, and particularly since the sanitary crisis, from citizens to organisations, a big actor as Club Med must position itself in this transition. It could even be a vital question since many emerging actors in the tourism industry represent this shift towards a more sustainable way of traveling, and are seducing more and more people.

## 1.1 Thesis background

Tourism is currently undergoing a major transformation, with a strong awareness on the part of tourists and tourism stakeholders. According to Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary General, we need to change our lifestyles and rethink the way we travel in order to move towards environmentally sustainable tourism.

Indeed, tourism has faced many sustainable challenges such as mass tourism (Butler, 1999), climate change, tourism development on landscapes (Jørgensen & McKercher, 2019), exploitation and destruction of local communities or ecosystems (Gössling, 2003). With destinations hosting more tourists than local inhabitants, tourism has a significant impact on the environment and local societies, often seen as a brake on sustainable development (Gössling, 2003).

But today, the sustainable development of the tourism sector has become a major issue, having a considerable weight in the world economy, this sector had to develop a new form of tourism called sustainable with new modes of consumption to counter mass tourism and thus play a role in the preservation of our planet, its ecosystems and its human beings.

Due to its negative effects on local populations and the environment, many other forms of tourism have been developed in recent years, such as alternative tourism, ecotourism, solidarity tourism, etc., each with its own specificities, but all with the common objective of sustainable development. Each of these forms belongs to sustainable tourism, which brings together the three pillars of sustainable de-

velopment: environmental, social and economic. This notion of sustainable tourism was born in 1992 during the international conference in Rio de Janeiro, dedicated to sustainable development and which worked to find a balance between tourist activities, human activity and ecosystems.

Since then, awareness has grown among governments, tourism stakeholders and also among tourists themselves, with a growing demand for sustainable tourism. Nevertheless, despite this growing demand for sustainable holidays (François Lecompte and Prim Allaz, 2009), the notion of sustainable tourism remains vague with subjective definitions, not allowing for concrete action on the part of all tourists with varying motivations.

The question now is whether this developing but still little-known tourism will be more attractive than the attractive but destructive mass tourism.

To enable the development of sustainable tourism, the first step is to assess the motivations of travellers and their interest in this new form of tourism. The aim is to find out if sustainable tourism could reach and suit a large part of the population and also to know what tourists are looking for in sustainable tourism. This would allow to propose an offer in line with their expectations and those of sustainable development, being linked to three pillars.

From an environmental point of view, sustainable tourism seeks to combine discovery with ecology (Van Den Walle, 2011). The discovery of authentic natural areas that are little disturbed by human activity, to recharge one's batteries in unique green spaces and to get away from one's daily urban life (Lequin, 2002) seems to be something that tourists are looking for.

At the socio-cultural level, tourists are mainly looking for an exchange with local people to discover their culture, way of life and products. The idea is to live like a local and to be active in their journey instead of remaining passive in their hotel. From an economic point of view, the motivation is to develop the local economy: by consuming local products, by participating in fair trade which will help the local population to develop economically.

Moreover, with the covid-19 crisis we're facing, tourism destinations are experiencing for the first time since a long time a moment of tranquility, with tourism deserted (Morton, 2020).

During this time, a lot of tourist's actors and travellers are questioning the future of tourism and travel industry. Some of them suggests that the pandemic could

be a “once in a lifetime opportunity” (Muller, 2020, p. 1) to change tourism businesses all over the world. This industry could restart in a better way than before, moving to a more sustainable tourism. But is it really realistic? A lot of experts also suggest that after the crisis the main goal for the companies will be to compensate the loss of 2020, with an aggressive recovery program: this means that even if companies want to have a sustainable development, they will prioritise their financial survival.

## **1.2 Thesis purpose**

The purpose of this thesis is to have more information about sustainable tourism, to learn more about the impacts of tourism on sustainable development and how this sector could develop and contribute to the protection of the environment and its population. This thesis explains how tourism is changing throughout the years to become more sustainable, thanks to the awareness of tourism stakeholders but also of tourists whose demand for sustainable holidays has increased. This thesis is taking Club Med company as a case study, to analyse their actions for sustainable development and also how they could implement more actions.

This research thesis will therefore aim to answer the research question “What is the future of mass tourism and how will Club Med fit into the new responsible tourism movement?”. We will therefore analyse three topics (1) Sustainability in the tourism industry and How is the demand for more sustainable tourism evolving? (2) How the COVID crisis may be shifting tourism towards more environmentally friendly tourism? (3) Does a major player in the tourism sector like Club Med take into account its impact on sustainable development? The first two sub-questions are related to the overall tourism industry and the third one investigates Club Med practices.

## **1.3 Research methodology**

The choice and formulation of the problem allowed, first of all, to develop working hypotheses and to determine a research plan focused on data collection and

analysis. The thesis was conducted through quantitative methods and also documentary research. This allowed the author to have theoretical data on global tourism, on sustainable tourism and its development and also on Club Med holidays, enabling the author to have a better understanding of these theories and how sustainable tourism is growing and developing.

On a practical level, this research was carried out in several stages: indeed, to have insights about Club Med company, the author did a 6 months internship on Club Med UK offices, where she learned a lot about it and its strategy during the covid-19 crisis.

The second step was to do a thorough research about the impact of tourism on sustainable development and see how tourism could be more sustainable, by analysing data from research carried out, for example, by the World Tourism Organisation. The research was also on Club Med, to search how this big tour operator could have more sustainable actions on its resorts all over the world.

## 2 THEORITICAL CONCEPTS

This thesis will introduce and explain different concepts that are link to the tourism industry and sustainable tourism: indeed, the terms “tourism” and “sustainable tourism” will be explained as it is important to have a deep knowledge of these terms for this thesis. Thanks to the definitions of these terms, the reader will have a better understanding of the topic of the thesis.

### 2.1 Tourism industry

#### 2.1.1 Tourism

The concept of tourism first appeared in 1929 with Glucksmann. (FUSTER, 1967).

However, it was the teachers Ealter Hunziker and Kurt Krapf who established the most elaborate definition by considering, in 1942, tourism as "the whole of the relations and phenomena generated by the movement and stay of people outside their usual place of residence, provided that such travel and stay is used to exercise a lucrative professional activity ". (Hunziker, W.; Krapf, K. 1942).

However, the first definition of tourism emerged only in the Congress of Palermo, Sicily, organised by the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism (IATSE) in 1954, which was held in the city of Palermo. It defined tourism as "a set of relationships and events that arise from travel and events that arise from travel and profit-making activity".

The UNWTO, in 1989, declared tourism as a means of international cooperation and sharing between people and thus as a factor of collective and individual development (in The Hague Declaration on Tourism).

But this definition of tourism changed again following the International Conference on Travel and Tourism Statistics in 1991 in Canada. Several recommendations on tourism statistics were proposed to the United Nations Statistical Com-

mission, which led to a clear definition of the concept of tourism as "a socio-economic and cultural phenomenon based on the movement of people (tourists) to places different from their usual residence, where they stay for more than 24 hours and less than 12 months, for leisure purposes, using the facilities of accommodation, food and other activities offered at the destination. Those who travel for less than 24 hours are called excursionists. This definition applies to both domestic (residents travelling within their country) and external/international tourism (with regard to the international movement of tourists and considers both tourist sending and receiving countries)" (UNWTO, 1993, pp.2-3)

### **2.1.2 Tourism experience**

Experience is a fundamental concept in tourism (Ritchie et al., 2010) that few stakeholders question its importance. Indeed, when it comes to experience, tourism is considered one of the largest producers of experience (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009).

From a sociological point of view, experience is something that allows an individual to get out of their everyday life, to experience something different from what they are used to doing, to try something new, different from what they are used to in everyday life (Uriely, 2005). Experience thus emerges as an aspect of differentiation between an individual's everyday life and the things they experience when travelling.

Even if the tourist experience has no definition, it remains an individual phenomenon that is constructed around the individual and by the individual (Kadri and Bondarenko, 2013). But the experience is also a subjective phenomenon that will depend on the complexity of each individual as proposed by Tung and Ritchie (2011: 1369): "An individual's subjective evaluation and undergoing (i.e. affective, cognitive, and behavioural) of events related to his/her tourist activities which begins before (i.e. planning and preparation) during (i.e., at the destination) and after the trip (i.e. collection)."

The tourist experience is therefore of a subjective nature since its appreciation and judgement will depend on each individual: each individual will appreciate or not in a different way the experiences he/she lives, since it will also depend on

his/her daily life, which is quite different according to each person.

When travelling, the traveller is not only looking for the desire to travel but also for the tourism experience (Glenza, 2009). Tourism actors seek to satisfy the tourists' need for experience, in order to have satisfied customers: they take into account that "Tourists are looking for escape, alternatives to their daily lives, strong sensations and entertainment" (Gortesh, 2002; cited in Glenza, 2009). Since experience is something different from tourists' daily lives, tourists seek out the tourist experience through escaping to authentic and different experiences (Glenza, 2009). Before travelling, tourists have no idea of the experiences they will have as they have never experienced them before, so their appreciation of the trip will depend on what they experience on the spot (Spindler and Durand, 2003).

This highlights that travel agencies or tourism actors are limited in creating experiences as they have no control over the emotions and feelings of their customers (Turig and Ritchie, 2011).

### **2.1.3 Tour operator**

The role of tour operators is mainly to sell all-inclusive trips, including transport, accommodation, food and activities.

Tour operators are companies that will sell the different elements of a trip, combining them to create packages. Thus, tour operators are responsible for providing all the elements included in their package. They can either go through intermediaries or other suppliers or provide these services themselves when they have their own hotels, transport or other services.

According to Poyther (1993), "the tour operator is the one who is responsible for putting together the ingredients of the trip, marketing it, making the bookings and doing the actual operation.

Holloway (1992), on the other hand, stated that tour operators perform a distinct function in the tourism industry, buying separate elements and putting them together to create package tours that include all these elements, which they then offer and sell to tourists.

The first tour operator was established in England in 1758 and it was none other

than Thomas Cook, one of the largest tour operators still operating in the market. In 1850, group travel was already in operation with the use of railways as a means of transport. In addition to selling tickets, tour operators of the time soon began to offer additional services such as itinerary planning and accommodation for wealthier clients, and so the group travel and activity packages were born. At the end of the 1940s, after the Second World War, the tour operator sector underwent a major change. With the advent of commercial aircraft and the development of the international motorway network, millions of middle class travellers began to travel longer distances. The rise of aeroplanes, easy access to airports and low travel costs allowed millions of tourists to travel to the four corners of the world.

Nowadays, many tour operators exist and compete for ever larger shares of the tourist market with ever higher turnover. Many nations depend on these tour operators as it is through these operators that tourists are attracted to certain destinations. Tour operators can therefore help to develop the local economy by bringing tourists to these destinations.

There are four types of tour operators: inbound tour operators - outbound tour operators - domestic tour operators - ground operators.

First of all, inbound tour operators are operators who mainly receive tourists from distant destinations. These operators correspond to travellers who wish to travel to a distant country but do not know the language, and do not feel comfortable making their own arrangements. The inbound tour operator will therefore programme their trips for them, taking care of all the planning and offering unique experiences and activities that the travellers would not necessarily have been able to organise on their own. Indeed, a client who wants to go trekking in Nepal without any information about the region could take a long time to plan his itinerary, find places to stay and eat etc. The tour operator will allow him to have a tailor-made trip in less time, with all the services included and adapted to each tourist's travels. Inbound tour operators are often specialised only in one region or country, offering a wide range of services in that country or region. Their offers are often customisable to best suit the needs of tourists who are often not familiar with the region.

Secondly, there are the outbound tour operators whose role is to promote travel to foreign destinations. They will therefore promote and sell trips to tourists from their own market, who are often travellers wanting to go far away and looking for

experiences in foreign countries. The inbound tour operator will either organise the trip 'remotely', usually working with intermediaries or suppliers in the country in question, or they will just market pre-designed trips by the inbound tour operator and then resell them to their customers.

Thirdly, there are the domestic tour operators, who assemble, combine tourist elements into inclusive tours and sell them to domestic travellers. Often these operators will offer services that are in the travellers' home country.

Finally, there are the ground operators: these operators will market trips on their national territory but unlike the domestic tour operators, they do not market their products directly to travellers and will therefore work closely with foreign operators who sell their products for them.

## **2.2 Sustainable tourism**

### **2.2.1 Sustainable development**

The concept of sustainable development emerged with the publication of the report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by Norway's Gro Harlem Brundtland in 1987. According to this report, "sustainable development meets the expectations of present generations to satisfy their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs". This puts forward two essential needs: the need of each individual and the notion that these individuals must limit themselves in order to respect the other notion of the needs of future generations.

Through its ability to ensure self-replicating satisfaction of human needs in the short, medium and long term, development becomes sustainable (Bon, 2009; Hopwood et al., 2005; Macleod and By, 2007). For sustainable development to be viable in the long term, three inseparable aspects must be guaranteed: respect for the environment, economic profitability and social equity.

In other words, sustainable development makes it possible to respect the quality of the natural environment, ensure the sustainability of resources, and promote the self-sufficiency of communities from one generation to the next.

At the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio,

the principles and objectives of Agenda 21 were defined. This programme aims to prioritise certain aspects in order to achieve sustainable development at local, regional, national and international levels. Numerous recommendations have been made on the fight against poverty, the protection of forests, oceans, biodiversity, the atmosphere, social development, food security, the situation of women in the world, the protection and management of natural resources, sustainable agriculture...

We can therefore conclude that sustainable development takes into account three interdependent components: economic, social and ecological (Figure 1)



FIGURE 1. principles of sustainable development

Sustainable development must be economically efficient, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable (Jean Gynse Bolivar, 2008). The social must be an objective, the economy a means and the environment a condition. Thus, sustainable development promotes a state of harmony between humans and nature and between humans themselves (Koleva, 2008).

There are therefore three challenges to sustainable development with essential issues at stake. The first is environmental sustainability, with the preservation of the environment, since natural resources are not infinite. The challenges at this level are to limit waste, to favour the use of renewable resources, etc. Preservation of the environment also involves protecting biodiversity, i.e. maintaining the variety of animal and plant species, and also the fight against climate change by avoiding CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The second challenge is to promote social cohesion, with the aim of ensuring the well-being of all citizens. This well-being corresponds to the possibility of accessing essential needs (food, housing, health, legal access to work, security, education, human rights, etc.), regardless of one's standard of living. This includes fighting exclusion and discrimination, respecting and protecting the weakest, providing access to social rights for all, promoting solidarity and contributing to well-being.

The third challenge concerns the promotion of a responsible economy. This involves reconciling the viability of a project or organisation with ethical principles, such as the preservation of social ties and environmental protection. Thus, when developing a project, the environmental and social cost must be taken into account. There are many issues at stake here, in connection with the other two environmental and social dimensions: we can take the example of fair trade, the circular economy, collaborative consumption, etc.

### **2.2.2 Sustainable tourism**

The concept of sustainable tourism first appeared in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit, with the objective of reducing the impact on the environment and respecting the economic and cultural development of local populations. Sustainable tourism is therefore based on the three pillars of sustainable development: the environment, the socio-cultural pillar and the economic pillar. The World Tourism Organisation's definition of sustainable tourism is: "Sustainable tourism development is any form of tourism development, planning or activity that respects and preserves natural, cultural and social resources over the long term and contributes positively and equitably to economic development and to the fulfilment of the individuals who live, work or stay in these areas. Thus, sustainable tourism is 'tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, meeting the needs of visitors, professionals, the environment and host communities' (Leroux, 2010).

At the end of the twentieth century, awareness of the need to preserve our planet became a major issue in the face of our endangered world.

Sustainable tourism remains a vague term with many definitions and terms. Indeed, sustainable tourism includes several types of tourism such as ecotourism, solidarity tourism, participatory tourism and responsible tourism.

Sustainable tourism is also a term that has been developed at the level of tourists, who are becoming aware of their impacts while travelling.

Today, tourism must allow the harmonious economic development of a territory, respecting the ecological environment of the place and the culture and well-being of its inhabitants (Hamon, 2005).

Nowadays, tourists are looking for a new form of travel with the desire to leave no trace behind. Several practices reflect the development of sustainable tourism (Clarimont and Vles, 2007) as consumers are increasingly interested in and concerned about environmental protection and their behaviour thus adopts softer, non-massive practices in order to contribute to the reduction of the ecological footprint (Dolnicar and Leisch, 2008).

Whether it is in terms of consumption, mode of travel or way of eating, we notice a real sustainable commitment towards future generations: the "sustainability" criterion becomes a determining factor in the choice of tourists. They are more committed to ethical, humanitarian and environmental values, which are more present in the consumer purchasing process (Maunier, 2007). Indeed, this aspect of sustainability is increasingly highlighted in today's society, particularly in the marketing of its products, and with the rise of digitalization, consumers cannot ignore messages encouraging responsible consumption. The tourism offer is thus following this path of sustainability, with an increasing demand from tourists who want to favour responsible travel. Offers with a sustainability aspect have thus increased tenfold in recent years to become an important aspect of tourism development in general (Herr and Larson, 2007).

There are several motivations for travellers who want to make a "sustainable" trip. Indeed, the motivations are diverse and can be either at the level of environmental protection, or contact with the locals or having an impact on the local economy. First of all, the environment is often the main motivation for travellers, as it is an essential pillar of the concept of sustainable development. In this category, the most important motivations are the tourists' desire to do activities in the countryside, to discover new landscapes and to get away from the city. Tourists are

therefore looking for authentic trips that access natural spaces (Lequin, 2002). Fauna, flora and green landscapes are aspects that attract more and more people, who want to get away from their daily urban life full of visual, noise and auditory pollution (Lequin, 2003). In today's era, tourists are mainly looking for proximity to a natural environment (François Lecompte and Prim Allaz, 2011).

Still at the level of the environment, the motivations can be found in travellers' movements, which are increasingly seeking to reduce their carbon footprint. Tourists will look for alternative means to the car or plane to get to their destination or to the place where they are staying. These alternatives include cycling, public transport or walking, which are all low-carbon alternatives. With this craze to pay attention to one's mode of transport, we see a real need to fight against global warming (Ruiz, 2013). Sustainable tourism is therefore perceived as a necessity, as an objective that should be achieved and this of course involves reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, by changing the means of transport to avoid flying (Van de Walle, 2011).

Secondly, there are the social and economic motivations, which come after the environmental motivations but are still important. In this category, the tourists' need to be in contact with the population and to learn more about their lifestyle and culture and thus to learn more from this experience is especially felt (Vles and Clarimont, 2006). This aspiration to have social links with local populations brings out the desire for authenticity, sharing, and a return to one's roots (Maunier, 2007), which tourists have somewhat lost with the bursting of the internet bubble, which has reduced social interaction. In this desire for social contact, there is a deep desire on the part of tourists to get away from their daily routine to discover something new filled with sharing, exchange and immersion in a new culture. Travellers will be in total immersion (Van de Walle, 2011) and live in the same way as the locals, they will sleep the same way, eat the same way, do the same activities and customs (Maunier, 2007). In tourism, travellers who are looking for this local proximity of sharing and exchange are going to be actors of solidarity and responsibility (Zaoual, 2007), putting forward the real human values that have disappeared with our society of overconsumption. These tourists will give meaning to their trip, pay attention to their consumption, to whom it benefits and who benefits from it. By wanting to immerse themselves in the local culture, there is a quest for authenticity: this also involves the discovery of historical

places that allow travellers to immerse themselves in the identity of a place and thus in the local culture (Perignon and Salavador, 2012).

Lastly, the pillar that has less motivation than the two notions discussed above is the economic pillar. The motivation in this economic pillar is about the fair distribution of wealth between the different actors with the aim of developing a local economy that would allow the local people to benefit from the wealth created by tourism and therefore to develop economically. This refers to circular or fair tourism, which aims to reduce the number of intermediaries between the producer and the consumer, but also by paying attention to the waste created by tourist consumption in order to turn it into something positive afterwards. To make the most of this, tourists will act on different aspects: for example, by making the local population work by staying in traditional hotels or with local people, by buying their food in local shops instead of large supermarkets, or by buying objects from local craftsmen instead of multinationals. The aim is to keep the local economy going by avoiding the large retailers present in the four corners of the world.

### **2.2.3 Ecotourism**

One of the first definition of ecotourism was defined by Hetzer (1965), with a focus on the area where the tourists travel (fennell, 1998). A lot of definitions have been created in the last years with a multi-focus character: Ceballos Lascurain included two dimension to the ecotourism definition: where tourists travel but also what they do when travelling "... travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas." (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987: 14; 1991a, b).

Ecotourism concept can be divided into two words: eco and tourism. About tourism, Mill defines it as 'the term given to the activity that occurs when tourists travel' (Mill, 1990, p. 21) and for Middleton its "is deemed to include any activity concerned with the temporary short-term movement of people to destinations outside the places where they normally live and work, and their activities during the

stay at these destinations' (Middleton, 1993, p. 7). With these definitions of tourism, we can conclude that tourism includes an activity. Eco comes from the word 'ecology', which is "the study of the relationships between living organisms and their environment; the set of relationships of a particular organism with its environment" (Collins English Dictionary). Therefore, ecotourism is an activity where the local people, tourists and other tourist actors co-operate to make it possible for tourists to travel to different areas in order to do some activities in nature or culture, without consuming the resources.

For Ceballos Lascurain, the profile of the ecotourist should be a person who is aware of and has knowledge of the natural environment and cultural aspects, so that "he or she becomes a person very involved in conservation issues" (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1991a: 25). Concerning the use of nature, a major difference was made by Ceballos Lascurain between mass tourism and ecotourism: although both forms of tourism go to natural areas, their use of nature is totally different. Indeed, mass tourism will have a passive role towards nature since they do not use nature as it is, but will do more consuming activities such as water sports, cycling, golf, which do not have any concern for the ecology. On the other hand, ecotourists, who use nature in a more active way by participating in activities such as wildlife photography, wildlife watching, which are thus non-consumptive of natural resources.

Ziffer, on the other hand, proposes another view of ecotourism with an approach based on "conservation, natural, economic and cultural components of ecotourism". This concept is above all an ethical one as it guarantees a minimal impact on the resources of the natural environment Ziffer (1989). Ecotourism is also about balancing economic, social and environmental objectives: "a form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures. The ecotourist visits relatively undeveloped areas in the spirit of appreciation, participation and sensitivity. The ecotourist practices a non-consumptive use of wildlife and natural resources and contributes to the visited area through labour or financial means aimed at directly, benefiting the conservation of the site and the economic well-being of the local residents" (Ziffer, 1989). Furthermore, destinations offering a form of ecotourism should be able to be qualified as ecotourist destinations (Ziffer, 1989: 5-8; Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996: 22). However,

this aspect has its limits, as it requires the definition of an authority that can evaluate a destination and give it an ecolabel: this is difficult to do as ecotourism has several different definitions with different objectives, nothing is firm.

At the level of sustainable tourism development, several forms of tourism exist and it is sometimes difficult to establish precise definitions for each form of tourism. The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has tried to clarify these different forms of tourism, for example by differentiating between sustainable tourism and ecotourism, and between ecotourism and nature tourism. There are many debates about the definition of ecotourism, but the most widely used definition is the one from the International Ecotourism Society (TIES): "Ecotourism is a form of responsible travel in natural areas that contributes to the protection of the environment and the well-being of local people. Ecotourism is therefore part of the sustainable tourism approach since these two forms of tourism have the same basis but their difference is in the areas of travel. Indeed, ecotourism applies to the field of travel and excursions in natural areas with the added notion of responsibility towards the natural environment and a desire to participate in the local economy. The difference with sustainable tourism is the educational character of ecotourism.

Ecotourism is therefore a form of tourism that groups together all forms of tourism based on nature with the aim of participating in the local economy. In order to better understand ecotourism, three principles can be used to define this concept. Firstly, ecotourism allows the conservation and enhancement of the environment (Caballos Lascurain, 1987). This is because ecotourism does not damage the environment, whereas tourism does. Unlike conventional tourism, ecotourism takes into account the consequences of its activity on the environment, so that it does not benefit from it if risks arise. The second principle corresponds to the equitable redistribution of wealth from tourism activities to local actors, to enable local development. This principle allows local people to benefit from the tourist activity: this means eating local food, having local guides, etc., which allows local people to generate income and thus reduce poverty. The third principle is about education/interpretation about the environment and local culture: this should generate an authentic experience while being responsible. With ecotourism, there is more contact with local stakeholders and the environment than with mass tourism.

### **3 FROM MASS TOURISM TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: A SHIFTING PARADIGM**

The environment is essential to tourism, as it is often the main reasons for travellers to travel to a new place. However, even if the environment is an essential factor to tourism, tourism has major impacts on the environment: it is a complex relationship. Indeed, many of these impacts came from the infrastructure built for the tourists, all the tourism activities like resorts or non-natural space, the transport used by tourists (planes, cars...): all these features are destroying the environmental resources.

But on the other side, tourism can also have positive impacts on the industry, as it is creating many jobs, it can be a fundamental income for countries allowing economical development. Tourism has also the potential to be an actor in the conservation and protection of natural areas or species. Indeed, income from tourists can be used to finance the protection of historical areas or other natural places for example. In this part, we will describe the impacts of tourism on the global scale, how it can contribute to the conservation of the environment and finally we will talk about the emergence of a more sustainable tourism in the coming years.

#### **3.1 Impact of tourism**

Impacts of tourism on the environment are created when the environmental capacity and ability is smaller than the level of visitor, so it can't support the number of travellers which became a threat for natural areas. When the environmental limit is reached, it can lead to major consequences such as the degradation of natural areas, the extinction of animal species, increased pollution or soil erosion.

The first main impacts the tourism industry has on the environment is the depletion of natural resources. Indeed, tourism has an important role in the depletion of water resources, on local resources or in land degradation.

About the water resources, which is one of the most critical natural resources, as this resource is not unlimited, tourism industry is overconsuming water. Indeed,

big hotels or resorts that have swimming pool, golf courses and are welcoming a lot of tourists often overuses water resources. This is a problem particularly in hot and dry countries where available resources can be limited. Nevertheless, the demand of tourists for this resource does not decrease and resorts have high demand of water resources. For example a golf course soaks up at least 525,000 gallons of water per day, which is an enormous amount and can have a significant impact on the resources available and can result in water scarcity.

Moreover, tourism has also impacts on local resources such as food, energy or other elements with a limited capacity. On high seasons, where the destination has times more inhabitants, these resources are heavily stretched to meet tourist's expectations.

Then the last depletion on natural resources is on land degradation that include minerals, fossil fuels, fertile soil, forests, wetland and wildlife. Tourism grew so fast these last years that it had to adapt his offer to the high demand. Therefore, a lot of construction have been made to welcome all the tourists and to entertain them, putting then pressure on these resources and landscapes. A lot of impacts have been made on natural resources, renewable and non-renewable, by the construction of these facilities and infrastructure: deforestation is one of the biggest impact, with land clearing to built infrastructures for example.

Other impact tourism industry has on the environment is the pollution. There are several forms of pollution created by tourist's action over time such as air pollution and noise, solid waste and littering, sewage and finally aesthetic pollution.

Indeed, with the number of tourists always evolving, their mobility is also increasing and thus there are using more transportation such as planes, which have direct consequences on air emissions. Nowadays air transport and tourism are two interlinked areas with interdependencies, as for long haul destination the only way to travel is the plane. Tourists accounts for more than 60% of air travel and among tourists a studied show than on 1.3 billion international tourist's arrivals on 2017, 57% of them travelled by air, which is the most polluting form of transport per passenger-kilometre. As the number of travellers never stop growing, air travel is also a fastest growing industry, with a gas emission that grow with it. The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT) reported a 32% increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emission since 2013. If current trends continue, aviation could be responsible for consuming a quarter of the 1.5°C carbon budget by 2050. Plane and other

types of transportation are also responsible for noise pollution which can cause stress, annoyance for the local population and can also be liable to wildlife distress for exemple.

Then there is the pollution due to the waste generating by tourists. For exemple, tourists can leave behind garbage or plastic or even cigarette butts in the environment thereby causing land pollution, plastic pollution and waste pollution. This can be a huge problem of the natural environment in areas with a lot of tourists: it can for exemple degrade the physical appearance of the landscapes as water or shorelines and also cause animals extinction or death (UNEP, 1997).

Moreover, asthetic environment is also impacted by the evasion of tourists as big infrastructure or other facilities have been massively constructed in the past years, changing the landscape of some areas. Huge building and resorts are now the place of natural environment.

This lead to physical impacts that tourism industry can have on attractive landscapes areas, with the degradation of ecosystems such as lakes, mountains, sandy beaches or coral reefs. Ecosystems are attractive places for tourists and therefore are also the most threatened places as there are ecologically very fragile: we can take the exemple of the great barrier reef in Australia which is at risk at the moment, or the Macchu Pichu in Peru which has been closed recently as there were too many tourists and it could cause its destruction.

At the global level, tourism industry has therefore a huge impact on the environment.

### **3.2 The emergence of a more sustainable tourism**

Tourism is often seen as part of sustainability rather than as 'sustainable'. Because of its ancient history of more than two centuries, tourism is indeed sustainable since it continues today to bring ancient places to life or to sustain the economy of certain countries: the "tourism revolution" is therefore a "sustainable revolution" (MIT Team, Tourisms 3, 2010). But this sustainability is not what we mean today by 'sustainable tourism' because today tourism is not what it was several years ago: our population is four times as large as it was several years ago, with many negative effects linked to tourism activities such as the destruction

of natural areas in favour of concrete buildings, unequal exchanges, low-skilled jobs, over-consumption of goods or non-renewable energy...

This is why 21st century tourism must be more respectful of nature, the economy and society. Sustainable tourism has become a very present concept in today's society and is already starting to change the mentality of tourism actors and tourists alike, thus changing the idea we had of tourism. Indeed, the statement of the main principles of sustainable development has made people aware of the alleged "climate change" and has led to economic, scientific and political reflections with a priority on the environment. These reflections have thus reached the tourism sector with many environmental awarenesses.

### 3.2.1 How tourism can contribute to sustainable development

Tourism has the potential to contribute to sustainable development on every level. On the year 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been set up. On the Agenda, a global framework has been listed until 2030 to end extreme poverty, fight injustice and inequality and adjust climate change and for the SDGs, 17 sustainable goals have been set up.



FIGURE 2. Sustainable Development goals

Tourism has the ability to contribute to all the goals, especially the goal 8, 12 and 14.

The goal number 8 is about having a sustainable economic growth. Indeed, tourism currently provide for 1 in 11 jobs all over the world so tourism is a big employment actor. This offer many opportunities for young or women who want to increase their competences and development their profesional skills. As job creator, tourism have a role to play in the economic growth of countries: for many countries worldwide, tourism is the first primary source of income and employment. Thus, tourism need to offer and promote decent work for everyone, with an equal treatment for all and good working conditions. The goal number 12 is about the sustainable consumption and production (SCP): as seen before, tourism is a major consumer of energy, water, food and other products needed by tourists. Therefore, it can play a significant role in adopting more sustainable and responsible consumption practices like reduce food waste, using renewable energy, recycled water...Tourism can be a role model and could accelerate the global trends towards sustainability. In order to do that, tourism industry must "Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism which creates jobs, promotes local culture and products" (World Tourism Organisation, 2015).

Finally, the goal 14 is about the preservation of the oceans: tourism can help to the conservation of fragile ecosystems and can promote blue economy to raise awareness on our oceans.

In recent years, a lot of action of these kinds have been implemented to conserve our natural environment. For example, about wildlife preservation, many countries have also implemented wildlife reserves and enacted strict laws protecting the animals that attract tourists (IUCN, 1996; UNEP and WTO, 1992; WWF,1992).

Environmental protection can also be promoted through awareness. For example, in Tahiti, Coral gardeners is an association to preserve the coral reef of the area: there are making action to restore corals, but also about the education in order to raise awareness about the damage and how precious coral reefs are. Coral reefs ecosystems are impacted by the global warming and this association believe that awareness is a key to protect our ocean. Indeed, raising awareness can lead to environmental conscious behavior and activities in order to conserve the natural habitat. In long term, to assure a sustainable development, tourism

industry needs to adopt the principles of sustainable consumption: such as promoting local product or services with the minimum of environmental impacts. Tourism industry needs to be a major actor in raising awareness and make the tourists be more careful of their actions, as there all have direct consequences, positive or negative, on the natural environment they are visiting.

### **3.2.2 The role of tours operators**

Previously, tour operators were unaware of their role in the negative impacts of tourism activities, and blamed local governments and tourism stakeholders in the destinations. However, with the collective awareness that has been growing over the last few years, tour operators have come to understand that they have a major role to play in influencing travellers' choice of destinations, activities or tourism practices towards a more sustainable tourism.

Many tourists depend on them and customise their holidays according to what the tour operators offer. The role of tour operators is to create a complete holiday for tourists, starting with transport, then accommodation, activities and food. It is therefore up to them to ensure that all these elements are as responsible as possible. Tour operators have the potential to influence and promote environmental and social accountabilities in their operation (Lin et al., 2018). By offering accommodation and activities that are environmentally friendly to local communities, tour operators will enable tourists to make their trip more responsible. Working with local guides, local cooks and local employees are important initiatives for tour operators to take. Indeed, tourists do not always have the time or the means to find out about local experiences to get closer to responsible travel, so being able to book a holiday where all these sustainable elements are already included would increase the development of sustainable tourism.

Nowadays, many tour operators are part of volunteer programmes to promote sustainable tourism: this type of tourism is only positive for tour operators as it is tourism that does not degrade: by caring for our planet and its environment, it will allow tour operators to continue to offer holidays all over the world. On the other hand, if tourism continues to degrade our planet, in a few years' time destinations and cultural sites will no longer be open to tourists. Thus, tour operators have everything to gain by promoting sustainable tourism, which allows them to ensure

their travel in the years to come, but also to respond to the growing demand of tourists, who are often more satisfied with sustainable travel. So it's a win-win situation for tour operators and for the planet. With this awareness of their impacts while travelling, tourists are increasingly willing to travel with travel agencies that offer practices that help reduce these impacts. "New generations of tourists appear showing a behaviour drifting away from the pure consumerism, but developing mentality of environmental consciousness, that characterises them as tourists who would prefer to stay in environmentally friendly accommodations using renewable energy sources. They are willing to pay more for "green" products and higher prices for staying in environmentally friendly hotels," says Stanislav Ivanov in his essay "Sustainable Tourism Practices of Accommodation Establishments in Bulgaria: An Exploratory Study."

Tourists are therefore increasingly choosing destinations that will help rather than harm the people and the destination. Sustainable tourism also saves them money as it uses fewer resources such as water and electricity, local activities or restaurants are often cheaper than large food chains and local accommodation is inevitably cheaper than luxury hotels.

Tour operators have the opportunity to include sustainable practices in all their activities: whether in their resorts or offices. Indeed, before the holiday, operators can reduce their consumption of paper, energy for example, or respect the labour rights of all their employees. Depending on the location of their office, they may favour local employees over expatriates. At the level of their tourism activities, they can plan them with sustainability criteria to respect, avoiding damage to the environment. At the destination level, it is up to them to be careful about where they take tourists, depending on the vulnerability of each place. Some places are more vulnerable than others, and some require special attention in terms of respect for the environment (e.g. coral reefs). In addition, some destinations have limited capacity, which means that the number of tourists sent to each destination must be carefully controlled so as not to damage the environment and the people they visit.

Finally, to promote sustainable tourism, tour operators can work with local government and local sub-contractors to propose and promote local activities that benefit the local economy. Tour operators are in contact with tourists before, during and after their trips, so they have a lot of scope for convincing them in their choice of destination or activity.

### **3.3 The emergence of a more sustainable tourism after the covid-19 crisis**

#### **3.3.1 Tourist's awareness of the environmental damages caused by the industry**

During the covid-19 crisis, tourism came to a halt: this gave rise to a reflection on the damage caused by tourism.

Indeed, many environmental and species benefits were observed during this crisis, for example in Thailand where marine animals such as endangered turtles and whale sharks were observed. According to scientists, this is due to the 83% drop in the number of foreign tourists. To continue this improvement, the Thai government has decided to close more than 150 national parks for three months of the year to limit access and allow the fauna and flora to regenerate. To compensate for these financial losses, prices to access national parks may increase, but as Varawut Silpa-archa, Thailand's Minister of the Environment, says: "this is the price to pay" to preserve nature.

Many of the same practices have been observed for the preservation of the environment and cultural space often degraded by mass tourism. According to Jean-Francois Rial, CEO of Voyageurs du Monde, it is necessary to "educate travellers" to visit lesser-known places or to come in low season when tourist activity is lower.

Indeed, many see the covid-19 crisis as an opportunity: "For radical solutions to emerge, there usually has to be an external shock," says Damien Chaney, professor of marketing. For him, the global pandemic would be an opportunity to move towards a more responsible tourism.

"Travel less but better": this is the new tourism slogan that has been developed especially during the crisis of covid-19. Indeed, during this crisis an awareness has developed among tourism consumers, which could be followed by effects if the travel actors apply it. "Travelling less but better" means first of all at the ecological level, being more concerned about the environment, respecting the visited regions as well as the local populations and their living environment. By ensuring that when they travel, tourists do not do anything that could degrade the environment in which they find themselves, being aware that this environment is not only

their holiday destination but above all a living environment for a whole population and ecosystem.

"Travelling less but better" also implies an awareness of consuming better-quality products. It means being careful about what you buy and where you buy it, whether it is for products or activities. Not trying to do everything possible on your trip, but focusing on limited activities to fully enjoy and experience everything; to take the time to discover everything.

### **3.3.2 Demand evolution**

With the covid-19 crisis, travellers' demand has changed. They prefer to secure their travel with low-risk, familiar trips, with a high demand for holidays in or around their home territory. Indeed, according to a 2020 survey, 58% of travellers took domestic holidays by the end of 2020 (Oliver Wyman Traveler COVID-19 Survey, 2020). The demand for sustainable holidays has also changed and increased, as shown in a covid-19 survey where "73% of consumers are taking note of brand that are making a difference during covid-19" (Oliver Wyman Traveler COVID-19 Survey, 2020).

Indeed, it has now been noticed that when planning a holiday, travellers will favour destinations close to home. This trend has manifested itself all over the world, for example after the peak of the crisis 77% of Chinese travellers favoured domestic travel. The same is true in the US, where 71% of travellers favoured domestic travel compared to 58% the previous year (Oliver Wyman Traveler COVID-19 Survey, 2020). This desire to travel close to home is also reflected in travellers' fear of being infected by the virus, so they prefer to stay in a safer and more familiar environment. Short-haul travel has already resumed, but long-haul travel will take longer to resume due to mandatory quarantine in many countries. According to Darrell Wade, Chairman of Intrepid Group, "Wealth will also be an issue as we are looking at a serious recession - the uncertainty around future income will make people focus on domestic and cheaper holidays". Unemployment rates are rising across OECD countries and, middle class consumption is shrinking with more people falling into poverty. Citizens are also increasingly concerned they could lose their jobs due to the pandemic, with 60% of Americans

fearing job loss. In this context, cost will have a large impact on travel decisions in the short to medium term. Eduardo Kina, CEO of Alatur JTB, fears that this could be the "end of the golden era of globalisation, after years of feeling that the world was getting smaller; to a new world, at least for a while, where travellers will maximise the time spent at the destination".

In addition, there has also been an increase in demand for more natural holidays. Indeed, in an effort to avoid crowds and overly touristy destinations, travellers are increasingly looking for places 'off the beaten track', often in a natural setting. One study found that 40% of Americans said they had rethought the way they travelled and the type of destination they chose because of the crisis in the US. Travel to lesser-known destinations and for more authentic experiences will therefore increase, boosting demand for community travel or cycling roadtrips, for example. Luis Araujo, managing director of Turismo de Portugal, agrees: "Those who choose to travel will appreciate the authenticity of the country even more". According to Geoffrey Kent, founder and co-chairman of Abercrombie & Kent, the definition of luxury will change from "huge bottles of champagne and silk sheets to adventure tourism with comfortable nights, delicious food and good wine".

Another trend that has emerged with the health crisis is that of planning. Planning will become an important aspect for travellers, highlighting the need for security. In addition, with the possibility of travel becoming limited, long-stay holidays are more in demand than short-stay holidays. According to Martin Zanone, managing director of Eurotur, a destination management company based in Argentina, "travellers want to maximise the number of nights per accommodation or destination, so we are seeing longer trips and itineraries of up to 20 days". Another important point from the tourist's point of view is flexibility: being able to change holiday dates without extra cost is a primary and decisive factor in travellers' choice of holiday.

## **4 CASE STUDY: HOW WILL CLUB MED FIT INTO THE NEW RESPONSIBLE TOURISM MOVEMENT?**

### **4.1 Club Med presentation**

In 1950, Gérard Blitz arrives in the market with an innovative concept that revolutionized the travel industry: the first holiday villages with an all-inclusive formula (transport, accommodation, leisure activities, catering...).

Nearly 60 years after creating the all-inclusive holidays, The Club Med proposes to its customers, the GM, a new way to live and enjoy their vacations with no frustration and therefore a total fulfillment was sought: "all-inclusive, upscale, friendly and multicultural" Villages. With a unique, premium, all-inclusive resorts, Club Med put visitors at ease, offering them a unique combination of stunning locations, beautiful accommodations, full-board gourmet cuisine, childcare and a multitude of activities and sports, suitable for everyone's wishes.

Having their villages situated in the most stunning places worldwide, Club Med built an image of dream and conviviality within the tourism industry. A brand promise associated with a strong focus on the quality of its service, attention to details and a sense of joy that can be found within every Club Med's ambassadors, employees and members.

Club Med is known for its resorts that meet everyone's needs: couples, singles, children or families.

In 2003, Club Med decided to change its strategy by positioning itself in an upscale market and clientele with high purchasing power, moving "from a volume strategy to a value strategy", without renouncing the company's fundamental values: friendliness, a sense of welcome and humanism. In addition to this new brand positioning, Club Med is also repositioning its clientele in the family market. By offering a new and unique GO- supervised program for children from 4 months to 17 years old, allowing adults and parents to enjoy their free time.

## **4.2 Sustainability at Club Med: the responsible vision of the pioneer in the all-inclusive holidays**

For several years, as a result of its international development, Club Med has centred some of its values on sustainable development.

From the very beginning, Club Med has acted in favour of sustainable development. Although often seen as a large tour operator in the tourism sector with negative impacts on the environment, Club Med has ultimately had a strong commitment to sustainable tourism and has acted for its development since its birth. For example, the very first resort built in Agadir in 1965 contributed to the reconstruction of this destination in Morocco after it was devastated by an earthquake. Several years later, other initiatives were put in place: Club Med created the first wastewater treatment plant in its resort La Pointe aux Canonnières in Mauritius or implanted the largest field of solar collectors in Europe in one of its resorts, in Martinique.

With more and more initiatives to develop sustainable tourism within its resorts, Gilbert Trigano, one of the founding fathers of Club Med, created in 1978 "La Fondation Club Med" to encourage sustainable practices and to promote volunteer work for solidarity or sustainable development projects. It is in these areas that the Club Med Foundation focuses its solidarity actions, since Youth and the Environment are two areas that allow solidarity actions and where Club Med employees and members can get involved.

Since 2005, there has also been a Sustainable Development Department which defines the group's priorities in corporate social responsibility (CSR) in order to better identify the impacts of their activities and improve them so that their activities no longer impact the environment and local populations. The Club Med Foundation and the Sustainable Development Department, having the same goal, merged in 2014 to become a single department: The Sustainable Development and Philanthropy Department (SDPD). The SDPD has subsequently carried out several surveys to define the priority issues in terms of sustainable development. One of these surveys defined the importance of the issues for Club Med and for the stakeholders. This survey was carried out in accordance with the AA1000 standard, which has four key questions: existence of an internal policy

on the subject, potential financial impact, social interest of the issue, formal expression of the interest of the Group's stakeholders in the issue. Following this standard, 28 questions were selected and classified according to the expectations of each stakeholder (customers, employees, suppliers, investors, etc.) and their impact on the group's activity (financial, commercial, regulatory, CSR ambition, level of internal investment, etc.).

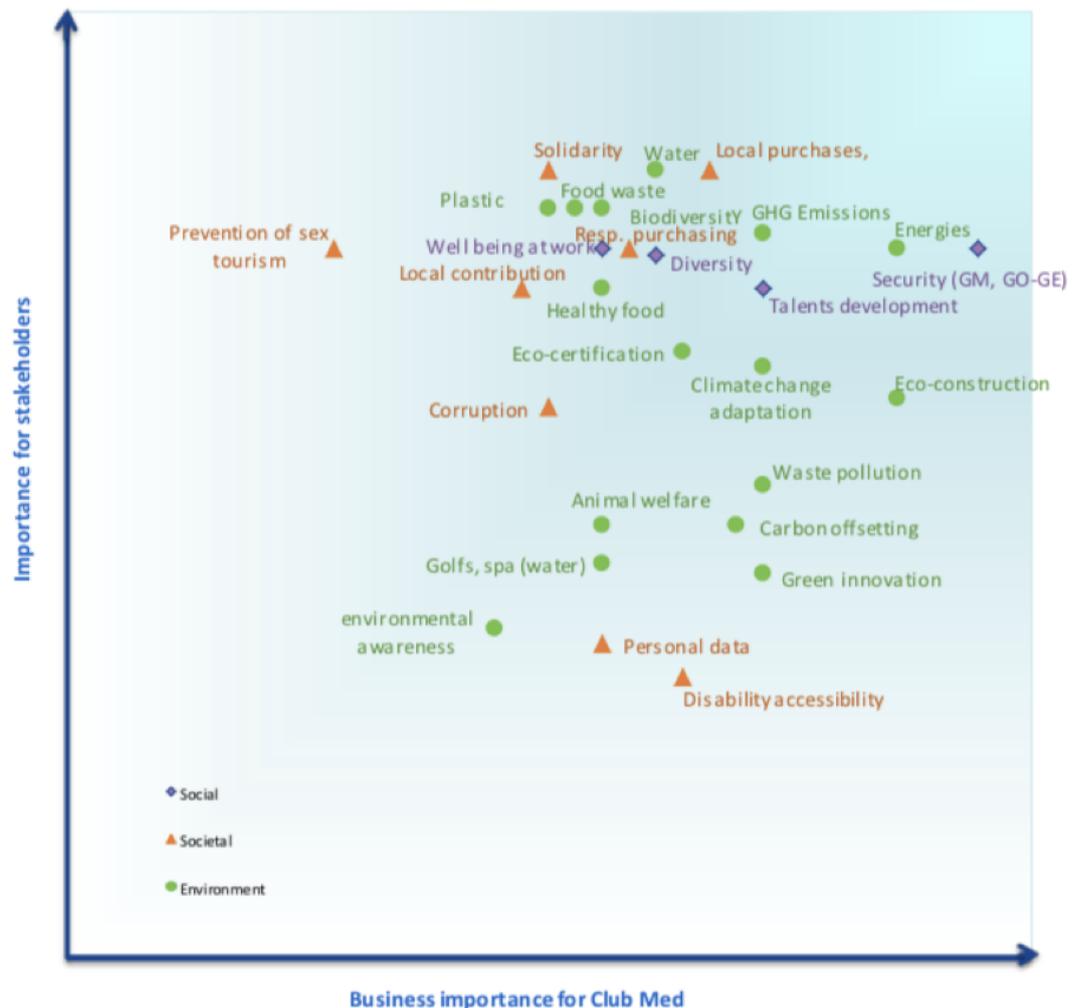


FIGURE 3. Sustainability priority issues

In September 2015, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were signed. Among these goals, Club Med's CSR policy participates in some of them, such as those concerning local development, the Bye-Bye plastic programme, waste management and the preservation of biodiversity (see picture below).

 <b>CROSS-REFERENCE TABLE WITH SOME NOTABLE ACTIONS OF CLUBMED CSR POLICY</b>	
	Support to local producers (§ 3.2.3) Foundation Education programs (§ 3.1.3)
	Health and safety at work (§ 2.4) Support to agro-ecology (§ 3.2.3) Foundation Sports Schools (§ 3.1.3)
	Foundation Education programs, Foundation Job Links (§ 3.1.3)
	Control consumption: Water consumption, wastewater treatment (§ 4.1 & 4.3) Phytoremediation (§ 4.1.3)
	Construction eco-standards (§ 4.1.3)
	<b>Contributing actively to local development (§ 3.1.2)</b> <b>Employment (§ 2.1) / Well-being at work (§ 2.4)</b> <b>Responsible purchasing (§ 3.2) Agrisud partnership (§ 3.2.3)</b>
	Contributing to local development (§ 3.1.2) Foundation and Solidarity (§ 3.1.3)
	Development of the Breeam standards for resorts (§ 4.1.3)
	<b>Food waste prevention (§ 4.2.2)</b> <b>"Bye bye plastic" program (§ 4.2.2)</b> <b>Green Globe, Breeam (§ 4.1.4) and ATR (§ 1.5) certifications</b>
	Sciences Based Target study on scope 1 + 2 (§ 4.4)
	<b>Responsible purchasing: Seafood charter (§ 3.2)</b> <b>Water: wastewater treatment and management (§ 4.3.1)</b> <b>"Bye bye plastic" program (§ 4.2.2)</b> <b>Preservation: sea turtles, coral reefs (§ 4.5.2)</b> <b>Awareness / Support Expedition MED (§ 4.6.2)</b>
	Protecting biodiversity with local protection associations (§ 4.5) Responsible purchasing: wood charter, Agrisud partnership (§ 3.2)
	Partnership with Agrisud (§ 3.2.3) Foundation (skill-based sponsorship) and Friends of the Foundation (fundraising) (§ 3.1.3) 15 local partnerships (§ 3.1.3)

FIGURE 4. Cross reference table with notable Actions of Club Med CSR policy

In 2019, Club Med launched a new corporate social responsibility programme called "Happy to care". This programme brings together the actions of the Club Med Foundation and the Sustainable Development Department and aims to be a sustainable programme by developing sustainable and responsible tourism within Club Med which is the tourism of the future. With its responsible vision, Club Med recognises that the tourism of tomorrow will be a responsible tourism with a low carbon footprint that respects ecosystems and local populations. Thus, sustainable practices within the group have been developed in all areas, all professions and are articulated around three main axes: the preservation of natural heritage through certifications, local development, and the sharing of experience.

#### **4.2.1 Preservation of natural heritage**

Club Med pays particular attention to the preservation of the environment and biodiversity in the destinations where it owns resorts. This is achieved by integrating the resorts into the local environment, i.e. not degrading the environment in which they are located. Indeed, endemic vegetation is always preserved or replanted, as for example in the Michès Playa Esmeralda resort in the Dominican Republic, which has set up a programme to replant trees that were removed during the construction of the resort: the 2000 trees that were removed have been replanted in the resort.

Vegetation is an important element that Club Med takes into account during the construction of a resort: the built surface never exceeds 10% of the total surface of the site in order to privilege natural spaces.

Finally, Club Med often works in collaboration with local environmental associations to protect the fauna and flora or animal species in certain regions, as for example in Atlanque in their resort La Palmyre Atlantique with their partnership with the Ligue de Protection des Oiseaux.

#### **Sustainable labels and certifications**

To support its commitment to sustainable tourism, most of Club Med's resorts have international responsible tourism certifications such as BREEAM, Green Globe, the ATR label or the EcoLeaders programme by TripAdvisor.

BREEAM is one of the most recognised eco-building certifications in the world. With this certification, Club Med is committed to eco-certifying all of its new resorts: before 2017, this certification did not exist for resorts, so in 2017, Club Med and the BREEAM teams created the Club Med - BREEAM "resort" adapted for resorts with the specificity that these resorts can be made up of several buildings spread over a vast area. Since 2018, 100% of the new resorts built by Club Med are BREEAM eco-certified, such as the Grand Massif Samoens Morillon resort, which obtained BREEAM "New Construction" certification (pass level) after its construction in 2018. In addition to this eco-certification, Club Med's new projects or construction always incorporate new "green" innovations to test new "green" technologies and then promote them to its members.

#### Green innovations put into practice since 2008

Biological wastewater treatment via Jardins Filtrants® with Phytorestore	2006	Albion (Mauritius)
	2011	Yasmina (Morocco)
	2013	Gulin (China)
Natural swimming pools with Phytorestore	2013	Gulin (China)
	2017	Da Balaia (Portugal)
	2018	Cefalu (Italia)
Automatic management of room amenities with wireless communication technology, or stack.	2012	Opio (France)
	2014	Kamarina (Italy)
	2014	Gregolimano (Greece)
	2018	Pointe aux Canonniers (Mauritius)
Hotel-specific thermostat from Aemec	2013	Gregolimano (Greece)
High-tech paint containing microspheres for increased reflection of solar radiation	2013	Punta Cana (Dominican Rep.)
	2014	Marrakech (Morocco)
"Self-learning" energy optimizer	2011	Valmorel (France)
	2014	Val Thorens (France)
"Smartgrid" and "load control switch" electricity load management in conjunction with EDF	2014	Alpes d'Huez, Serre-Chevalier, La Flagne 2100 et Val d'Isère (France)
LED to replace high-powered halogen lighting	2014	Da Balaia (Portugal)
Biomass urban heating	2014	Vittel le Parc (France)
Solar LED for autonomous external lighting	2014	Opio (France)

SiteControl software for centralized irrigation management connected to a weather station	2015	Albion (Mauritius)
Photovoltaic biaxial tracking systems with Helioslite and CEA-INES	2015	Cap Skirring (Senegal)
Ice water unit with high efficiency electro-magnetic compressors without oil	2016	Pointe aux Canonniers (Mauritius)
Installation combining thermic solar, heating and A/C heat pump, and recovery of calories in the sanitary hot water network	2016	Gregolimano (Greece)
CO2 heat pump	2017	Da Balaia (Portugal)
Tw eener® LED lighting suitable for outdoor tennis courts	2018	Opio (France)
High temperature heat pump for DHW preparation	2018	Pointe aux Canonniers Maurice)
Structure ossature bois	2018	Cefalu (Italia)
<b>Production of domestic hot water by wood pellets ("solid bio fuel")</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Rio das Pedras (Brazil)</b>
<b>Thermo fridge pump to simultaneously produce heat and cold by heat exchange (hot water and air conditioning)</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Marrakech (Morocco)</b>

FIGURE 5. Green innovations put into practice since 2008 at Club Med

Then there is the Green Globe eco-certification which is one of the most demanding certifications in terms of sustainable tourism. This certification rewards establishments that take sustainable development into account in their practices and are committed to improving the environmental and social management of their activity.

This certification is very demanding as it includes more than 300 criteria that are evaluated by accredited organisations, and to renew it each year the progress

approach is necessary. These criteria cover, for example, the protection of biodiversity, the development of the local economy, the reduction of the carbon footprint, energy management, air quality, the preservation of cultural heritage, etc. Club Med is adopting many of these practices within its resorts and currently has 80% of its resorts with Green Globe certification and expects to reach 100% by the end of 2021.

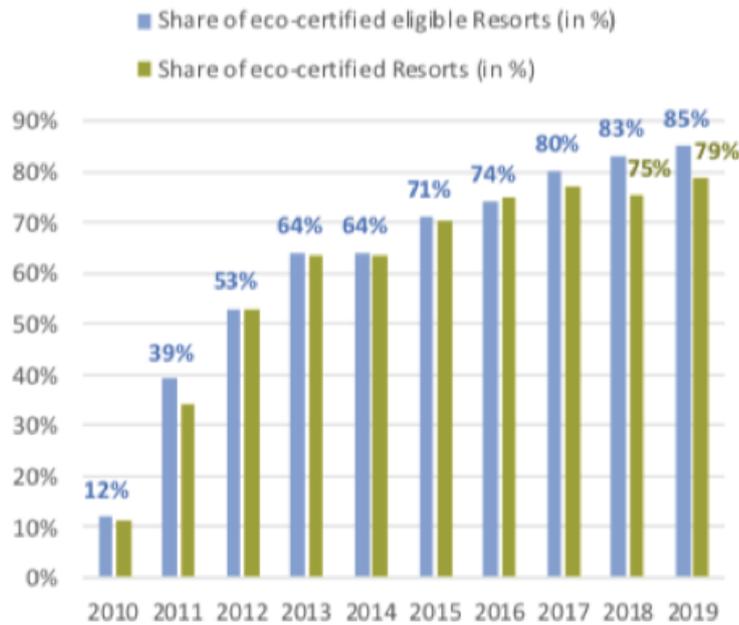


FIGURE 6. Eco-certified Club Med resorts and eligible resorts for the Green Globe certification

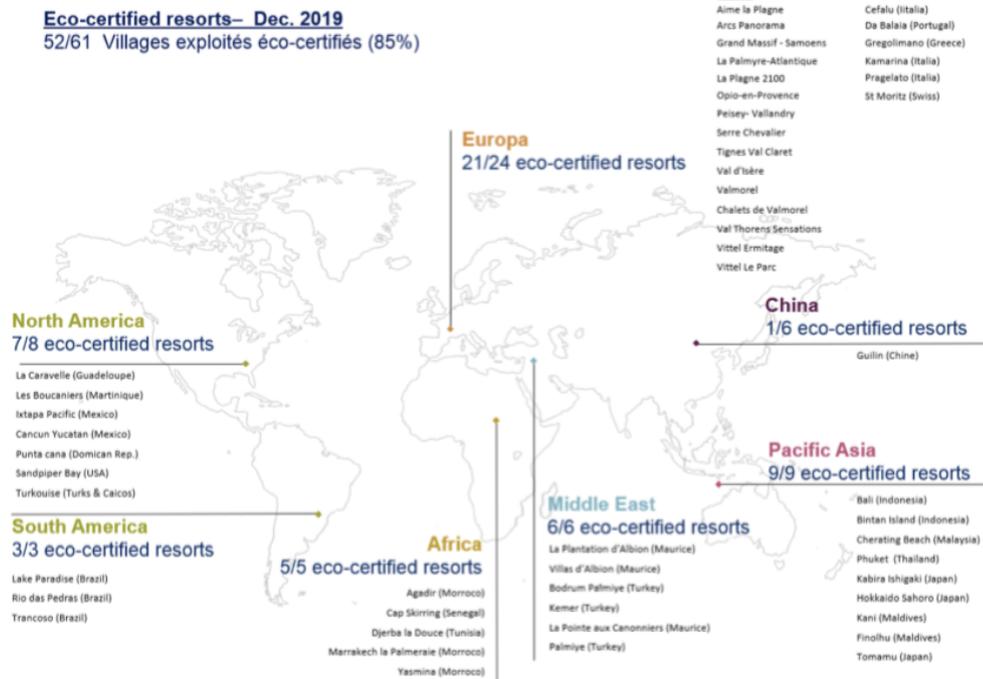


FIGURE 7. Eco-certified Club Med resorts in 2019

Thirdly, there is the ATR label 'Agir pour un Tourisme Responsable' (Acting for Responsible Tourism) for French tour operators who have a sustainable approach to their tours in order to support local development and the preservation of the environment. The aim is to preserve the authenticity of each destination by not degrading the beauty of each environment and by respecting the customs of the host population. To qualify for this label, 16 criteria must be fulfilled and it is the ECOCERT organisation that evaluates its achievement with an annual audit. Since December 2017, all the discovery tours offered by Club Med have obtained this label, thanks to their commitment to responsible tourism and the many practices implemented over the years. Indeed, Club Med discovery tours have many commitments that correspond to the criteria that ECOCERT evaluates, such as limiting the number of tourists going to the same destination to avoid degrading the most sensitive places, offering an authentic experience with moments of sharing with the local community, supporting the local economy with, for example, the discovery of local cuisine and crafts or working with local service providers or guides.

Finally, there is the EcoLeaders programme by TripAdvisor which recognises resorts with good eco-responsible practices. This label allows travellers who want

to make an eco-friendly trip to be able to identify establishments that are respectful of the environment. In order to obtain the Ecoleader label, a minimum of 7 ecological practices are required: monitoring energy consumption regularly, having more than 75% of its light bulbs energy saving, reusing towels and bed linen, being able to recycle at least 2 types of waste, having a staff trained and aware of ecological practices and finally communicating with its customers on the sustainable actions to be applied. In 2019, 16 Club Med resorts have been recognised as 'Green Leader' by Tripadvisor.

Thanks to all its sustainable tourism practices, Club Med has been rated at Silver level with a score of 60/100 by the Ecovadis group in 2019, which is the rating agency for suppliers of sustainable products (see picture below):

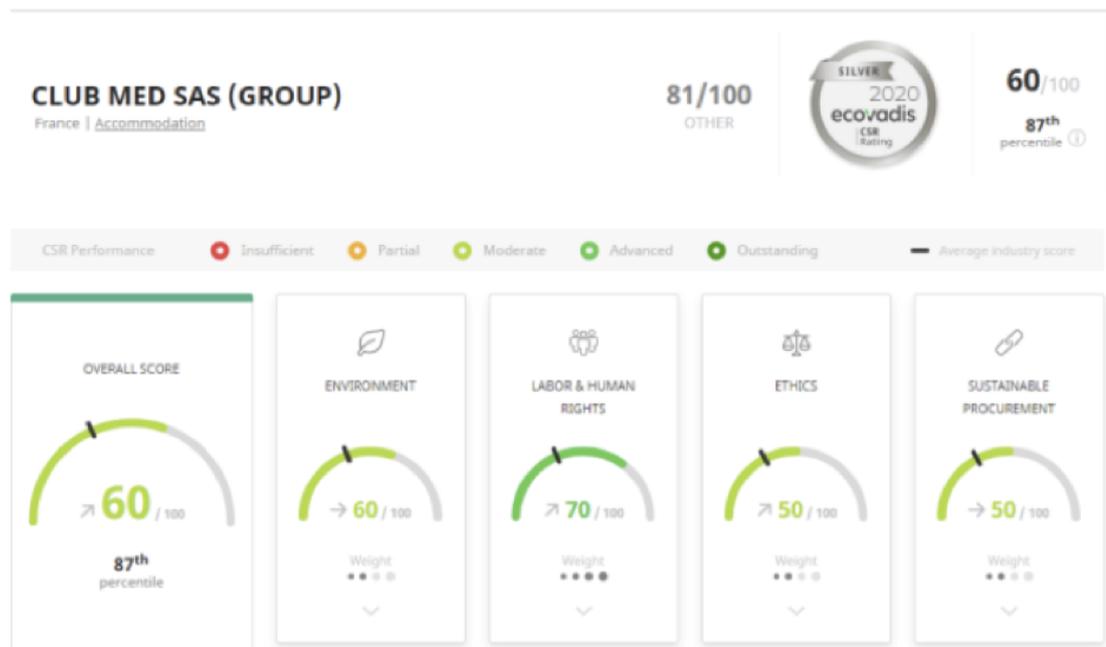


FIGURE 8. ranking made by ecovadis for Club Med in 2019

### Proactive sustainable projects and activities implemented

Club Med does not stop at these labels and certifications, since to work in favour of sustainable tourism the pioneering all-inclusive holiday operator has also set up numerous concrete projects with proactive approaches.

This is indeed the case of the "Bye Bye Plastic" programme launched in 2018, the aim of which is to eliminate all single-use plastic products present in all the

resorts by 2021 (straws, dishes, products in the rooms, etc.). These measures have been taken since the end of 2019 as straws, cups or plates have been removed from the resorts and shower gel, shampoo or cream in plastic tubes have been replaced by larger reusable containers. Since the end of 2020 there has also been the replacement of plastic water bottles with glass or recycled plastic bottles.

Another project implemented by Club Med concerns the reduction of food waste. As Club Med offers all-you-can-eat buffets to its customers, their objective is to reduce the amount of food thrown away. This project has enabled Club Med to continue to offer generous, tasty buffets while paying attention to waste: Club Med's all-you-can-eat buffets are now ranked among the least wasteful, with an estimated 101g of waste per meal and per person. To achieve this result, several practices have been adopted such as optimising stocks, anticipating the number of guests to adjust the quantities of buffets, recipes allowing the reuse of certain dishes not consumed, cooking meals on demand... In addition to these practices limiting waste, Club Med has also equipped the bins of its resorts with Winnow technology, which is an artificial intelligence that measures and limits food waste by recognising discarded food and prepared dishes.

It is all of these actions that allow Club Med to have the Green Globe certification, with a continuous work to improve their impacts, from waste sorting to the reuse of packaging.

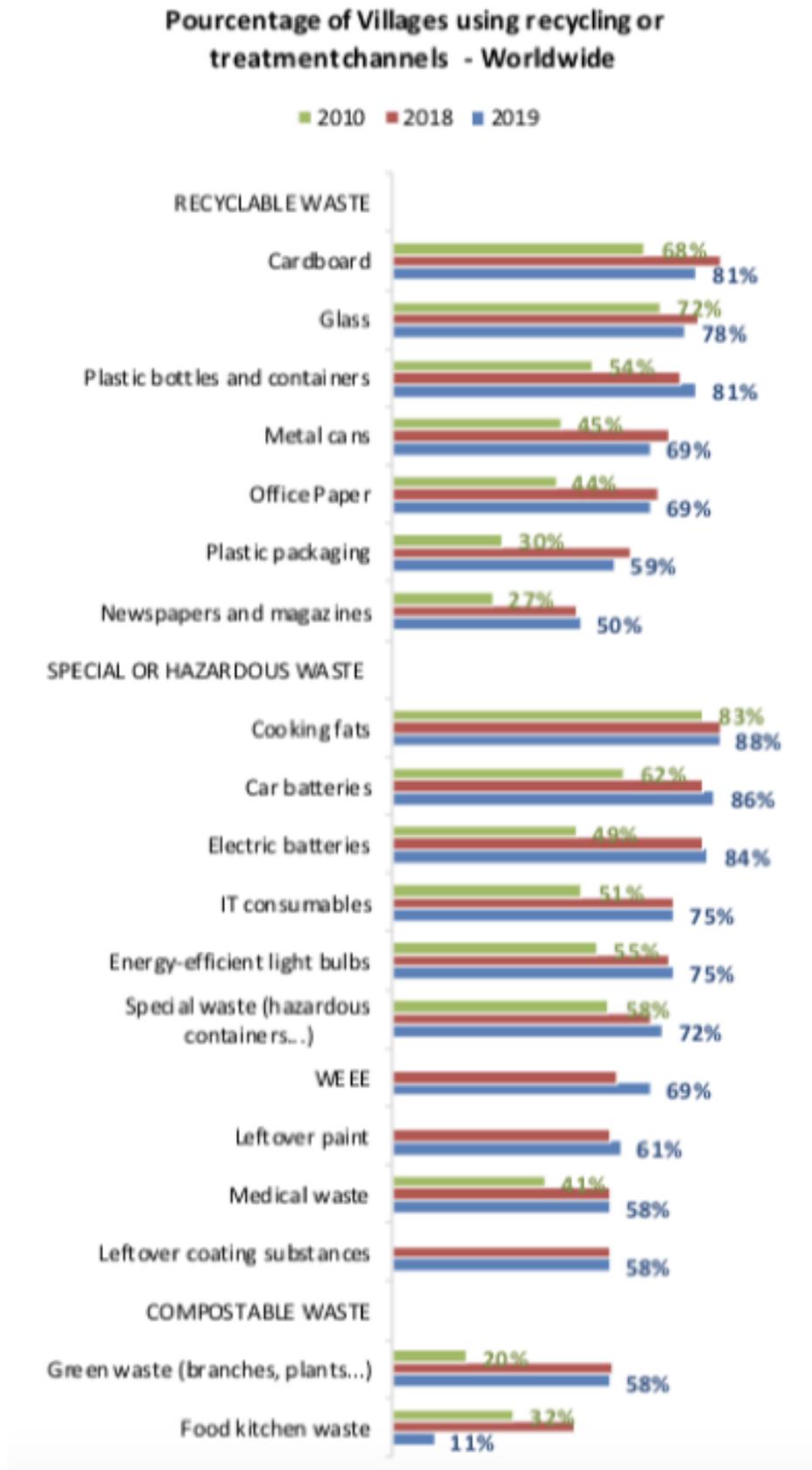


FIGURE 9. Percentage of Village using recycling or treatments channels

Finally, Club Med's approach to sustainable tourism also concerns the preservation of animal welfare. Animals contribute to the richness of a destination and have an important place in the tourism world. They are part of the reasons why tourists go to a particular destination and many animal-related activities are organised to allow tourists to get closer and closer to the animals. However, these activities can be detrimental to their welfare and it is often difficult to distinguish between good and bad practices, although studies have been carried out for several years to identify and eliminate bad practices and improve good practices. Club Med is committed to working with stakeholders and specialists who want to improve its good practices. Let's take the example of elephant rides: many tourists, particularly in Asia, experience this type of attraction, but very few of them are aware that in order to ride on their backs, the elephants undergo a special training ritual that subjects them to real torture. This ritual called "phajaan" consists of breaking the spirit of the elephant to separate it from its body with the aim of subjecting it to man "the origin of phajaan comes from the ancestral belief that one can separate the spirit of an elephant from its body so that it loses its reflexes and its natural wild instinct and be completely under the control of man" (Gentside, 2018). This practice is carried out for about a week on young animals who are beaten, starved and deprived of sleep until the day when the "trainers" feel that their spirit is broken. The trainer then teaches the elephant the commands that entertain the tourists and then uses it as an attraction.

In order not to participate in the torture of elephants, Club Med has written off all circus activities, elephant rides and elephant bathing, and now only offers elephant watching, which is not harmful to elephants.

Still on the subject of animal welfare, Club Med is also committed to having 100% of their eggs from cage-free farms by 2025 in Europe, Brazil and the United States and by 2027 in other markets.

Finally, for the preservation of the natural heritage, numerous "nature" activities are offered in all Club Med resorts to allow guests of all ages to immerse themselves in the local cultural habitat and to be more receptive to environmental protection. Indeed, experiences related to the nature and biodiversity of the sites in which the resorts are located are highlighted: The "Green G.O" are experts who will lead these educational activities in order to highlight the natural heritage.

Other activities allow children to become aware of environmental protection. This is the case of Clean Art Planet, artistic workshops where children create works of art from plastic objects thrown back into the sea to make them aware of what the sea receives because of humans.

Many other examples of "green" activities related to the preservation of the environment exist at Club Med, such as the observation of the birth of turtles at the Cherating resort, the educational farms at Anji, or the educational snorkelling at Turkoise...

#### **4.2.2 Contribution to local development**

With resorts all over the world and as a major player in the tourism sector, Club Med has a duty to act in favour of local development. This is a commitment that Club Med has made since the beginning of its activity with the creation of the Foundation in 1978, as we have seen previously. This Foundation was one of the first to encourage the commitment of its employees through various actions such as their participation in solidarity projects, or environmental actions in collaboration with associations. In 2019, for example, more than 2,000 G.O. and G.E. participated in almost 300 projects in 24 different countries. This Foundation focuses its actions on two main areas: youth and the environment.

Indeed, the Club Med Foundation's priority is to help underprivileged children in the vicinity of their resorts, by offering them access to education (renovation of buildings, school equipment, tutoring, etc.) or work experience. This also involves donating equipment by mobilising Club Med resources: for example, 75 tonnes of supplies were donated to the EMMAUS and AIMA associations after the renovation of the La Palmyre Atlantique resort in France.

Club Med also offers solidarity stays for sick children identified by the associations Petit Princes and Make-A-Wish, so that they can have their dream holiday offered at Club Med and discover new activities such as skiing, the sea... The aim is also for the children to have stimulating, educational and enriching experiences and for the most motivated to be able to take advantage of training to become a G.O. These actions towards young people are increasingly numerous and in 2019, 430 children were accompanied in 8 sports schools, 6 young people were

taken on as interns or hired, 2700 children participated in the "planetary snack" which takes place in 36 resorts.

The Foundation also encourages sustainable development in the vicinity of the resorts: this translates into various actions concerning the preservation of the environment, such as beach clean-ups, collaboration with environmental associations such as the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation (Mauritius) whose project is to protect the fauna and flora, or Agrisud International (Senegal and Morocco) which will help and support local producers. In addition, 25 of Club Med's resorts have partnerships with Green Keepers which are local associations for the preservation of biodiversity and the Green Farmers programme to train local producers in agro-ecology is in place in 6 resorts.

The aim of the Foundation is above all to get Club Med members, both employees and customers, to collaborate in solidarity actions around the world in the vicinity of their resorts. Everything is based on voluntary work and mainly collaborates on projects where employees can participate and get involved.

But the Foundation does not stop at its actions, to be able to finance a greater number of projects and initiatives and to allow all those who cannot physically participate, a charity account has been opened. In 2012, Club Med created "Les amis de la fondation Club Med" to allow Club Med customers to make financial donations to this solidarity foundation which contributes to associations near Club Med resorts. For example, in 2017, around 20 solidarity projects received donations from the "Friends of the Club Med Foundation" and in 2019, €144k was raised to finance solidarity projects.

To contribute to these sustainable initiatives, Club Med members can participate in several ways: first of all, with a fundraising allowing those who want to finance this programme, through activities, tombolas during stays or online or auctions. During the booking process, customers also have the opportunity to make an online donation. This foundation is funded by the generosity of Club Med members who are often very generous and allow the realisation of various projects around the world.

Club Med also participates in local development through local employment.

In a resort, the number of jobs to be filled is very high given the number of activities and services offered: whether it is in the kitchens, sports or nature activities,

cleaning, the Children's Club... In 2018, out of all these jobs available, 75% of them were given to local people. This allows the development of the local economy as it increases the employability of local workers: the majority of local employees at Club Med receive training which develops their skills

About the Green Farmers programme, it aims to support the creation of small sustainable local businesses located near Club Med resorts. The benefit is two-fold: these small producers can access Club Med's customers to sell their products and it allows Club Med to offer even more responsible holidays with buffets made of fresh, healthy and local products. In 2019, 182 tons of agro-ecological products were delivered to Club Med by local producers. 500 producers have already been trained with this programme to base their agriculture on a more environmentally friendly agriculture.

#### **4.2.3 Sharing experience**

Club Med's actions to develop sustainably are not only about the environment and 'external' actions but also about the employees directly. The G.O. (Gentle Organisers) and G.E. (Gentle Employees) jobs are enriching experiences in an exceptional working environment allowing each person to develop in their own way. Club Med allows its employees to reveal themselves in the areas that correspond to them, allowing them to evolve within the company and to experience "the happiness of revealing themselves". Club Med has an 87% positive opinion of their working conditions. In addition to working in a unique setting with a rich and diverse culture, employees can also get involved in projects that are close to their hearts, as we have seen with the Club Med Foundation.

Club Med also offers rich and diverse career paths: with an international presence, there are more than 105 nationalities working in Club Med resorts around the world, with 26% of G.O & G.E having changed country of assignment and training to acquire new functions.

Nevertheless, Club Med teams have a high level of local representation with 75% of employees being local, which allows for local development by focusing on the local market: this allows for a real diversity of employees within the resorts

Club Med also has measures in place to ensure professional equality between men and women which are based on three axes: hiring, promotions and work/life balance.

Firstly, in terms of hiring, Club Med is transparent in its recruitment and offers the same salary for men and women in the same position. The proportion of women on the Club Med Management Committee is 46% in 2019, which is more than double the average level of women in high functionality in the world's twelve largest economies (source 2014: TheOfficialBoard.com, based on a panel of 38,000 companies worldwide).

In addition, in 2019 Club Med achieved a score of 89/100 on the Gender Equality Index which is calculated annually on pay, raises, promotions, maternity leave and management parity. This score is very satisfactory for Club Med as it is 6 points above the average score for companies with more than 100 employees and therefore shows Club Med's commitment to gender equality.

Equal treatment at Club Med is also achieved at the age level with their non-discrimination policy on age. Indeed, in 2015 the group signed an agreement to protect the jobs of senior citizens over 50. This agreement, in addition to maintaining the employment of seniors, also allows for actions in various areas such as skills development and access to information, assistance in the transition between the end of career and retirement ... This agreement also targets the youngest to offer them, for example, training, offering more fixed-term contracts and stimulating the mechanism of skills transfer. Indeed, each year more than 15500 new G.O and G.E are trained, with training courses given in the resorts as well as diploma courses for those who want.

## **5 RESEARCH METHOD AND FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Research objectives**

The aim of the research is initially to find an objective in order to direct the research properly. Since the topic of this thesis is sustainable tourism, the research objective was therefore to know and understand the sustainable tourism approaches that Club Med applies, and how these are perceived by tourists.

The aim of the research was also to find out the habits of consumers towards sustainable tourism, their motivations for practising this type of tourism and the obstacles they encounter. Indeed, in order to develop this form of tourism that is more concerned with its impact on the environment and local communities, it is first of all important to know whether this form of tourism interests' tourists (François Lecompte and Prim Allaz, 2009) and their motivations in order to be able to adapt the offers to the demand.

Knowing whether sustainable tourism really reaches tourists is therefore a key question for the development of sustainable tourism. Awareness has been raised among tourism stakeholders and tourists about the impacts of 'classical' tourism (Saarinen, 2006), but applying more responsible practices is something different. Indeed, according to several surveys, tourists are generally interested in the concept of sustainable tourism, but this is not really reflected in the way they travel. It is true that for several years the communication of sustainable tourism via different channels has increased enormously with also many blogs advocating soft practices in the tourism sector: all this explains why tourists are more sensitive to consume a more responsible tourism. It is therefore a first step, but to continue to develop, this craze for sustainable tourism must now be translated into real action and practice by tourists and tourism stakeholders.

### **5.2 Data collection method**

After the objectives were well defined, the author of the thesis considered the most appropriate research method and found that the most suitable method would be the quantitative method in order to collect quantitative data.

The author therefore created a questionnaire with various questions in order to collect as many answers and data as possible to have a representative sample of the population. As the theme of the thesis is mainly tourism, the questionnaire was sent to people who have already travelled or have a great interest in tourism. Indeed, the questionnaire was sent to acquaintances but was also made available on platforms such as LinkedIn or Facebook, with large communities. On Facebook, the questionnaire was posted on groups dedicated to travellers, allowing me to have a smaller sample of travellers.

The data collected is primary data but it has a limitation as on social networks, it was impossible to interview all tourists and it is not sure that all the people on the Facebook pages are necessarily travellers.

### 5.3 Summary of results

The return of the questionnaires was slightly lower than expected, with a total of 119 questionnaires completed.

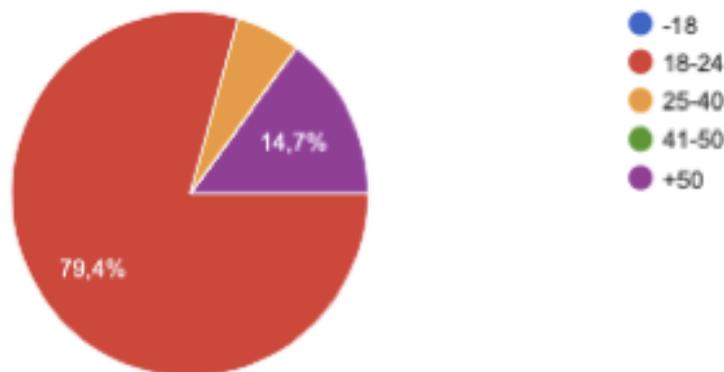


FIGURE 10. Age of respondents

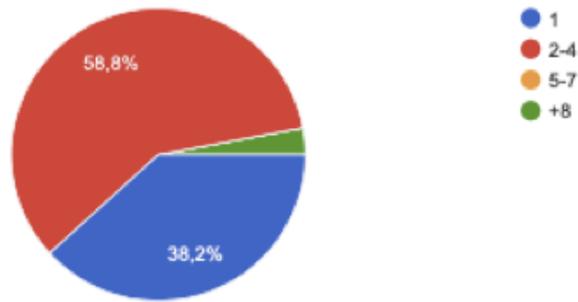


FIGURE 11. How many times respondents travel per year

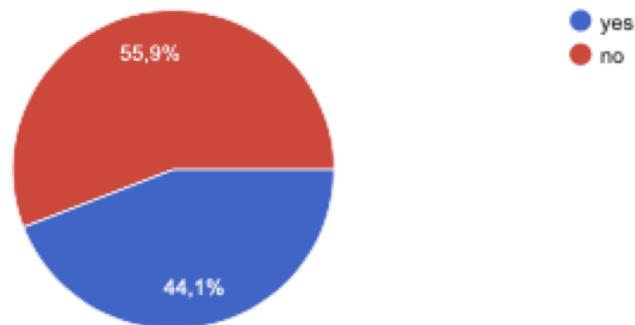


FIGURE 12. Respondent who had been to a Club Med holiday

Regarding the sample, it appears that the majority of respondents are between 18-24 years old (79.4%) and the second age group are respondents over 50 years old (14.7%). Among all these respondents, 58.8% of them travel regularly during the year, with a frequency ranging from 2 to 4 trips per year. Finally, more than half of the sample have already been on holiday with Club Med, which is useful to get their opinion on the sustainable policies established in the international group.

What word would you use to describe sustainable tourism?

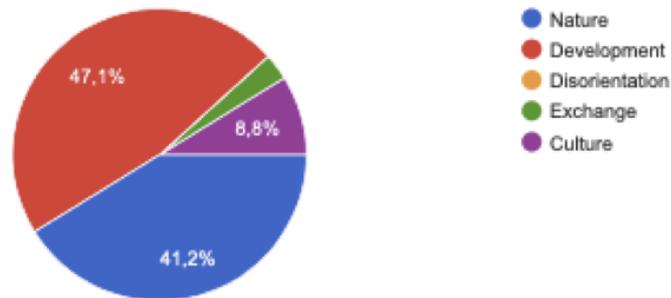


FIGURE 14. representing sustainable tourism in a nutshell

As can be seen from the graph below, sustainable tourism is mostly associated with the economic pillar, namely local development. For the respondents, sustainable tourism is above all the fact of consuming local products, doing local activities with local guides or other practices that allow local development. Secondly, it is the environmental pillar that receives 41.2% of the votes with the word "nature" referring to the environment. This shows that sustainable tourism is very much linked to respect the environment and nature (Harris Interactive, 2012). Finally, in third place there is the social pillar: for 8.8% of respondent's sustainable tourism is about culture.

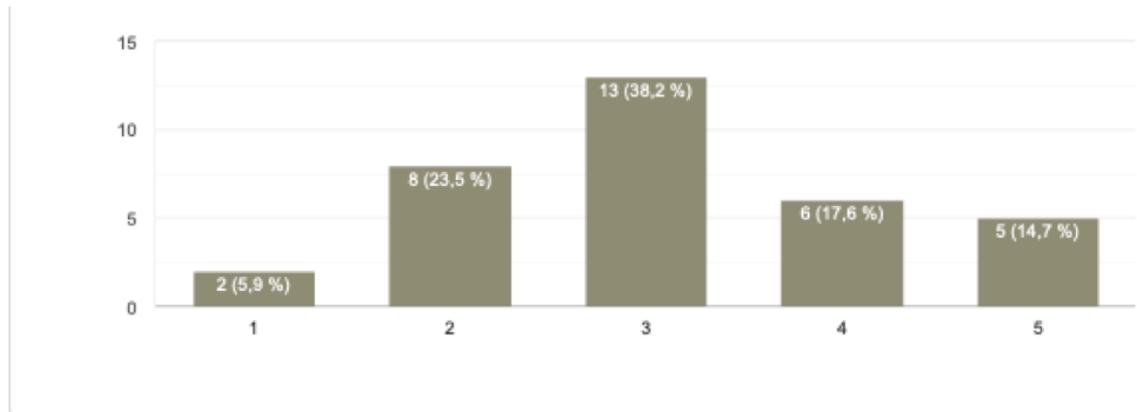


FIGURE 15. Importance of environmental impact when respondent choose a holiday

As we can see on the graph above, the environmental impact of tourists when traveling is still important, with 38% of the respondents giving a score of 3. The second highest score is 2 (23.5%) and the fourth highest is 4 (17.6%). This shows that tourists are becoming more aware of their environmental impact while traveling, but that their efforts to reduce it are still to be developed.

This may be due to the fact that there are several obstacles to practicing a sustainable stay, as we will see in the next question.

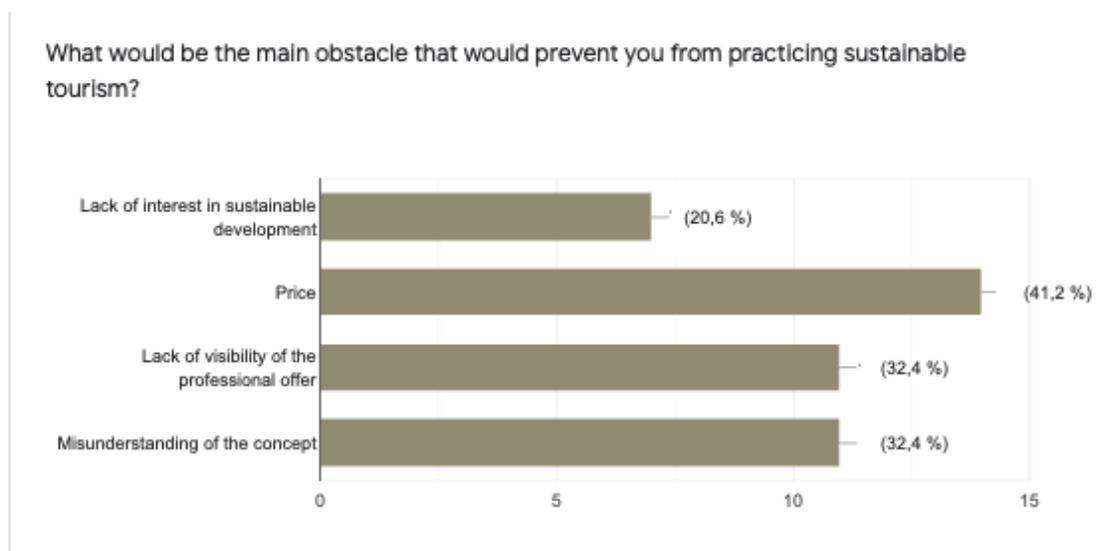


FIGURE 16. the obstacles to sustainable tourism

The analysis of the obstacles to the development of sustainable tourism is important to know, as it allows tourism stakeholders to adapt their offers to tourists. As can be seen in the graph above, the least important brake is the interest in

sustainable development: tourists are interested in practising this form of sustainable tourism but other brakes prevent them from doing so. Indeed, tourists have become aware of the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and local populations and are ready to change their way of travelling.

The main obstacle is the price, which concerns more than 40% of respondents: for one person in four, the price will prevent them from practising sustainable tourism. These results correspond to those of the study carried out by the CTB Trade for Development, which found that 40% of respondents found the price of sustainable tourism to be higher than that of "classic" tourism (CTB TRADE FOR DEVELOPMENT, 2013). The question arises as to whether this type of tourism only concerns the most affluent tourists? (Callot, 2010).

Then, on an equal footing, the other visible obstacles are those of the lack of visibility of the offers and thus the lack of clarity of the concept of sustainable tourism.

Indeed, the offers in favour of sustainable tourism are not very well known by tourists, and communication is often weak or non-existent. How can one want to practice sustainable tourism without knowing what is feasible? Even if people are interested, if tourists do not have the necessary information to adapt responsible practices, they will not be able to travel sustainably. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, there is no clear definition of sustainable tourism: the concept is often misunderstood and the practices for implementing sustainable tourism remain unclear: how can one travel sustainably if one does not know what sustainable travel means?

The main reasons for practicing sustainable tourism

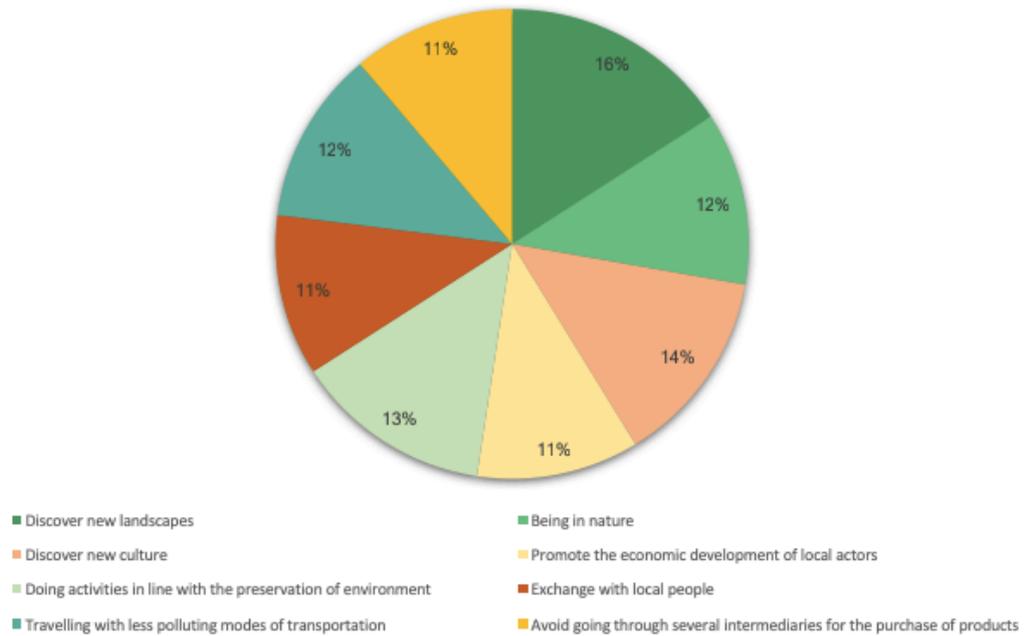


FIGURE 17. Motivations of the respondents

Once again, the two pillars that receive the most motivation are the environmental and economic pillars, as mentioned in the previous answers.

It is nevertheless the environmental pillar that comes out on top, with the "discovery of new landscapes" in first place (16%) and the realization of tourist activities related to "the preservation of the environment" in third place (13%).

The 2nd place is the economic pillar, with a score of 14% for the economic development of local actors.

This shows that sustainable tourism is symbolized by the preservation of the environment, which is therefore the greatest concern of travelers. The fact of consuming local products and supporting the local economy in the host destination also seems to be important for tourists. Nevertheless, we can note that the social pillar is the one that seems to touch the least people.

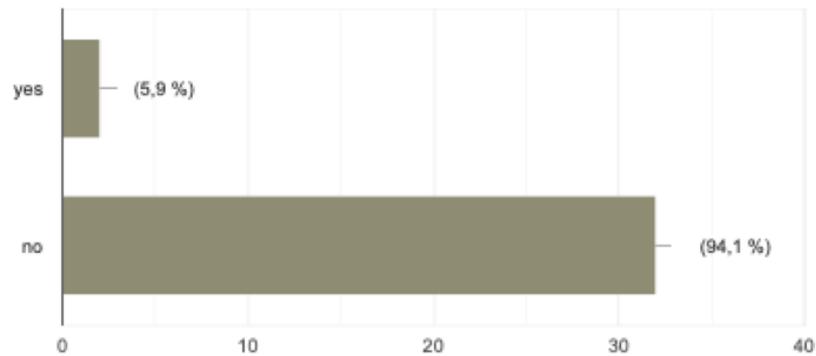


FIGURE 18. Is Club Med holiday a sustainable holidays for the respondents?

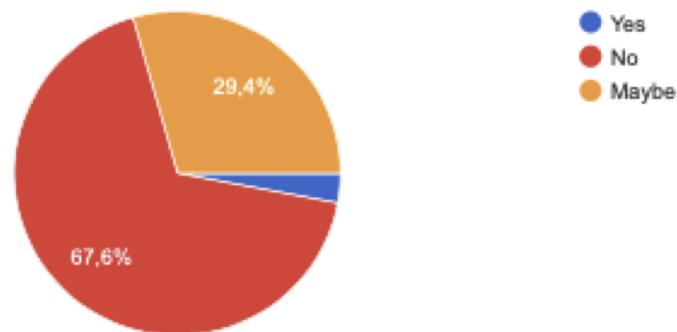


FIGURE 19. Will respondents go with Club Med for a sustainable holiday?

94.1% of respondents felt that Club Med does not offer sustainable holidays and of these 65.6% would not go on a sustainable holiday with Club Med.

To justify this response, the question that followed was about why respondents would not go on a holiday with Club Med. Many of the responses focused on the environmental and social pillar of sustainable tourism, saying that Club Med does not engage in responsible environmental and social practices. Indeed, many say that Club Med "is not sustainable at all" because of their large resorts with a lot of waste, which they associate with mass tourism with "a huge carbon footprint". Furthermore, on a social level, respondents find that Club Med does not offer "an immersive cultural experience" and that Club Med "does not promote local economy" and "are not often local actors".

After the covid crisis, do you think that the emergence of responsible tourism will take over from mass tourism ?

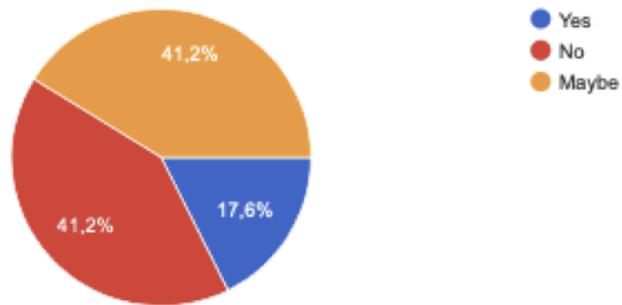


FIGURE 20. The emergence of responsible tourism after tourism will take over the mass tourism?

Since the covid-19, do you think there is a trend towards local tourism holidays ?

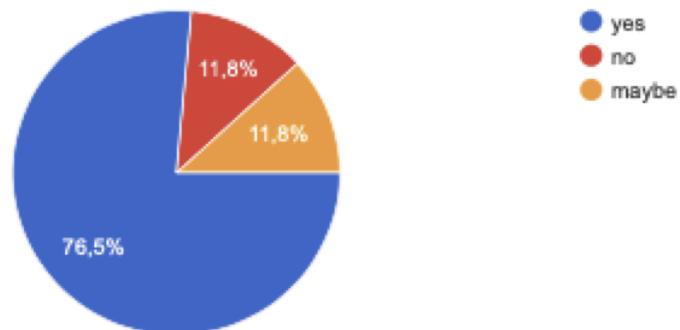


FIGURE 21. Is there a trends toward local tourism holidays since the covid-19?

Since covid-19, are you more interested to go on local tourism holidays?

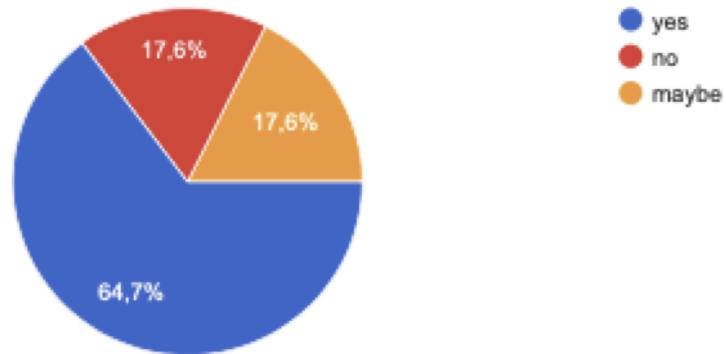


FIGURE 22. Are respondents more interested to go on local tourism holidays since covid-19?

Thus, with the covid-19 health crisis we can see that local tourism has increased and that 64.7% of the respondents are more interested than before in this type of tourism, less far away, safer and less degrading for the environment. But among them only 17,6% think that sustainable tourism will take over from mass tourism.

## **6 ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **6.1 Club Med, a player committed to sustainable tourism, but too little known**

As we have seen above, Club Med has a number of practices in favor of sustainable development, and these have been in place since the group's inception. These practices concern the three pillars of sustainable development, since Club Med acts in favor of local economy, the respect of the environment and social cohesion. Indeed, over time, Club Med has developed several to address the challenges of sustainable development, such as building resorts that blend into the landscape, being vigilant about energy consumption by favoring green energy, recycling wastewater and paying attention to waste, promoting local employment, etc.

Nevertheless, many people are unaware of these responsible practices that Club Med applies: as we saw in the survey, 94.1% of respondents say they do not consider Club Med to be a sustainable vacation.

This is due in part to Club Med's brand image, as well as its upscale positioning strategy: prestige, luxury, modernity and all-inclusive are Club Med's DNA. These words are not usually associated with sustainable development, which is why 64.7% (Figure 21) of respondents would not go on a sustainable vacation with Club Med. The image of Club Med refers more to consumerist tourism, with large resorts hosting too many tourists who enjoy the pool or golf more than the local experiences.

### **6.2 A business model that does not correspond to sustainable tourism**

In addition to a brand image that does not refer to sustainable tourism, the business plan of Club Med is also the opposite of sustainable tourism. Indeed, the value proposition of Club Med is to offer vacations in big resorts all over the world, with unlimited all-inclusive. They keep building resorts in ever more distant destinations, thus inciting tourists to make long distance trips. Moreover, with their all-you-can-eat buffet and all-day bar, it pushes customers to overconsume: even if

there are local products and waste is regulated, people going on a Club Med trip often overconsume. The same is true for activities: golf, jet skiing, or other non-local but often appreciated activities at Club Med are also unlimited. In Club Med resorts, the customer is king, with unlimited access to whatever he wants: this is not necessarily the vision that tourists have of sustainable tourism.

While Club Med has adopted a number of sustainable tourism practices to reduce waste and pay attention to energy consumption, are they really consistent with the unlimited consumption of each Club Med customer?

### **6.3 Recommendation**

In response to these analyses, the author of the thesis proposes several recommendations and areas for improvement for the Club Med company.

#### **6.3.1 Promote their sustainable practices**

First of all, Club Med should put more emphasis on their sustainable approach and practices. Indeed, as we found during the analysis, customers and tourists in general are unaware that Club Med is a player committed to sustainable tourism: all still have the vision of these large resorts, often associated with mass tourism, which advocates the overconsumption of travelers with its all-inclusive packages. The truth is quite different because at Club Med, the consumption of energy, water, food and other products are well regulated. Even with the numerous labels proving their commitment and solidarity actions around the world, tourists are unaware that Club Med offers increasingly responsible tourism. Yet Club Med communicates this through digital networks: on their website, a section dedicated to "Happy to Care" has been created to explain all their actions and steps, on social networks posts explaining their commitments are published... With existing communications, how can Club Med be vocal about its commitment to sustainable tourism?

Without changing its brand image, Club Med should try to include this image of an actor committed to sustainable tourism in order to show that high-end all-inclusive holidays can be responsible.

By highlighting this, Club Med could reach a wider clientele, especially a clientele that is sensitive to sustainable tourism and that is increasingly present.

The first area for improvement is therefore communication: communicating on Club Med's sustainable practices, which already exist but are little known to the general public.

### **6.3.2 Practices to be improved**

Club Med pays particular attention to energy consumption, trying to use renewable energy and recycle their waste water. However, these practices can be improved and developed.

Indeed, even with efforts, the water consumption of tourist resorts or hotels is often higher than the water consumption of local populations: a study has shown that in a hotel, nearly 40 to 100 US gallons of water are consumed per day. The quantity of water needed is significant since it is used for cleaning, bathing, laundry, cooking, landscaping and swimming pools. This large consumption of water can sometimes cause problems for countries with limited resources, especially hot and dry countries. In addition, it is often in these countries that the consumption of water by tourists will be higher since in a hot climate they will have to take more showers, use the pool more... Similarly, for resorts that include a golf course, which can be a problem since their irrigation and daily maintenance requires a huge amount of water (An average golf course absorbs at least 525,000 gallons of water per day). So, to reduce water consumption, several practices can be applied: first, before the construction of the resort, identify the sources of water or even the existing wells to be able to use them later. Then, to reduce water consumption, several simple measures can be taken: check for water leaks on a regular basis, install low water consumption showerheads in the tourists' bathrooms, install low flow toilets, install pedal valves in the kitchens that allow staff to use water without letting it run when their hands are busy. Finally, for the outside grounds and landscape, do not use drinking water but rather irrigate them with treated wastewater.

Energy consumption is also important in hotels where guest rooms account for at least 40% of overall energy consumption, mainly due to air conditioning. To reduce this energy consumption several simple practices can be put in place such as installing sealing strips on all windows and doors, allowing the automatic closing of bathrooms to prevent fresh air from escaping, the use of low energy light bulbs or the use of heat recovery units to heat water afterwards. Another investment that can be made is the use of solar and wind energy, which in the long term will result in significant savings.

Club Med can therefore adopt new practices to reduce its overconsumption of energy and water. The activities offered in the resorts should be reviewed, favouring those that require a significant amount of energy: golf for example. Club Med should therefore focus on activities in nature or with the local population so that tourists can have sustainable experiences that are also enriching for them. Club Med cannot force its clients to do these types of activities, but it can encourage them by making sustainable activities more accessible, open to all, etc.

### **6.3.3 Promote local tourism**

Club Med is often perceived as offering trips to dream destinations, with private villas in the Maldives or to go skiing in Japan. But why go to the other side of the world when you can do the same thing close to home, without having a carbon footprint of 2.873 CO<sub>2</sub> to go to Thailand?

Club Med's strengths are to offer accommodations in unique locations, with resorts stretching over several acres to offer a sense of freedom and seclusion to its customers. At Club Med, customers have everything in the resort and some customers even stay in the resort for a week without visiting the country they are in: so why fly 12 hours to stay in a resort?

Club Med should first of all put forward the resorts close to their customers, since each country has its own customers with a website and customer service, so each niche has its own communication and its own promotions and offers. For example, the European market should focus more on promoting its resorts in Europe rather than those in Asia. If Club Med offers more promotions for its nearby

resorts with better prices than those at longer distances, customers will be more likely to choose on the basis of price, which is often an important criterion in the travel decision process.

Moreover, proximity tourism seems to be a form of tourism that interests more and more people, especially with the health crisis that has rethought our way of traveling: safety, easy access and flexibility are now the key words in the decision making of travelers. The proximity tourism allows the meeting of these three factors and several tourist activities can be organized around them to attract local tourists and make the local economy live.

Several studies show that many tourists, for proximity vacations, would look at all-inclusive packages after the global pandemic. This is especially true for families, who prefer the all-inclusive option rather than having to organize everything. Like all other types of hotels in the world, all-inclusive offers have also dropped during the global pandemic: however, many analysts believe that the demand for this type of vacation will quickly recover. The main reason for this is that tourists want to feel safe and secure: in an all-inclusive resort, tourists have everything at their disposal without having to leave the resort. This goes hand in hand with tourists who are also afraid to travel and prefer to stay on their local territory, the easiest way is to take a vacation where everything is included to enjoy and rest fully. This is the difference with "basic" hotels where you have to leave the hotel to go to dinner or to do activities, so tourists have to leave their little quiet bubble to go outside. Hence the feeling of security in a resort where everything is at their disposal and if they wish they can stay during their entire stay in the resort, without putting a foot "outside".

Plus, as we have seen previously, the price is one of the most important obstacles for tourists to practice sustainable tourism. For the majority of tourists, responsible travel requires a larger budget, whereas it is quite different. Indeed, local tourism allows people to travel close to home and therefore considerably reduces the cost of transport, especially when tourists do not need to take a plane. Thus, Club Med could make offers on resorts close to travellers: firstly, by limiting air travel and favouring train or car travel via partnerships allowing discounts for Club Med clients, and by proposing tailor-made sustainable holidays at reduced prices. The sustainable offer could contain reduced activities, without access to the all-you-

can-eat buffet but with one portion per person... Indeed, activities such as golf, jet skiing or other not very responsible activities could be replaced by other activities in nature, hiking, kayaking etc... to be proposed to travellers. A special "sustainable tourism" offer could therefore be created by Club Med for tourists wishing to go with Club Med to one of its famous resorts but without taking advantage of the all-inclusive package but only the things that interest them. With a reduced price, this formula could allow Club Med to attract a wider clientele: a clientele that wishes to practice sustainable tourism but also a clientele with a limited budget that could not go to Club Med with a "normal" formula.

Therefore, the last recommendation made to Club Med would be to favour proximity tourism: to propose more tailor-made stays with more attractive prices for local customers. The idea would be to propose special offers on stays close to the customers, and in particular discounted offers for trips where the customer does not need to fly to the resort: price being one of the main criteria for reluctance to practice sustainable tourism, this kind of offer could be of interest to customers with a limited budget.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The objective of this thesis was to analyse sustainable tourism as a whole, how this form of tourism develops over time and how a major tourism player such as Club Med integrates the sustainable aspect into its development. The author of the thesis therefore analysed how this form of tourism is evolving and what practices Club Med has adopted to reduce its impact on the environment, subsequently proposing points for improvement. The collection of data through the questionnaire allowed the author to have a better insight into the travellers' feelings about the sustainable offer and their thoughts about the development of sustainable tourism, especially after the covid-19 crisis.

The research question was "What is the future of mass tourism and how will Club Med fit into the new responsible tourism movement? For the first two sub-topics "(1) Sustainability in tourism industry and How is the demand for more sustainable tourism evolving? (2) how the covid crisis may be shifting tourism towards more environmentally friendly tourism?" they were both seen in part 3 which is dedicated to global tourism and the last sub-question "(3) Does a major player in the tourism sector like Club Med take into account its impact on sustainable development" was answered in the previous part.

The benefit of this research for Club Med is firstly to gain insight into all the sustainable practices they are engaged in and secondly to understand why their offerings are not reaching customers who want to travel sustainably. The thesis provides recommendations on how Club Med could further enhance their sustainable practices and also offers suggestions on how to improve their practices. The thesis also proposes other ideas for travel offers that focus more on local tourism to target a clientele that is engaged in sustainable tourism but with a lower income than Club Med's usual clientele.

The recommendations made by the author are explained in more detail in the previous chapter: the first recommendation for Club Med is to develop communication on their responsible commitments, by making their customers aware of the

sustainable activities proposed and also communicating on their practices to all tourists, who are often unaware of the company's responsible commitment.

In order to continue its sustainable development, it is also recommended that Club Med continues its efforts to reduce its overconsumption of energy and water, since these consumptions are important in resorts and many methods exist nowadays to reduce them.

Finally, the author of the thesis recommends that Club Med should develop its local tourism offers by proposing tailor-made stays at a reduced price to allow customers who are concerned about their impact to be able to live the Club Med experience, at a reduced price and by practicing responsible tourism.

Taking into account the objectivity of the research, the researcher could have done a few things differently to improve the validity. The first thing the author could have done would have been to conduct the interviews face to face instead of sending questionnaires to strangers. This would have allowed for a better understanding of the tourists' views on sustainable tourism and their opinions about Club Med. Another thing that could have been done is sampling, separating tourists who have already travelled with Club Med from those who have not travelled with Club Med. This would have allowed us to have more internal opinions from customers on the sustainable practices practiced by Club Med, and to know if for them their stay was sustainable.

However, taking into account the limitations of time and resources, the questionnaire was the best way to collect data for this thesis.

During the research, the author noticed a great intention of tourists towards sustainable tourism, with the desire to practice this new form of tourism. However, as customers are not up to date with Club Med's sustainable practices, the author of the thesis advises Club Med to make a communication plan on these sustainable practices so that the tourism community no longer sees this company as part of mass tourism with significant negative impacts. The author also recommends that Club Med conduct a study on the motivations of customers to adapt their sustainable offers as much as possible: many would be interested in proximity tourism so this is something that Club Med could develop more.

The author of the thesis has learned a lot from this process as it is the largest research she has done so far. At the beginning, the time seemed right with a lot to do in a short time but the author managed her time and trusted her skills. Setting short-term goals with detailed deadlines for each part helped the author to finish this thesis on time. The author of the thesis has gained a better understanding of the tourism market, with an awareness of the impacts of tourism and the need to look at more sustainable tourism for her next holiday, when the travel world is back to "normal".



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Questionnaire question

1. How old are you?
  - 18
  - 18-24
  - 25-40
  - 41-50
  - +50
  
2. How many times do you travel per year? (outside your home country)
  - 1
  - 2-4
  - 5-7
  - +8
  
3. Have you ever been to a Club Med holiday ?
  - yes
  - no
  
4. When travelling, what of the above option are you doing?
  - eat local food
  - sleeping in local homes
  - doing activities in nature
  - interact with local people
  - use public transport
  
5. Where are you travelling?
  - Long distance destination
  - Short distance destination
  - Local tourism (home country)
  
6. How important is your environmental impact when choosing a holiday?  
*The respondents could rate from 1 (not important) to 5 (important)*
  
7. What word would you use to describe sustainable tourism?
  - Nature
  - Development
  - Disorientation
  - Exchange
  - Culture
  
8. What would be the main obstacle that would prevent you from practicing sustainable tourism?
  - Lack of interest in sustainable development
  - Price
  - Lack of visibility of the professional offer
  - Misunderstanding of the concept

9. What are the main reasons for practicing sustainable tourism ? Please rate them.

- Discover new landscapes
- Being in nature
- Discover new culture
- Promote the economic development of local actors
- Doing activities in line with the preservation of environment
- Exchange with local people
- Travelling with less polluting modes of transportation
- Avoid going through several intermediaries for the purchase of products

10. Do you consider a Club Med holiday to be a 'sustainable' holiday?

- Yes
- No

11. For a sustainable holiday, would you go with Club Med?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

12. Please explain why

13. After the covid crisis, do you think that the emergence of responsible tourism will take over from mass tourism?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

14. Since the covid-19, do you think there is a trend towards local tourism holidays?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

15. Since covid-19, are you more interested to go on local tourism holidays?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe