Internal and external factors that influence the ecotourists

A study on green consumer behaviour, applied to ecotourism

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Acknowledgments

This thesis about ecotourism was raised out of two common interests of the authors. Green concern for one, tourism for the other. Both studying business in our home country, France, it became then logical to link our main study topic to ours interests.

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Summary

Topic: Which factors influence the ecotourists?

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Keywords: Consumer behaviour, ecotourism, tourism marketing mix, green behaviour, ecotourists segmentation, questionnaire

Purpose: The interest of this thesis is first to understand what types of customers are most likely to be attracted to ecotourism, and more precisely to find which factors, inherent to the person, influence their choice of ecotourism when travelling. The second goal is to perceive what external elements to the person can also have an impact on this decision. To that end, the authors of this thesis have been focusing on the components of mix-marketing (product, price, place and promotion) of the travel companies (and other stakeholders).

Frame of references: is divided in two main parts: the consumer behaviour and the marketing-mix, closely related both to green attitude and/or tourism, which gives us an analysis of the ecotourists.

Method: The authors have come to the conclusion that the explanatory research is the most relevant regarding the purpose of the thesis. After having made the exploratory research, a questionnaire was established to find primary data. It will give information on how ecotourists are led to choose ecotourism and will hopefully give a satisfactory explanation.

Conclusion: It was found that some factors in the frame of references, were actually relevant in the survey: therefore, ecotourists are mostly influences by their values, and their attitude regarding the buying process is hard to influence, they are quite independent of the external influence such as reference groups or advertising. Another interesting findings are the relation to green attitude: the ecotourists, for most of them, do not make green concern as a lifestyle.
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1. Introduction

Background

Green marketing first attracted the attention of researchers in the 70’s when Henion and Kinnear published the first book about it, “Ecological Marketing”, in 1976 (Polonsky, 1994). Since then, it has become a real concern, thanks to the growing interest of consumers in saving the planet, and therefore in green products. If green marketing is a broad subject, it concerns the study of how to get one’s company, products, services and management really eco-friendly and turn all of that into a competitive advantage to meet customers’ demands, while also being compatible with ecosystems (Fuller 1999, p. 4).

A phenomenon even more recent than global green marketing is one of its subsections: green tourism. The interest of choosing tourism as a “product to sell” is that this industry is one of the world’s major sectors of economic development and growth: it contributes a lot to the diversification of the economy by generating income, reducing the gap between rural and urban populations and by improving basic services (MacPherson, 1997; Narayanan, 2002). Tourism is expanding fast: global international travel rose by 4.5 percent in 2008 (Nutek) with 10% of the world’s population travelling yearly, and is predicted to double in the next 15 years (WTTC, 2007). What is important to notice is that there are two types of tourism. Firstly, mass tourism which represents a “large number of people seeking replication of their own culture in an institutionalized setting”. Basically, it refers to traditional trips where the customer just goes on holiday to a place still related to his culture (same country or similar) just to rest. The opposite form is called alternative tourism and is generally characterized by small-scale sustainable activities, as the authors of this paper will be developing later on (Smith and Eadington, 1992).

However, tourism can cause damages to the environment through water, noise and air disturbance to the ecosystems, loss of authenticity, and soil and beach erosion (Wilkinson, 1989; Buckley and Pannel, 1990). Consequently, this key factor leads to a new kind of tourism which is called “ecotourism”. Indeed, nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors within the global tourism industry (Buckley 2004) and according to Dowling and Page (2002), people began to seek alternative options for mass tourism in the early 1980s. Even the European Union emphasized, through
Agenda 21, the growing importance of sustainable tourism for future generations and does its best to provide support for it: indeed, 12 goals regarding sustainable tourism appear in Agenda 21, decreed by the World Tourism Organisation (UNAT, 2007). Ayala (1996) explains this new interest in sustainable tourism as the result of a “mass tourism maturing market”. For him, there is a “beach boredom”, consumers have experienced the 3 S’s (sun, sea and sand) too many times and want something new. So, along with the general human concerns for green products, green technologies and saving the planet, the demand for nature-related travels is going up. Therefore, it seems logical that this new kind of tourism is being developed by tour operators, visitors centers, or travel agencies to meet the consumer’s needs.

**Definitions**

Since the 1980’s, ecotourism has become the fastest growing segment within the tourism industry by attracting millions of tourists and increasing to over $335 billion a year worldwide (Arlen, 1995). It was suggested in 2004 that eco-friendly tourism was growing three times faster globally than the tourism industry as a whole (WTO 2004, cited in TIES 2006). But what is ecotourism? Freedman (1995) gives the following definition:

“**ecotourism is a segment of the travel industry which appeals to the environmentally conscious and has low impact on the surrounding area while contributing to the local economy**”.

Of course, a lot of authors disagree on the exact definition of ecotourism. To sum-up, ecotourism is a sustainable alternative to mass tourism that:

- Concerns travelling to a natural area with a traditional culture
- Feeds economic profit into local environmental protection and involves local people
- Increases awareness of biodiversity conservation principles among locals and tourists through minimizing visitor impact and promoting tourist education
- Allows the tourist to go to “relatively undisturbed natural areas” to enjoy the phenomenon of nature.


Ecotourism is mostly found in peaceful retreats in countries like Australia, Costa Rica and the Galapagos Islands, but it can also simply be staying in eco-accommodation,
on an eco-camp site, or even in eco-village. For instance, it combines wildlife and adventure tourism experiences such as swimming with dolphins, going on safari or again trekking through a rainforest.¹

But what kind of people are really interested in this type of travel? To know that, understanding how humans react, to sustainability and preserving our planet is the key. Therefore, there is a strategic segmentation that relies on studying green consumer behavior. Dowling and Page showed that ecotourists are a distinct market and reaching them is a complicated marketing proposal (2002). A problem with much of the research about green consumerism is the complexity surrounding consumer behaviour: the enormity of the range of influences on consumers and the way these affect individuals over time (Font and Buckley, 2001).

Through the time, research has been carried out to identify and segment these consumers (Peattie, 2001). Some of them focused on the demographic criteria, while others focused on concern and knowledge of the environment, but the complexity lies in the gap between the values of the customers and the real actions they take. Some researchers even invented typologies of green consumers according to their knowledge of green issue and their attitudes. They divided them into groups from ‘very dark green’ to ‘not green at all’, which designates people who sustain their ego and not the environment (McDonald et al, 2006; Wheeller 1993). There is therefore no doubt that the factors influencing behavior in green tourism “[are] crucial to foreseeing their potential travel choices” (Bradley et al, 1997).

Problem Statement

According to Young et al. (2009), there is a gap between what customers think and say when it comes to being concerned about the environment and their real purchasing habits. This theory is also supported by a study in 1991 which confirmed that “people are conscious about environment and prefer the green products in general but do not intend to buy green products by themselves”². This is what Roberts (1996) called the difference between “attitude” and “behavior”. Nowadays this statement is less efficient than before: it is true that people are willing to spend more money on

¹ British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) study “Top 50 activities to do before you die”
² Simmons Market Research Bureau 1991
green products (Laroche et al., 2011). The interest here is then to find what ecotourists, that are really motivated by green consumption and protecting the environment behave, and why, in order to see if this model can be applied to regular tourists.

**Purpose**

The interest of this thesis is first to understand what types of customers are most likely to be attracted to ecotourism, and more precisely to find which factors, inherent to the person, influence their choice of ecotourism when travelling. The second goal is to perceive what external elements to the person can also have an impact on this decision. To that end, the authors of this thesis have been focusing on the components of mix-marketing (product, price, place and promotion) of the travel companies (and other stakeholders). For that matter, this thesis will be developed as followed: the frame of references will deal with the theories around consumer behaviour – dealing with factors that influence consumer -, always linked to tourism or/and green attitude. The second big part of this thesis will then be about getting data regarding theories developed in the frame of references.

This was decided in order to allow the examination of which elements consumers are most sensitive to so that the travel companies are able to adapt their strategies to make ecotourism more accessible to regular consumers.

As a consequence of these objectives, our research question is the following:

**What internal and external factors influence consumers to choose ecotourism?**

To help us answer that question, the ecotourists are the target that was observed so that it is possible to extend their habits to regular travelers.

**Use of this thesis**

The results found in this research work can be useful for the following stakeholders:

- Ecotourism agency: they can gain understanding about the factors that influence an ecotourist to buy their product and therefore fulfill their expectations. They can also consider the results of this thesis when preparing their brochures, special offers, the type of advertisement that is working best.
• Visitors’ centers: which want to have a deeper knowledge about their customers, they can also use the results to highlight destinations and activities that ecotourists would be more likely to choose.

• Countries tourism department and people involved in other ecotourism activities can gain understanding of how these internal and external factors have effects on the consumer behavior of the tourists. By knowing that their country has a high probability to attract tourists, they could take actions to develop ecotourism activities (put bikes to rent in the cities, make an environmental awareness, promote biodiversity through National Parks…)

• Academics and others doing research and development in the area of ecotourism can benefit from the different theories quoted and the empirical data part.

• Consumer and environmental NGO’s as well as eco-friendly people can gain knowledge and, hopefully, inspiration on how current ecotourism strategies are used and can help them to change their behaviors to a more ecological choice.
2. Frame of References

2.1. Consumer behaviour

One of the main goals of this thesis is to understand how people are led to buy or not to buy certain kind of products. The most common definition is the following: “consumer behaviour is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires.” (Solomon et al. 2006, p.6)

In other words, what are the customer motivations to buy? Authors have developed theories that have a scope inherent to the consumer himself, but that are also external to him.

This part will therefore explain the different factors (internal and external) to a person that influence a person’s choices. In each sub part, the authors have linked the theories to tourism or green attitude so that it can match the goal of this thesis. Therefore, the reader has to understand when we refer to tourism or green attitude as “Does this theory is directly applicable to a tourist?” Because as Goeldner and Ritchie said it in 2003: “A professional understanding of the consumer is at the core of the successful business practice in the tourism industry.

It is to be noted that most of the theories appearing in this part have been explained by Solomon et al, 2006. If not, it is mentioned differently.

2.2. Consumer as an individual

Five wide categories influence the consumer decision process when buying, regarding the consumer as individual:

- His perception of the product
- His memory
- His motivations, values and level of involvement
- His attitudes
- The self
2.2.1 Perception

The perceptual process relies on the customer using his five senses to be aware of the environment around him. Basically, the process goes from what the customer will see, smell, hear, touch and taste – from sensation, to perception.

Sensory inputs are used to trigger an image in customers’ mind. For instance, evoking an event from the past such as childhood through fantasy image. This sensory system relies on emotional aspects.

People are confronted to a lot of stimuli on a daily basis. Therefore, companies have to catch their attention. Attention is the degree to which a consumer focuses on stimuli within their range of exposure.

Interpretation refers to the meaning that people assign to a sensory stimulus. Two people can see the exact same thing but give them a different importance. Here, everything will rely on the person’s history with symbolism, known in the marketing field as semiotics.

According to the interpretation the customer gives to a stimuli, he will have a special response regarding the brand or the product/service: and this is what perception is all about. Solomon et al (2006) also mentioned that the perception can be related to cognitive approach: the given idea the consumer has of the product or service associated.

Regarding tourism, this aspect of consumer behaviour is important since travelling is about leisure, rest, discovery, mostly. The Schmoll model (1997) emphasizes that trips, activities offered by travel agencies must attract the customer, and for that, they
have to appeal to the emotional side of the customer, therefore call for his senses: mostly sight.

2.2.2 Learning and Memory

Learning is a change in behaviour caused by experience, regarding external events. It can occur through a simple association between stimulus and a response or via different series of cognitive activities.

Memory refers to the storage of learned information. The way a product/service is perceived by the customer will remain this way in his brain. The memory system is closely linked to the sensory system: the latter allowing the other one to retain information.

Regarding tourism, this factor is of course important but not as determining as it could be for a regular product. Indeed, a trip is an important purchase, involving a large amount of money that makes the customers think a lot about it. Therefore, their memory will be automatically operational to remember any trips.

2.2.3 Motivation, values and involvement

2.2.3.1 Motivation

Motivation refers to the processes that cause people to behave the way they do. Motivation occurs when a need is aroused, and that the customer wants to satisfy it.
This famous idea was pointed out by William Stanley Jevons in 1870, and is called “The Utility Theory”. It refers to the fact that consumers make choices based on the expected outcomes of the products they buy. Here, consumers are rational and only concern by their personal interest. Therefore, they buy to satisfy their expressed needs. Needs are first classified in 1938 by Murray’s in two main categories: physical (like eat, sleep, drink…) and psychological needs. A few examples of the latter can be the need for recognition, order, achievement, dominance, deference, autonomy, and so on. Another famous theory about needs was drawn by Maslow in 1943 and state: humans meet basic needs; they seek to satisfy successively higher needs that occupy a set of hierarchy. The hierarchy goes as follows:

Regarding travelling, this study about needs is very important. For example, when joining organized trips, travellers may be looking to fulfil their Love/Sense of belonging need by being sure they will meet new people. People responding a self-actualization need will learn the language of the country before travelling, or will be most likely to choose ecotourism (Chon et al, 2000).
It is also important to remind that all needs are not clear, or known by the customer. This is known as underlying needs that a company can still appeal to: but it is obviously harder to measure.

2.2.3.2 Involvement
Involvement is defined as a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on their inherent needs, values and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Involvement is often related to the process of looking for information related to the purchase of the product. The different levels of involvement go gradually from inertia to passion.

Concerning tourism, involvement is a very important factor. Indeed, travel is often a considerable investment, requires asking for a vacation for a few weeks usually and is therefore a high involving purchase.

2.2.3.3 Values
A value is “a belief about some desirable end-state that transcends specific situations and guides selection of behaviour” (Solomon et al, 2006). Values are therefore different from attitude since they are sustainable in time and are not related to specific situations only. It is also important to mention that values are often closely related to one’s culture: it is known as core values. Some of the main values domains were developed in the Schwartz value survey in 1990 and goes as follow:

![Values Diagram]

This dimension of values is the most universal model. Besides, regarding green attitude, when this survey was done among the Danish population, it came out that the
values regarding the green segment are: protecting the environment, unity with nature, logically, but also “mature love”, “broadminded” and social justice. The non-green segment was characterized by “authority” and “social power” (Grunert and Juhl, 1995). Values are important when studying green purchase, because the consumer has to be person sensitive to the environment, in its personal beliefs (Rex et al, 2006, p.569) though, argued that this link between « intention » and « behaviour » is blocked by external factors that will also influence the consumer, such as the cost, if the product is associated with earlier behaviour and habits, if the consumer perceives that there are alternative products to this one and if or not the consumer is sure that the company is eco-friendly. Let’s keep in mind that environmental concerns do not mean buying green.

2.2.4 Attitudes and intentions

Sociology and psychology are often taken as a source to explain and predict tourism behaviour (Gnoth, 1997). Attitudes are linked to the beliefs of the consumer, which then have a direct influence on the purchase behaviour (Ajzen and Fishbein, 2000). According to Moutinho (1993, p.19) attitude is a “predisposition, created by learning and experience, to respond in a consistent way toward an object, such as a product.” Most researchers agree that an attitude has three components:

- Affect: the way a consumer feels about the product
- Behaviour: the consumer’s intention
- Cognition: the beliefs of the consumer

2.2.4.1 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

Developed in the 1960’s, this theory is part of the Prescriptive Cognitive Models that focus on the beliefs and attitudes aspects in buying behaviour (Ahtola 1975). It is actually an extension of the Fishbein model, which previously focused on measuring consumer’s attitude toward the product. This version of the theory proved the ability to predict relevant behaviour. There, behaviour intention is influenced both by the product’s use and the power of people to influence the customer, known as « subjective norms » (Solomon et al. 2006).
2.2.4.2 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

The TPB is an extension of the TRA: it adds the aspect of predicting behaviours, according to the person’s skills, attitude, subjective norms and resources. (Ajzen 2006), following this graph:

As shown in the graph, behavioural beliefs lead to a certain type of attitude, when Normative beliefs lead to Subjective Norms (pressure of your social group), and your control beliefs lead to a perceived behavioural control, which is basically self-persuasion. It measures the confidence toward the probability, feasability of the given behaviour.

Regarding tourism, attitudes towards decision making would correspond to a tendency in relation to a holiday destination. These attitudes are affected by a set of social influences: culture, reference group, family... (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Eco-tourist companies can therefore change or create consumer attitudes using different methods. They can for example alter the belief of their company or of the closest competitors by introducing environmental attributes or by highlighting their eco-label (Moutinho, 1993).

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1**

Attitudes and travel decision making process (Moutinho, 1993)

The figures underline the fact that attitude, preference and the travel decision purchase are all linked together. As travel intentions and attitudes are developed
through the perception of benefits, a company can influence the traveler’s decision by showing that their service will give them the best benefits.

As we can see on the figure, the likelihood of buying a product (intention) relies first on the opinion toward the product, second on the beliefs and feelings, and third on situational factors. A decision-making purchase is actually the end of lots of influencing attitudes and behaviour of customers (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005).

2.2.5 The self

The self can be referred to as demographic factors. Indeed, the very core of what people are could influence their buying behaviour. For instance, the gender, the age, the income, the education, the habits, occupation, personality and lifestyle have an impact on buying behaviour. People buy things differently when they are 20 years old or 85: it makes people consume differently.

Other factors are also nationality, social class and so on.

Regarding green consumer, Rex et al pointed out that although surveys are not each time relevant, the main component in terms of demographic factors is the following: young females, with a relatively high education and income are the most likely to have favourable eco-friendly attitude.

2.3. The Buying Behaviour Theory: consumer as a decision-maker

The Theory of Buying Behaviour, developed by Howard and Sheth in 1969, pointed out that three main categories of factors exist regarding the decision-making process:

- The exogenous variables: importance of purchase, personal data, social class, financial status, culture, etc…
- The inputs: the brand, the product etc…
- The outputs: how to reach consumer’s attention, comprehension, attitude and intention as we mentioned in part 1.1 Consumer as individuals.


2.3.1 Exogenous variables

Social influences are one of the main points in influencing consumer behaviour and are way out of reach of the companies’ control. The marketing strategies, tactics are used to influence buying behaviour.

2.3.1.1 Reference groups

Reference groups are people with whom one’s evolve everyday. It might be co-workers, a group of friends, family… This group creates somehow pressure with a will for one’s to absolutely « fit in ». This will then have a strong impact on one’s buying behaviour, because his whole lifestyle, way of living depends on the ones from his group. A person in a group is defined by its role and status. For instance, a job involves a role in the company that comes together with a social status. Therefore, it makes sense that a manager will seek different products than a front-line employee (Cliffs and Hall, 1997).

Reference groups can be formal (organization that has a structure, offices…) and informal: group of friends, family (Solomon et al, 2006).

Social groups are powerful in influencing a consumer:

Referent power: one person will try to imitate the person he admires (the referent). There, the person changes voluntary his behaviour to identify to someone else.

Expert power: people will change his consumption after hearing an expert talking and saying “what is best”.

Reward power: if a person expects a reward, as tangible than not tangible, he will act different.

2.3.1.2 Conformity

Conformity “refers to a change in beliefs or actions as a reaction to real or imagined groups pressure” (Solomon et al, 2006).

It is not an automatic process; different factors might affect the likelihood of conformity, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural pressure</th>
<th>The affect that one’s culture has on one’s consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of deviance</td>
<td>Fear of being treated differently if one’s act different</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The more a person is included in a group, the more she will want to follow the group’s leaders.

As a group gain power, the compliance increases

Regarding tourism, green attitude and ecotourism, reference groups and conformity are one of the most important factors. Indeed, the sensitivity to ecological concerns is a relatively new trend and has taken a various importance, but still an importance in all the major developed countries all over the world. Therefore, more and more people are influenced by this trend and especially in green tourism.

2.3.2 The Inputs

2.3.2.1 Crompton’s Push-and-Pull Model

This model emphasizes that a consumer is drawn by two forces regarding the act of buying: the push or pull system.

In the push system, the product is shown to the consumer, who is not looking for that particular product but happens to find it and it will consider its purchase.

In the pull system, the consumer is attracted by the service or the product and the company has to “pull” towards its goods.

Regarding tourism, in the Crompton’s Push and Pull Model (Crompton, 1979):

- The push refers to a general desire to go and be somewhere else, without this being even known by the customer: it is basically the need of the person to go on vacation.
- The pull refers to the desire to go somewhere or to do something specifically: characteristics or attributes of a destination are primarily related to its perceived attractiveness.

In both strategies, advertising will then define which behaviour the consumer will have.

Regarding green consumption, it is mostly green consumers that have the pull system and socio-environmental legislation that try to use the push system (Peattie, 1995).

2.3.2.2 Decision-making model

The Schmoll Model (1977) explains that there are four phases in the decision-making process:
The first three points being already dealt with in the previous part of this thesis, the last one will be discussed now.

When considering a product, what will also matter are the actual skills of the product: its use, obviously, but also its design, its price, its quality and so on.

Regarding travels, what matter most will be cost/value relations, attraction of the activities offered, range of travel opportunities, type of arrangement offered, but also security, insurance and so on.

Travellers will also consider features like distance, duration of the trips, interest in the visited area etc…

Regarding green consumption, the process is the same: customer will be more sensitive to the origin of the product, its quality, its components…

In July 2008, the MIT Sloan Management Review made a survey regarding green consumption, to know what the customers expected different to make them buy green products.
2.4. Eco-tourism

When establishing a marketing strategy, the main elements are the characteristics of a consumer. Indeed knowing them helps identify the product qualities that fit best with consumers’ preferences.

To promote ecotourism, marketers should identify population’s needs, expectations, interest and motivations. Therefore they should apply a segmentation strategy that targets specifically these behaviours and attitudes in accordance with the communication strategy.

Market segmentation consists of splitting up the customer within which have similar requirements that can be satisfied by a different mix of marketing strategies for each group (McDonald, 1998).

It is a vital component of a business’s operational strategy. By segmenting the consumer audience, the company can position and target better its brand with messages, packaging, products, and distribution point and therefore develop the right marketing mix to meet that demand. By concentrating their effort on a small part of the overall market, marketers will higher level of ecotourists satisfaction.

2.4.1 Ecotourists as a market segment

Ecotourism is a small but fast growing industry working within a niche market. Although the market is hard to quantify, the trend confirms a strong consumer enthusiasm and awareness for ecotourism experience.

Promoting ecotourism is often equivalent to nature tourism. The following graph shows how ecotourism is part of the larger tourism marketplace. Adventure tourism and ecotourism are part of the same sub-group of nature tourism. However we can notice that ecotourism has stronger links to rural and cultural tourism compare to adventure tourists.
2.4.1.1 Ecotourists market segmentation

But who are the ecotourists? The most important thing for ecotourism as said above, in the introduction, is the observation and appreciation of natural environment and cultural assets. For Stanley Plog (2004) ecotourists are “intellectually curious” and they seek to be “immersed in destination experiences”.

Attempts to isolate ecotourists as a unique market segment has been reported by many researchers. After lots of investigation based on their behaviour, preferences and motivations, they came out to say that an ecotourist is likely to have higher level of education and income (Eagles & Cascagnette, 1995; Wight, 1996, 2001). According to a survey of whale watching in Scotland (Rawles & Parsons, 2004) and an eco-lodge customer satisfaction in Australia (Weaver & Lawton, 2002), individuals who are engaged in some eco-trips are found to be more environmentally aware and active than other ‘normal’ consumers. They are mostly individual or small-scale tourism (small groups up to 25 and small accommodation up to 100 beds).

Ballantine and Eagles (1994) found that ecotourists tend to be middle age, have a relatively high incomes and level of education, and involved in the environmental cause. But this is just a descriptive approach and there is no definitive agreement about whom or what is an ecotourist.

Source: WTO (World Tourism Office)
2.4.1.2 Ecotourists market profile

Literature on tourism has offered several theories about market segmentation typologies in order to distinguish ecotourists from the others and divide them into distinct sub-groups knowing that each will have its unique set of management application.

From a behavioural perspective, the soft / hard model is dominant (Blamey & Braithwaite, 1997; Diamantis, 1999; Palacio & McCool, 1997; Weaver & Lawton, 2002).

They identified a typology and divided ecotourists in 3 groups.

- **Harder ecotourists**: travellers with strong environmental attitudes who prefers to travel in small groups. They favour long trips with few services provided. They are physically active and enjoy challenging activities. They make their own travel arrangements in order to make it a real life experience.

- **Softer ecotourists**: travelers who both like ecotourism and traditional holidays. They prefer to travel in large group of people; they require comforts and good quality services and are not really active. This time they tend to rely on travel agencies and tour operators.

Weaver & Lawton added in a survey of ecolodge guest this interesting typology:

- **Structured ecotourists**: These travelers are a mix between harder ecotourists as they prefer interacting with nature and practice physical activities but they also look like softer ecotourists as they are looking for short and multipurpose trips with large groups comfortable accommodation and gourmets meals.

Lindberg (1991) divided the ecotourism market in four segments including the behaviours and the motivations.

The first segment is **hardcore nature tourists**: “scientific researchers or individuals who travel for educational purposes.

The second one are **mainstream nature tourists**: “people who visit famous wilderness destinations”.


Then there is the category of the **casual nature tourists**: “tourists who come into close contact with nature only incidentally while in a holiday trip (Galley & Clifton, 2004).

Lastly, **dedicated nature tourists**: “people travelling to protected areas to understand natural and local history”

**2.4.1.3 Geographic segmentation**

Studies from Kerstetter, Hou and Lin (2004) show that East Asia ecotourists differ significantly from North American or European ecotourists. Indeed they say “physical health is perceived to be a primary benefit of travel for Asians.”

Moreover, according to Weaver (2007) “they are more likely to fits well within a disciplined group”.

**2.4.1.4 Demographic segmentation**

As said in the green consumer segmentation, research have shown that ecotourists are more likely to be **female** (Wight, 2001). Weaver and Lowton (2002) found for example that 64% of ecotourists at Queensland National Park were female. Swain and Swain (2004) are talking about an ‘eco-feminist- approach to managing ecotourism with prominent roles played by female both as providers and guests. About the age, the segmentation will depend on the type of activity of the cost but the dominant segment is **35-54 years old** ecotourists. Diamantis (1999) found that more then half of the softer ecotourists in the UK were in between 17-34 years old. Backman and Potts (1993) state that nature tourists are generally older (aged 45 and over) than the other type of tourists. According to Tourism Canada, they are more looking for activities such as polar watching, sailing, seal pup watching. Whereas younger target (less than 34 old) were interested in ice and rock climbing, trail, rafting or scuba diving.

Education is also a factor to consider in the demographic segmentation of ecotourists. Indeed according to Hvenegaard and Dearden (1998), and to Backman and Potts (1993) ecotourists have **higher education** than other consumers or general tourists. Indeed, 50% recorded a degree as the highest level of education, and 35% were in the professional /managerial occupation group. Potts (1993) also discovered that ecotourists are earning more money than normal tourists.
2.4.2 Trip characteristics segmentation

In general the duration of the trip is in between **8 to 14 days** (Fair Wings). About the expenditure, ecotourists are willing to spend more than the general ones which is equal from **$1,001 to $1,500** per trip.

About the booking, ecotourists rely a lot on **word of mouth** as well as brochures and magazines. Moreover, with the Internet explosion, they tend to rely on the personal recommendation of the others and that they can find in forums or blogs on the web. Ecotourists do not usually go to travel agencies as they prefer **making their own trips arrangements**.

2.4.2.1 Motivation and preference segmentation

The top 3 travel motivations for an ecotourist is learning about the environment (wilderness setting and wildlife viewing), relief from stress (areas to escape crowds and urban life) and bonding with family and friends (family and group camping areas). When looking at the motivations to go for a next trip, experienced ecotourists are likely to come back to enjoy new activities, or to experience new places.

About the accommodation, they are looking for intimacy and adventure accommodation such as ecolodges, cabins, bed&breakfasts. It is mainly mid-range to basic budget level accommodations. Finally, 60% of experienced ecotourists state that they prefer to travel as a couple, 15% with their family and 13% alone.

2.4.2.1 Destination segmentation

Ecotourism destinations are usually associated with “natural “or “undisturbed”. Therefore, most ecotourism destinations take place in protected areas like National Parks, which “provides regulatory environment that restricts potentially harmful activities” (Bulter and Boyd, 2000).

Harder ecotourists tend to be attracted to remote regions while soft ecotourists are concentrated in accessible portions of parks that are located within few hours drive from major cities or 3S resort areas (Weaver, 1998).

Ecotourists can also be attracted to protected areas that provide authenticity, and nature or even farmland that have an access to the wildlife.

According to Weaver and Lawton (2002) it occurs in all part of the world but some regions are prominent as shown on the map (next page):
South America: since a few years, several countries opt for a more ecological tourism. Indeed, heritage from pre-Columbian and the nice environment (Amazon basin) make South America an ecotourist destination. Costa Rica was the leading country starting with ecotourism, they bet on the natural and cultural richness attractions to galvanize its economy. Ecuador also attracts lots of ecotourists with their natural reserve in the Galapagos Islands.

North America: This continent has long been involved in the concept of ecotourism. Having lots of natural areas and an important fauna and flora, the US and the Canada created National Parks, which attract more and more visitors each year.

Oceania: Australia and New Zealand also own lots of beautiful natural resources with outstanding scenery and wealth marine wildlife. Among them can be quoted rainforest, or the Great Barrier Reef. Australia today owns approximately 600 ecotourism operators and ecotourist represent nearly 30% of domestic travelers (ecotrends 1999, cited by Wight, in press).

Asia: South East Asian destinations (like Thailand, Nepal Borneo and Sumatra) are very popular. The Asian continent owns lots of natural resources however, they are extremely threatened. Yet some regions stay wild, especially in the Himalaya cost. For example the most popular destination for trekking is the Nepal with it Annapurna area.

Other main regions are the ‘safari corridor’ from South Africa to Kenya. All these destinations have a related activity with natural environment, savanna and so on. The Kenya Wildlife Service (1995) estimated that 80% of the Kenya’s tourist market is drawn by the wildlife and that ecotourism generates 1/3 of the country’s foreign exchange earnings.
2.4.3 The marketing mix of ecotourists

The mix of these variables is a package of offerings designed to determine to which extent a company satisfies the needs of the market. These variables are referred to as the “Marketing mix”. The goal of marketers is to find the right combination between product, place, price and promotion in order to satisfy the special needs and desires of the target market.

The 4 P’s are outlined in this figure:

2.4.3.1 Eco-product

According to Medlik and Middleton (1973) “the product covers the complete experience from the time the tourists leave home to the time he returns to it”. Thus, tourism products need to be considered as a package. Eco-tourists choose their destination in accordance with the types of products offered, generally they are looking for specific experiences they cannot reach in other areas. Therefore providing a high value product and services is very important. However, there is a green market gap: according to Epler Wood, consumers who have strong opinions about the environment do not act upon these values when it comes to
the purchase decision. For most customers, having a hotel that consumes little water and energy and produce little waste is not as meaningful. They will be more attracted by other product attributes such as an ideal location or very good quality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination attractions and environment</th>
<th>It is the key element that determine consumer choice.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natural attractions: landscape, beaches, climate, access to natural resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Built attractions: buildings and tourism infrastructure, location of the hotel, general cleanliness monuments, promenade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecotourist attractions: scuba diving, visit a national park, go hiking in the rainforest…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural attractions: history, religion, art, theatre, music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social attractions: learn about the way of life of the resident, language, opportunities to interact with the local people (and not just hotel and restaurant)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination facilities and services</th>
<th>Elements which make it possible for visitors to stay and participate in the attractions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accommodation units: hotels, eco-lodge, campsites, sleeping in a local host family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restaurant, bars, cafes: quality of the food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transport at the destination: taxis, coaches, car, rented cycles…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Services: quality of the guides, diversity of the services, friendliness of the staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sport/ activity: ski schools, sailing schools, rafting, kayaking…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retail outlet: shops, travel agents, souvenirs, camping supplies, gift shop in relation to the activity proposed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and perception of the destination</th>
<th>As seen before, the attitudes and perception that customers have towards a tourist destination has a strong influence on their purchase decision.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The brand image of the tourism operator is also taken into consideration. Therefore the codes of conduct are important. It is a guarantee for the customer that operators are really eco-responsible and not just using green washing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Products need to be always up-to-date in order to meet the target segment needs, expectations and ability to pay.

### 2.4.3.2 Eco-Price

*For Middleton (1994, p.103) "the use of price as one of the four main levers of marketing mix is particularly important in managing demand and revenue".*

There are several options: selling below or above the market price. The current market price is the largest amount a consumer is ready to pay. Tourism is a high involvement, high-risk product to its consumers. It involves committing a large amount of money to something reasonably unknown. Sometimes, tour operators need to make early decision and choose a price 12 months in advance before the customer purchase is made.

The price relies also on the macro-environment (fluctuation of the oil price or currency exchanges rates) which makes it difficult to predict.

**The role of price in strategy and tactics:** Price is highly relevant to symbol because it communicates what buyers should expect from the quality of the travel they buy. For example, paying for an expensive night in an eco-lodge can be a meaning of high level of investment in the building and equipment and therefore a good quality.

The aim of the marketers is to interpret which prices are realistic and expected by the market segment chosen. They should know to what extent price is value for money and product quality.
They can use pricing strategies that encourage off season and non-peak period sales, group business, professional prices for the trade, longer stays and sale packages (combination of meal, accommodation activity). It must also consider strategies for new opportunities such as price skimming (charging high price to maximize profit in the long term) and penetration pricing (introducing the service at a low price to gain the market) (Bustam and Stein (2010), Goeldner and Ritchie (2009); U.S. Small Business (2010)).

Shaw, (1982, p.153) states that the price should be adapted to the segment because that senior or young market do not have the same budget. However, Weeden (2002) argued that ecotourism “can allow companies to compete on more than just price.” Research reported by Goodwin & Francis (2003), confirmed that destination, price, services and departure dates remain tourist’s key decision making criteria according to ecotourism operators. They also stated that their responsible tourism practices make the difference nearly every time (Goodwin & Francis, 2003 p262).

Some consumers see the price of an eco-friendly product as more expensive than the conventional ones (Chang, 2011,p.20). The consumers will pay an extra if the product or service brings a real benefit. For them spending money on an eco-tourism trip is worthy because it will preserve the deterioration of the Earth.

According to a survey of Pirani and Secondi (2011, p.69) around 75% of the respondents (27,000 respondents) are willing to pay more for eco-friendly products. However, another survey made by Pirani and Secondi (2011) on the Belgium population show that consumers are not willing to pay more than 27% price premium. Therefore, consumers are positive towards ethical product until a certain extent, and they will not automatically transform their attempt into a purchase behaviour.

2.4.3.3 Eco-place

Place in tourism does not just mean the location of a tourist attraction or facility. “It’s the location of all point of sales that provide an access to tourist products”, Middleton (1994).

Principle of distribution

A distribution channel is the place where the customers buy the tourism product. They have to match the potential ecotourist with the ecotourism opportunities offered by the company. The distribution channel in tourism is different from the other sectors,
while manufacturing goods are transported to consumers, here it is the consumer that is transported to the product.

An ecotourist can face different distribution channels:

**Ecotour operators** are more and more numerous. They try to have a different positioning from the mass tourism tour operator. The trend is to encourage domestic tour operators to keep tourism revenues at home.

**Travel agents** can also help them organizing their ecotrips. Finally, more and more tourists use the **Global Distribution System** (GDS).

It allows customers to make online booking and reservations. It is a great distribution network for ecotourism because Global Internet travel sales have increased in the last years - *ex: Hotel.com, Expedia.*

### 2.4.3.4 Eco-Promotion

Promotion increases the demand by conveying a positive image of the product to potential customers. According to Kotler and Keller (2009, p.63) promotion involves “sales promotion, advertising, publicity, public relations and direct marketing”.

**Sales promotion:** short-term strategies that promote a product through discounts. For example it can be a special discount of 80% off during one day only in order to increase awareness to customers.

**Branding:** promoting responsible brands can be done with the help of The International Ecotourist Society (TIES), which allow the brand to use their logo in advertising initiatives. However Weaver (2002) found that few operators in Australia having EcoCertified product informed their client on their website efficiently, thus they do not use their competitive advantage in an efficient way.

**Personal selling:** This technique involves personal communication with ecotourist consumers/distribution channels. The goal is to create the demand by offering personal recommendations and opportunities (Goeldner and Ritchie 2009). For instance, ecotourism operators might rely on this strategy to inform their consumers of other tour options available to them.

**Public relation:** It is very important especially in the tourism industry where the word of mouth is used. Indeed, people are very interested in stories about faraway destinations and cultural habits. Moreover it is free and will always be beneficial for
the ecotourism company. *Ex: press release in a famous tourism guide, or green award ceremony...*

**Merchandising:** according to Makens and Bowen (1996) it can be used very effectively as a promotional tool. It involves sale of the product associated with a particular company or destination. For example a tour can sell a tee-shirt with its logo on it.

**Social Media:** It is a way of communication more and more popular. Using platforms like Twitter, My Space, Facebook or blogs is a great way to market the segment chosen as it meets the technological trends.

**Online direct marketing:** it is a major trend in the sector, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), within the 5 years Internet sales will represent a quarter of the global tourism sales. Marketers should use strategic linking, search engine registration, direct e-marketing with e-mails and newsletters.

**Advertising:** it is the most common form of paid promotion. There are two approaches:

- **The shot-gun marketing:** which corresponds to an advertisement placed in an accessible media. Much of the delivery will miss the target audience but as there is a high-level of saturation it is likely that the target audience will be hit.

  *Ex: a backpacker hotel published an advertisement in the Time, most of the readers will ignore it but it can also recruit new people and reach a lot of people.*

  The opposite approach is the **rifle marketing:** it is when the advertisement is directly targeted to the market.

Advertising attracts consumers to the ecotourism opportunities being sold and employ media such as internet, newspapers, television, magazines, radio, and outdoor advertising (Goeldner and Ritchie 2009). The most common one for the tourism industry is using brochures because it allows to concentrate 100% on the promotional effort.

They are available in travel agencies, tourism information centers, hotels, mails and other strategic locations. Some green companies decide to charge a small fee for their brochures or encourage to return them to the travel agency because when you market something green, you have to start being green yourself.
Internet is now being used as a promotional tool by almost every destination. Ex: AdventureTV.com is a travel-related media that demonstrates the marketing potential of webcasting. It provides on-demand and free Internet access to travel videos which allow the tourists to virtually ‘visit’ any destination.

Magazines are also a good way of coverage and exposure and not really expensive. Writing an article in magazines such as ‘National Geographic‘ can be efficient, however, sometimes it can result in a bad impact on the image (ex: 2 tourists were kidnapped in this place...) According to Zaiton (2007) the most attractive source of information are travel guide books and especially the *Lonely Planet* guide.

**Word of mouth promotion** (WOM): It is one of the most important form of promotion of tourism because, as it comes directly from customers it is very efficient. The strategy to make WOM effective include understanding visitors needs and wants by procuring them coupons, special packages and encourage them to recommend the place to friends and relatives. Therefore tourism management must continue to market the customer when he arrived to the destination. The second strategy is to use interactive marketing which involves recognizing and identifying the tourist in order to maximize its satisfaction.

Mills and Morrisson (2002) have added 2 other P’s that are particular relevant for the marketing mix of tourism:

2.4.3.5 *Programming*

It is basically options that a company can offer to a product already bought to diversify it. It includes special activities, themed event, excursion activity... For example nature tour operators might invite a local wildlife expert to share their knowledge in a distinctive education program.

2.4.3.6 *Eco-people*

Ecotourism market needs to help travelers feel they can belong to a special world where they live experiences and transcend material values. As we have seen in the purpose segmentation majority of them are doing this type of trip to ‘reconnect’ with nature and cultural traditions. Ecotourism trip is therefore relying a lot on experiences, fulfillment and revitalization rather than just places and things.

Harvey Hartman (2003) suggests that ecotourists make judgments through “subjective-experience orientations” rather than “objective-truth” thinking.” Thus
according to Epler Wood (2003) marketers should not only focus on the green aspect to attract them.

Marketers should adopt a lifestyle marketing approaches: by focusing on what consumer would like to see in and of themselves rather than on any physical properties promoted. Indeed literatures from King (2002 p.16) indicate that travellers go on holiday for a king of self-renewal, they want to feel they have had “a real experience that extend their bodies, mind and soul”. Therefore marketers should put emphasis on the holiday experience and try to connect it with the customer.
3. Method

3.1. Research method
A research method has a goal of describing step by step the work of the authors when writing this thesis. This detailed and specific method allows the reader to follow all the thoughts and give this thesis a structured content that is coherent with the research purpose.

3.2. Research purpose
According to Fisher (2007) the research topic has to be interesting for the authors, in order to motivate the researchers. This is why the subject of ecotourism was found, linking the different interests of the authors in two different topics: sustainable development and tourism. Therefore, a research interest had to be drawn out of the subject. This is why the goal of this thesis is to find which factors; both internal and external to the consumer are responsible for eco-tourism. Basically, it is about to find which customer profile is more likely to be attracted by ecotrips: what is the profile of an ecotourist nowadays.

3.3. Research orientations
Two research orientations could be relevant for the purpose of this thesis.

The deductive approach: it is a structured approach where the researchers collect data to highlight a causal relationship between two variables, and be able to draw a conclusion out of it (Saunders et al, 2009).

Therefore, the aim here is to have a better approach of ecotourists, but not only: after finding several elements on ecotourists, that will be called hypothesis, the goal is then to test those hypothesis by proving an existing or non-existing relationship between the variables.

This method is the main used in that thesis, the authors have come up with a questionnaire, described later on.

The inductive approach: it is used when the researchers are a part of the study (Saunders et al., 2009), and when previous studies similar on different fields have been used by the authors. Then, the collection of data already used allows the
researchers to make final assumptions and conclusions by adapting previous researches to their current work (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005).

3.4. Research approaches
Ghauri & Gronhaug, (2005) mentioned that there are several research approaches to choose from depending upon the nature of the study, and explain that a study which combines various methods of data collection (such as observations, gathering of information and trying to find reasons or explanations) and different findings within the studied area is known as an exploratory research. It follows a descriptive research. Indeed, it involves that the researches already have a theoretical background to compare data.

Another type of research is the explanatory research, Williamson (2002) suggests that this approach is often used to explain the underlying question of causal relationship (why is something the way it is): it is basically done by doing statistical tests and its aim is to explain why things are the way they are.

Regarding the subject of this thesis, the authors have used several approaches.

**Exploratory research:** this type of research has been mostly used regarding the frame of references. It is basically about investigating into a problem or situation that provides knowledge to the researcher, who use a variety of methods such as trial studies, interviews, group discussions, experiments, and so on. Logically this type of research goes along with the use of secondary data. Secondary data are information already gathered in other research, studies and are not related to the analysis the authors of this thesis found (Joseph S. Rabianski, 2003).

In all the thesis, the information source and interviews have been selected in a systematic way in order to collect information in a structured manner.

**Explanatory research:** the authors have come to the conclusion that the explanatory research is the most relevant regarding the purpose of the thesis. After having made the exploratory research, a questionnaire was established to find primary data. It will give information on how ecotourists are led to choose ecotourism and will hopefully give a satisfactory explanation.
3.5. Quantitative or qualitative

Bryman and Bell (2007) believe that for studying the social facts, quantitative approach is suitable to study the social facts. The aim of quantitative research is to study social facts, count them, and build up statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed: this approach involves analysis of numerical data. Those data follow an explained pattern as the authors of this thesis did in the frame of references. Besides, quantitative data is more reliable to test existing hypothesis (Neill, 2007). Let us remind that the goal of this thesis is to check what factors can influence the ecotourists to go on ecotourism to make this model spread to regular travelers.

Since this type of study is the most appropriate for behavioural researches, the authors have implemented a questionnaire, made after the previous different findings discussed in the frame of reference.

The qualitative research intends to give a complete and total description on a topic, by interviewing people. The data collected is then richer, but hard to generalize and it is what is the concern of this thesis. Besides, this technique of data collection is time-consuming and finding an appropriate question might be difficult: to the level of the researchers, who are students in a foreign country, it would have been almost impossible to gather workable data, that is why the qualitative research was not used for the purpose of the thesis.

3.6. Collection of data

3.6.1.1 Primary data

During a study, collect two types of data can be collected: primary data and secondary data (Adams, Khan, Raeside & White, 2007).

Primary data is the data collection for the particular problem of the research done in a focus group (ex: depth interviews, survey research…)

Secondary data relates to “the re-analysis of data for the purpose of answering the original research question” Glass (1976, p 3). It implies that the information already exists as it was collected for another research purpose (Malhotra & Birks, 2007; Adams et al., 2007).
Romeu (1999) states that a good data collection means that the data is accurate, trustworthy complete and it has been carefully reviewed before being published.

According to Denscombe (1998, p 83), there are four data collection methods: questionnaires, interviews, observation and written sources.

As the authors decided to do a quantitative data collection, a questionnaire will be distributed to a sample of the population. Therefore it will provide interesting information about the ecotourists profile regarding several criteria such as its behavior, attitudes, intentions, motivations (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). Electronic questionnaire will be distributed to the target population. Regarding to the limitation of time given, using electronic questionnaire can be very useful as it is quick, cost efficient, does not require assistance and can be easily distributed to a large amount of person (Williamson, 2002). These quantitative techniques perfectly fit with the objective given: it will give suitable results about what is the profile of ecotourist nowadays.

3.6.1.2 Questionnaire

As the authors are conducting a quantitative data, the authors will use a questionnaire as an instrument for primary data collection; the results will be analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics.

For the questionnaire, the authors chose to target ecotourists. The questionnaire opened on the 5th of April 2013 and was closed on the 2nd of May 2013. It was distributed electronically through the use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and personal e-mail contact. It was published on most of the Facebook countries ecotourism page (eg : Marocco Ecotourism) and sent through personal message to the people belonging in those groups. Blogs, forums and trip advisors websites have also been used. The authors used the software Google drive to put in form the questionnaire. Two questionnaires were distributed one in French and one in English in order to target the maximum of ecotourists.

To increase the number of answers, participants were asked to spread the link to their contacts. Indeed, as Coolridge (2000) says: the more respondents there is, the more the sample will be representative of the overall population.
The respondents gave a total of 240 questionnaires. 26 were filtered out because they did not fill the profile of being real ecotourists as they answered ‘no’ to the first question (“do you consider yourself as an ecotourist?”). The authors did not count the questions which were not answered as part of the total number. In total the questionnaire reached the amount of 214 valid responses. Even though it may look like a small amount, according to Coolridge (2000) and Pallant (2005) the minimum for a study is 30 respondents, therefore as the authors fulfilled the requirements the study can be considered as valid.

3.6.1.3 Questionnaire design

The process of writing a questionnaire involves in different steps that has to be perfectly followed. In order to have reliable answers, the questionnaire has to be well structured, and must deliver an effective image to respondents (Don, Jolene and Melani, 2009).

Williams (2003) states that three characteristics have to be pursued by all questionnaires: validity, sensitivity and reliability.

The authors try to build an interesting structure, impartial, easy to complete, and general to the selected respondents. The questions are meaningful, clear to the respondent and close-ended because it is be easier to organize and analyze.

The authors also sent individual messages because according to Don, Jolene and Melani, (2009); respondents feel more motivated and essential for our survey when they receive personal comments.

The layout clearly indicated the response categories with an appropriate text.

The first question is a filter question, it aims at eliminating all the wrong target. Then the questionnaire consisted in two different sections related to the section of the frame of references. The first one concerns the consumer behaviour and the second one, the segmentation and marketing mix of ecotourist including the gender, age group, the destination travelling, etc.

Here is a table which sums up the questionnaire design:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of information</th>
<th>Information collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consumer behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>Ideas about ecotourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs/Values</td>
<td>Importance of green concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Habits regarding eco-consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sensitivity during time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasons for being an ecotourist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude/ decision-making</td>
<td>Factors that matters most when travelling in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour/ TRA model</td>
<td>Behaviour while travelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference groups</td>
<td>Importance of ecotourism among friends/family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People ecotourists travel with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecotourism</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic segmentation</td>
<td>Gender, age, level of education, income, job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip characteristic segmentation</td>
<td>Duration of their trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation segmentation</td>
<td>Motivations regarding people ecotourists travel with and what they do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination segmentation</td>
<td>Last ecotrip destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco product</td>
<td>The attraction of the destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activities down in the last ecotrip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco price</td>
<td>Willingness to pay more than a conventional trip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco place</td>
<td>Channel from which they buy the ecotrip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco promotion</td>
<td>Way of looking for information before buying an ecotrip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7. Population and sample

3.7.1.1 Population

Bryman and Bell (2007) stated that population constitutes all the units from which the sample is going to be chosen. According to Thyer (2010) a population is defined by “a large group of persons, objects or phenomenon in which researchers are interested to learn”.

In order to answer the research question it was chosen to study ecotourists population. The general population of ecotourists was used to assess the internal and external impacts that can have an impact of them. A general and global population was chosen to try to touch the maximum of people as it is sometimes difficult to get in touch with ecotourist people who are not easily reachable through the Internet.

3.7.1.2 Sample

According to Thyer (2010) a population can be divided into different segments, through a sampling process which consist in different methods that allow researchers to identify groups of persons, objects or phenomena that were selected for marketing research and used to represent the total population.

In order to develop a good sampling plan, three steps have to be followed: sampling unit, sample size and sampling procedure.

- The sampling unit refers to the unit studied. Here the unit corresponds to ecotourist people (who consider themselves as ecotourists). The question of knowing the delimitation of an ecotourist has long been a controversial topic as lots of definitions are given. For example the difference between adventure tourism and ecotourism is weak.

- A suitable sample size is mandatory to get results to have a good level of confidence. Indeed, the more ecotourists respond in a various way to the questionnaire, the more it will be valid. Even if WTO made some report to estimate the number of ecotourists, it is still impossible to know exactly how many ecotourists exist in the world. However, in order to achieve a balance between these findings and the received answers, and keeping in mind the
time and resource constraints, a sample around 200 to 250 answers seemed to be sufficient.

- The third step concerns the sampling procedure. Saunders et al (2009), offer two possible techniques when selecting the targeted respondent group: the probability and non-probability sampling.

In this study, the non-probability sampling technique has been applied. According to Malhotra and Birks (2007) this sampling may provide a good overview of the studied population characteristics, however, it does not give an “objective evaluation” and can therefore not be statistically projectable to the overall population. According to Bryman and Bell, (2007) it means that some units of the population have more possibilities to be chosen than others for the research. Indeed, the selection is made by the authors as the questionnaire was sent to specific websites. The authors recognize that it is a disadvantage however, it was not possible to use a probability sampling due to the lack of data about the global population of ecotourists.
4. Empirical data

After sending the questionnaires to the different entities cited before, 240 answers were received.

As mentioned in the method, the main target of the respondents was the eco-tourists. The target being spread around the world, the authors chose to send the questionnaire to private, small communities of the main eco-tourists destinations (Eco-tourism Canada, Eco-Tourism Kenya, Eco-tourism Lapland…).

As a result, there were 240 answers to this questionnaire. To know if all the respondents were in our target, the first question was used as a filter question. Therefore, to the question “are you an eco-tourist?”, 26 responses were “no”. The definition of the ecotourist used was the following: “a responsible traveller that goes to natural areas and conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.” (TIES, 1990). These percentages of the survey are not the target group of this study. Hence, a total amount of 214 responses out of 240 has been taken into consideration for the analysis.

4.1. Green attitude

The following charts were created to find the link between green attitude and ecotourism.

2. What is you first idea about ecotourism ?

- 41%: It's more factor to take into account while planning the trip
- 19%: It's not always possible
- 30%: It's likely to be more expensive
- 10%: It's more complicated to plan
The goal of this question was to understand if the prejudices about eco-tourism, thought by the masses, are true to eco-tourists. A prejudice, as explained in the frame of reference, is a common idea that a group of people have, without necessarily being true, or tested by them to see if it was true. It is to be noticed that the most common prejudice “it is more expensive” is actually only reaching 19% of the target. The main idea when coming to eco-tourism is that ‘it is just one factor to take into account when traveling’, so actually not a constraint, since only 10% of the people interrogated think it is.

This pie chart is related to eco-responsible attitude. Indeed, as said before, eco-tourists are more likely to be sensitive to green concern, and, by extension, people interested in green concern should be more likely to favour ecotourism. Here, 1 is « not important » and 5 is « really important », and the results show that 33% of the eco-tourists consider green attitude as mostly important.

But those results show that green attitude is not essential for eco-tourism. People manage to differentiate eco-tourism from green attitude, since 20% of them consider it is not really important in their life (1 and 2).
The fourth question has been set up to understand if the eco-tourists really had eco-responsible sensitivity in their lifestyle or not. It appears that green attitude is only a lifestyle for 33%, which would correspond to the 5 on the previous question. 62% are simply a little concerned about it (a 4 or a 3), so actually not a real commitment but just a sensitivity to it. This is also related to the influence of values on consumer behaviour.
The next question was drawn to check the real concern of eco-tourists to green attitude. Indeed, as mentioned in the introduction, there is a gap between what people think they do, think they behave and how they really behave. The results show that eco-tourists do eco-responsible action that are not much involving, such as reducing energy consumption (31%) or recycle (30%), the two main actions that are spread worldwide and supported by governments in developed countries. Means that imply a real commitment such as re-use rain water or use public transportation only get 7% and 12%.

This graph is still oriented on green consumption, and more precisely on the duration to see if it was linked to eco-tourism, if there was a cause-effect relationship. Since the eco-tourists who answered the questionnaire are new eco-tourists (less than 2 years), it appears that the duration of the concern for the environment is less than 2 years old for 23%, and from 5 years to more than 10 years for 65% of them.
With the next question, the goal was to identify the importance of the external environment, regarding sensitivity to green concerns. The results show that for more than half (54%) of the eco-tourists, the interest has been drawn by themselves and the influence on their country environmental policy (11%) and family (20%) is therefore less important. It is important to notice that in «Other», the reason «School education» has been mentioned a few times (2%) without being originally in the answers, as well as «awareness after reading news» or «instinct» (1%). This question was to evaluate the «involvement» part of the consumer behaviour.
4.2. Consumer behaviour

The following charts were put up with the objectives of understanding the behaviour of eco-tourists.

4.2.1 Decision making

This graph is directly related to eco-tourism and consumer behaviour, and more precisely to the decision-making part. It appears that the most important factor taken into account by ecotourists when travelling is to “discover another part of the world” (27%), and to “meet new people and share different cultures” (23%), closely followed by “do activities you would not do in your home country” (19%). Other factors, more physical are less important (2%).
4.2.2 Reference groups

The next question is also related to consumer behaviour and external influences. Travelling is a special activity, rarely involving a unique person. The goal was there to identify the most common pattern of how many people travel together to sort out if the big group or the isolated person is more likely to influence the eco-tourist to do eco-tourism. As it appears, the most common pattern is with the family (parents and children, 33%), closely followed by a few friends (27%). It is then obvious than a close person can influence you in eco-tourism instead of the big mass effect – the large groups and organized group trips gather less than 6%.
4.2.3 Values

This question is related to the Values part of the consumer behaviour, and especially using a tool called the Schwartz theory, already mentioned in the frame of references. Each proposition to the question is related to a value category drawn by Schwartz, as it will be made clear in the analysis part. But it is to be noticed that the first proposition is interesting because it shows a perfect blend between eco-tourism and tourism in the mind of the consumer: he has totally assimilated eco-tourism as a regular factor (13%).

10. Why do you travel in an eco-tourist way?

- You feel close to the nature, peace, far from the stressful world (30%)
- You feel like you have a power to really act for saving the planet (29%)
- Eco-tourism or not, it is the same for you (17%)
- You have always done it this way, it is some kind of tradition (9%)
- It is a new and stimulating way of traveling, and you like new things (6%)
- You choose to make sacrifices (less comfort for instance) in a spirit of generosity (6%)
- Other (3%)
This question is not directly related to proper consumer behaviour, but it also influences it. The way of looking for information before travelling helps the communication part of the marketing mix. It appears that most of the time, either people have a very precise and clear idea where they want to travel (32%), either they just know the destination they would like to go to (30%). Improvisation is less common in eco-trips (15%).

4.2.4 Reference group

The following graphs rely on basic consumer behaviour and especially the influence of reference groups (friends and family).*
As seen in the frame of references, groups are essential in influencing eco-tourists. For instance, eco-tourism is known and considered as really important for the eco-tourists’ families to 33%, and for friends. Although, it is important to notice that if they are concerned about it, families do not practice it (64%). For friends, they are more likely to be eco-tourists themselves (59% and 28%).

4.2.5 Attitudes

The following question is related to consumer behaviour, and mostly towards attitudes. Trust is of essence since 38% of the eco-tourists are reluctant when it is all new and they do not know people that did it before. But, at the same level comes the price (38%), which is also a factor to be careful with.
4.3. Marketing Mix

The following questions are directly related to marketing-mix, meaning that the goal was to know what the eco-tourists are sensitive to regarding product, price, place and promotion.

The next figure is a map representing the last trip destinations where the respondents went. The most represented countries as ecotrip destinations in the survey are Morocco, Swedish Lapland, Australia, France, Costa Rica and Canada, Peru and India.

The people surveyed were also asked to precise the activities practiced during their last ecotrips.
The main activity practiced is sightseeing (9%) or sleeping in an ecolodge (7%) followed by meeting the local population (6%). The category “other” includes activities such as swimming in an eco-swimming pool, eating in a restaurant cultivating their own food, participate to the reforestation of the Amazonian forest, diving with sharks, stay in the jungle to see Orang Utans…

The goal of the following question was to identify the duration of the trips, in order to find information for the product part of the marketing mix. Although this question does not really give a clear and useful answer since the figures are close together. One
week is the most common answer (31%) but the others, two weeks, on week end, 10 days and so on gather between 10 and 20%.

The following question is related to the communication and distribution part of the marketing mix. It appears that mainly the Internet and precisely the social networks are used (41%). Specialized organisms, public (Visitor Centers) and private (Travel agencies) are less used (3% and 8%). Friends and family, also called the network, is important (18%). Let’s notice that “looking for information on your own” (17%) is also pretty important.
The following question is about the price part of the marketing mix. Obviously, the eco-tourists are willing to pay from 0 to 10% more (59%), but there are also 30% ready to pay up to 20% more.

21. Which part of your trip would you accept to make more eco-responsible?

- Transport: 20%
- Accommodation: 22%
- Food consumption: 19%
- Activities: 19%
- Material consumption: 11%
- Respect of natural areas: 9%

The next question is also for the product part of the marketing mix. The goal was to find out which part of a trip the eco-tourists make more eco-responsible. But the results are not really accurate since the Transportation, the Accommodation, the activities, and the food gather around 20% each.
4.4. Demographics

Those questions were drawn to identify what kind of people answered the questionnaire.

For instance, the researchers got to know how many respondents were males and females. According to the result, 56% respondents were females and 44% were males. The authors included this question because gender equality is important in the survey to determine the ratio of men and women. As it will be explained in the data analysis, trends can be drawn out of those data.

Regarding the age group, it appears that the respondents are quite spread, almost equally. 35% of them belong to the category 36 to 55 years old, closely followed by 18 to 25 years old (29%) and 26 to 35 and +56 get 18% both.

Regarding the education, the most of respondents (87%) are graduated from university. This question is important to evaluate the level of education and then link it to eco-tourism.
Closely overlapping with education, now comes the level of income. A first question was used as a filter to identify which people had an income and then, of which level. The results show that 91% of the respondents have an income, which is about 195 people within the 214 respondents. The one saying no belongs therefore to the student or unemployed category.

Within these 195 respondents, 37% have a high income and 36% a middle income, which matches with globally the middle-high income category for more than 70% of them, regarding the frame of references.

![25. Do you have an income?](image)

![26. Level of income](image)

Even if the level of income already gives an idea of the kind of occupation the respondents have, the authors of this thesis used the last question for getting this information. From the responses, the following chart was drawn, with the main categories of the occupations cited. As shown as followed, 48% of the respondents have a position of managers in companies or work in the public services at a high level of hierarchy. The second important category is the employees (18%), then it is fairly spread (6 or 7%) between retired respondents, students and teachers.
5. Data analysis

This part holds an analysis of the empirical data presented above. The analysis will be evaluated with the chosen theories from the frame of references, to draw conclusions and to test already existing theories.

5.1. Consumer Behaviour

5.1.1 Perception

Regarding the perception, Solomon et al (2006) mentioned the importance of stimuli for the decision-making process, and that sensory inputs are used to impulse an image in customers’ mind. The goal was therefore to find out how the eco-tourists perceived eco-tourism themselves, what idea they had to be able to understand how an eco-trip works. The findings show that eco-trips are not more complicated to plan as it could be thought for most of the people: indeed, 41% think that it is just a factor to take into account and it is not a burden to accomplish. Therefore, the interpretation that the consumers have about eco-tourism is quite good, according to the Schmoll model, the activities offered by eco-tourism are easily added by the customer in his trips.

5.1.2 Motivations, values and involvement

During the decision-making process, the motivations are of essence. Motivations rely on needs, and the way of fulfilling those needs. Both Murray (1938) and Maslow (1943) agreed on separating the needs into the main categories of “physical needs” and “psychological needs”. The results show that eco-tourism is all about fulfilling psychological needs, such as “discover another part of the world” (27%) and “share different cultures” (23%) when needs related to physical orientation are only about 2%. Going more into details, the answer “discover another part of the world” and “share different cultures” belong to the Self-Esteem category needs of the Maslow pyramid, which is almost the highest a person can have. It means that eco-tourism is a response to a demanding need, that is not the first one to be fulfilled: it comes after the physical, safety, and love needs.

Needs are here generalized, they strongly rely on the person’s values, which are dependent on the person itself. Values are sustainable in time, and as shown in the
frame of references, the main value regarding eco-tourists should be the sensitivity to green concern, sustainable development and the protection of the environment. Based on the results, it appears that if green concern is important for eco-tourists, it is not a real lifestyle as it could have been expected. Indeed, the respondents mentioned it to ‘be important’ to ‘really important’ at 60%, but 20% of them said it was ‘not important’. Besides, 62% of them even precise that it is not a lifestyle, against 33% that claim it is. To verify those answers, the respondents were asked what was their concrete actions regarding green concerns. Once more, the results show that strong green practice such as using the public transportation or re-using rain water only get 19% when recycling or using low energy appliances get 51% of the respondents answers. So, obviously green concern is important but not to a high point as it was expected. Finally for the green concern value, the respondents were asked how long they had been sensitive to sustainable development to see if it was closely linked to eco-tourism. Since 65% of the respondents said ‘more than 5 years’, there is no link between their concern for ecology and their eco-tourist way of travelling.

But eco-tourists also answers to other values, gathered in the Schwartz model.

The first set of value is related to Openness to change (6%), the second Self-Transcendence (6%), Self-enhancement (29%) and Conservation (9% + 30%). It is then clear that the two major needs category are the need for conservation – respect of tradition, cultures, protecting environment, ethics, mixed with a self-enhancement need which relies on doing something good for one's self-esteem. It is also important to notice that the self-transcendence only got 6%, which could have been expected, for being more important since it is about universalism and goodwill.

Once a need is known, or at least needs fulfilling, the involvement part enters the process, since it is based on inherent needs, values and interests (Zaichkowsky, 1985). The results show that interest in eco-tourism comes from the eco-tourists themselves for 54% of the respondents. It means they are aware of what it implies and do it freely, because they want to. Obviously the influence of the family or the institutions is also important but not that much (less than 20%).
5.1.3 Attitudes

Attitudes are described through the TRA (theory of reasoned action) and TPB (theory of planned behaviour) models. The TPB is an extension of the TRA: it adds the aspect of predicting behaviours, according to the person’s skills, attitude, subjective norms and resources, according to Ajzen (2006). Based on the results, the behavioural beliefs in sustainable development and the need to fulfil self-enhancement actions lead to choose eco-tourism. But, another important factor influencing beliefs is the general external environment. For instance, we saw before that 20% and 12% of the respondents are sensitive to eco-tourism because their family or the public institutions enhance it. Besides, green attitude is said to be important for 60% of the respondents, hence the attitude towards eco-tourism. Indeed, it is important to notice that if not all eco-tourists are sensitive to green consumption, people sensitive to green consumption are sensitive to eco-tourism. Another interesting part regarding attitude is towards decision-making process. The results show that there is not a special attitude that sorts out of the questionnaire: the respondents are equally either a very precise idea of where to go and what to do, or just where to go (30% each). It can still be pointed out that improvisation has a small part in attitudes towards decision making (15%).

5.1.4 Reference groups

Reference groups can be formal (organization that has a structure, offices…) and informal: group of friends, family (Solomon et al, 2006), and are basically a social pressure to influence their consumption. Based on the empirical findings, it is fair to say that the respondents have a low social influence and pressure towards eco-tourism. Indeed, they are sensitive to eco-tourism by themselves for 60% of them. It could also be mentioned that 17% of the respondents plan the trip on their own, which also show a strong independent proportion. Another interesting information is to see that big groups have no influence on eco-tourists, since they never travel with a large group of friends or really little with organized trips (6%). The big mass effect has then no influence. 15% of the respondents also travel on their own, which is really special regarding travelling, only eco-tourism is known for being a lonely activity. But, the figures still matches the average regarding travelling with family or friends: they are actually the two most effective entities that can influence the eco-tourist, to a certain
extent. It is really interesting to outline that families and friends know about eco-tourism and are likely to be involved in it (60% each) but are not for the moment (64% for families). Therefore, it is obvious that if family has an impact on eco-tourists, it is more related to the values, the education than to being eco-tourists in itself. It is less obvious for friends, since 59% of the respondents answered that some of their friends were eco-tourists themselves. Hence, friends are usually in the same age category than the eco-tourists while family is older (parents, uncles notably). Then, there is a gap between two generations: the older think and transmit the values while the younger generation actually is eco-tourist. To conclude on that part, it can be said that conformity is not strong in eco-tourists. They are driven by other reasons, stronger, such as the values for instance: the group as a very little impact.

5.1. Ecotourism as a market segment

Previous finding about ecotourist segmentation suggest that it is possible to isolate ecotourists as a unique market segment.

   5.1.1 Demographic segmentation

Men and women tend to be viewed differently by the society in terms of travelers. Wight (2001), Weaver and Lowton (2002) and Swain (2004) found out that ecotourists are more likely to be female as they were talking about a ‘eco-feminist-approach’ to manage ecotourism. Many studies show that women are more concerned when it comes to environmental issues due to their motherhood attitude (Mida,2009).

Here is the cross-analyse of the empirical finding with two variables at stake: the gender and the importance of green attitude from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important)
The results are quite balanced, there is just a slight difference between men and women as 33% of women consider green attitude as very important compare to 24% for men. Hence, the results confirm the findings from other studies although it is not possible to distinguish a real ‘eco-feminism’ approach to ecotourism. However, the distinction can be made with the type of activity researched and the role of the tourist. Men may be seeking adventurous activities while women are more likely to take a passive role in the strange or risky environment.

The framework also states that the main dominant segment is 35-54 years old ecotourists. In the questionnaire, the majority of people (35%) are also situated in this age group, although the authors are conscious that this result is skewed as the questionnaire was send to our personal ecotourist contacts which are mainly young people.

Diamantis (1999) try to compare the age with the type of ecotourist. He found that softer ecotourist were generally younger (17-34) whereas harder ecotourist were more likely to be older (aged 45 and older).

Here is a cross-tabulation of the factors age and importance of green attitude in order to confirm that the practice fits with the results.
Softer ecotourists are travellers who both like ecotourism and traditional holidays. Here it can be considered that softer ecotourists would answer the question ‘How is green attitude important to you’ from 1 to 3. Here 38% of softer ecotourists are aged from 18 to 35 whereas 36% of them are aged from 36 to 56+. There is no big differences announced by the research done, this may probably come from the fact that the research have been made long time ago and that now, the young population is born with the trend of sustainable development and green attitude.

64% of harder ecotourists (4 and 5) are aged from 36 to 56+ whereas 62% are aged from 18 to 35. Therefore, given the close results, it is not possible to affirm that harder ecotourist are more likely to be older. The authors are conscious that the problem here may rely in the question ‘How green attitude is important for you’ which is not especially related to the typologies of ecotourists.

The education is also a factor to take into consideration. According to Hvenegaard and Dearden (1998), and to Backman and Potts (1993), 50% of ecotourists have higher education than other consumers or general tourists. The difference between the numbers is probably due to the democratization of traveling and school, since the statement from Backman and Potts is 20 years old.

Along with education, the level of income is naturally taken into account. Eagles & Cascagnette, (1995) and Wight (1996, 2001) state that an ecotourist is likely to have higher level of income than a normal tourist. In the survey, the authors found out that a total of 70% of respondents have either middle income or high income, which also matches the theories given.

Concerning the jobs of ecotourists, to Backman and Potts (1993) also discover that 35% of ecotourists were in a professional or managerial occupation group. Indeed, the survey led to almost the same results as 48% of the respondents have a role of manager in companies or work in the public services at a high hierarchical position.
To conclude: Although the demographics data are not always relevant and depend a lot on the size of the sample, the present findings correlates with the main results of other studies. Marketers should therefore take into account the demographic segmentation while promoting their ecotrips. People interested in ecotourism are more likely to be female, middle age, with a high level of education and mainly active in a managerial occupation group involving a high-middle salary. A communication strategy specifically tailored to this group is recommended.

5.1.2 Trip characteristics segmentation

In general, the theory stated that the duration of the trip is between 8 to 14 days (Fair Wings). When respondents were asked to answer the question how long was your last ecotrip, most of them answered that it lasted one week. Although, all the answers were pretty close together, it seems that the duration of the trip is not relevant information to analyze and predict consumer behavior.

Then, marketers of ecotourism should offer packages lasting one weekend, one week or two but they should avoid proposing irregular days.

About the booking, ecotourists usually make their own trips arrangements (17% of the people surveyed), using mostly the Internet and Social media.

To conclude on that part: an ecotrip is more likely to last one week or two and ecotourists are more likely to make their own trips arrangements.

5.1.3 Motivation and preference segmentation

While offering an ecotrip, marketers should take into consideration the motivations and the preferences of the customer. Here both theory from the frame of references and practice with the survey match. Ecotourists are interested in learning about the environment, discover another part of the world, relieve stress, escape crowded places and meet other people or spend time with their family.

However there is a difference in the pattern of how many people travel together, indeed most people surveyed prefer to travel with their family (33%) of with close friends (27%) whereas the theoretical part emphasizes the fact that experiences ecotourists prefer to travel as a couple (60%).
Here is a comparison of two factors, the age and the pattern of how many people travel together.

As shown above, youngest people prefer to travel with friends or family. People who most like to travel alone are young adults from 26 to 35. The trend of travelling with the family is getting bigger from 35 to 55 years old (common age for family establishment) and later on older people are more sensible to organized group travel. All this data can be useful for marketers while planning their trip. Indeed, each offer should be targeted to a special age segment according to their preferences.

To conclude on that part, marketers should focus on promoting the top three tourists motivations, which are “discover another part of the world”, “relieve from stress and crowed place” and “meeting new culture”. They should also take into account the age of the customers as the trip preferences will change from one age to another.

Limitation: According to Page and Connell (2007, p79) ‘ it is not realistic to assume that the accurate description of tourists trough their reasons for travel that were gained at the time of purchase will remain constant throughout the travel experience’.
5.1.4 Destination segmentation

Ecotourist destinations are usually associated with natural, undisturbed area. The theory of Bulter and Boyd, (2000) which explains that most eco-tourists destinations take place in protected areas like National Parks because it “provides regulatory environment that restricts potentially harmful activities”. This was proved in the survey. Lots of respondents answered that they were going to Natural Parks (ex: the Yellowstone Park in the US, or the park of Carl Mon Joy in Spain) to islands (like the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador, Frazer Islands in Australia...), to the mountains (the French Alps) or to natural places like Lapland, the Amazonas or the desert Atlas. This information should be carefully taken since the given sample is too small and not diversified enough for that information to be totally relevant: it simply gives an idea of destinations that were cited several times in this survey.

To conclude: The ecotourists destinations mainly take place in natural places, faraway from the crowded areas.

Limitation: Here, there is no precision of the nationality of the respondents, which can be a disadvantage for marketers who won’t be able to adapt appropriate strategies to the needs and aspirations of each major markets.

5.2. Marketing mix of ecotourism

Eco-product

Providing high value products and services is very important (Medlik and Midleton, 1973). According to the theory, even if people are environmentally sensitive it does not always mean that they will purchase an ecotrip, other factors need to be taken into account.

The destinations attraction and the environment is the first one, 19% of the respondents want to do activities they will never do in their home country, activities such as trekking in National parks, sleeping in an ecolodge or meeting the local people are often quoted. About the destination facilities, respondents, often say that
they try to use public transportation like bikes, buses or hitchhiking instead of renting a car.

The image and perception of the destination should also be highlighted, indeed as seen before research mentioned that the attitudes and perception that customers have towards a tourist destination has a strong influence on their purchase decision. Indeed, the survey shows that 38% of the respondents are reluctant to buy the travel if no one around them has done this trip before. The price to consumer is also an important factor while promoting the product, 38% of the person surveyed would hesitate to choose a specific trip if the price is too high.

To conclude: the destinations have to be attractive for ecotourists, and offer a natural environment and lot of possibilities for ecotourist activities. Companies should promote the destinations so that customers can have a lot of information and choices offered to them, and thus take their purchase decision.

**Eco-price**

Since trips are a high-risk product that involves a large amount of money, marketers should really focus on this part of the marketing mix.

According to Chang (2011), consumers see the price of an eco-friendly product as more expensive than the conventional ones and they will pay an extra if the product or service brings a real benefit. Indeed, the survey shows that 59% of the respondents are willing to pay more, from 0 to 10% and 30% are willing to pay up to 20% more. It corresponds to the survey led by Pirani and Secondi (2011) on the Belgium population that show that consumers are not willing to pay more than 27% price premium.

Shaw, (1982, p.153) states that the price should be adapted to the segment because senior or young people do not have the same budget.

Here is a cross-comparison analysis of age and price from the results of the questionnaire.
It is obvious that young people do not have the same budget than older people. Therefore, once again marketers should make this distinction and choose the right price for the right people.

To conclude: the price for an eco-product is different from one age to another, it should be more expensive than the conventional one only if it proposes a real extra benefit. People are willing to pay up to 20% more than the price of a conventional trip.

**Eco-place**

As said in the theoretical framework, an ecotourist can face different distribution channels: ecotour operator as well as travel agents. This has been shown in the survey as 8% of the respondents go to a travel agency or tour operator to purchase their product. However, now most of the purchases are made through the Internet with more than 40% of the respondents buying their ecotrip online. Yet, the channel also depend on the age, indeed as seen before, the people more interested in travelling with an organized group are the older one (56+).

Marketers should therefore use strategies such as tourism management and interactive marketing to keep the customer satisfied all along his trip.
Eco-promotion

Selecting the most appropriate communication strategy should obviously take into account the aims and the targets of the advertising campaign. Marketer can choose between several ways to promote its products. The most popular and efficient one is the use of the Internet, online direct marketing and the social media (41%). During the research, the authors have seen lots of blogs and Twitter accounts about ecotourism. Lots of countries are actually using a Facebook page especially reserved for ecotourism.

The second one is word of mouth strategy (WOM) with a total of 18% of respondents who ask advice from their friends and family before booking a travel.

To conclude: Nowadays the trend is to build its own trip through advice from relatives and the help of the Internet. Thus marketers should focus on this kind of promotion even if visitors’ centers help and travel guides still need to be taken into account.

Programming

20 % of the respondents to the survey said that when choosing an eco-trip, they often have an idea of the destination but do not know what to do there and need to look for precise information. As said in the theoretical part, marketers should at this point diversify the choice of activities to do and promote it well to the ecotourists.

Eco-people

According to Epler Wood (2003) marketers should not only focus on the green aspect to attract them as ecotourist make judgments through “subjective-experience orientations” rather than “objective-truth” thinking according to Harvey Hartman (2003). Marketers should focus on what consumer would like to see in and of themselves rather than on any physical properties promoted. Indeed literatures from King (2002) indicate that travelers go on holiday to renew themselves.

It is demonstrated in the survey as 13% of the respondents think that what matters most while travelling is to relieve from stress and urban crowds and 33% want to spend time with their family. In general this groups of tourists reveals a positive attitudes toward ecotourism. They appreciate nature if it can benefit their personal wellbeing and the quality of their tourism experience. Therefore marketers should emphasis the holiday experience and try to connect it with the customer.
6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the factors, which can influence consumers’ purchasing intention, regarding ecotourism. More specifically, ecotourists intentions have been analyzed to find the reasons they were ecotourists, and allow the authors of the thesis to find factors that can be extended to regular tourists. Therefore, the research question “What internal and external factors influence consumers to choose ecotourism?” has been developed, and in order to answer it, a theoretical framework and an empirical study have been lead.

After evaluating the results of the research sample, it is found that in term of proper consumer behaviour, the respondents have a good perception of ecotourism and do not see it as a burden like regular tourists may think. Besides, motivations that lead ecotourists to choose ecotourism are fairly linked to psychological needs, which means that ecotourism fulfills a high need that cannot be accessed until the consumer reaches a secure life – especially financial and familial security. The internal motivations answers the following needs: ‘feel about yourself by doing something important for the others’ (or here, the planet) but also some self-centered need such as ‘going on vacation’, ‘running away from the stress of the day-to-day life’. Regarding values, it appears that to be an ecotourist, the following values are found: ‘want to help the others’, ‘respect of traditions and your environment’ but not necessarily having green concern has a lifestyle. Even more, the study showed you can be an ecotourist for different reasons than just the protection of the planet. Regarding attitude and social pressure, it appears that it has quite a low effect and ecotourists are very self-motivated people. Family and friends do not seem to have such an impact on attitude but more on transmitting the values: there is a gap between two generations - the older think and transmit the values while the younger generation actually acts like ecotourists.
The second research objective was to find which external factors can influence the consumer to choose ecotourism. The empirical research suggested that it was possible to isolate ecotourists as a unique market segment. Indeed, tourism is a combination of product and experiences, which meet a diverse range of individual needs. Therefore, ecotourists marketers should consider those variables in order to target the right people however; they should always consider that motives may change over time. Understanding the ecotourist external variables is not best served by using static models, but by recognizing the dynamic and the changing elements through the time of the external environment.

Demographic segment for example suggest that ecotourists are more likely to be female, middle age with a high level of education and mainly active in a managerial occupation. However, distinctions should be made, as people get more concerned about green attitude over the time. The main motivation of ecotourists is driven by the wish to discover another part of the world, relieve from stress and meet other cultures; however the trip preferences will change from one age to another.

The marketing-mix of an ecotourist has been drawn out. While in theory, tourists are free to choose their ecotourist product; their choice is inevitably limited by awareness of constraints, which influence the range of opportunities. Indeed the destination itself should offer a natural environment without pollution destroying the environment and abuse to the local human resources yet it should be secure, well known and fit out to receive tourists. Therefore, both industries and authorities share the challenge of providing the necessary infrastructure to secure an easy access for the tourists. The ecotourist price should be up to 20% higher from a conventional trip however; prices should be adapted accordingly to the age of the customer. The ecotourism managers and tour operators are also able to design and implement promotional efforts that are likely to transform interested individuals into visitors to desired destinations. Indeed by concentrating their efforts on the word of mouth strategy and more specifically on Internet promotion, it will enable them to acquire a significant part of the market as ecotourists are willing to make their own trip arrangements with the advice of friends or Internet users (forums, blogs, social media...). Along the trip, it is also necessary to use an interactive management to keep the client satisfied. To sum up, a good marketing strategy for this targeted market
segment is needed in order to provide a high value product and a greater level of satisfaction.

6.1. Limitations

Although this study has identified some interesting findings, there are limitations to how this data can be generalized as the majority of the information was taken from specific respondents that the authors chose from the Internet. Therefore it is not necessarily relevant for every ecotourists.

The consumer behaviour is a broad subject, studied for many years by different researchers. A lot of information are therefore available, which are different and sometimes even have opposite meanings. Thus it is hard to find really useful information for the precise purpose of this thesis. Besides, these theories are often dated from more than 50 years, and it might be thought that they are not relevant to nowadays consumers. On top of that, predicting consumer behaviour is a hard task to achieve, because human reactions are not a 100% predictable.

Some of the theories used in the frame of references are made up from empirical studies: it means that after implementing large surveys, researchers got answers and made theories out of it. The problem that might exist regarding this matter is that results vary regarding the sample used: different size, nationality, time and so on. The consequences are that the results can be completely different and therefore, theories become contradictory.

Regarding the number of eco-tourists in the world, the sample was too small to give a 100% reliable analysis. Besides, some of the answers might be not relevant since the questionnaires were sent to specific organisms like “Eco-tourism Morocco” or “Eco-tourism Kenya”: therefore, the answers to “what is your last eco-trip”, Morocco or Kenya were quoted a lot.
6.2. Discussion and Further Research

This paper focuses on identifying and analyzing the factors which can influence consumers’ purchasing intention, regarding ecotourism. Future research can be concerned with determining a wider range of factors that influence the ecotourist behavior of a consumer. On suggestion would be to look more deeply into all the elements of destination in order to see if the destination is related to the ecotourists home country and if its inherent culture has influenced its choice.

Further research could consist of surveys carried out on bigger samples that would be more representative of the entire ecotourist population. Additional questions and statements regarding consumer behaviour as well as personal comments can also be included in the questionnaire. Another survey could be carry out on a narrowed area for a specific country in order to help them more precisely to target the people who are interested to do ecotourism in their country. Or on the opposite to a wider area targeting all the tourists in general in order to make a comparison between the two results. Another approach would be to obtain the ecotourist’s agency perspective on the topic by interviewing experts working within the ecotourism industry.
7. References


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8. Appendix

**Eco-tourism**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. All the responses will be anonymous and only used for the purpose of our thesis. The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what factors lead a traveler to choose eco-tourism over regular tourism. For that matter, we will identify the importance of green attitude and the travel habits. It will not take more than 5 minutes to fill these questions.

*Obligatoire*

**Do you consider yourself as an eco-tourist?**

An ecotourist is a responsible traveler that goes to natural areas and conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

**What is your first idea about ecotourism?**

- [ ] It's likely to be more expensive
- [ ] It's not always possible
- [ ] It's more complicated to plan
- [ ] It's one more factor to take into account while planning the trip

**How is green attitude important to you?**

In general, not related to eco-tourism especially

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**Regarding eco-responsible consumption...**

Choose the sentence the most accurate for you

- [ ] I am a green purchaser and recycler
- [ ] I buy sometimes green products but it is not a lifestyle
- [ ] None of the above
Regarding eco-responsible attitude: what do you do
Several responses possible
■ Recycle / Compost waste
■ Re-use rain water
■ Buy recycled / labeled products
■ Use green transportation (biking, electric car...)
■ Use low energy lighting / energy-efficient appliances

How long have you been sensitive to sustainable development?
■ Less than 2 years
■ 2 - 4
■ 5 - 10
■ More than 10 years

Why?
■ Your family has always been into it
■ Your country policy has always been into it
■ You have found the interest yourself because the situation is getting worse

What matters most when traveling is:
■ Do activities you would never do in your home country
■ To relieve stress and escape from crowds and urban life
■ To discover another part of the world
■ Security, insurance included
■ Duration of the trips / Distance
■ Meet other people and share culture
■ Cost/value relationship

Why do you travel in an eco-tourist way?
■ Eco-tourism or not, it is the same for you
■ You are contributing to saving the planet
■ It’s new and stimulating so you want to give it a try
■ It makes you feel like you are doing something good

How is eco-tourism important for your family and friends?

1 2 3 4 5

Not Important ■ ■ ■ ■ Very Important
What can be reluctant when choosing eco-trips?
- No one knows this trip around you
- You don’t know the company/travel agency that provides it
- The price
- The activities

What is your last eco-trip?
Please mention the destination and your main activity there

How long was it?
- A weekend
- 1 week
- 2 weeks

When choosing your eco-trip...
- You often have a precise idea of where you want to go / what to do
- You are often tempted by a destination but don’t know what to do there
- You have no idea: you just know you want vacation

Where do you look for information before traveling?
Several answers possible
- Internet, social media, blogs
- Travel Agencies or Tour Operators
- Friends and Family
- Own travel arrangement
- Visitor Center
- Travel guides and newspapers

How much are you willing to pay more for an eco-trip?
compare to a “normal” trip
- 0 to 10%
- 11% to 20%
- 20% to 30%
- 30% and +
Do you travel more often
- Alone
- As a couple
- With your family
- With friends
- With a group

Gender
- Man
- Woman

Please state which age group you belong to
- 18 - 25
- 26 - 35
- 36 - 55
- 56 +

Please indicate your level of education
- Elementary school
- Upper secondary school
- University or more

Do you have an income
- Yes
- No

If yes, which level
- Low income
- Middle income
- High income

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