Marketing Sustainability in Charter Tourism

The Influence of Brands, Eco-Labels and their Combination on the Swedish Charter Tourist’s Decision Making

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Abstract

Tourism as one of the biggest industries in the world has been changing continuously and rapidly. The publishing of the Brundtland Report in 1987 has accelerated the discussion about combining economic, social and environmental factors – the so-called triple-bottom line – in order to secure long-term sustainable living conditions on a finite planet for both business and society. This has lead to occurring pressure from different stakeholder groups as for example policy makers or non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) urging for more sustainable business practise within the industry whereas one important pressure group appears to be missing out in this context: the customers of mass tourism products and therefore the demand side within the economic equation. Tourists have been observed to be overall reluctant to pay price premiums for more sustainable travel alternatives and seem to “take vacation” from their everyday green behaviour. Hence at the current point of time eco-tourism appears to be a market niche in which mainly small-scale providers and NGO’s like Nature’s Best in Sweden operate. However integrating mass tourism into the consideration can be seen as a promising opportunity and from an environmental standpoint an urgent necessity as it can be argued that within an industry of this scale, even small improvements towards more sustainable behaviour bear the potential for a substantial impact.

The purpose of this study therefore lies in researching the two marketing tools of brands and eco-labels and the influence they can have individually and in combination on the tourist’s decision making delimited to the context of charter tourism in Sweden. Through the research of this study it was found that currently no directly applicable theory about the combination of brands and eco-labels seems to exist for marketing neither in general, nor for the tourism industry in particular. This strongly indicates the novelty of the topic of combining brands and eco-labels and points out research opportunities.

In order to achieve this purpose, a mixed-method research design was used combining qualitative expert interviews from direct business representatives and a quantitative data collection utilizing the scholarly acknowledged marketing research method of conjoint analysis in one of its most up-to-date forms of an adaptive choice-based conjoint analysis. Theory from different fields of study as consumer behaviour and decision making, branding and eco-labelling as well as sustainability marketing was combined and translated into the new and emerging service category of sustainable tourism. From this a conceptual framework was developed combining the data collection results from the mixed-method approach. This leads to the identification of ways for improving current charter tourism companies’ marketing based on the customers’ current view on utilities within certain aspects of the tourism package.

Overall this study therefore contributes to the discussion on how demand for sustainable products evolves and can likely be increased. This is seen as a valuable theoretical, practical and societal contribution as it helps improving tourism companies’ understanding of their customer base and supports offering products/services with an improved perceived individual and societal value for charter tourism companies that aim for a higher degree of sustainability in their objectives.

Keywords: Charter Tourism, Sustainability Marketing, Eco-Tourism, Tourism Branding, Eco-Labelling, Co-Branding, Service Marketing, Consumer Decision Making, Conjoint Analysis
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1. Introduction

This chapter provides background information on how sustainability considerations have been increasing within the tourism industry throughout recent years. The concepts of brands and eco-labels are introduced and set in the context of sustainable tourism. From this the research gap, purpose and three subsequent research questions are presented.

1.1. Problem Background

The cornerstone for modern tourism was laid in 1948 when Pan American World Airways officially introduced their tourist class and through this, aero plane travel was made available to the general public. This in combination with the introduction of jet engines in 1957 made air and long-distance travel accessible to the non-business consumer paving the way for a new era of mass tourism. (Honey, 2008, p. 9) Consequently, the tourism and travel sector showed an almost uninterrupted growth throughout the last six decades with an increase from 25 million international tourist arrivals in 1950 (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2013, p. 1) to the record number of 1.087 billion in 2013 (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2014a, p. 1). This figure is further expected to reach 1.6 billion arrivals in 2020 (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2014b). Subsequently, tourism is viewed nowadays as one of the world’s largest legitimate businesses (Honey, 2008, p. 10). The sector generated 1.075 trillion international tourist receipts during 2012 (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2013, p. 5) and by this contributed 6.6 trillion USD to the world economy - accounting for 260 million jobs (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2013, p. 1). In summary the sector administered 9 % of the total world GDP in 2012 and provided one in every twelve worldwide available work opportunities (ibid).

Consequently, tourism influences countries, regions and the world as a whole in both positive and negative ways. On the one hand it provides financial revenues for private and public actors creating job and business opportunities (Jansson, 2009, p. 1; Dowling & Fennell, 2003, p. 2). On the other hand it can have negative environmental and social effects including environmental exploitation and pollution, low- or under-paid jobs, or visitors behaving insensitive towards local cultures and their heritage (Jansson, 2009, p. 1; Honey, 2008, p. 10). A proposed method to tackle these negative impacts and based on a growing awareness for environmental issues, is the idea of sustainable tourism. (Jansson, 2009, p. 7; Dowling & Fennell, 2003, p. 4; Pforr, 2001, p. 68). What constitutes sustainable tourism differs by definition and has since its introduction been widely discussed both by scholars and organizations (Janson, 2009, p. 9; Pforr, 2001, p. 68). Dowling & Fennell (2003) define the concept of sustainable tourism development as “the equating of tourism development with ecological and social responsibility”, where its “aim is to meet the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing environmental, social and economic values for the future” (pp. 4-5). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (2014c) views sustainable tourism as: “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”. Moreover, the ambiguous term ecotourism is commonly used in this context to explain environmental and socially conscious choices in tourism. Tao et al. (2004) define ecotourism as: “tourism occurring in a natural setting, providing environmental education, respecting natural conservation, and with a goal of integrated,
sustainable environmental management” (p. 2). Even though the two concepts can be seen as quite similar, ecotourism can be viewed as either a general term in substitution for sustainable tourism or a niche segment within the broader concept of sustainable tourism (Holtz & Edwards, 2003, p. 41). For the purpose of this study, sustainable tourism is used as it is more inclusive thus, held here to be more relevant and of greater value to this study compared to using the term ecotourism with its limited scope offered in the aforementioned definition.

Since the late 1980s the issue of sustainable tourism has been both discussed and used by academics and the tourism industry. A large contributing factor to this was the influential 1987 report “Our Common Future” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) also referred to as the Brundtland Report. The report presents the idea that the three elements natural environment, human social welfare and economic activity are interdependent and a dynamic balance needs to be established and maintained among these elements effectively summarizing the concept of sustainable development establishing the idea that the human economy must not expand beyond what the planet could physically sustain. (Belz & Peattie, 2012, pp. 7-13) Five years later, following the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, a plan of action called Agenda 21 set the goal “that travel and tourism provide a source of income for many people; that travel and tourism contribute to the conservation, protection and restoration of the Earth’s ecosystem; that international trade in travel and tourism services takes place on a sustainable basis; and that environmental protection is an integral part of tourism development” (United Nations Resolution, 1998). Based on these goals established in 1992, the UN General assembly agreed in 1998 to designate the year 2002 as the “International Year of Ecotourism” - hoping that the decision would contribute to an increased awareness of the negative consequences of tourism. (ibid)

Ideas raised within the Brundtland Report not only influenced the discussions and actions of academics and the tourism industry, but also spread out and gained higher priority among the general society. In this context challenges such as climate change, concerns for resource depletion and damages on the ecosystem alerted and informed the public about the need for new patterns of consumption and development (Belz & Peattie, 2012, pp. 7-13). The relationship between the three elements of sustainability (economic, environmental and social) often stands in conflict though and is thus particularly challenging to balance when put into a tourism context. A conflict for example exists between the economical and environmental elements due to the price factor since ecological products/service alternatives are often more expensive. Price can also cause a conflict between economic and social elements if the consumer cannot or is not willing to purchase socially fair product/service alternatives. Moreover environmental and social issues clash due to the role of consumption as a status symbol in society. (Jansson, 2009, pp. 7-8) Regarding this clash, Hedlund (2013) states that the consumer’s sustainable vacation choices can be seen as a social dilemma, where a trade-off between short-term individual gains and long-term collective gains is made (p. 71). In this context previous research reveals that consumers do not seem to prioritize green attitudes when considering tourism (Sharpley, 2001, pp. 44-45; Becken, 2007, pp. 363-365) and that a general lack of knowledge about sustainable tourism in society seems to exist (Hedlund, 2013, p. 16; Björk, 2004, p. 38). Another example are results presented by Barr et al. (2010) showing that consumers who in their everyday life showcase a green behaviour find it complicated to transfer such a behaviour into a tourism context (pp. 479-480). This indicates an apparent gap between consumers’ attitudes and their behaviour concerning green issues when it comes to tourism. An explanation for this gap is that con-
sumers perceive their vacation as a time for slowing down and getting away from the pace and monotony of everyday life (Hedlund, 2013, pp. 14-15). Another reason could be the consumers’ desire to participate in global mobility and therefore let individual considerations prevail social ones (Becken, 2007, p. 364). The consequence for either case is the imbalance between the economic, environmental and social elements. Therefore it lies in the industry’s responsibility to find a way to effectively reach, influence and educate consumers towards becoming more aware of and ultimately consider sustainable tourist alternatives.

One of the most commonly used tools to influence consumers’ choices towards more sustainable alternatives is eco-labelling (Budeanu, 2007, p. 504). Following the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, Agenda 21 identified eco-labels as a way for consumers to adopt more sustainable consumption patterns through more resource and energy efficient products (Horne, 2009, p. 175). In the context of tourism such a certificate refers to a procedure of auditing and control providing assurance that a product or service meets a specific set of criteria or standards. (Haaland & Aas, 2010, pp. 375-376; Honey & Stewart, 2002, p. 4) In 2001 around 100 eco-labels, certifications and awards were active and applicable in the area of sustainable tourism in Europe (Ecotrans, 2014) - a number which since then has increased (Hedlund, 2013, p. 14). As a consequence the term eco-label is found to be used broadly and often only vaguely defined for instance in terms its of social and/or ecological schedule. For reasons of simplification the authors have decided to refer to the most widely accepted term of “eco-labels” when considering both social and environmental labels.

A problem with the usage of eco-labels is that consumers are found to have little interest or use for such tools. Buckley (2001) states that consumers do not purchase tourism products and services certified with eco-labels because of for instance low consumer recognition or uncertainty about the environmental outcomes (pp. 23-24). Other suggested explanations are that the large amount of eco-labels and certificates available on the international market confuse consumers (Fairweather et al., 2005, p. 86), and that there is generally a lack of knowledge about eco-labels among tourists (Fairweather et al., 2005, p. 94; Hedlund, 2013, p. 16). Research in Sweden has shown in this context that tourists participating in eco-labelled tourism activities know more about ecotourism than other types of tourists, but that even among some of the ecotourists the knowledge of the concept of ecotourism is low despite the fact that they do travel in such a manner themselves (Wurzinger & Johansson, 2006, p. 225). Another reason for the low usage of tourism eco-labels could be that peoples’ high environmental awareness does not necessarily translate into behavioural responses (Buckley, 2002, p. 185), which showcases that there is a gap between the consumers’ attitude and behaviour concerning the issue of sustainability.

A possible tool for influencing consumers’ choices about sustainable tourism alternatives could be provided by travel agencies and more specifically their brand. For this thesis we will in particular focus on charter tourism providers in Sweden. The term charter tourism, charter tourism packages or charter-package tourism is widely used by scholars but rarely defined in its scope (Hedlund, 2013, p. 2013; Scheyvens, 2002 ,p. 151; Jacobsen, 2000, p. 284). For this thesis the authors therefore decide to define it in line with the majority of found scholars as packaged tourism which refers to "organised trips following predetermined and detailed programmes involving several tourism services. The packages are sold in advance at a fixed price." (Vellas & Bécherel, 1995, p.163). Package tour travels have the reputation of being less sustainable than for exam-
ple independent travelling or backpacking. In line with Kirstges (2003) we argue that this is a misconception. It represents a more co-ordinated form of travel streams in which influence on sustainable behaviour can be controlled much stronger by the tourism company than for individual tourists travelling countries by their own, two people in a car, not being exposed to any supervision for example for recycling. (p. 7) In Sweden charter tourism presents with 20% of all outbound leisure trips with overnight stay from Sweden in 2012 a widely accepted form of travelling (Tillväxtverket, 2013, p. 83). This in combination with the high awareness of eco-labels in general among Swedish customers (Nordic Eco-Label, 2014; Krav, 2014), the authors of this thesis argue that the Swedish charter tourism market carries the potential to set a benchmark for sustainable packaged tourism for other markets with this ambition. Examples for charter providers and their brands in Sweden are Fritidsresor, Ving or Apollo. The general willingness of those companies for an increased sustainability orientation can be already seen in their commonly existing Corporate Social Responsibility actions, which will be part of the considerations posing an alternative or supplementary measure to eco-labelling.

The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2014) defines a brand as a “name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers”. Closely connected to brands stands the term brand equity, which describes the added value a brand can generate for products and services. Such added value can be both reflected through consumers’ thoughts, feelings and actions in respect to the brand, and the power the brand for instance holds through its market share, profitability and consumer price sensitivity. (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 243) From a consumer’s perspective brand equity can be understood as being based on three concepts differential effect, brand knowledge and consumers’ response to marketing. This implies that a strong brand can influence the consumer by better recognizing the brand and answering positively towards the brand’s products/services, its price and marketing efforts compared to competitors. (Keller, 1993, p. 8) Furthermore, strong brands are important in the context of services and the service industry (e.g. tourism) since they can increase consumers’ trust in the offered services, while supporting the consumer in visualizing what they are purchasing (Berry, 2000, p. 136). Another important feature is the impact brands can have on the purchasing process. Research suggests that consumer loyalty towards specific brands can be an important factor in the final purchasing decision. Even when the brand’s corporation engages in unethical behaviour, the presence of a specific brand can influence the consumer to ignore negative information or lower the threshold for what the consumer considers to be acceptable performance. (Ahluwalia et al., 2000, pp. 211-212; Ingram et al., 2005, pp. 246-247) Particularly with regard to sustainability questions, research suggests that brand recognition on sustainable products can have a greater influence on the consumer’s purchase behaviour than the consumer’s attitudes towards sustainability itself (Blamey et al., 1999, pp. 21-22). In conclusion, the theory presented above suggests that brands and the power of brand equity could be used to influence consumers’ choices, and help to overcome the consumers’ attitude-behaviour gap concerning sustainable products/services.

Generally, labels and brands can be seen sharing many similarities, especially when focussing on communication structures and association networks (Font, 2001, p. 3; Björk, 2004, p. 27). This is also true for brands and eco-labels although the two differ in a number of functions. The brand functions as an image for whom the source or maker of the product/service is, and to whom the consumer assigns the responsibility of the product/service’s performance (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 242) whereas the eco-label can be perceived as a protection tool (Charles, 2009, p. 251), conveying information to
the consumer about a product/service’s environmental impact (Bruce and Lariya, 2007, pp. 276-277). In that sense the brand and its product/service can wear the eco-label additionally as a badge to showcase that they fulfil and uphold certain sustainable standards (GEN, 2004, p. 1; Bruce and Lariya, 2007, pp. 276-277). Even though the brand and eco-label often work in conjunction with each other (for instance when the eco-label is placed on the brand’s products/services or visible in advertising) there is, to the authors’ knowledge, little or no research on how the two function and affect each other in marketing communication and the consumers’ decision making process. Drawing from the concept of co-branding it has been shown that combining two brands can create a market synergy where both brands benefit (Hjalanger & Konu, 2011, p. 882). Positive brand associations from one brand can be for example facilitated and transferred to another (Besharat, 2010, p. 1241). The quality perceptions of one brand can influence the quality signals of another (McCarthy & Norris, 1999, p. 279). Two well-known brands when combined can attain a better attribute profile when extending into a new product category (Park et al., 1996, pp. 464-465) and influence and transfer the image of one brand to another (Levin & Levin, 2000, p. 51). Even though brands certified with eco-labels do not fit the definition of co-branding (Abratt & Motlana, 2002, p. 43; Washburn et al., 2000, pp. 591-592), the authors believe that some of the advantages of co-branding presented above can be relevant in the context of brands and eco-labels. In other words, the combination of brands and eco-labels could have influence on and benefit each other, which from a consumer perspective could generate a market synergy.

1.2. Research Gap

Based on the initial literature review the authors find that the connection between brands and eco-labels in the consumer decision making process is a rather new and under-researched area in marketing and in particular in tourism marketing.

Extensive research has already been undertaken in the area of the consumer decision making process itself with varying outcomes presented from differing perspectives (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, p. 16; Jansson, 2009). Interestingly a few researchers have been found to investigate eco-labels or brands and their influence on consumer decisions (Jansson, 2009; Björk, 2004) but no notable research on the combination of both and their placement in the decision making process could be found. The authors think this is particularly interesting in the field of tourism as the decision making process here has been found being highly complex, inter-temporal and using heuristics across different parts of the process (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, p. 16). Especially concerning the concept of heuristics the authors believe that brands and eco-labels constitute a very important combination in easing more sustainable behaviour for consumers in the future. Therefore research in this area supports the international tourism industry in their goals towards sustainability (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2013).

This thesis questions the findings of consumers not considering sustainable behaviour when on holidays (Jansson, 2009; Barr et al., 2010) as the authors believe that this shortfall of eco-label effectiveness may be having its roots in miscommunication rather than intentional neglecting of sustainability issues by the tourists. Concordant with the assertion in Dolnicar and Long (2009) finding that a sustainability orientation can pro-

1 The terms “the authors” and “the researchers” is in the following if not stated differently within the context used as third person reference to the authors of this thesis.
provide an attractive alternative to mass tourism and arguing that for this: 1) the decision making process of tourists needs further investigation, and 2) focus needs to be put on developing more attractive sustainable product bundles (pp. 511-512) this study investigates possible approaches for increasing demand for more sustainable offers in charter tourism. Based on the initial literature review the authors argue that brand value and the value of eco-labels are likely to be connected and lie in the perception of the consumer. Consequently this connection is investigated here concordant with the concept of value co-creation with the consumer within the Service Dominant Logic (S-D logic) concept (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This therefore poses the research gap that this thesis contributes to.

The gap is approached by three succeeding steps. The knowledge gap is first identified in its extent. For this, peer reviewed research builds the basis for picturing the perceived value of consumers for brands and for eco-labels in the tourism sector. From this an image on how brands and eco-labels are currently communicated towards consumers is drawn. The discussions and explanation approaches of the authors of this previous research are collected and compared to accumulate possible reasons for the gap according to the opinion of business experts and researches in this field (Research Question 1). The second step focuses on the consumer perspective collecting primary data in order to identify where consumers currently consider brands and eco-labels in their decision making process. These results are further used to indicate where they could imagine considering them in the future. Thereby a picture of current consumer preferences and of where they see potential for value co-creation and synergies is built (Research Question 2). The third step overlays the two perspectives and identifies matching and mismatching perceptions in order to find room for improving communication and by this value creation for both consumers and businesses (Research Question 3).

1.3. Research Question and Purpose

The Marketing Science Institute (MSI) identifies research priorities in marketing on a regular basis. Among the priorities for the years 2012-2014 the second priority states: ‘Rethinking the Journey to Purchase and Beyond, Whether Conceptualized as a Funnel or a More Iterative Process” (MSI, 2012). Within this topic, this thesis focuses upon MSI’s elaborated sub-question: “Where [does] the brand play the greatest role in the purchase journey?” (MSI, 2012) and relates it to the issue of sustainability within tourism.

This thesis’ research purpose lies in investigating how far a change in currently established Swedish tourism providers’ communication approach can increase more sustainable package choices among customers as these companies operate in the field of charter tourism. By focusing on these providers the authors claim that the research can cover a wider range of sub-decisions than a focus on providers solely offering possibilities for certain decisions like travel mode or accommodation could feature. In particular the possibilities of combining the well-established tool of branding with the rather new tool of sustainable labelling are researched. The intended outcome is a conceptual framework that triangulates former findings from the decision making process in tourism, branding and eco-labelling in order to point out where consumers perceive the communication of the brand, the eco-label and their combination as most value adding and thus most effective.
As the name indicates the majority of the currently existing 100 eco-labels that can be applied in tourism are focusing mostly on the ecological perspective (Ecotrans, 2014). Consequently most found research adopts this environmental notion (Jansson, 2009, p. 5). Nevertheless, this research focuses on increasing sustainability as a whole and therefore includes social labels such as Fair trade into the research as the concept of sustainability with its presented triple-bottom line requires (Belz & Peattie, 2012, pp. 7-13).

Hedlund (2013) has in this context in a recent study identified six categories of decisions in sustainable tourism that include choosing the destination, departure time, activities within the destination, decisions regarding accommodation (e.g. type of hotel or apartment), and generally the length of the trip in days (p. 1). Elaborating on existing models regarding the type and order of the various decision steps lies out of the range of this study, the thesis will adapt these six existing decision making categories to use it as guideline for consumers and business experts in this studies’ data collection and setting the scope of this study. The authors are aware, that the timely order of decision steps undertaken may vary in different situations and type of trips. This is therefore not a point of the investigation as they are is interested in which of the different decision types the brands and eco-labels play a role and not in which order the decisions are made.

An important consideration in this study is the real consumers’ empirical statements about where they currently consider brands and eco-labels in the decision process and where they would be willing to further include them if provided with the right information.

For this purpose the following three questions are addressed:

**RQ 1**: Why does branding appear to be successful in influencing tourism choice while eco-labelling is found to have lower or no influence on consumers?

**RQ 2**: Where do brands and eco-labels play a role in the decision making of tourists?

**RQ 3**: Are there synergies between branding and eco-labelling that can be used in marketing communication?

### 1.4. Intended Theoretical and Practical Contribution

The intended theoretical contribution lies in deriving a conceptual framework from this study. It builds on existing, tested theory related in a new approach and by this enhances the status quo through focusing on brands and eco-labels as an additional influencing and interrelated factor. It therefore constitutes a triangulation of theory that has not been provided in this context and with this deepens theoretical knowledge about communication effectiveness and value perceptions of consumers in the tourism industry. It further provides an insight into which areas of communication in the decision types may be
over- or under-focussed in current theory as a point of critique has been for example the focus on destination choice in many models (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). By this a deeper understanding of the characteristics related to brands and eco-labels in the context of tourism is provided and how their features interact with each other and the consumer’s perception.

The conceptual framework presented in this study practically contributes to marketing communication in tourism showing where branding and eco-labelling are important to tourists. By pointing out critical moments of truth connected to the brand and/or the eco-label throughout the tourist’s decision making process the communication can be targeted towards points where consumers perceive them as value enhancing. This relates to the concept of S-D logic as the consumer is seen as the holder of the value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Meanwhile it can prevent marketing practitioners from misplacing communication at points where they turn out either ineffective because they may be ignored or are even perceived as nuisance and potentially decrease the overall perception of information quality.

The targeted audience is an important factor in planning research. Gunnersson (2007) even goes as far as stating that “Without any audience all research is dead” (p. 132). The audience of this research can be divided into three sub-groups: academics, tourism practitioners and students. The theoretical contribution suggests a research gap in a rather new area of sustainability and thus may provide ideas for academics in the field of marketing for further research or a different view on existing research from a perspective that investigates companies’ influence on sustainability. For practitioners the findings about the communication of brands and eco-labels can be of value as it indicates areas where marketing with eco-labels may be of more or less effect and consequently increase the return on marketing investment in the long run. Finally do the authors believe that sustainability is an increasingly important topic within business studies and therefore future students may benefit from receiving ideas for their own research by reading this master thesis.

1.5. Delimitation

The study intends to provide information on where brands and eco-labels should be communicated in combination or separation according to consumer’s perceptions while it excludes testing those statements’ transfer into actual behaviour patterns. Moreover the values of the customers behind the particular placements need to be further investigated in order for the framework to become theory as the authors can only focus on descriptive elements within the conjoint analysis and explanatory elements found in the existing theory. Testing and improving these explanations requires a deeper understanding of psychological factors in consumer behaviour than the authors can provide with their education in marketing.

The study focuses on the Swedish tourism market researching its customers and tourism agencies. Cultural differences among tourists are hence not considered in this study but the authors acknowledge the likelihood of their existence and the influence they may have on decisions and perceptions. Further the literature used focuses on publications in English language and is mainly researched in a Western culture context. The findings of this literature for instance when researching the decision making process, are therefore not claimed to be fully transferrable for example to more high context cultural back-
grounds (Hall, 1981, pp. 105-117). The authors still argue as the research focuses on Swedish tourism, that the theory found to build on can be applied within a Swedish context as no opposing factors were found and could be thought of by the authors especially since most research from Swedish scholars relies on it as well. Finally, although this may be indicated in the findings of the quantitative part of the research, the segment specific requirements are not a main focus and hence segmentation theory (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, pp. 216-225) is not included into this research in-deeply.

1.6. Thesis Disposition

This thesis comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 has up to this point introduced the topic and research gap on which the thesis addresses the three subsequent research questions. Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework provides a literature review for the topics of branding, eco-labelling and decision making in tourism marketing introducing most relevant models. Chapter 3: Methodology discusses this study’s method used and its implications on the research process. The first choices refer to relevant philosophies and approaches discussing their advantages and disadvantages before concluding with the choice made for this thesis. Building on this, the choice for the data collection techniques within a mixed method approach is presented. Chapter 4: Results and Data Analysis presents the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses patterns relating to the three main theories of brands, eco-labels and decision making and introducing the conceptual model. Chapter 5: Discussion discusses the empirical findings and uses the existing theories introduced in Chapter 2 to provide explanations for occurred patterns in the data. The conceptual model introduced in Chapter 4 is developed into a framework. Chapter 6: Conclusion and Implications finally draws conclusions of this study and shows implications for both practitioners and researchers for the evolved conceptual model indicating future research possibilities.
2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter depicts existing models, frameworks and theory in the context of branding, eco-labelling and decision making in tourism. As this thesis is guided by three subsequent research questions the literature review is accordingly structured. Each sub-chapter adds a further step of theoretical knowledge needed on the path towards the building of the conceptual framework and shall be understood as such.

2.1. RQ 1: “Why does branding appear to be successful in influencing tourism choice while eco-labelling is found to have lower or no influence on consumers?”

2.1.1. Branding in Theory

The cornerstone of this thesis is branding theory and is therefore introduced first. It presents the basic knowledge for understanding the impact brands can have on consumer behaviour. Consequently, understanding of the brand building process is required and the following theories provide both guidance for the reader and theoretical knowledge to the authors when analysing and discussing the findings of this study.

Numerous reasons for developing a strong brand exist. The main one is to highlight and distinguish a company’s product/services from its competitors on the market. This means that a company can utilize a brand to position itself as a unique service provision based on material and immaterial attributes that are hard for competitors to copy or resemble. (Kotler & Keller, 2012, pp. 242-243) Brands further provide assurance about quality to the consumer (Sherlekar & Gordon, 2010, p. 94). Such assurance can for instance be built up by consumers’ experience of the brand or by the brand’s reputation. Therefore the consumer often holds positive associations with a strong brand, which ultimately functions as a form of guarantee. (Kotler & Keller, 2012, pp. 242-243)

A widely recognized definition of brand equity is the added value that a brand can generate to a product/service (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 243; Keller, 1993, p. 1). The concept of brand equity itself can be divided into either a customer or financial perspective (Lassar et al., 1995, p. 12). The financial perspective describes the “motivation to estimate the value of a brand more precisely for accounting purposes (in terms of asset valuation for the balance sheet) or for mergers, acquisition, or divestiture purposes” (Keller, 1993, p. 1). For the current study the authors will focus on the customer’s perspective (also called customer-based brand equity) since the study’s purpose is to study and understand consumers’ decision process in tourism. This study adopts Keller’s (1991) definition of customer-based brand equity when referring in the following to the term brand equity. Keller (1993) defines customer-based brand equity as: “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (p. 2). In relation to this, Lassar et al. (1995) define five factors important to consider in order improve understanding the concept of customer-based brand equity.

According to them brand equity
(1) refers to consumer perception rather than objective indication;
(2) refers to the global overall impression and value associated with the brand;
(3) is the global overall impression and value originating from the brand name and not only the physical aspects of the brand;
(4) is not absolute but relative and must be put in comparison to competitors;
(5) affects the organization’s financial performance positively. (pp. 21-22)
Respectively does Aaker (1991, pp. 16-17; 1996, p. 103) divide customer-based brand equity into four sub-dimensions depicted in figure 3: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. The total summation of the four dimensions reveals a brand’s whole equity.

**Brand Awareness:** Keller (2003) defines brand awareness as “the consumers’ ability to recall and recognize the brand as reflected by their ability to identify the brand under different conditions and to link the brand name, logo, symbol, and so forth to certain associations in memory” (p. 76). Brand awareness can therefore be split into the consumer’s ability to recall and recognize a brand (Keller, 1993, p. 2). There are three main reasons why brand awareness is important:

1. Brand awareness is important in order for a brand to be part of the consumer’s consideration set (Baker et al., 1986, pp. 637-638; Nedungadi, 1990, p. 264);
2. Brand awareness can affect the consumer’s choice, for example favouring one brand’s product over a competitor’s products (Keller, 1993, p. 3);
3. Brand awareness influences the formation and strength of the brand associations in the brand image, which further can affect the consumer’s decision making (ibid).

**Brand Associations:** Both Aaker (1991, p. 109) and Keller (1993, p. 4) define brand association as the information and perceptions connected to a brand that the consumers hold in their memory. Aaker (1996) suggests that brand associations can be structured around three perspectives: the brand-as-product (value), the brand-as-person (brand personality) and the brand-as-organization (organizational associations) (p. 111). Associations can be for instance connected to a brand by viewing it as a product, personality and/or organization. The associations connected to a brand can differ based on the consumer and his/her preferences and attitudes (Keller, 1993, p. 4). The strength of the association depends on how the consumer has obtained the information, how the information is stored and how easily the information can be retrieved from memory. As a result association is often stronger when based on many experiences and/or exposures to a brand and its communication (Keller, 1993, p. 10).

**Perceived Quality:** This dimension refers to the brand providing the perception of value to the consumer which is illustrated through Zeithaml’s (1988) definition of perceived quality: “the consumer’s judgment about a product’s overall excellence or superiority” (p. 3). This means that the evaluation of quality is subjective rather than objective (ibid). When a consumer evaluates a brand offering a high perceived quality the chance of choosing that brand over another increases (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 2). Therefore a correlation exists between the perceived quality of a brand and the brand equity, which means that increased perceived brand quality leads to increased brand equity. In reality it is almost impossible for the consumer to fully evaluate the product’s/service’s actual qual-
ity. Consequently consumers use cues and attributes connected to the product/service instead in order to evaluate its perceived quality. (Zeithaml, 1988, pp. 4-5; Keller, 1993, p. 5; Aaker, 1996, pp. 109-110) Resulting from this it is necessary for a brand owner to investigate and acknowledge which attributes consumers find important in order to develop, design and formulate the brand, its products/services and marketing efforts to fit with the consumers’ preferences of perceived quality. 

**Brand Loyalty:** Aaker (1991) defines brand loyalty as: “the attachment that a customer has to a brand” (p. 39) whereas Oliver (1997) has elaborated the definition of brand loyalty as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour” (p. 392). In order to provide a deeper understanding on the concept of loyalty in a service context Gremler and Brown (1996) present the three levels of behavioural, attitudinal and cognitive loyalty (pp. 172-173). Behavioural loyalty refers to the consumer’s behaviour when for example purchasing and later repurchasing (repeated purchases) a brand’s services offerings. Attitudinal loyalty refers to the consumer’s preferences and attitudes which imply that the consumer feels a certain connection and attachment to a particular brand. Cognitive loyalty can be seen as the highest level of loyalty where the brand is the first alternative (or first choice) to come up in the consumers mind among certain alternatives. (Gremler & Brown, 1996, pp. 172-173; Anselmsson et al., 2007, p. 406)

The four dimensions connected to brand equity presented above illustrate how the different presented factors related to brands can affect consumers in their choice and purchasing process. The associations about certain attributes a consumer holds connected to a brand can for example influence the perceived quality of a brand, which in turn can influence the chance of purchase. Moreover can the concept and its dimensions be utilized (to a certain extent) in order to understand how eco-labels can influence consumers. High awareness levels and positive associations connected to the eco-label could for example affect the chance of the eco-label being part of the consumer’s consideration set. The dimensions can therefore provide guidance and a better understanding on how, why and why not charter tourism brands and tourism eco-labels influence consumers in their purchasing process.

Based on the concept of customer-based brand equity Keller (2009) has developed a model for how a strong brand can be built. This is done through a sequence of four steps where each step needs to be fulfilled before the next can be achieved:

1. **Brand Identity** - the consumer must be able to identify the brand and hold certain associations about the brand connected to a certain product group or consumer needs;
2. **Brand Meaning** - the brand should establish brand meaning by strategically linking and holding both tangible and intangible brand associations;
3. **Brand Response** - the brand should be able to evoke proper consumers responses in terms of brand-related judgment and feelings;
4. **Brand Relationship** - the brand should convert the consumer response in order to create an intense, active and loyal relationship between the consumer and brand. (Keller, 2009, p. 143)

The four brand building steps presented above are established on six individual brand building blocks which are related to the consumer. These six building blocks are:

1. **Brand Salience** – how often and how easily evoked are thoughts about the brand under various purchase or consumption situations?
(2) Brand Performance – how well does the product/service meet the consumers needs?
(3) Brand Imagery – how does the product/services outward appearance, attributes, etc. signal how well the product/service will meet the consumers needs?
(4) Brand Judgment – what are the consumers own personal opinion and evaluation of the product/service?
(5) Brand Feelings – what are the consumer’s emotional responses and reactions related to the brand and its functions?
(6) Brand Resonance – relates to the relationship between the consumer and the brand, and how the consumer feels about his/her relationship with the brand. (i.e. the intensity and/or depth of the relationship). (Keller, 2009, pp. 143-144)

Figure 4 below provides an overview of the brand building process, where the four brand building steps are dependent on the six consumer-related brand building blocks. Important to remember is that the model is sequential. This implies that the bottom steps and blocks must be achieved before the next step/level can be reached in order to build a strong brand.

Connected to the concept of brand building Aaker (1991) has identified a number of signs and indications that the brand-building process within the company is eroding and brand loyalty falling. Examples of such signs and indications are if the brands’ associations are becoming harder to identify and differentiate; knowledge about consumers awareness and attachment towards brands is lacking; there appears no statistically reliable tools implemented that can measure consumer satisfaction and loyalty; and eventually when the brand and its equity has a low priority in the organization, where either there is no person in charge of protecting the brand equity or that there is no long-term strategy for the brand. (Aaker, 1991, pp. 10-11) If an organization ignores or forgets to deal with the signs and indications mentioned above, it can as a consequence fail to reap the benefits connected to a strong brand.
2.1.2. Eco-Labels in Theory

The second marketing tool investigated in this thesis is eco-labelling. As mentioned the terminology and usage of eco-labels is not used in consensus and needs due to its novelty clarification. The following sections present how eco-labels are defined, their features and functions to the consumer.

The Global Eco-label Network (GEN) describes an eco-label as: “a label which identifies overall, proven environmental preference of a product or service within a specific product/service category. In contrast to "green" symbols, or claim statements developed by manufacturers and service providers, the most credible labels are based on life cycle considerations; they are awarded by an impartial third-party in relation to certain products or services that are independently determined to meet transparent environmental leadership criteria” (GEN, 2013; GEN, 2004, p. 1). Eco-labels can be utilized by a variety of groups. For example can companies them in order to gain competitive advantage on the market (Kumar et al., 2012, p. 482-483; UNEP, 2005, p. 13), policymakers can use eco-labels as a tool to create incentives for businesses to alter and change the market, whereas non-government organizations (NGO) can use eco-labels to both put pressure on companies and consumers and/or try to stimulate public debate (Boer, 2003, pp. 260-262).

Nowadays several types of eco-labels exist. They can be either mandatory or voluntary and can take on different forms based on the environmental and/or social context they are active in (Buckley, 2002, p. 184; Zaman et al., 2010, p. 105). However, the difference is that mandatory eco-labels are required by law in order to keep consumers safe (e.g. EU energy label), whereas the voluntary are not required by law but have increasingly been adopted by companies because of the growing interest/demand for sustainable practices from consumers. (Horne, 2009, pp. 176-177; Zaman et al., 2010, p. 105) According to this the term “eco-label” in this thesis refers to the voluntarily adopted type. In this context, ISO (The International Standards Organization) is a major influence in the field of environmental and social certifications as it provides widely recognized specifications for products, services and good practices in order to help industry and companies to be more effective and efficient (ISO, 2014).

In the context of tourism Kozak and Nield (2004) state that eco-labels can be used for all tourism products, hotels, restaurants, tour operators, travel agents, leisure parts (p. 141), but also for labelling destinations in general (Lee, 2001, pp. 313-314; Bowman, 2007, p. 272), and transportation (Anderson et al., 2013, p. 750; Osborne, 2007) in order to provide “written assurance that a facility, a product, service or management system meets specific standards” (Honey & Stewart, 2002, p. 4). Due to this diversity in the areas of usage, the tourism eco-label schemes can differ considerably based on factors such as: geographic scale, tourism subsectors covered, environmental issues addressed, product, company or individual focus, etc. (Buckley, 2002, p. 191). Further Buckley (2001) states that the ideal scheme for eco-labels in tourism should possess characteristics such as “a global brand name and audit process, local implementation, detailed technical criteria for different types of tourism activity or service, multiple labelling levels, and high transparency and public accessibility of information” (p. 21).

Since eco-labels could be seen as a badge that a brand wears to advertise to the consumer that their products/services fulfil and uphold certain sustainable standards (GEN, 2004, p. 1; Bruce & Laroiya, 2007, pp. 276-277), Spittler and Haak (2001) state that an eco-label must be able to represent, inform and clarify to the consumer what the nature
and intention of the label is (pp. 231-232). Such information is often transferred through the logo and design of the label, which according to Spittler and Haak (2001) should communicate: “who the awarding body is, to whom the eco-label is awarded, the reason why it was awarded, an indication of its criteria, the duration period of the eco-label and, where appropriate, a classification” (p. 232). This connects to Björks (2004) statement that the only visual part of the eco-labelling schemes that the consumer is coming in contact with is the eco-label per se (name or logo) (p. 29). In other words the consumer does not often come in contact with many of the elements and processes functioning within the eco-labels’ scheme.

Eco-labels could therefore be seen as a bearer of information, which according to Thøgersen (2000) could affect consumer behaviour when (1) consumers are aware about the label’s existence, (2) know what the label looks like and where it appears, (3) have knowledge about the label’s meaning and its purpose (4) have trust in the label’s message as well as in its accrediting organization, and (5) believe that the label will achieve and fulfil the consumer’s desires and intentions concerning the issue connected to the label’s certification (pp. 291-292). In other words, there are many factors which must be achieved before an eco-label can have full effect on the consumer’s behaviour. At the same time the visible side of eco-labels is useful in order to differentiate, signal and remind the consumer about the eco-label and its purpose when placed on other brands’ products/services (Aaker, 1991, pp. 7-8; Bruce & Laroiya, 2007, pp. 276-277).

As stated previously in the thesis, eco-labels and brands can be perceived to share similarities, especially when focusing on communication structures and association networks (Font, 2001, p. 3; Björk, 2004, p. 27). This study contends that considerable parts of theory connected to branding (presented in section 2.1.1) could be adaptable for eco-labels in order to better understand and manage them in a tourism context. The signs and indications that the brand-building process is eroding identified by Aaker (1991) can for example be also utilized in an eco-label context in order to provide guidance to eco-label certification organization on areas where the eco-label is failing and attention is needed. The application of these theories and possible transitions are further analysed within the building of the conceptual framework in the analysis chapter 4.3 and discussion section 5.3.2 of this thesis.

2.1.3. Corporate Social Responsibility

Additionally to branding and eco-labelling, the terminology of Corporate Social Responsibility needs to be clarified. As mentioned in the introduction the authors argue that these measures are a common approach in tourism to market for sustainability orientation of companies. It can be seen as an alternative to eco-labelling or as well as a supplementary measure of which the influence needs to be clarified throughout this thesis. Thus, the following section defines the term and its functions.

A different approach for marketing sustainability is the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) defined as "a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and cleaner environment" (Commission of European Communities, 2001, p. 4). Further a more elaborate definition of the concept states that "corporate social responsibility is the continuing commitment by business to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the community and society at large" (World Council for Sustaina-
ble Development, 2014, p. 3). Therefore CSR can be seen as how an organization handles the minimum obligations they hold towards their stakeholders based on specified regulations (Johnson et al., 2011, p. 134). Stakeholders are defined by Johnson et al. (2011) as “those individual or groups that depend on an organization to fulfil their own goals and on whom, in turn, the organization depends” (p. 119). As a result organizations can have different forms of obligations depending on their connection with the stakeholder. Suppliers and employees (contractual stakeholders) for example stand in a legally binding relationship to the organization, whereas the local community and pressure groups (community stakeholders) often do not (ibid).

The spectrum of how an organization’s CSR is managed can differ based on their stance. The involvement can be anything from only meeting the minimum required obligations to consider and include systems and policies to ensure compliance with best practice (e.g. ISO 14000 certification) as well as incorporating multiple stakeholders’ interest and expectations. (Johnson et al., 2011, pp. 134-136) To exemplify how CSR can be utilized in an organization Martinuzzi and Krumay (2013) identify four approaches on incorporating CSR into organizations’ business operations. These are:

1. Project-oriented CSR – when CSR activities are incorporated into a project. This can be temporary organizations that are designed for relatively unique short-to medium term strategic business processes;
2. Quality-oriented CSR – when CSR activities are incorporated and connected to quality management (e.g. ISO or Total Quality Management (TQM));
3. Strategic CSR – when CSR activities are incorporated into an organization’s strategic endeavours and therefore have an influence on the long-term approach and positioning of the organization;
4. Transformational CSR – when CSR activities not only have influence on the organization and its strategy but also on the organization’s stakeholders and society as a whole. (Martinuzzi & Krumay, 2013, pp. 427-428)

Vogel (2005) states that many organizations choose to pursue CSR not only for ethical reasons but because of the competitive advantages such activities could provide. Examples of such advantages include more responsibly managed organizations could face fewer business risks than less responsible ones; that they would be less likely to face consumer boycotts; be able to obtain capital more easily and at a lower cost and could attract and retain more committed employees and loyal customers. (Vogel, 2005, p. 19)

There are however different opinions whether CSR can generate competitive advantages, with the majority of research suggesting a positive relationship between the two (Becchetti et al., 2012, p. 1635; Clarkson et al., 2008, p. 325; Ghoul et al., 2011, pp. 2400-2401; Sharfman & Fernando, 2008, pp. 586-588; Vilanova et al., 2009, pp. 65-66), others find a negative relationship (Cordeiro & Sarkis, 1997, pp. 110-112; Hassel et al., 2005, pp. 56-57) and some research indicates the relationship being neutral (Nelling & Webb, 2009, pp. 208-209; Wagner, 2005, pp. 115-117).

Kim and Reber (2008) claim CSR to be a “central relationship-building activity within organizations” (p. 341). Therefore it is important for companies to communicate to their stakeholders and the public about their CSR activities since it can, according to Kim and Reber (2008), allow “public relations a substantial opportunity to build mutually beneficial relationship with publics” (ibid). Communication in CSR has been defined by Morsing (2006) as “communication that is designed and distributed by the company itself about its CSR efforts” (p. 171). A company’s communication about its CSR activities can consequently be used to position the organization’s brand towards
their customers and stakeholders (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010, p. 2) through for example annual reports (Sweeney & Coughlan, 2008, pp. 115-118) and websites (Maignan & Ralston, 2002, pp. 497-499; Wanderley et al., 2008, pp. 369-370). Wanderley et al. (2008) state that providing information through the internet has become one of the main tools of communication for companies concerning their CSR activities since it provides them with an outlet where information can be publicized quickly and less expensively. The internet also provides the benefit of letting information continue to remain permanently available, allowing the user to choose which information he/she wishes to access, when he/she wants to, and can function as an official perspective of the organizations CSR stance and activities for all its stakeholders. (Wanderley et al., 2008, pp. 369-370) Even though communication about an organization's CSR activities often is found to be positive and favourable by consumers (Mohr et al., 2001, p. 59), it can also trigger distrust, scepticism and cynicism towards the company and its CSR activities (Schlegelmilch & Pollach, 2005; Van de Ven, 2008, p. 341; Mohr et al., 2001, p. 59). In this context, Belz & Peattie state that “credibility, like the meaning of communication, is something that is decided by the audience, not by the communicators” (p. 216) and the accusation of “green washing” (a neologism of the words “greening” and “whitewash”) can quickly appear if customers feel, that companies are not performing according to their sustainable claims (p. 217). Green washing in general refers to company practices marketing seemingly “green” products without the genuine intention of acting sustainably but solely benefiting from the growing demand for sustainable products (Orange, 2010, p. 30).

2.1.4. The Service Marketing Mix in Tourism

In order to understand the specifics of the tourism sector and challenges providers are facing there, the connection to service marketing has to be pointed out. Knowledge is required how the distinctive features of services in contrast to physical products change the interaction between companies and customers and how this leads to an extended marketing mix. This helps understanding this study’s core industry and explaining and discussing the research’s findings setting brands, eco-labels and CSR into context.

Marketing as a concept is both broad and does not have a clear universal definition. Kotler and Keller (2012) for example define it as: “a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and freely exchanging products and services of value with others” (p. 5). The American Marketing Association (AMA, 2013) describes marketing as “the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”. In order to deepen understanding Singh (2008) points out four important aspects connected to the concept of marketing:

(1) identification of customer needs,
(2) prediction of customer behaviour,
(3) converting customer needs and motivations into effective demand,
(4) moving the product to the final consumer or user so as to achieve the objective set by the organization. (p. 5)

Since tourism is in majority a service based industry, the offers provided to the consumer are mainly recreational experiences and hospitality (Raju, 2009, p. 4). Services are
defined to be intangible, heterogeneous, inseparable and perishable (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 15). Consequently, these services are different and often harder to market than regular products. For example it can be hard for the consumers to evaluate and compare the service offering before the actual purchase, since production and consumption often happen at the same time and in co-creation with the consumer. (Wilson et al., 2012, pp. 16-18; Vargo & Lunsch, 2004, p. 6). As a consequence, services marketing puts a special emphasis on the consumer and adapts different methods in order to effectively communicate their message (Wilson et al., 2012, pp. 23-24).

Tourism as an industry is very complex, since the complete experience from the consumers’ planning process until their returning home is covered. A number of different activities and processes (e.g. consultation and booking at the travel agency, transport, accommodation, and activities) are active in order to provide a complete service offering suitable for the consumer’s needs and preferences. Marketing in the context of tourism marketing is defined as “the systematic and coordinated efforts exerted by the national tourist organization and/or the tourist enterprises at international, national and local levels to optimize the satisfaction of tourists, groups and individuals, in view sustained tourism growth”. (Raju, 2009, p. 122) In line with the means and tools utilized for services, the marketing mix for tourism consists of the elements: product, price, promotion, place, people, physical evidence and processes (Singh, 2008, p. 15). The marketing mix can be seen as interrelated elements the tourism supplier controls that can be used to satisfy and/or communicate with tourists (Wilson et al., 2012, pp. 20-22). This describes in other words how brands create value, interact with tourists and market themselves. In the following a short presentation of each of the seven elements is given in order to provide understanding on how they function in a tourism context.

**Product** is “anything that can be offered to a market to satisfy a want of a need” (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 325) and can in a tourism context be everything from the destination, transport, accommodation, activity, tour operator. It has to be acknowledged that it is harder for a marketer in a tourism setting to control and influence factors connected to the destination (for example: weather conditions or a destination’s infrastructure) compared to factors connected to for instance the transportation or accommodation. (Pomer- ing et al., 2011, p. 961). For a charter tourism setting the product can be seen as a combination of the activities mentioned it above with the destination, transport, accommodation and activities packaged for the tourist to purchase as one product/service (Shel- don & Mak, 1987, p. 13).

**Price** is the element of “the marketing mix that generates value revenue”, “communicates to the market the company’s intended value positioning of its product or brand”
and affects demand for a company’s products or services (Kotler & Keller, 2012, pp. 383-384). In the context of charter tourism the activity to combine and package a number of separate products/services is called price bundling (Naylor & Frank, 2001, p. 270) as the package is sold to a single price and the individual price of each element (transport, accommodation, etc.) may not be known by the tourist (Sheldon & Mak, 1987, p. 13). Naylor & Frank (2001) show that such price-bundled packages can have a positive impact on a consumer’s perception of value, even if the monetary outlay is actually higher (especially for first time-consumers). Research also shows that consumers would rather pay for all-inclusive packages than deal with separate charges, even if the total price of the individual purchases is lower (Naylor & Frank, 2001, p. 277). This can be explained by the consumer’s willingness to minimize the decision-making effort and non-monetary costs (time, effort, etc.) thus providing a higher perceived value (Naylor & Frank, 2001, p. 272). Since price signals the quality of a brand or product (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 383-384), high and low pricing of tourism can reflect such quality and influence consumers’ perceived value about the product/service. Furthermore, the perceived brand equity can influence the consumers’ willingness to pay a higher price for a brand/product/service (Kotler & Keller, 2012, pp. 243-244; Keller, 1993, p. 8).

Promotion is the “means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind consumers – directly or indirectly - about the products and brands they sell” (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 476). Means of promotion also referred to as marketing communication can for example be advertising, sales promotion or personal selling (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 479). Notably for tourism most of the marketing and sales today is done through the internet (Wu et al., 2008, p. 221) and research shows that internet promotion has a significant impact on the consumer’s travel and purchasing behaviour (Bhattacharya & Licata, 2002, pp. 218-219; Tierney, 2000, p. 219). An example of how the internet is used in tourism promotion is that individual tourism firms and destinations often encourage the consumer to download online available brochures containing offers and information about specific travels/destination. This promotes, stimulates and influences the consumer’s decision making. (Pomering et al., 2011, p. 962)

Place (also called marketing channels) is “the set of independent organizations involved in the processes of making the product or service available for use of consumption” (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p. 415). In the context of charter tourism these organizations connected to the element of place are the destination, marketing organizations, retail travel agencies, transportation providers, etc. which together add value along the value chain from the initial customer intentions to purchasing and eventually consuming the tourism package (Pomering et al., 2011, p. 961).

People relates to “all human actors who play a part in service delivery and thus influence the buyer’s perception: namely, the firm’s personnel, the customer, and other customers in the service environment” (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 21). This element both highlights the tourists’ and employees’ role in the development of the tourist service. It therefore implies that certain rules need to be followed and thus an appropriate behaviour needs to be assured by all human participants when experiencing the tourism service. Especially the employees in a service firm need to be focussed on when performing since they are seen to not only represent but personify the firm from the customer’s perspective (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 250). Service role and script theory directly relates to this need for order when various actors are interacting within one common service setting. Service roles are the predefined behaviour patterns expected from the employees in the service encounter, providing social cues and guidance throughout the service
delivery to the customer (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 38; Victorino et al., 2013, p. 518). This builds on the assumption that services are a form of social exchange in which the actors try to maximize the rewards while trying to minimize their perceived costs (Homans, 1961, p. 57). Service role and script theory puts it into a dramaturgical metaphor defining role enactment as the “the degree to which a particular part is acted appropriately [...] as determined by the reactions of fellow actors and observers (the audience)” (Solomon et al., 1985, p. 102) and the script as the logical sequence of actions performed by the various actors that through repetition influence the customer’s service expectations (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 38). Translating this to the context of sustainable tourism the sustainable behaviour of tourists as well as the tourism operator and its employees plays a crucial role in order for the service to be successful in its intentions. Sustainable behaviour therefore has to find its roots in the roles and scripts performed by the social actors and has to be continuously and coherently repeated to form expectations towards more sustainable service offers.

Physical evidence is “the environment in which the service is delivered and where the firm and customer interact, and any tangible components that facilitate performance or communication of the service” (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 21). In a tourism context, physical evidence both has great importance at the individual firm’s level and the broader destination level (Pomering et al., 2011, p. 963). Physical evidence can for example be the illustrations in the brochures that tourism companies distribute to the consumers, the exterior and interior of the travel agency office, the travel agency webpage, brand or eco-label logo/signage, landmarks for destinations, etc. (Wilson et al., 2012, pp. 21-22). The hotel and its interior/exterior design for instance play an important role in providing physical evidence to the tourist that the accommodation choice holds certain quality standards. Further the travel agencies’ websites provides the tourist with information, images and symbolic cues connected to sustainability and their offers and by this ease the evaluation of different service alternatives.

Process is “the actual procedures, mechanisms, and flow of activities by which the service is delivered – the service delivery and operating systems” (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 22). This refers to when hotels, airlines or tour operators for example provide offers which either are simple (little or no extra services are included and offered apart from the basic main service) or offers which provide more added value (many or extra services are offered apart from the basic main service) (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 22). In the context of charter tourism the whole value-chain of different activities can be perceived as different processes active in the pre-packaged tourism offer (Sheldon & Mak, 1987, p. 13). Another example is the usage of digital booking and account management systems instead of paper-based systems to simplify and fasten the booking and purchasing processes (Pomering et al., 2011, p. 963). Finally, the consumer’s decision making process can be considered as a service process itself, where the consumer has to choose and evaluate a number of alternative choices in order to find and purchase the tourism alternative they find of most value (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002).

2.1.5. Sustainability Marketing in Tourism

As this thesis ventures from a sustainability orientation, the connection of marketing with sustainability considerations has to be clarified. The following section explains the implications of a sustainability orientation on the classic and extended marketing mix towards the sustainability marketing mix.
Connecting tourism marketing to the context of sustainability, the focus shifts from only considering the economic factors toward incorporating environmental and social factors (the triple-bottom-line: economic, environmental, social) (Pomering et al., 2011, p. 956; Belz & Peattie, 2012, pp. 129-132). This shift implies that the marketing mix needs to incorporate the three factors and obtain a balance between them. The company/brand’s marketing mix for example should not only ensure and provide a viable, long-term operation (economic factors), but also manage the ecological impacts of the service and make optimal use of the environmental resources (environmental factors), as well as both respect and preserve culture at the destination including reducing the chance of negative impacts on the tourist’s, natives’ and employees’ health and safety (social factors). (Pomering et al., 2011, pp. 956-567; Belz & Peattie, 2012, pp. 129-132) As a consequence the sustainable marketing mix has evolved comprising the four P’s into the four C’s: customer solutions, customer cost, communication and convenience (Lauterborn, 1990, p. 26; Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, p. 77). Customer solutions refers to the original element of product in the classic marketing mix and the service marketing mix but takes it one step further by considering not only the demand behind the purchase but the actual problem of the customer that requires solutions to be presented (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 31). Customer cost does not only focus on the price but outlines additionally to the monetary expenses the possible “psychological, social and environmental costs of obtaining, using and disposing of a product” (ibid). Communication extends the element of promotion which in its classical definition is a one-way persuasion approach from the company to the customer whereas communication is seen as an interactive dialogue establishing trust and credibility. The final element convenience is not directly relating to an element within the classic marketing mix but adds the consideration of how easy and convenient the access and usage of a product meeting a customer’s needs is. (ibid)

By this, it can be seen that the sustainable marketing mix aims to achieve a paradigm shift towards a more long-term and holistic customer orientation, considering not only short-term needs but also social and environmental aspects influencing the customers’ well-being in the future (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 29).

2.2. RQ 2: “Where do brands and eco-labels play a role in the decision making of tourists?”

2.2.1. Overview of Decision Making Research

In order to evaluate how the introduced marketing tools influence consumers’ choices theory about decision making needs to be understood. As this field touches upon a number of factors delving into consumers’ psychology, the authors have chosen to lean on existent theory differentiating approaches towards investigating decision making in tourism. The overview provided by Jeng & Fesenmaier is used as orientation and enhanced or elaborated more in-depth where the authors argue the topic of brands and eco-labels carries more weight in the decisions. This helps explaining patterns found in the answers of surveyed participants in the quantitative part and deriving explanations when comparing it to the experts’ statements.

Researchers have approached the decision making process in tourism from different perspectives including econometrics, psychological motivational/value and information processing models with various outcomes adding further knowledge to this field of tour-
ism studies. This consequently has resulted in a variety of applicable theoretical starting points of which Jeng & Fesenmaier (2002), two renowned experts in this particular field of tourism research, provide a decent and among tourism researchers widely used overview (Hedlund, 2013; Hwang et al., 2009; Hyde, 2008).

According to that the various past research approaches can be subdivided into two types: one focusing on the affective nature of the process and one centring round a parsimonious measurement viewpoint (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, p. 16). As a point of critique many of those models solely focus on the destination choice and have the assumption of a static process in common, which affects the validity of the derived estimations (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, pp. 15-16). A reason for this static assumption lies in the deriving of those models from research of consumer decision making in regard to tangible products which implies a focus on a single rather than various interrelated choices (Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). This has resulted in an over-emphasizing of the destination choice while neglecting choices about activities and travel mode (e.g. flight, train, car, etc.) (Hedlund, 2011, p. 43). More current research has therefore found in contrast that “travel decisions reflect a variety of temporal, dynamic, successive, and multistage contingent processes.” (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, p. 16). Smallman & Moore (2010) argue that this new notion of the process requires the consideration of the underlying ontology as a process can be seen from at least two perspectives. Through a realism approach real objects and entities interact with each other in a reasonable order and by this create the process. On the other hand the process can be seen as something real by itself and by this potentially give rise to the objects and entities that may be created through it or socially constructed. Consequently the categorization of tourism relies on this basic assumption as being rather a product (object definition) or service (process definition) although the service definition is mostly used (Smallman & Moore, 2010, p. 389) and as previously stated adopted in this thesis as well.

2.2.2. Affective Decision Making Models: Attitudes and Risk Perceptions

Within the first type of Jeng and Fesenmaier’s (2002) in the foregoing chapter introduced decision making research approaches the most broadly used in research is attitude theory (p. 16). An attitude is a general and lasting evaluation by people, which includes the own self, objects, advertisements or issues (Baron & Byrne, 1987, cited in Solomon et al., 2013, p. 292). The object towards which one holds this attitude is referred to as attitude object (A_o) (Solomon et al., 2013, p. 292). Attitude theory is a cornerstone of social psychology as this field was initially defined as attitude study building on the assumption that understanding attitudes paves the way for understanding human behaviour (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918 and Watson, 1925, cited in Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011, p. 255). Elaborating on this Daniel Katz introduced the functional study of attitudes in the 1960s with the notion that two people can have the same attitude towards an object for highly different reasons (Solomon et al., 2013, p. 293). Behind these reasons lies an either utilitarian, value-expressive, ego-defensive or knowledge function. The first refers to the principle of reward and punishment or in other words if the consumer is expecting pleasure or pain provided by the product. The value-expressive function refers to attitudes that express the individual’s self-concept and values. The ego-defensive function protects the individual from external or internal harm that may occur from the object the attitude is held towards. The fourth function refers to knowledge and de-
cribes the forming of attitudes due to the need for order, structure and meaning. (Katz, 1960, p. 170; Solomon et al., 2013, p. 293)

While this still relates to researching a single attitude towards an attitude object, research has advanced behaviour studies towards the usage of multi-attribute attitude models and translated this into consumer behaviour research. Those models assume that a consumer’s attitude towards an attitude object like a product depends on several beliefs they have about different attributes of this object. The attitude-behaviour model of Fishbein & Ajzen is considered the most influential multi-attribute attitude model in this field. (Solomon et al., 2013, pp. 305-307) They argue that for the ability to predict behaviour the individual’s attitude towards the behaviour rather than towards the target of the behaviour needs to be assessed (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980, p. 27). In order to understand attitudes they therefore emphasize the importance of understanding people’s underlying beliefs influencing attitudes that guide decisions and actions. Those beliefs are divided into behavioural, normative and control beliefs. Behavioural beliefs are referring to those attitudes held towards a particular behaviour, normative beliefs refer to people’s perceived norms and control beliefs examine perceived behavioural control over their choices. They argue that in order to influence intentions and eventually behaviour changes in the connected behaviour, normative and control beliefs have to be achieved. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011, p. 321)

Other theory does not put the main focus on attitudes but rather sees it as one influential factor on behaviour. Steg and Vlek (2009) suggest that in order to be able to change an individual’s behaviour, it is necessary to understand which and how other factors influence behaviour. Factors determining behaviour are according to Steg and Vlek (2009): (1) perceived costs and benefits, referring to the choices and alternatives which provide the highest value/utility to the consumer with the lowest cost; (2) moral and normative concerns, which refers to how consumers’ values, moral obligations, social norms, etc. influences behaviour; (3) affect, which refers to how affective and symbolic factors can influence consumers’ behaviour; (4) contextual factors, referring to how context and surroundings can both constrain and influence behaviour (e.g. availability of product/service); and (5) habits, which refers to a behaviour being habitual and being guided by automated cognitive processes. (Steg & Vlek, 2009, pp. 310-313)

Additionally Solomon et al. (2013) suggest that the credibility and attractiveness of the source itself is important. Source credibility refers to a consumer’s belief and perception on a particular source’s expertise, objectivity and/or trustworthiness. Source attractiveness on the other hand refers to the social value of a source - in other words the source’s physical appearance, personality, social status and/or similarities to the consumer. (Solomon et al., 2013, pp. 315-316)

Those above presented influences by Steg and Vlek (2009) and Solomon et al. (2013) further refer to the concept of risk and risk perception within purchasing decisions. Risk can be defined as “a measure of the probability and severity of adverse effects.” (Lowrance, 1996, cited in Andretta, 2013, p. 2) Perceived risk on the other hand does not embrace the rationale of statistical probability but refers to the belief of possible negative outcomes when purchasing and/or using a certain product (Solomon et al., 2013, p. 351). This induces that mood and familiarity with the product influence decisions though still to a certain extend rational evaluation of different risks takes place.
Five different types of risk can be differentiated: monetary, functional, physical, social and psychological risk. Monetary risk refers to capital and property and how people can feel a risk when having substantial expenditures. Functional Risk refers to the product/service performing as expected and meeting the consumer’s needs or not. Physical Risk refers to the chance that a product/service could affect or be harmful to the user/s in any physical way. Social Risk refers to how the product/service will affect the user in a social setting such as reducing a person’s status among peers like family and friends (i.e. affect self-esteem or self-confidence). Psychological Risk refers to how well the product/service connects and fits with a person’s self-image. (Solomon et al., 2013, p. 353; Lopez-Nicolas & Molina-Castillo, 2008, p. 104) The last risk in particular relates to the self-image congruence model finding that products are more likely to be chosen if their attributes are perceived to match with aspects of the own-self (Onkvisit & Shaw, 1987, p. 22) and that marketers need to focus on creating this matching situation in tourism (Hosany & Martin, 2012, p. 690). Research has found that in particular for choosing a destination the image of the destination has to be in line with the self-image of the tourist (Sirgy & Su, 2000, p. 340) and that stereotypes about the products (in this case the destinations) tend to be transferred to the one’s own self and perceptions about other customers (Murphy et al., 2007, p. 45; Grubb & Hupp, 1968, p. 62).

In summary, changing consumer situations increase or decrease an individual’s vulnerability to actual risk and risk perception. (Solomon et al., 2013, p. 351-353). This concept applies especially in the service industry and hence plays a considerable role in tourism as well. Due to its characteristics of intangibility, heterogeneity and perishability services have to be selected on a lower level of pre-purchase information (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 32). Further does as described in the services marketing mix section (2.1.4) the service experience depend on the interaction with the customer and factors like weather conditions or the behaviour of other customers in the case of tourism cannot be completely standardized. This non-standardization and intangibility decrease the tourist’s ability to judge the service’s quality beforehand and consequently increase the perceived risks of consumers compared to the purchase of a tangible product (Laroche et al., 2004, p. 373). In this context can intangibility be subdivided into physical intangibility, generality and mental intangibility. The first, physical dimension describes in how far product information are not accessible through the human sensory system. Generality means that a consumer cannot precisely define a particular good’s features but only understand the general concept and mental intangibility refers to the fact that a physically tangible good still might not be easy to grasp mentally. (Laroche et al., 2001, p. 26; Laroche et al., 2004, p. 375)

In conclusion, risk can be categorized into either providing a tool for analysis, logic, reason and scientific deliberation or as a feeling referring to instinctive and intuitive reactions to danger (Slovic, 2010, p. 21). More recent research in the evaluation of risk nevertheless shifts from the assumption of rationality towards the influence of affect used as a heuristic arguing that the usage of an already existing and readily available impression can be more efficient than weighing out risk probabilities for every new case or retrieving past examples from the memory (Slovic, 2010, p. 25).
2.2.3. Parsimonious Measurement Decision Making Models: Preference Theory and Heuristics

The second type of decision making research approaches refers to the utility maximization strategy in which a pre-set mental process is followed and the selected choice constitutes the individual’s highest perceived utility (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, pp. 16).

These concepts evolved after Fishbein’s attribute theory was criticized for using a “linear additive function of directly stated “importance weights” of product attributes and ranking of product attributes” (Hauser & Urban, 1979, p. 251).

Within this area the concept of preferences needs to be investigated as those are seen to precede a choice. Ashworth and Goodall (1990) state “which course is selected and which is rejected depends on the individuals’ preference” (p. 45) while Tran and Ralston (2005) define it as “the act of selecting from among a set of choices as influenced by one’s motivations.” (p. 428). A selection can therefore be set as the alternative with the greatest preference and be measured on a nominal scale. As a result the difference in a consumer’s utility showcases the strength of the particular preference. When testing, two features of utility have to be kept in mind: 1) it only provides insight when put into the context of a direct choice situation and an isolated utility value without a comparison has no meaning; 2) utility is a very subjective construct and varies among every individual. (Krider et al., 2010, p. 783).

The majorly used models to measure preference are the ideal vector, ideal point and partial benefit models (Gustafsson et al., 2007, p. 6).

The ideal vector model in figure 6 describes a proportional relationship between an attribute and its partial benefit value. It suggests that the benefit value either increases or decreases with an increasing appearance of the connected attribute. This means either \( w_{xj} > 0 \) for an increase or \( w_{xj} < 0 \) for a decrease (Vriens, 1995; Srinivasan, Jain & Malhotra, 1983; Kamakura & Srivastava, 1986; Allenby, Arora & Ginter, 1995, cited in Gustafsson et al., 2007, p. 6). Based on Green et al. (2001) assumptions for the vector model formula, \( P \) denotes the attributes and \( J \) explains the stimuli. For each respondent \( Y_{jp} \) denotes the desirability of the \( P \)th attribute for the \( J \)th stimulus, where \( W_p \) denotes the respondent’s (in this case tourist’s) importance weight for each of the attributes (\( P \)). This is summarised in following formula. (Green et al., 2001, pp. 59-60)

\[
S_j = \sum_{p=1}^{P} W_p Y_{jp}
\]
The ideal point model in figure 7 also builds on this notion but assumes that the benefit value increases with an increasing attribute appearance until a particular ideal point is reached. From this point on the benefit value decreases. (Green & Tull, 1982, cited in Gustafsson et al., 2007, p. 6) For the Ideal-Point Model Green et al. (2001) assumes that “preference $S_j$ is inversely related to the weighed squared distance $d_j^2$ of the location $Y_{jp}$ of the $J$th stimulus from the individual’s ideal point $X_p$ ” (p. 60). It is calculated with the following formula (ibid).

$$d_j^2 = \sum_{p=1}^{p} W_p(Y_{jp} \sim X_p)^2$$

The last and most flexible model is the partial benefit model (also called part worth utility model) in figure 8, which includes the former two models’ notions but does not infer a specific functional process (Green & Srinivasan, 1978; Cattin & Wittink, 1982; Louviere, 1984; Wittink & Cattin, 1989; Krishnamurthi & Wittink, 1991; Green & Srinivasan, 1990, cited in Gustafsson et al., 2007, p. 6). As mentioned above the utilities can only be interpreted in context. The scale level for this is metric and the part worth utilities present partial benefits derived from the attributes. It can be further differentiated into two combinations: a compensatory and non-compensatory model. In contrast to the second one, the first one implies that all existing attributes are evaluated within the bundle and a low partial utility of one attribute can be compensated by the benefit contribution of another. (Gustafsson et al., 2007, p. 6-8). This model is in most cases used for a conjoint analysis (Green & Srinivasan, 1978; Wittink & Cattin, 1989; Cattin & Wittink, 1982, cited in Gustafsson et al., p. 8). Concerning the part-worth utility model (which is the most relevant for this study) Green et al. (2001) assumes that the variable $Y_{jp}$ is the category level, whereas $f_p$ denotes the part-worth corresponding to level $Y_{jp}$.
In other words is $f_p(Y_{fp})$ estimated for a selected set of discrete level of $Y_{fp}$. The formula for this is stated below. (Green et al., 2001, p. 60)

$$S_j = \sum_{p=1}^{P} W_p (Y_{fp})$$

The application of this theory in conjoint analysis is presented more in-depth within the methodology and analysis section of this study.

Nevertheless, in complex choice situations consumers often focus on one most influencing attribute (Yadav, 1994, cited in Hedlund, 2013 p. 16). If two packages provide the same level of this attribute, the preference for the second most important attribute decides. Further, if an attribute is not perceived to be easily enough accessible the alternative is not considered more deeply (Hedlund, 2013, pp. 16-17). This infers that communication for more sustainable travel choices needs to be placed carefully at points of service encounters where they are most effective in easing accessibility.

However other researchers have shifted from this notion of rationality based on decision rules but instead observe decision heuristics (Luce, 1995, p. 4). Smallman & Moore (2010) argue that decisions in tourism are either based on contextual facts or on perceptions and evaluative judgements about personal risk (p. 399). In line with this Luce (1995) concludes that people often act irrationally and everyday decisions depend only partially on mathematical logics and partially on personal interpretation (p. 4).

Heuristics are used to reduce the cognitive effort of decision making and constitute a trade-off in accuracy to reduce the amount of available options (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, p. 23). They are mental shortcuts and different dimensions of heuristics have been found: rejection-inducing dimension (RID), relative preference dimension (RPD) and trade-off dimension (TD) (Park & Lutz, 1982, p. 109). Using the RID strategy implies that one dimension/attribute of an alternative constitutes the immediate rejection of all other alternatives not providing this certain level of the desired dimension/attribute. RPD is used as a more relative heuristic implying a certain threshold of a desired dimension/attribute within and acceptance of all alternatives reaching this threshold while rejecting the ones below. TD relates to a conditional acceptance although the alternatives do not provide a desired level of the dimension/attribute. (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, p. 23; Park & Lutz, 1982, p. 109)

Another perspective added to the discussion is the level of involvement of the decision task and therefore the information processing of the tourist. Consumer involvement can be defined as “*a person’s perceived relevance of the object based on their inherent needs, values and interests*” (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342). It can influence factors determining the consumers’ attitudes and behaviour at different decision stages. A consumer’s involvement with an object also influences the mental effort needed to carry out a specific decision task. A complex decision requires a greater mental effort developing a deeper commitment and stronger attitude. (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, p. 20) In other words complex decisions (or high involvement decisions) are to a larger extent thought through at every point of the process and information is processed cognitively by a central route (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, p. 21; Solomon et al., 2013, pp. 322-323). Low involvement does on the contrary connect to simple decisions which are processed by a peripheral route and thereby require less effort (Lilien et al., 1992; Reid & Crompton, 1993, cited in Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002, p. 20; Solomon et al., 2013, pp. 322-323).
2.2.4. Decisions in Charter Tourism Packages

In order to narrow down decision making in tourism to charter tourism, the following section presents the key elements investigated in this study when investigating direct placement possibilities of brands and eco-labels in the service product of charter tourism. A deeper elaboration for each element is provided in the methodology chapter when discussing how the research is specifically designed around those elements.

Hedlund (2013), as one of the most recent studies, concludes that there is no universally adaptable vacation choice structure due to its observed complexity. This complexity derives from three factors: the complexity of the tourism product, the complexity of the interrelations of sub-choices and the complexity of external and personal factors that influence the tourist (Hedlund, 2013, p. 4). She has rather identified six types of decisions within the vacation choices that are made in different orders and weights of importance: destination, accommodation, travel mode, time of travel, length of travel and activities (p. I). As stated before, these six types of choices for travel packages anchor this study’s approach towards analysing brand and eco-label importance.

Vacation choices can be bundled and bought as packages at a single price. (Sheldon & Mak, 1987, p. 13). These packages are valued by customers for minimizing the decision making involved, saving time and providing convenience (Money & Crotts, 2003, p. 100; Naylor & Frank, 2001, pp. 277-278; Sheldon & Mak, 1987, p. 13 & p. 17).

Hedlund (2013) raises the question in her study on which factors could enhance greener vacation choices among tourists (p. 1). In this context it is important to note that previous research has found consumers to evaluate the attributes of alternative bundles as well as the attributes and their relationships within the single bundle making trade-offs in favour of certain features (Hamilton & Koukova, 2008, pp. 431-432; Hedlund, 2013, p. 1). Further Tay et al. (1996) have researched a model for portfolio choices viewing the trip as a bundle of decisions for destination, travel mode and length and time of travel. Although not explicitly stated their finding contributes to charter tourism by stating that an increasing attractiveness of the travel portfolio as a whole increases the likelihood for its choice. However, as a point of critique for the portfolios decision making presented they acknowledge that this presumes that all the different decisions are made before the trip. (Tay et al, 1996, pp. 335-336) Nevertheless their findings suggest that if the improvement of even one aspect in the product bundle can be achieved, this increases the likelihood of the purchase of the whole bundle. This conclusively underlines the importance of the right communication approach to increase the perceived attractiveness of more sustainable travel portfolios and indicates that even small changes in certain aspects of the bundles may increase the preference for those bundles as a whole.

2.3. RQ 3: “Are there synergies between branding and eco-labelling that can be used in marketing communication?”

2.3.1. Communication in Tourism

As this thesis positions the introduced marketing tools mainly in the focus of communication, the influence of advertising in the specific field of tourism marketing needs explanations especially as destination advertising is a commonly appearing term in this context adding another element to the direct features of the travel package to consider when marketing for the service.
Research concerning tourism marketing efforts provides various different suggestions on how destination advertising can influence tourists’ travel choices. At a basic level Kim et al. (2005) state that destination advertising can be a strong influence on the tourist’s destination choice (pp. 47-48). Park et al. (2013) elaborate that destination advertising can have different influence depending on where the tourist is exposed to it in the decision making process and that the advertising does not only have influence on the destination choice but surrounding choices as well. (Park et al., 2013, pp. 277-279)

Further Choe et al. (2013) show that destination advertising influences how tourists choose to exercise and change their trip structure (in terms of time and money) (p. 720). The study finds that tourists respond differently to destination advertising depending on how they choose to spend and change their budget (money or time) across the different trip-related facets (e.g. destination choice, travel route, accommodation, activities). The tourists who change their length of stay are more influenced by destination advertising in all of the trip-related facets except for destination choice. Tourists choosing to increase the money spent at the destination are found being influenced by destination advertising across all trip-related facets. Whereas tourists who choose to decrease or not change the money spent are less influenced by destination advertisement at trip choices such as restaurants, shopping or accommodation. Interestingly the results showcase that people who choose to increase the time spent are more influenced by the destination advertising than the people who increase their monetary spending. (Choe et al., 2013, p. 717) Based on the results Choe et al. (2013) suggests that destination advertising can generate two types of responses: The first response connects to a basic level, where the destination advertisement focus is to persuade the tourists to choose the option/s advertised (e.g. destination, accommodation, restaurants, etc.) whereas the second response relates to the destination advertisements’ ability to persuade the tourist to adjust the travel budget (time and/or money) spent at the destination across the different facets. (Choe et al., 2013, p. 720).

2.3.2. Service-Dominant Logic in Tourism

As services pose different challenges to the marketers for interacting with the consumer than tangible products do, the Service-Dominant Logic is a major theory that needs to be positioned in this thesis’ context in order to clarify the assumptions made when explaining and discussing the research’s findings.

In the tourism sector an increased focus has been put on the consumer and the consumer’s experience, where the tourism supplier and consumer have to interact more closely at all stages of their relationship in order to create a better experience and generate value for the tourist (Shaw et al., 2011, p. 207; Blazquez-Resino et al., 2013, p. 2). In order to better understand this interaction the concept of service-dominant logic (S-D Logic) is relevant. Vargo and Lusch (2004) state that marketing moves with S-D Logic from a goods-dominated perspective, where “tangible output” and “discrete transaction” have been central concepts to a service dominant perspective, where instead “intangibility”, the “exchange processes” and “relationship” are central (p. 2). Further does the S-D logic perspective highlight the importance of the consumer role in being part as a co-creator in the value-creation process (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 6). This means that the consumer does not buy a tangible product or service but rather an experience customized after his/her needs, where the value resides in the personalized experiences (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, pp. 12-14). The concept of S-D logic therefore fits with the current state
of tourism, since the tourism sector is centralized around the interaction between consumer and company, and the value creation that stems from such an interaction (Shaw et al., 2011, p. 207). When perceiving marketing from a S-D logic perspective and in line with the preceding argumentation throughout chapter 2, the term service marketing can be used, which Vargo and Lusch (2004) describe as: “the service-centred dominant logic represents a reoriented philosophy that is applicable to all marketing offerings, including those that involve tangible output (goods) and the process of service provision” (2004, p. 2). Further can the brand, when perceived from a S-D logic perspective, be referred to as service brand (Kasper et al., 2006, p. 163). According to Brodie et al. (2009) the brand plays in a service brand perspective a much larger role than a regular product-based brand would, as the brand interacts not only with the customers but the company, its employees and network of stakeholders (p. 345). Berry (2000) suggests that through the service brand mind-set the experience is the brand, where the brands meaning is derived from the consumers experience, and that this meaning is affected not only by the service outcome (or product) but also by the consumers’ experience with the organization both before and after purchase (pp. 129-130). Research conducted by Dall’Olmo Riley and de Chernatony (2000) reveals that the service brand can act as a relationship builder and/or as a foothold for the relationship (pp. 147-148). Davis et al. (2000) show that in an electronic commerce setting (online shopping) the service brand further fulfills an important function, helping to develop dialogue and strengthen consumers’ motivation towards the service offering (p. 185). Davis et al. (2000) therefore state that the service brand “defines the consumers’ experiences when shopping online in terms of service attributes, symbolic meanings and functional consequences of the service encounter” (ibid). Connected to the findings presented by Dall’Olmo Riley and de Chernatony (2000), Davis et al. (2000) also find that in the context of online shopping the service brand particularly acts “as a relationship lever or fulcrum on which trust was built between consumer and service provider” (p. 185). Especially in the context of tourism are the results of Davis et al. (2000) relevant since most of the marketing and sales for tourism today is done through the internet (Wu et al., 2008, p. 221).

In the context of services and S-D logic the service encounters (or moments of truth) constitute a key-concept. According to Wilson et al. (2012) service encounters are where the service’s promises are tested - in other words when the customer interacts with the company providing the service. Based on these experiences the consumers’ perception about the company and its services is built. Therefore service encounters provide opportunities from companies to prove their potential and increase customer loyalty (pp. 84-85). Wilson et al. (2012) state that “a service encounter occurs every time a consumer interacts with the service organisation” (p. 85). Therefore service encounters can differ in terms of type based on the context. For example, a service encounter can occur without any human contact (remote encounter) where the consumer/company interacts through websites, email, letters or other electronic devices (ATM systems, vending machines, etc.). Service encounters can also happen over the telephone and through direct contact between the employee and customer (also called face-to-face encounter). (Wilson et al., 2012, pp. 84-86) In the context of tourism a number of possible different service encounters can be identified. Examples are when tourists purchase their trip through the internet - thus interacting with the tourism company without any human contact (remote encounter) and/or interacting with the hotel personnel, tourism agency employee, etc. during the trip (face-to-face encounters). Further, the concept of service encounters is strongly connected to the three main service-oriented elements (people, physical evidence, and process) of the marketing mix for tourism (Singh, 2008, p. 15). Based on this connection it can be concluded that the concept of S-
D logic (including the concept of service encounters) provides a valuable enhancement on considerations about the consumers’ experiences and perceptions concerning tourism, the tourism operator/organization and tourism related activities.

2.3.3. Theory Building

As the third research question merges into a theoretical framework, the authors argue that a structured approach to theory building needs to be established. Theory about theory building in general eases this structured approach needed for answering this last research question.

Scientific theory building is a field of study by itself and its meaning for this research’s conceptual framework has to be acknowledged. Hambrick (2007) exemplifies the dangers of neglecting the thought about theory usage by pointing towards the risk of contorting an interesting phenomenon to be researched when applying ill-fitting theory if no directly applicable frameworks yet exist (p. 1349). No consensus about the definition of the terminus “theory” exists (Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 12) and often the term is merely used to refer simply to the background literature in the context of a social enquiry (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 10). Nevertheless, theory is in general a “statement of concepts and their interrelationships that shows how and/or why a phenomenon occurs” (Gioia & Pitre, 2009, cited in Corley & Gioia, 2011, p. 12).

Based on this notion the approaches to theory building need to be clarified as they are based on exploratory, descriptive or explanatory steps.

In order to build a valuable conceptual model in this thesis the process of theory development in general needs to be thoroughly taken into account. Figure 9 shows the normal research cycle that assumes continuous iteration of the steps of description, modelling, explanation, testing and continuously refining the research by starting with building models, then frameworks and eventually arriving at a valid theory. Within this process previous research is continuously validated or invalidated and step by step improved. (Meredith, 1993, p. 3)

Consequently stepwise development bears the danger of particular steps being occasionally skipped. Neglecting the descriptive phase for instance by focusing on iterating the steps of explanation and testing is criticised as theory-testing-research. Termed “ivory-tower prescriptions”, this procedure leads to a drift from real-world problems towards results irrelevant for the management of businesses (Meredith, 1993, p. 4). If the step of explanation is skipped this results in the building of non-explanatory models and “descriptive black boxes [...] which simulate or replicate reality but no understand-
ing of the phenomenon occurs” (Meredith, 1993, p. 3). It is argued that this is commonly a reason for the reluctance among managers to transfer solutions that they do not grasp onto problems that they at least understand. Finally, ignoring the testing stage induces a halt of the research progress in this field itself, as each newly derived explanation goes into new directions and ends in a simple collection of so termed “war stories”. (Meredith, 1993, pp. 3-4) This is what Hambrick (2007) highly criticizes as “hyper-commitment to theory” (p. 1351)

A model is defined as a “simplified representation or abstraction of reality” (Turban & Meredith, 1992, p. 30, cited in Meredith, 1993, p. 5). A concept is defined as a building block of theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 153). Bulmer (1984) states “Concepts themselves are not theories. They are categories for the organisation of ideas and observations. In order to form explanatory theory, concepts must be interrelated.” (p. 43)

Therefore Meredith (1993) argues that “conceptual methods, building primarily on description and explanation, lead to a better balance between theory-building and theory-testing research” (p. 4).

The process of theory building is divided into three sub-steps: first conceptual models are built that focus on the element of description, second conceptual frameworks are derived that include explanations and eventually valid theory is reached that has been continuously tested and approved. Theory is therefore defined as “a coherent group of interrelated concepts and propositions used as principles of explanation and understanding” (Meredith, 1993, p. 7).

In order to differentiate frameworks from theory Dubin (1969, cited in Meredith, 1993, p. 7) has identified five prerequisites that need to be fulfilled for a framework to become theory:

1. It has to allow prediction or shall increase understanding.
2. It has to be interesting and thus non-trivial.
3. It has to include attributes or variables and depict their interrelation.
4. It shall not include “composite” variables, that consist of various other variables, elements or undefined attributes.
5. It has to include boundary criteria.

Concluding, a conceptual model that includes explanatory elements hence constitutes a conceptual framework but does not meet all five named criteria, is essentially seen as a pre-theory (Meredith, 1993, p. 7).
3. Methodology

This chapter presents this study’s research design providing the general plan on how the research questions will be answered starting from the broader to the increasingly specific considerations by planning the research philosophy, approach, methodological choice, strategy, time horizon and eventually data collection techniques and procedures (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 159-161).

3.1. Research Philosophy and Approach

The research philosophy of this study relates to the questions of how knowledge is developed and what the nature of this knowledge is (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 127-128). Saunders et al. (2012) claim that there is no right or wrong research philosophy in social science but in order to conduct a coherent study the most appropriate philosophical standpoint for the particular purpose has to be identified regarding its ontology, epistemology and axiology. (p. 127, pp. 137-139)

From this presumption three questions are derived:

1. What is the nature of reality? The continuum ranges from external/objective to socially constructed/subjective and is constituted by the choice of ontology.
2. What is considered acceptable knowledge? The continuum from observable phenomena/law-like generalizations to subjective meanings/details of specifics is described within the choice for the epistemology.
3. What is the role of values? – The continuum from value free to value bound is constituted by the choice of axiology. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 129)

Referring to the first question, ontology describes the vision on the nature of reality and how the researcher believes, the world operates. Two different viewpoints exist here: objectivism and subjectivism - also referred to as social constructionism or simply constructionism. Objectivism sees social entities existing independently and external to social actors (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 131; Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 21). Saunders et al. (2012) use the social entity of management as an example. It is formed by job descriptions and operating procedures rather than the managers as individual social actors. Hence management should according to this be similar throughout different organizations given the same predefined functional tasks and objectives (p. 131). This is consequently true for the function of marketing as well. Subjectivism represents the opposite standpoint, which claims that “social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors” (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 132). Social phenomena are constantly evolving and in need for revision. Therefore details of a situation and the reality occurring behind the observable scene need to be studied to enhance scientific understanding. The management example would imply here that the management does not exist apart from the individual manager but is a construct of him or her interpreting the functional description and interacting with other social actors in his management environment. (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 131-132)

Epistemology is used to describe what “constitutes acceptable knowledge in a field of study” (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 132). This branches out into three directions: positivism, realism and interpretivism. Positivism is seen as the philosophical standpoint of a natural scientist (Saunders et al., 2012. p. 134; Bryman & Bell, pp. 15-16) and Auguste Comte was the first to translate it into social sciences (Burawoy, 2011, p. 396). It presumes that an observable social reality exists, that can be researched in a value-free
way. Data are collected to investigate patterns and causalities and draw law-like conclusions. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 134; Burawoy, 2011, p. 396)

Closely related to this stands realism. It refers to the assumption, that what can be sensed constitutes reality independently of the individual’s mind. Two subtypes exist: direct realism and critical realism. Direct realism embraces the notion of sensed reality completely. The information obtained from the sensory system is considered sufficient for evaluation and if not it is a question of further data to be collected through different sensory means. Critical realism in contrast acknowledges the fact that human senses can be deceived and divides the sensory process into two steps: the sensational experience itself and additionally its mental processing. Consequently the direct realist assumes a rather unchangeable reality whereas the critical realist admits that different levels of study may change the picture of the initially observed reality. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 136)

On the other side of the continuum stands interpretivism. Critiques to positivism argue that law-like generalization leads to a loss of insights into a complex socially constructed reality (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 137; Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 16). Gill and Johnson (2002) even reach as far as claiming that “positivism becomes indefensible in its own terms” (p. 176). They argue that usage of the methodologies of natural sciences neglects the importance of human subjectivity (p. 168). Differences between social actors need to be acknowledged. Hence researching people needs to be differentiated from researching objects (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 137). Communication is increasingly realised for carrying its major share in non-verbal elements (Gummesson, 2007, p. 131). A vital point to this argumentation is the central role of the researcher as social actor within the socially and uniquely constructed reality between him or herself and the researched individuals at a given situation in time. Therefore an empathetic standpoint has to be taken. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 137)

Axiology answers the question of the researcher’s values and which role they play in influencing the research and its credibility (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 138). Heron (1996) argues that demonstrating axiological skill means being able to argue for values that are used as a basis for the conducted research (pp. 11-12). This already starts when choosing one topic over another thus ascribing it higher importance and needs to be considered throughout the entire research process (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 139).

There is often a debate about the choice of a quantitative or qualitative research method that influences the philosophical basis as both methodologies are considered to require different standpoints of either being inclined towards positivism or interpretivism (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 127). However, more recent research suggests changing the view on research philosophy from philosophical dichotomies towards a multidimensional set of continuua (Niglas, 2010, p. 217). Consequently four research philosophies currently dominate the field of business research: positivism, interpretivism, realism, and a mixed stance termed pragmatism. Positivism takes an objectivist ontology, positivist epistemology and value-free axiology. Its data collection method is highly structured, mostly quantitative and strives for generalizability. Interpretivism constitutes the opposing philosophy with a subjectivist ontology, interpretivist epistemology and value bound axiology. Data are collected through small samples within in-depth qualitative investigations. Realism uses an objectivist ontology, either direct or critical realist epistemology and acknowledges a value laden axiology. Methods can be both qualitative and quantitative and need to be tailored to the subject matter. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 140)
Pragmatism in comparison to the other three philosophies constitutes a mixed approach using different philosophical positions where considered appropriate for each particular research question. It builds on the principle of ‘relevance to practise’, that multiple realities exist and that a combination of different points of views may provide a more holistic picture (Saunders et al., 2010, p. 130). Kelemen & Rumens (2008) state: “Pragmatism is a theory of meaning. In other words, pragmatism asserts that concepts are only relevant in as much as they are relevant for action.” (p. 40). Thus it is claimed to suit a multiple method approach particularly well since it provides credible and relevant data which advance the research as a whole (Kelemen & Rumens, 2008, p. 40; Creswell, 2009, p. 10).

Since the purpose of this study lies in the juxtaposition of qualitative data from expert interviews and quantitative data from a consumer survey in form of a conjoint analysis the authors claim that a pragmatist philosophical stance suits the purpose of this study more holistically (merging different philosophical viewpoints in one study tailored to the different research steps) than a stance on either side of the philosophical continuum would do. This is in line with the argumentation regarding mixed-methods of Kelemen & Rumens (2008) and Dayman & Holloway (2011, p. 349). As stated, the pragmatist standpoint provides the possibility to use different epistemologies for different research questions. The authors see most value by using an interpretivist standpoint for the expert interviews and scientific theory review that is needed for answering RQ1: “Why does branding appear to be successful in influencing tourism choice while eco-labelling is found to have lower or no influence on consumers?”. Here different theories have to be chosen, merged and translated into a new field of study by the authors as social, influencing and value-bound actors and interpretations have to be made from the statements of participants representing charter tourism providers as social entities.

However the highest rate of validity and credibility for the quantitative data collection needed in order to answer RQ 2: “Where do brand and eco-labels play a role in the decision making process of tourism?” can be in the authors’ opinion achieved through a critical realist standpoint. They claim that here a reliance on observable data is sufficient to answer the particular research question while the second step of processing the information in the survey provided to the consumer needs to be acknowledged and accordingly implemented in the research design. This means that although the observable data in form of phrasing and visual cues provided to the participants through the survey may appear objectively the same, the internal processing and associations connected to the questions may differ within each individual and by this provide different outcomes. A critical realist viewpoint accepts that different motives or understanding of the concepts may stand behind same or similar responses.

The conceptual framework derived in research RQ 3: “Are there synergies between branding and eco-labelling that can be used in marketing communication?” will require an interpretivist standpoint as generalizing the framework only towards observable phenomena would risk to leave out important facets of the social phenomenon ‘tourism’ and would not provide room for applying and translating the theoretical backgrounds from branding, eco-labelling and the experts’ opinions. As the intended outcome of this study is a conceptual framework including explanations for certain observed patterns, this standpoint needs to be taken to reach out into theory searching for explanations and possible solutions in order to provide both a theoretical and practical contribution. Testing those suggested theory applications and solutions on their effectiveness can as a
further, iterative step take a more positivist standpoint. This could constitute the next stage building on this study within further research.

Building on the introduced philosophical standpoint of this thesis the research approach needs to be clarified. It answers the question about the way existing theory is used. Generally three possibilities exist: deduction, induction and abduction (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 128 & p. 143). Deduction refers to conclusions that are derived from premises in existing theory, confirming or opposing this theoretical frameworks and models (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010, p. 316). Deductive research is therefore developed from existing academic literature and its purpose is to test this given conclusions (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 144-145; Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 11). Induction on the contrary describes a gap between existing theory and the conclusions judged by the made observations (Ketokivi & Mantere, 2010, p. 316). Inductive research consequently starts with data collection in order to explore a phenomenon and builds theory for instance as a conceptual framework derived from the findings (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 145; Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 11). Hence the difference is that the former leads to “inescapable solutions” while the latter is a “process of inference” consciously embracing the probability of being incorrect (Meredith, 1993, p. 9). Abduction as a third option is a mixed form, which uses existing premises from theory and data collection in order to explore and explain patterns. By this new theory is generated or existing one is modified which is then subsequently tested through further data collection. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 145)

This thesis builds on an overall inductive inference as no existing theory directly applicable was found that could be tested or improved. In line with Meredith’s (1993) argumentation for building conceptual models, known premises from related theory within different fields of study are taken into consideration and transferred in order to generate conclusions in the form of a new conceptual framework. This model remains by the end of this thesis untested but theoretical starting points are used to explain features of the model. Hence the choice of a deductive approach would exclude the probability of correctness of theories that the authors may despite their literature review not be aware of or which may be still themselves in a development process, but would be applicable if published. An abductive approach is in the authors’ assessment inferior to an inductive approach despite the fact that both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods are used. The reason for this is that the current study is highly interconnected in between the particular development steps. A clear separation where induction and deduction is applied cannot possibly be provided without decreasing the level of coherence and the overall purpose of this study requires a primarily inductive basis.

3.2. Research Strategy, Methodological Choice and Time Horizon

The research strategy refers to the overall orientation when conducting business research. Generally two different strategies can be distinguished: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research is numeric data to test existing theory. Hence it is often associated with the deductive research approach combining a positivist epistemology and objectivist ontology. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 27) Since business research is prominently evaluated against the criteria of reliability, replication and validity the advantage of quantitative research lies in its structured data collection. Ensuring those three criteria by statistical means and results are capable of generalizability (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 41; Saunders et al., 2012, p. 163). Nevertheless, quantitative analysis is criticised for neglecting subjective and socially constructed meanings (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 163).
Conversely, qualitative research collects information in the form of linguistic data rather than numeric. It emphasizes an inductive generation of theory based on interpretivism and subjectivism. Thus social reality is viewed as a constantly changing social creation. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 27) Its advantage is seen by its ability to enrich the existing theoretical perspective through non-standardised data collection and its flexibility as questions and procedures may occur out of the interactive research process altering the research’s direction (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 163). Hence its disadvantage lies in generalizability and the applicability of the three formerly mentioned criteria suffers. These are substituted with different quality criteria instead. Credibility tests parallel to internal validity in quantitative research the findings’ trustworthiness. Transferability can be seen analogue to external validity testing if the findings are applicable toward other contexts. Dependability as the counterpart to reliability tests if findings can be applied at a different time setting and confirmability parallel to objectivity tests the degree to which the researcher allows values to intrude the research. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 43)

A solution to this discussion is provided by the multiple method research design, since it offers the possibility to use both quantitative and qualitative elements in either the data collection or analysis or a combination (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 164). This is also referring to a trend in social science studies, where it can be said that studies drift from polar opposite quantitative or qualitative approaches towards merely being more inclined to the first or latter but not purely relying on either one (Creswell, 2009, p. 5). Mixed methods use both approaches in tandem in order to achieve a greater overall strength of a study than usage of either of the two approaches in isolation provides (Creswell & Plano, 2007, cited in Creswell, 2009, p. 4). These can be either conducted sequentially or concurrently of which sequential research is the more common design. The former implies that one research method follows and is informed by another while in the latter both quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously. In this case research is also referred to as ‘triangulation’. (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, pp. 352-354)

Building on the theory presented on conceptual modelling the methodological choice will be of a descriptive nature in the first step in order to arrive at the conceptual model. The second step requires the explanatory element, which will be subsequently derived from the triangulation of the different introduced theories in the domains of branding, eco-labelling and decision making. The methodological approach in this study combines the different study domains is a multiple methods research design rather than a purely quantitative or qualitative. Thus it uses a simple mixed method approach. Qualitative semi-structured expert interviews are combined with a customer survey in form of a conjoint analysis which will result as picture in figure 10 in a draft of a conceptual framework in chapter 5.3.2.

The time horizon is restricted ranging from the end of January until end of May 2014. This depicts a cross-sectional study of approximately four months. Due to this time restriction, the conceptual framework built cannot be iteratively tested but provides a starting point for further research and improvement.
3.3. Research Techniques and Procedures

3.3.1. Qualitative Data Collection: Semi-Structured Expert Interviews

The qualitative part of the mixed method approach of this study consists of expert interviews questioning participants from both the travel agencies and the field of tourism research. The purpose of conducting these semi-structured interviews with representatives from the tourism industry is to gain an insight and understanding from experts on the areas of sustainable tourism, marketing efforts for sustainable alternatives, the use of eco-labels and the perceived influential power of brands in tourism. From this, their opinion about possible synergies between brands and eco-labels is investigated. The decision to conduct a semi-structured interview with a researcher in the area of consumer choice in tourism and sustainable tourism was made in order to get clarification and gain deeper knowledge on consumer choice theory, as well as insight into the area of sustainable tourism from a current and academic viewpoint.

Saunders et al. (2012) describe semi-structured interviews as being “non-standardised” as the researcher prepares a list of fairly specific topics, themes or key-questions which the interview revolves around. Because of this flexible structure the interview process can vary based on the context and the flow of the conversation, where for example the order of the questions can be varied and/or questions be added or left out. (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 374-375) The list of topics or key-questions builds on a predefined interview guide ensuring that the researchers collect similar types of data from the respondents even if the structure of the interview process varies (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 225). Because of this a higher emphasis is put on the researchers’ role in developing the interviews’ purpose and questions - in other words what aspects of the research problem the researchers find important to explain and understand (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 467).

The nature of the questions to be included into the interview can function as a guideline when choosing the interview approach. Semi-structured interviews are seen the most advantageous in situations where: (1) the questions are large in number, (2) the questions are complex or open-ended, (3) the order and structure of the questioning can or needs to be flexible. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Jankowicz, 2005, cited in Saunders et al., 2012, p. 379). Based on these three points the authors believe that a semi-structured interview approach is most suitable for their qualitative research section. Since the thesis touches upon several research areas the spectrum and number of questions is comparably high and due to the wide range of topics included in the interviews, many of the questions are complex and open-ended in order to identify the perspective of the interviewees (for example the travel agencies’ perception on possible brand/eco-label synergies). Finally the interviews are flexible in their ordering and logic of questions since certain aspects of a topic can be explored further or dismissed depending on the answers and knowledge of the individual interviewee. This implies that certain aspects of the topic can evolve being more interesting during interviews with certain companies than others and the logic and ordering of the questions can therefore be changed and adapted.

Semi-structured interviews are mainly used for explanatory and to a lesser extent exploratory research. Since the intention of conducting interviews for this thesis is to triangulate and gain understanding, an alternative approach could be the usage of regular structured interviews as those are more frequently used for descriptive studies. The authors’ argumentation for not doing so and instead choosing semi-structured interviews is that structured interviews are helpful where the intention is to test theory through statistical proposition or hypothesis. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 377) Since this thesis does not
intend to test theory and there is to the authors’ knowledge no theoretical framework connecting the areas of tourism, branding, eco-labels and consumer choice that can be tested, the usage of structured interviews would not provide a considerable benefit over semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews do not only allow the authors to get an insight into the area but also to get explanations from the interviewees that may not exist in theory yet. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 377) Another argument for why the authors believe that semi-structured interviews fit this study most is that its flexible structure allows probing of answers, were the interviewees can be asked for further explanation and build on their responses to provide greater insight, add significance and depth to the data (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, pp. 230-232).

Nevertheless, the authors are also aware of the potential downsides of this approach. Because of the non-standardised nature of semi-structured interviews certain issues can arise related to the reliability of the research and concerns about bias connected to the interviewer, interviewee and/or people participating. Interviewer bias relates to the behaviour, perception and nature of the person conducting the interview. Interviewee or response bias refers both to how the interviewee perceives the interviewer but also the interviewees’ perception about the subject matter and questions asked. Participation bias refers to the nature of the person or organization participating in the interviews. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 381-383) In order to overcome the issue of bias connected to semi-structured interviews a number of methods can be used. The authors for example thoroughly plan and pre-test the key-questions and potential follow up questions for the interviews, as well as minding desirable behaviour, in order to avoid creating bias by imposing certain beliefs through the questions. The key-questions and possible follow up questions are further created in such a way that they are not perceived to be offensive or unpleasant for the interviewee to discuss, even though the authors do not believe that the themes and topics connected to their study intrude or touch upon sensitive areas for the interviewees. (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 381-383) Further the authors also try to develop trust and credibility between them and the respondents by sending out the key-questions as well as information about the topic and areas of discussion before the execution of the interviews in order to allow preparation and clarification of questions (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, pp. 236-237; Rubin & Rubin, 2005, pp. 92-93). The respondents are handed the questions at least a week before the interviews and are asked to read through the outline and straighten questions if they are not clearly understandable or if the respondents feel like they cannot or do not want to answer particular questions. The authors also ensure within the email sent with the questions that no interviewee’s answers will be traced back to him or her and no names of them or the companies are published. By doing so potential biases created from the interviewees’ perception can be diminished. The answers are likely to be more honest as the representative nature of the interviewee for the company is decreased as much as within this research’s frame can be influenced by the authors.

3.3.2. Selection of Participants for Expert Interviews

For the semi-structured interviews the participants were chosen with a purposive sampling approach (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p. 212) since the authors’ intention with the interviews is to get insight from experts in the field of Swedish charter tourism. Because of this and since this part of the study is qualitative the authors do not choose their sample at random as the amount of travel agencies in Sweden providing charter tourism
and researchers focusing on consumer choice in tourism, is limited. The reason for why the authors choose to only focus on Swedish tourism companies is because the thesis’ intention is to gather quantitative data from Swedish tourists thereby having a connection between the data from both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the thesis. Even though a purposive sample never can be fully statistically representative of a whole population (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 287), the authors believe that their selection of chosen subjects is representative of the population desired for the qualitative study (Bryman & Bell, 2010, p. 176). When searching for possible interview subjects in the field of charter tourism six of the biggest companies active in Sweden were identified and contacted. Consequently the authors have to work with a limited amount of interviews and also face the risk of not reaching saturation from the selected number of participants, which neither is expected nor the goal of the planned interviews as even with interviewing 100% of the currently operating providers a saturation in responses would be unlikely. The researcher from the research field of consumer behaviour in tourism was contacted and responded positively to the subject matter and suggestion for an interview. The authors contacted the researcher and each of the six companies through email where a short presentation on the authors, their study and the reason for contacting the company/researcher was given. In the email the authors also attached a document which included a brief summary of the thesis’ introduction, problem formulation, research question and potential theoretical/practical contributions. The email was sent from the authors’ university email account to provide further credibility. In order to avoid misunderstanding because of language barriers and make the researcher and company representatives feel more comfortable the email was written in Swedish. Two weeks after the emails were sent out the researcher including five out of the six companies had responded. Two of the companies declined the inquiry. Since both the researcher and three companies had agreed to participating the authors decided to stop searching for new potential respondents as the remaining tourism providers did not fit the criterion of mass charter tourism provision. The authors instead focused on developing the interview guide and qualitative methodology. The reason for why the authors consider the number of three travel companies sufficient is mainly because of the small number of charter tourist companies active in Sweden with the six contacted companies representing the most commonly known in Sweden and their products being traded in mixed tourism offices. Therefore it would be hard to find any further relevant interview subjects with comparable experience. The reason for choosing to only interviewing one researcher is because of the limited amount of researchers in Sweden focusing on consumer decision making in the context of sustainable tourism. Further do the authors believe that the one researcher can provide additional information needed for the decision making part of the thesis providing recent insight into the field of tourism research while the other parts of brands and eco-labels are discussed in more detail with the travel companies’ experts.

Three of the interviews are conducted via phone call whereas one is held in person. In order for the interviewees to be able to prepare beforehand, each one is sent the interview guide containing the topics and key-questions one week in advance. To prevent misunderstanding, the questions are sent in both English and Swedish to the interviewees and they are asked for a preferred language of the interview. Retrospectively, each of the interviews took approximately around 30 minutes to conduct, where the interview procedure went according to plan since all questions were given answers without any objections or major misunderstandings from the interviewees.
3.3.3. Quantitative Data Collection: Conjoint Analysis

Malhotra et al. (2010) describes conjoint analysis as a tool which “attempts to determine the relative importance consumers attach to salient attributes and the utilities they attach to the levels of attributes” (p. 843). Such information is gathered through respondents’ evaluation of product profiles which are composed of multiple attributes and levels (Orme, 2010, p. 29). Respondents are presented with different product attributes and levels which are then evaluated in terms of their desirability (Malhotra et al., 2010, p. 843). Attributes are the characteristic of the product/service (e.g. colour, price, processes), which are established from a minimum of two levels or degrees related to that characteristic (red or blue; cheap or expensive; little or much extra service) (Orme, 2010, p. 51). Based on how the respondents evaluate the combination of attributes and levels (product/service attributes), which means the choices and scores the respondents assign to individual attributes and levels, a greater understanding on what utility the respondents attach to each product/service attribute can be gathered (Orme, 2010, p. 29). Because of these functions the conjoint analysis has become one of the most widely used quantitative tool in modern marketing research (Orme, 2010, p. 39), utilized in areas as product and concept identification, competitive analysis, pricing, marketing segmentation, advertising and distribution (Malhotra et al., 2010, p. 844).

Conjoint analysis provides a number of benefits when conducting research. First of all does it provide a greater realism in how consumers choose between attributes and levels. The respondent have to make trade-offs between the attributes and levels, which can be compared to a regular survey where the respondents only have to choose which attributes and levels are considered important and not. Because of this, such an approach can reveal what attributes and levels really provide the highest value (highest utility) to the respondent. Further conjoint analysis lets respondents react to specific and realistic product features rather than towards more general attributes. This approach helps to provide data that are both meaningful and easy to implement. Conjoint analysis can also be applied to measure a brand’s equity. Such a measure is based on the respondents’ price sensitivity to certain brands and their product attributes, where the brand and price point reveal the respondents’ price preference and price elasticity. Because of this, it can further be used for strategic pricing research. There are, however, limitations to the conjoint analysis, since the tool should be perceived as a way to predict consumer preference rather than actual market share as multiple factors influence sales and market shares like awareness, distribution or advertising. So even if a brand or product showcases a high score from the conjoint analysis it does not necessarily mean that the brand or product actually will attract consumers and translate the stated preferences into real sales. (Orme, 2010, pp. 19-27)

Several different conjoint analysis methods exist, which can be utilized depending on the situation. There are three main approaches most commonly used in industry nowadays. These are: Traditional full-profile conjoint analysis, also called Conjoint Value Analysis (CVA), Adaptive Conjoint Analysis (ACA), and Choice-based Conjoint (CBC). The CVA approach has previously been the standard approach for conjoint analyses. CVA can deal with about six attributes which either are rated or ranked by the respondent. The respondents get to see the products with all their attributes as one choice option which simplifies the decision process since the focus only is on a few salient attributes. Subsequently, the ACA takes on a hybrid approach which in a two-step process combines the ranking or rating of attribute levels with assigning of importance to each attribute, making it suitable for studying high-involvement purchases.
The main advantage with the ACA is that it provides the possibility to incorporate more attributes (compared to the CVA and CBC) and does not let the respondents evaluate all the attributes at the same time (compared to the CVA). Finally CBC takes on a different approach than CVA and ACA as it tries to resemble the consumer's purchase process for brands and products more than the former two. Instead of having to rate or rank the brand or products’ attributes and levels, the respondents are shown a number of products in full profile which they are asked to pick the one they would like to purchase. This means that the respondents also can choose to pick none of the alternatives, since that would be possible in a real purchase situation. In that sense the CBC not only reflects preferences but also choices. When comparing the CBC method with CVA and ACA it has generally been shown that attributes that are important to the respondents get more emphasis and vice versa. (Orme, 2010, pp. 39-46)

In relation to the approach of CBC stands a method called Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint (ACBC) which according to Orme (2010) “combine[s] the best aspects of adaptive interviewing with the realism and accuracy of choice data” (p. 49). Through the ACBC approach the participants first of all specify their consideration set (preferred product/service) using a build-your-own (BYO) exercise. Then the respondents have to choose between different product/service alternatives which are based on their own previously identified consideration set. A positive aspect with the ACBC approach is that the ACBC’s interviews/questionnaires have been found by respondents to be more engaging, realistic, relevant and being an overall greater experience when applied than regular CBC interviews/questionnaires. Because of this a possible downside and important to remember is that the ACBC approach is certainly more time consuming when applied than the CBC approach. Nevertheless, comparison between the ACBC approach and the regular CBC approach shows that ACBC claims the ability to capture more information at the individual level which both provides more accurate predictions and leads to better discrimination and segmentation between respondents than the regular CBC. (Orme, 2010, p. 49) Further can the ACBC approach be effectively applied in studies with small samples (n < 100) (SSI Web, 2014a), since it can better stabilize the estimates compared to CBC (Orme, 2010, p. 50) In this context ACBC data have been shown to be effective in their hit rate prediction with sample sizes as low as 9 respondents (SSI Web Help, 2013a).

Based on the information presented above, the authors believe that the ACBC approach is the most suitable conjoint analysis method to use for this particular study. Especially because of its flexibility with smaller samples ACBC is seen appropriate, since the authors conduct the study on a limited population and the time constraints further limit extensive access to this population. Another reason for using ACBC is that the study makes use of five of the six types of decisions defined by Hedlund (2013) as attributes, which fits with the ACBC recommendations of having five attributes or more (Orme, 2010, p. 126; SSI Web, 2014a).
3.3.4. Acquisition of Adaptive Choice Based Conjoint Analysis Software

Sawtooth Software Inc. located in Orem, Utah is a software company focusing on analytical and survey interviewing systems for marketing research. Sawtooth Software is one of the most renowned developers of software aimed at Conjoint/Choice Analyses. (SSI Web, 2014b) One of the products it offers is the ACBC software module, which is an add-on product to the Sawtooth Software product SSI Web (a web-based interviewing software) (SSI Web, 2014a). For this thesis the ACBC module is claimed being the most appropriate tool to use in order to study and understand consumer choice.

Since the price of acquiring an individual license for the ACBC module (including SSI web) lies with 10,000 US$ per license (SSI Web, 2014c) out of range for students, Sawtooth Software has established the Academic Grant Program where Master’s and Ph.D. students can apply and be granted the usage of Sawtooth Software products for the time period of their research. In order to be granted the software, students need to send an application consisting of: contact details on both students and supervising instructor; an overview and description of their research; name(s) of the required software and/or modules they wish to acquire; reasons for choosing one specific type of conjoint methodology over another, and confirmation that the student(s) have downloaded a trial version of the software and gone through relevant tutorials. (SSI Web, 2014d).

The authors applied for the Sawtooth Software Academic Grant on the 26th of February 2014 to be granted the SSI Web and the ACBC module. In their application they argued that the Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint (ACBC) module would fit their study most, since they intend to include a number of attributes and levels in the study in order to get a picture of the consumer’s preferred levels within the attributes and their ideal combination. The authors’ application was successful and the licenses for the full versions of SSI Web and ACBC module were received on the 24th of March, 2014. In line with the timeframe of the study the licenses are valid until the 30th of June, 2014. Sawtooth requires in exchange writing a short presentation of the authors and their work which is published on Sawtooth’s website visible to potential customers and applicants as well as sending an executive summary of the study’s findings when finished.

3.3.5. Design and Formulation of Attributes and Levels

The survey used for the quantitative study is built up from two parts: (1) the ACBC part and (2) complementary questions. The full quantitative study as shown to the participants is attached in the appendix. The ACBC part consists of a build-your-own section, a screening section and a choice task section, which contributes information about the respondents’ preferences on brands and eco-labels in the context of tourism choices. This refers to where in the four choices of destination, accommodation, travel mode and activities brands and/or eco-labels are important/not important for the respondent. The complementary questions gather descriptive data about the respondents (age, gender, previous experiences with charter tourism and departure time) and data about the respondents’ claimed brand and environmental consciousness as well as eco-label considerations in order to see if the choices are influenced by their awareness and/or loyalty towards certain brands or eco-labels. The collection of data is done through the SSI Web CAPI module which allows the authors to collect the data on their stationery notebooks rather than having to connect the studies to an online server (SSI Web Help, 2013b). Such an approach is beneficial for this research since the authors partially col-
lect their data at Umeå Airport where the quality of the internet connection may influence the outcome of the data collection negatively.

Orme (2010) states that defining the attributes and levels ranks among the most important steps in developing a conjoint analysis, both since the attributes and levels represent the product/service as well as letting the respondents express their preferences towards a product/service (p. 51). The description of the attributes and levels should be as clear and concise in its meaning as possible. For example, ranges or estimates should be avoided when describing a single level of an attribute (e.g. weight 5 to 10 kilos), as well as having an unspecific language and meanings when describing the attributes. (Orme, 2010, p. 52) Orme (2010) further states that the chosen attributes should stand independently from each other in order to not become double counted and having influence on respondents’ product choices (p. 53).

As stated previously, this study partially utilizes Hedlunds (2013) decision model consisting of six types of decisions within the vacation choices in order to study where in the consumer’s decision making brands and eco-labels play a role and not. Five of these six attributes are chosen to be applied in the study directly: destination, accommodation, travel mode, length of travel and activities (Hedlund, 2013, p. I). Departure time is not implemented into the attributes but poses an additional question within the survey part. The authors believe that these five attributes individually all are clear, concise and unambiguous in their meaning, which is in line with Orme’s (2010) recommendations for the amount and description of attributes. Connected to Orme’s (2010) argumentation that the attributes should be independent to an as large extent as possible, the authors argue that even though the chosen attributes could be seen to be interrelated with each other (since they all are part of the consumers decision process), the chosen levels connected to each attribute do not depend on each other. The participant can choose for instance being brand and eco-label conscious for the choice of accommodation whereas not seeing any value in those levels for the choice of travel mode. As this still provides valid and the targeted form of results the authors argue that the attributes are independent in this study.

Further Orme (2010) states that the amount of levels connected to an attribute should be about two to five levels (p. 51). He advises that the number of levels should be balanced across the attributes and not define more levels than recommended since such actions may create data-analysis problems, although these advises are first and foremost connected to quantitative attributes and levels like numeric options (pp. 54-55). Though this study will utilize qualitative attributes and levels, the authors have decided to still keep the number of levels within the recommended amount (two to five). The four attributes destination, travel mode, accommodation and activities all share the same five levels: Brand; No Brand; Eco-label & No Brand; Eco-label & Brand; Brand & CSR. Whereas the attribute length of stay is presented with the two levels: Short trip; Long trip. The attribute of length of stay however is not included into the build-your-own part of the survey and will instead be included and used later in the survey for differentiation between the offered packages.
### Table 1. Attribute and Level Design for Conjoint Analysis

Table 1 provides an overview on the different attributes and the available choices for the levels. This means that the participant has five choices (levels) for the first four attributes. Taking the attribute “accommodation” as an example the participant can choose between:

1. No Brand & No Eco-Label: “Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.” Price premium is the identified base price: +0 SEK.
2. Brand: “I consider it important to choose accommodation provided by a particular brand.” Price premium: +500 SEK.
3. Eco-Label & No Brand: “My choice of accommodation is not influenced by a particular brand but rather by if the option is eco-labelled.” Price premium: +500 SEK.
4. Eco-Label & Brand: “I prefer choosing accommodation by a particular brand when it is eco-labelled.” Price premium: +1000 SEK.
5. Brand & CSR: “I prefer choosing the accommodation provided by a particular brand and care about this brand’s general CSR measures. I do not think they have to eco-label it though.” Price premium: +750 SEK.

The last attribute of “Length of Stay” requires different levels:

1. Short Trip: This level refers to trips of 2-7 days. The authors argue that those trips may evoke thoughts about Weekend or City Trips and therefore may indicate other choices in branding and eco-labelling than the second provided level.
2. Long Trip: This choice refers to trips longer than 7 days. Although no theory directly related to the definition of long and short trips could be found, the authors believe that testing the length of stay as a part of the decision making provides valuable insight into preferences and indicate differences for creating tailored communication hence providing a practical contribution.

The factor “price” is included into the attributes in order to overcome the named attitude-behaviour gap that might influence the choices of the packages. The authors argue that if the consumer is provided a more realistic package that includes different prices, this reduces bias by environmental behaviour expectations and leads to a choice that stronger indicates actual behaviour. Research in different business areas has revealed existing price premiums for both branded and eco-labelled products (Erdem et al., 2002, p. 1; Ainscough, 2006, pp. 43-47, Delmas & Grant, 2014, p. 29; Apelbaum et al., 2003,
In 1996 a survey for example found that 54% of households indicated willingness to pay up to 10% more for environmentally preferable products (Environmental Protection Agency, 1998, p. 53). In 2003 Goodwin and Francis presented data indicating that this willingness to pay more for products which guarantee environmental and socio-economical benefits had further increased. For instance had the proportion of people willing to pay 5% more increased by 12% and those willing to pay 10% more by 6% between the years 2000 to 2002. (pp. 280-281) This infers a trend that though not being a pivotal part of this study needs to be taken into consideration when designing a more realistic tourism package for the survey.

The size of the price premium differs among brands considerably and no appropriate data for travel packages were found, that the authors could use as a direct source. Still they claim that since the pricing of eco-labels and brands is not a main focus of the investigation but rather used as an auxiliary tool, a simplified addition of prices is legitimate. Thus the authors have compared the major charter providers’ holiday offers to get an idea of the price of a one week trip exemplary to Spain during the summer season. Based on the findings the authors have decided to provide a theoretical maximum budget of 10 000 SEK for the participant in order to get an impression about the trade-off’s made. This budget is meant to be sufficient for the most costly option of a branded and eco-labelled holiday. The trade-off situation is shown by telling the participant, that if he or she decides to not use the whole budget he or she could keep the rest. The least costly option is priced at 6000 SEK and represents an offer independent from a brand and not eco-labelled thus claiming a differentiation by price among the providers. Hence depending on the different combinations of the levels, the prices for the whole packages range between 6000 and 10 000 SEK. By this the authors believe to get insight into the inclusion of price in the decision making and ease imagination for the participants though as mentioned before this is only seen as an indicator. Price sensitivity in tourism is a research area for itself and the authors acknowledge the limitation that may occur from being provided and spending a budget that was not earned through own work. This phenomenon is summarized as an own concept in consumer behaviour theory known as the sunk-cost fallacy (Solomon et al., 2013, p. 346) of which an elimination in the research design can only be achieved when researching actual purchasing behaviour in a real context. Further the pricing itself is vague in its estimation since different brands, eco-labels and CSR measures require different additional costs and margins. In addition it was found that CSR activities are claimed to not increase the price premium directly (Mohr & Webb, 2005, p. 141). The authors therefore assume a price increase on top of the branding that is still lower than the eco-labels’ as no third-party accreditation indicates lower additional costs than a third-party involvement may induce.

### 3.3.6. Sampling for Conjoint Analysis Participants

The purpose of conducting an Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint Survey (ACBC) is to see where in the consumers’ decision making process of tourism brand and eco-labels play a role. Due to accessibility constraints the study is conducted in the city of Umeå which is located in the northern part of Sweden. As the study is going to focus on the tourists’ decision making process and perceptions, the authors believe that the most appropriate population for sampling is individuals who have experience with travelling and the process of consumer choice in the context of tourism. Since the sampling frame (complete list of the whole population available) for such a population is hard to identi-
fy, the sample for the ACBC survey has to be selected through a non-probability approach (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 262). The sampling technique used claims a combination between purposive and volunteer sampling since it is needed to find subjects which fulfill the criteria of having experience with tourism and the process of consumer choice in the context of tourism as well as being willing to voluntarily participate in the survey (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 287-290). The collection of data for the ACBC survey is done at two locations: the local airport in Umeå since the majority of people visiting are people who are tourists or have experience with travelling and Umeå University since the environment provides higher chances of volunteering participants for a demanding, 30 minutes long survey. The authors do not set a specific sample size for the ACBC survey but plan to collect as many responses as possible as long as the number of responses exceeds the recommended minimum of nine participants, which is the number of responses needed to get meaningful data out of the survey. A big advantage with ACBC is that a large sample does not always provide more useful and reliable data that can be analysed. In this context the term hit rate needs to be clarified. It describes how well the part-worth utilities for each person can predict which product concept the respondent would choose in the holdout sets. According to calculations provided by Sawtooth a sample size of 286 respondents in a ACBC setting predicts a hit rate of 56.5%, whereas a sample size of 9 respondents predicts a hit rate of 53.5%. (SSI Web Help, 2013a). The authors claim that this 3% difference does not decrease the study’s quality since the purpose lies in picturing preferences rather than measuring sales potentials.

As mentioned above, in order to increase the chance of collecting a sufficient amount of answers the authors decided to expand the sample to also include students at Umeå University. The reason for this decision on top of generating more responses is to diversify the sample. Because of the authors’ aiming for answers from people who have experience with travelling and tourism, they tried to raise the average age of the participants by selective choice since the chance is higher that they could have own experience with traveling and tourism (in other words booked their own trips and holidays). The authors believe that the University area of Lindellhallen depicts a suitable environment to find participants that can spare time for answering a 25-30 minute long survey in a comparably calm atmosphere. Further students can be seen to be more accustomed to answering surveys since they are likely to have own experience with designing and conducting them. From an ethical perspective this puts less pressure on the participants and decreases the bias of a participant error, which states that the time and situation a participant is asked influences the quality of the response’s outcome (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 192).

Despite the additional answers from the University context, the priority of the authors lay in acquiring the minimum sample requirement of nine participants from the airport seeing the University sample in a more complementary way. Building on this idea the authors also contacted Swedish travel forums asking for permission to post the survey on these but did not get any positive response from the responsible contact persons. Therefore the authors decided to not upload the survey in these forums without an official permission. The length and complexity of the survey was also expected to lead to few valuable responses when the authors cannot be directly asked for clarification while answering.
3.4. Development Process of Research Design

After acquiring the Sawtooth SSI Web and ACBC module, the next challenge posed is the collecting of the data from tourists. The complexity of the different package attributes and their different levels combined with the intensity of the number of questions, required through the software itself in order to achieve statistically relevant results, leads to a high amount of information that needs to be conveyed to the participant. In the first version of the survey, the authors realized the extensive amount of time required per participant as first test runs required at least 35 Minutes for answering. Further the amount of text explaining the different alternatives and steps within the survey turned out to be overwhelming and participants started to become visibly bored and lost concentration while answering. This generally portrays a challenge for the research method of a conjoint analysis since the program minimum requires six packages to be chosen as interesting or not interesting after the build-your-own part and further two acceptable and three unacceptable questions each before continuing with the offering of three desirable packages (SSI Web Help, 2013c). Even in its most simple version, this already induces a considerable amount of cognitive work for the participant and naturally requires time for both understanding and executing. This posed a greater challenge than expected to the authors for both the design and information giving within the survey. The idea that arose from this was putting the whole travel package choice situation into a story context. The authors created a storyline within which the participant has to answer the required questions interacting with the virtual character “Caireen” – a spirit appearing within the story to grant the participant his/her wish for an ideal holiday package, that needs to be chosen – and in the end is handed a piece of chocolate by the authors as a gratification and an incentive. The design is adjusted to create a higher grade of visual cues and overview and the pages are split into more separate steps. A progress bar is added to provide guidance for the expected remaining time needed.

As a result the second test run provided positive feedback for the storyline and the design. Only minor comments were made for improving understanding within the text. Despite the authors’ efforts to shorten down the amount of necessary information and questions the overall time spent on the survey during the test run could only be cut towards around 20-25 minutes per survey. This extensive time needed per participant presents a special challenge for the environment in which the questioning can be possible. The authors approached representatives from Umeå Airport inquiring if the survey conduction within the security area would be possible as this appeared to be a good solution for the problem of the time constraints. The idea behind this is contacting travellers when they are in a waiting situation before boarding their flights and are more likely to be willing to spend time for answering. Unfortunately the access to the security area before boarding requires a national security check for each author costing 730 SEK and the check takes around three weeks (Swedish Transport Agency, 2012). Due to budget and time constraints the authors therefore had to think of an alternative approach and decided to try and collect data outside the security area. Here participants are harder to catch as the situations both before the security checkpoint and after arrival are more time-constraint and only few people arrive much earlier than the check in is open. Still and with the kind allowance and support of the airport representatives providing the authors with name tags and by this adding an official character to the questioning, the authors managed to attain the required minimum of nine respondents from tourists travelling through the airport of Umeå.
3.5. Personal Background and Ethical Considerations

3.5.1. Thesis Author’s Backgrounds

Personal values have to be acknowledged when conducting research since the field of social science research increasingly recognises that an utterly value free research position cannot feasibly be taken. Those values consequently reflect beliefs or feelings of researchers and influence the following areas throughout the research conduction: choice of research area and research question, choice of method, research design and data collection, implementation and analysis of data collection and eventually the stage of interpretation and concluding from the data. (Bryman & Bell, 2011, pp. 29-30)

The authors both hold a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration and study within a Master of Marketing programme at Umeå University. This educational background provides a thorough basis to assess market trends and evaluate a business’ actual and potential influence on consumer behaviour. Both authors are interested in and have studied Sustainability Marketing, Marketing Ethics and Services Marketing together which depicts the common knowledge foundation for this thesis from which the idea for the topic and research design originally evolved.

The authors perceive their cultural diversity coming from Sweden and Germany as beneficial as this broadens the perspective and cultural standpoints on the topic and working context in a complementary way. They acknowledge their underlying cultural values influencing the thesis throughout its whole process and recognize these as vital part within the research’s theory search, research design and analysis outcome. Although the personal values were tried to kept out as much as possible from the data collection in order to not bias the participants, the authors stand by their opinion that sustainability is an important issue and wish to contribute with this thesis to paving the way towards more sustainable tourism behaviour.

3.5.2. Ethical Considerations

When conducting interviews the authors recognize that a number of factors can affect the respondent and the ethical base for this study. Since the interviews are audio recorded it could inhibit the interviewees’ responses and thereby reduce the reliability of the data. In other words could the benefit of having accurate and unedited data through audio recording also affect the interviewees to feel at unease to say something incorrect or putting themselves into a negative social light. Their answers then could be also held against them from the company and therefore restrict their willingness to expose opinions if they may not be in line with the company’s culture. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2010, cited in Saunders et al., 2012, p. 396). This can be overcome by the authors acting openly, truthfully and promoting accuracy from the start, where the interviewee is informed beforehand about the interview and the implications of participating, how their answers will be used, that their privacy and anonymity will be respected and kept during the writing of the thesis as well as after it has been published (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 230-232). For this thesis the interviewees are (as stated in section 3.3.1) sent the questions a week before the interview so they can prepare and provide feedback if any questions are unclear or considered inappropriate in order to minimize the chance of the interviewees feeling uncomfortable or having a lack of control over the interview. During the email conversations before the interview the authors also informed the interviewees about their intention to audio record the interviews and
asked for permission for such an action. When asking for permission the authors additionally explained how the interviewees’ responses would be used in the context of the thesis. One interviewee also requested to see the answers in the context of the text before published in order to be able to clarify and correct the answer if believing that the authors have misinterpreted anything. Overall do the authors believe that ethical considerations and actions like these help to both create a pleasant experience for the interviewees as well as more efficiently generate reliable data and truthful insight.

Similar considerations have to be made when conducting the quantitative survey. When approaching potential participants the authors took care that these appeared to not be busy and asked them directly if they could spare 20-25 minutes of their time to answer a survey for a master thesis about tourism. Once the participants agreed the authors handed out the notebook to the participants with the opened survey and told them that they would stay in reach for questions. They decided to not stand next to the participants while filling out the survey in order to not create bias for socially desirable answers or any form of perceived time pressure. Within the survey the participant was introduced more thoroughly towards the type and purpose of the study and asked for answering as honestly as possible while assuring anonymity. The authors took care to provide assistance and asked at least once through every interview how the participant was progressing and if throughout the process questions occurred. Two participants were not able to finish the survey because of their time constraints. Those were still thanked and given a piece of chocolate as a gratification as it was done generally with all participants.

In summary the authors tried to approach participants in an as much as possible relaxed environment and make them feel comfortable when participating. The participation was clearly stated to be voluntarily and that participants could withdraw anytime within answering if they felt like it or needed to leave. Consequently the authors did not observe any visible discomfort of the participants and the surveys were all finished in a friendly and grateful manner.

3.6. Literature and Software Sources

When acquiring relevant secondary sources (literature and other sources of material), the authors primary use the resources available at the Umeå University library. With the help of the library’s search database the authors access books, research articles/journal, theses, doctoral dissertations, etc. available both in printed or electronic form. When acquiring books or articles in electronic form the library webpage allows access to a multiple online databases such as Ebrary, Elsevier, EBSCOhost, Wiley, SAGE, JST-ORE, Science Direct, Emerald Full, DiVA. Further, the authors also utilize Google Scholar and Google Books when desired material is not available through the library (both in printed or electronic form). One important branding book was ordered through the library since it was not available yet.

Generally books are mainly used for the methodical choices and fundamental theories such as branding, since such information often is elaborated and static and the books provide references to the genuine sources of the theory. Peer-reviewed articles are used in areas which are multifaceted, less developed and demand input from multiple sources in order to create a better understanding and provide up to date information. Examples from this thesis would be theory about eco-labelling in tourism and consumer behaviour in the purchase process of tourism.
Since the thesis’ topic, theoretical and methodical framework incorporates many different subject areas (e.g. sustainable tourism, tourism decision making processes, branding, eco-labelling, etc.), the number of keywords used for searching relevant literature has been considerable. Examples of keywords are: Sustainable Tourism, Eco-tourism, Eco-labels + Tourism, Tourism Marketing, Decision Making Model, Tourist Decision Making, Conjoint Analysis, etc. When conducting the searches, the authors try to keep the material as up to date as possible and then trace references in the articles, books, etc. back to the original source. With such a method both the benefit of being exposed to up to date research and being presented with relevant sources for previous research in the area is exploited. One example is the doctoral dissertation “Tourists’ vacation choice structure: Influence of values and implications for green tourism” from 2013 by Therese Hedlund, which the authors perceive as being a cornerstone in how the thesis developed. The dissertation both provides the authors with Hedlunds (2013) up to date research and framework on the six types of decisions within vacation choices, references on sustainable tourism and up to date information on consumer choice and behaviour in the area of vacation purchases. Another important source of information for this thesis comes from Jeng and Fesenmaiers 2002 article “Conceptualizing the travel decision-making hierarchy: A review of recent developments”, which provides an informative overview on behavioural decision models including sources from previous research in the area of tourism.

The knowledge bases for the Conjoint Analysis, Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint Analysis and related techniques is majorly provided by Sawtooth Software Inc’s website and the book published by the Sawtooth Software president Bryan Orme. The company provides articles, manuals, personal contact for help and tutorials about the different conjoint analysis approaches and Sawtooth Software Inc’s different products and services. Since this form of conjoint analysis is a new and sophisticated version of the idea of conjoint analysis in general, not much additional scientific theory could be found that was applicable where the majority of sources referred back to the book of Orme (2010) as a resource. The company’s resources therefore present the most valid information source in this context.
4. Results and Data Analysis

4.1. Semi-Structured Expert Interviews

Based on the results from the interviews with the charter tourism providers and the researcher, patterns and discrepancies become visible. The semi-structured interviews’ focus lies on four main parts: brands, eco-labels, sustainability in general and a future outlook. For interviewing the researcher, the branding part plays only a minor role but is instead replaced with questions about decision making theory in the context of tourism. These qualitative interviews revolve majorly around RQ 1 but the statements are also utilized when analysing RQ 2.

4.1.1. Conduction and Analysis of Qualitative Expert Interviews

In order to analyse the outcome of the four conducted interviews, similar statements on the questioned topics of branding, eco-labelling, sustainability and the future of tourism as well as differing answers among the participants have to be accentuated. All interviews took around 30 minutes and were conducted on April 8th, 11th and 16th, 2014. Three were held via phone, while one took place in person. Every interview was, with permission of the participant, recorded and then afterwards transcribed by the authors. One interview was wished to be held in Swedish. Therefore the additional transcription from Swedish into English had to be made, which in this case was unproblematic as one of the authors is a native Swedish speaker. For reasons of confidentiality, the participants’ and companies’ names are going to be, as agreed beforehand, kept anonymously throughout the analysis and statements allowing tracing back information are avoided.

Generally analysing open questions in qualitative interviews requires a form of coding in which a coding frame is designed identifying the types of answers arising from each question (Bryman, 2012, p. 248). Although qualitative analysis is claimed to be more flexible and not following rigid stages as quantitative data analysis usually does, Davenport & Holloway (2011) recommend the three following steps for analysing qualitative interviews: transcribing and listening, organizing the data and eventually coding and categorizing (pp. 304-306). The authors used this type of analysis in a simplified form as the number of four interviews still provides the possibility to analyse the data without making numerical coding for a computer processing approach necessary. As the interviews were structured around the four introduced main topics and no considerable drifting in the discussion from those topics took place in any of it, the structure for the analysis remained clear. The coding scheme for the transcribed interviews thus consisted of identifying answers concerning the usage and communication of brands, eco-labels and CSR measures as well as statements about perceived trends and the future outlook for the industry. Those answers were marked in different colours and then compared for their similarity or diverseness in order to structure the analysis section by this continuum. The interview with the researcher played a special role since it was structured differently to the company interviews. Here the coding for brand usage and communication was replaced by the topic of the customer decision making.

As argued for in the methodology section, an interpretivist standpoint is taken by the authors in order to analyse and in the following chapter discuss the outcomes of the interviews. Although the authors tried to reduce their influence within the questioning as much as possible, the interviews still remain a process of human interaction and the likelihood of sub-conscious influencing like in the form of the social desirability bias needs to be acknowledged and taken into account.
4.1.2. Observed Similarities

A variety of patterns can be identified when analysing the statements of the different representatives. When for instance asked for the companies’ general branding approach, each of the interviewees is aware of the equity of their brand and the guidance it provides to their customers as well as the company. The brand and logo are used heavily to differentiate from competing offers and are displayed widely on communication means such as brochures, emails and the companies’ websites. It is clearly stated that, based on the interviewees’ answers, certain customers choose trips depending on particular brands they favour and ask directly for those brands. In this relation one interviewee for example states that: “You have to start asking before making a choice for the customers to see, what you (the customer) like to have?” (Interview 3). Further it is claimed that “Usually families prefer to have everything included to make it easy” (Interview 3), pointing out that families are by personal experience perceived to be more likely to use preferred brands and book all-inclusive packages of these to simplify the process.

Furthermore, when asked about Corporate Social Responsibility all of the charter tourism companies agree that it is increasing in importance. Interestingly every company seems to have its own approach concerning the type, amount and communication of their CSR activities. Relating to this, two of three interviewees raise the concern that communicating CSR places a challenge but also provides room for improvement since customers currently tend to display little knowledge about the companies’ CSR efforts. One participant for instance states that “[...] the consumers do not understand the sustainability issues properly, they have a view or may have a view but they are not that very well informed [...]” (Interview 4). As a probable reason for this low understanding the interviewees suggest that customers seem to generally trust the company and its CSR activities, appreciating the existence of these activities but preferring not to request information about it very actively. Consequently CSR is perceived to have become a “hygiene factor”. This relates to Herzberg’s two-factor theory, initially developed in a human resource management context but has since then been commonly transferred into marketing context. In this theory a hygiene factor is seen as a factor that is in contrast to a motivator not able to create satisfaction but the missing of this particular factor is likely to create dissatisfaction. (Herzberg, 1966; Slevitch & Oh, 2010, p. 562; Huang & Dastmalchian, 2006, p. 362). This notion is further expressed by another of the interviewees stating that “[...] our most faithful customers know that we are certified and take responsibility for the environment and because of that do they not ask any question or care” (Interview 1). Confirming this, a different interviewee expresses the concern that customers react more strongly to negative publicity connecting to the company than positive one.

In addition to that, the impression that tourists seem to generally take vacation from their green everyday behaviour is commonly and unanimously stated. The consumers booking charter flights appear unwilling to bother and spend time on sustainability issues while being on vacation. One interviewee for instance claims “[...] when you buy a packaged holiday you want to get away from responsibility and you want to leave your old life behind.” (Interview 4). Overall, this is the commonly observed trend that all three providers and the researcher give as a likely explanation for the apparent gap between green attitude statements and actual tourism behaviour.

When asked about the possibility of combining brands and eco-labels all of the interviewees state that they see the possibility for synergy effects. Nevertheless, the dangers
of collaborating with non-trustworthy eco-labels and the chance of adding confusion to the product due to the perceived high intransparency resulting from the variety of different eco-labels available on the market is mentioned in consent. This is exemplified by the statements: “[...] a challenge in the travel business is the recognition factors and there is so much out there (eco-labels) on the market right now” (Interview 1) and “[...] there is no rulebook which says what is right or wrong and it is instead up to the companies to search and find in this jungle of alternatives.” (Interview 1). Due to this situation one interviewee notes that based on the amount of eco-labels and certification programs currently available on the market “[...] did we end up in a situation which was unsustainable since there was not really a red thread that we could communicate to the customers.” (Interview 1). In order to conquer this issue the label Travelife has been recently introduced. This eco-label intends to increase its usage in collaboration with the different providers in order to create more transparency. Another program which is seen as being successful in terms of providing a strong environmental standard itself is the ISO certification. Relating to this, one interviewee indicates that “[...] it’s trustworthy in the sense that it is a very strong standard” (Interview 4). The statement “[...] when I meet customers and stakeholders - and even if the knowledge about ISO is not so wide - everyone understands that ISO is something good, that it is a certification that is a good and useful tool” (Interview 1) also showcases that ISO certifications seem to hold a positive association with people despite seemingly not having a detailed understanding about it. Furthermore one of the interviewees states that at the moment social labels (e.g. for child protection) seem to play a more important role in the current marketing of sustainability than ecologically oriented labels do.

Another interesting pattern observed is the mutual agreement among all of the four interviews upon the increasing shift towards more local production and consumption. This is seen as one of the most important trends for tourism within the future ten years. They reveal that customers are progressively showing genuine interest into local circumstances when they experience the country themselves or as one interviewee states “[...] see what happens outside the hotel” (Interview 1). In this context ecological issues are claimed to be easier to show to tourists when for example recycling is provided or missing in the hotels, while social problems are harder to address as they often carry a sensitive or complex notion of which communication bears the danger to be misinterpreted.

Further, more and more tourists are becoming self-relying due to their increasing travel experience. They tend to rather focus on booking solely the flight and accommodation with the provider than the whole package. One interviewee claims that “[...] they (the tourists) do not really need these big charter operators” (Interview 3) implying that people with the necessary travel experience can book their own holidays with local suppliers and thereby are benefiting the local community at the destination to a larger extent. This statement indicates a need for a paradigm shift in the current charter tourism approach as it might lead to a considerable decrease of the customer base in the future if business as usual is continued. This will be discussed further in 5.3.1 in the discussion section. Moreover and relating to this, the individual benefit standing behind the action and the tangibility are mentioned when people show willingness to act more sustainably. According to the researcher’s opinion this phenomenon may relate to the notion of status as actions that are more visible to other customers seem to be more highly accepted. Illustrated through the quote “We are not so likely to give up extra money for paying just to organizers to be environmentally friendly. That doesn’t give them any individual benefits and wouldn’t give them status to their peers” (Interview 2). This may be another point of investigation for future research.
4.1.3. Observed Differences

Not only common patterns but, as can be expected from different companies, differences in the communication of CSR and Eco-labels are found. While two of the providers answer being increasingly active in using certificates, sustainability awards and ISO standards in their promotion, one provider states that their sustainability measures are more held in the background and not promoted actively as a sales argument. Here the possible accusation of greenwashing introduced in the theory section appears to be the reason for a rather modest communication of CSR and sustainability measures. The company representative argues “We do this instead of talking about it. A lot of companies are often questioned that they talk a lot but do little.” (Interview 1). Another explanation is given by the argument that the tourist companies are not seen as the legitimate institution for educating consumers in what their behaviour and opinions are supposed to be. This is underlined by the quote “[...] we are not here to teach [...] people what to do, what not to do and what to think [...]” (Interview 3). Their competitor in contrast uses a more direct marketing attitude by implementing sustainability awards and other public recognition of social or environmental measures to differentiate itself within the market more clearly.

The interviews correspondingly showcase that each of the companies uses different forms of eco-labels for different purposes. One of the companies for example only uses social labels rather than eco-labels, whereas two companies both use the eco-label Travelife but also differ by additionally using the EU Eco-label or the ISO 14001 standard.

Another dissimilarity identified is the level of involvement the customer is required to put into supporting the sustainability oriented measures. One provider for instance offers to take direct action through a small donation within the purchasing action. The consumer is through this encouraged to cognitively participate and decide for this action whereas other providers use capital from their turnover to invest into social or environmental projects hence implying a passive contribution of the tourist.

4.1.4. Summary of Common Patterns and Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patterns</th>
<th>Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of trust and transparency towards eco-labels</td>
<td>Usage of different forms of Eco-labels and certifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer takes a vacation from green behaviour</td>
<td>Differences in communication of CSR and Eco-labels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand provides recognition and trust</td>
<td>Active vs. passive contribution from tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR is required in some form but not requested directly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco-Labels are not directly used with the branding but kept more in the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>background</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility for synergies but also dangers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local consumption and production becomes increasingly important</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Summary of Interview Results’ Observed Patterns and Differences
4.1.5. Brands, Eco-Labels and CSR in Tourism Companies’ Marketing

Within the interviews, each of the charter tourism representatives was asked in which parts of the four travel choices the brand, eco-labels and CSR measures are currently playing a minor or major role. What can be observed is that the tourism companies’ momentary marketing seems to not clearly differentiate the different choices.

Destination: In the interviews it is commonly stated that the brand and destination choice are strongly connected but brands often promote themselves to a larger extent when a specific brand is the only one providing trips to a particular destination. This means that the providers emphasize their brand for more specialized and exotic offers like trips to Africa or South Africa. Packages to same or similar destinations (e.g. Spain or Turkey) on the other hand do often not showcase such a clear focus on branding the destination choice and offers appear less differentiated among competitors. Still, generally the destination can be perceived as branded by this approach, though none of the providers stated that they eco-label the destination as well. CSR measures are not directly stated to relate to particular destinations in the marketing either although the providers seem to try improving local working and education conditions as the customers are experienced to show interest into these issues when they reach the destinations.

Travel Mode: Within the travel mode the providers are generally limited to aviation travel since it provides few opportunities for differentiation. This is exemplified by the statements “[…] the airplanes more or less look the same and have the same standards […]” (Interview 4) and “[…] we would then of course promote our brand more in accommodation and activities rather than the choice of destination and travel mode I would say. Since destination and travel mode are similar between the providers” (Interview 4). Aviation travel is perceived as unsustainable in general by the interviewees but they also note that no possible alternative for the Nordic countries can be currently seen since the timely effort limits other options like trains or busses too much for tourists to accept these as alternatives. The providers both command own charter flights with company owned planes and collaborate with major aviation companies. The brand is therefore playing a role for the travel mode as well but seems to not be in focus for the tourism companies. Eco-Labels are not stated to be used even though CO2-compensation programs are offered. The compensation programs are though noted as being impractical since there seems to be a high variety of different forms of climate compensation based on the lack of rules and regulations to follow. This in turn is seen as potentially creating suspicion towards climate compensation programs as customers are not provided clear and tangible cues on where their compensation money goes to.

Accommodation: For the choice of the accommodation the branding appears to play a major role since the hotels are either owned by the providers or closely collaborate with them. One interviewee states that “When it comes to accommodation and activities I think […] you have more of a differentiation, so we could actually say that this is our hotel - only available with us […]” (Interview 4). Here the providers indicate to have more control over the performance, since they often are the direct owners of the hotels and therefore “[…] have a lot to say, in other words take decision and make choices” (Interview 1). Interesting in this context is that the hotels seem to be a large focus for eco-labelling, where for instance the EU Eco-label is applied towards the hotels to a large extent. One interviewee for example mentions that by now 50 % of their consumer volume is already hosted in certified hotels.
Activities: When asked about the choice of activities neither the brand nor the eco-label currently seem to play an important role for all companies. The authors perceive this as being surprising since the travel companies, as shown from the statement about accommodation above, seem to recognize the opportunity for differentiation through offered activities. The interviews reveal that customers to a larger extent often only book the destination, accommodation and travel mode but do choose the activities locally. On the other hand it is also stated that activities seem to be important for families booking packaged holidays. Examples for demanded family friendly activities are available playgrounds or a children’s’ club.

4.2. Consumer Conjoint Analysis

The analysis section focusing on the results from the conducted conjoint analysis mainly contributes to answering RQ 2. This section is divided into two sub-sections analysing first in 4.2.1 the descriptive data within the survey adding background information and starting points for possible explanations for the utility results drawn from the conjoint analysis. This is followed then in the next sub-chapter focusing on the actual outcome of the conjoint analysis in 4.2.2 showcasing preferences through respondents’ choices and resulting in Hierarchical Bayes (HB) estimations. As argued, here a critical realist stance is taken by the authors acknowledging that different cognitive information processing within the participants may influence the utility scores and the authors recommend the reader to look into appendix 5 to ease understanding.

4.2.1. Descriptive Data

The number of responses collected for the conjoint analysis part of this mixed method study is 21. 9 responses were gathered at Umeå Airport and 12 at Umeå University. The age group distribution shows that more than half of the sample (12 respondents) are between 19 and 25 years old, whereas 6 respondents are between 25 and 30 years old and 3 respondents are 30 years or older. The average age of the respondents is 27 years old, which the authors perceive as being acceptable since by this age people are likely to have a substantial amount of travel experience. The sample size of 9 respondents gathered at Umeå Airport further fulfils the recommended quota for the minimum amount of respondents needed to get acceptable HB-estimations out of the conjoint analysis, were the 12 responses collected at Umeå University are seen as complementary. For the question “Have you ever booked a charter tour?” a split between respondents that have booked a charter tour and respondents who have not, with 10 respondents having never booked a charter package so far, is stated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>9 (43%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19-25</td>
<td>12 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>6 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+</td>
<td>3 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of Sample</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Umeå Airport</td>
<td>9 (43%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Umeå University</td>
<td>12 (57%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever booked a charter tour</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10 (47,62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10 (47,62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know/remember</td>
<td>1 (4,76%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Descriptive Counts Summary
In order to see if brand or environmental orientation influences respondents in their everyday purchasing behaviour the survey contains questions concerning how brand and environmentally conscious each respondent perceives himself or herself to be based on two five-point Likert scales representing a continuum from “not at all” brand/environmentally conscious to “very much” brand/environmentally conscious. Figure 11 shows the results for respondents’ perceived brand consciousness and figure 12 depicts the results for environmental consciousness. Each of the tables presents the number of counts for each alternative on the Likert scale as well as the percentage count. Important to note is that with a sample of 21 respondents no generalizable statistical conclusions can be drawn from this part of the collected data. It is instead viewed as an auxiliary means to visualise the respondents’ answers for this particular study and connect the descriptive data to possible explanations from the provided theory.

From the results a trend showcasing the shape of a normal distribution can be observed for the respondents’ perceived brand consciousness, where in the middle 8 respondents (38%) perceive themselves as having a medium brand consciousness. At the lower end of the scale (point 1 and 2), 4 of the respondents (19%) perceive themselves as not being brand conscious at all, whereas 3 respondents (14%) perceive themselves as having a low brand consciousness. At the lower end of the scale (point 1 and 2), 4 of the respondents (19%) perceive themselves as having a low brand consciousness. At the lower end of the scale (point 1 and 2), 4 of the respondents (19%) perceive themselves as having a low brand consciousness. At the lower end of the scale (point 1 and 2), 4 of the respondents (19%) perceive themselves as having a low brand consciousness. At the lower end of the scale (point 1 and 2), 4 of the respondents (19%) perceive themselves as having a low brand consciousness.

For the respondents’ environmental consciousness the spread of counts in contrast to respondents’ perceived brand consciousness is smaller and no clear trend is depicted. In the middle of the scale 4 respondents (19%) answer that they are holding a medium environmental consciousness. The results outline that not many of the respondents see themselves as being either not conscious at all or being...
very conscious, since only 1 respondent (5%) each picked those choices. Further 7 respondents (33%) perceive themselves having a low environmental consciousness, whereas 8 respondents (38%) see themselves lying above average. These results suggest that most of the respondents are, even if they choose the “low environmentally conscious” option, taking these issues to some extent into consideration. This is interesting for the upcoming results since only one respondent describes him or herself as not environmentally conscious at all. Similarly only 1 respondent states to be very conscious, which could suggest that the sample does not contain people who actively search for and solely purchase eco-labelled products/services.

The survey further investigates environmental consciousness by including the actual purchasing behaviour for different eco-labelled products. Therefore a question is added concerning if and for which product groups the respondents consider eco-labels in their everyday lives. The question is structured as a list question where multiple answers can be given. These results can be seen in table 4. As with the data from section 5.2.2 these results are a tool to identify coherence in the respondents’ answers for this study and are due to the low sample size not used to generalize towards a broader context. What is interesting is that for example the person that from the foregoing question claims not being environmentally conscious at all, in this question still chooses considerations about eco-labels for food. This can imply that the respondent is considering environmental issues subconsciously or buys eco-labels for different reasons than the environmental aspect as for example a higher quality perception.

The results in table 4 show that a striking majority of the respondents (81%) considers eco-labels when shopping for food, whereas 9 respondents (43%) also consider eco-labels when purchasing household cleaning and or washing products. Notably, only 5 respondents (24%) do not consider eco-labels at all when shopping in their everyday lives. Consequently these results suggest that a major part of the sample is influenced by and considers eco-labels in some form. This is interesting as this number is higher than the results from the question for environmental consciousness would imply. Therefore the statements about environmental consciousness of the respondents (previous section) seem to be not fully transferred into everyday shopping behaviour. The person that picked a high environmental consciousness before, in this question for instance only answers that he or she takes eco-labels into consideration when purchasing clothes and electronics. Additionally, 1 respondent also considers eco-labels when choosing transportation (“other”), which could indicate the possibility for transferring this towards the choice of travel mode.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eco-Label Considerations</th>
<th>Counts</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household cleaning/washing products</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (open answer possible)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Eco-Label Consideration Counts
4.2.2. Conjoint Analysis

The conjoint analysis section of the survey begins with the respondents having to choose which of the five different levels are the most important in each of the four choices (destination, travel mode, accommodation, activities). The results can be seen in Table 5 where the selection frequency and percentage for each of the levels is presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Counts</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + No Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + Brand (+20%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand + CSR (+15%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Mode</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>47.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + No Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + Brand (+20%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand + CSR (+15%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + No Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + Brand (+20%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand + CSR (+15%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>61.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + No Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + Brand (+20%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand + CSR (+15%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Build-Your-Own Section Counts

In the choice of destination almost half of the respondents (47.62%) do not consider either brands or eco-labels, whereas 7 (33.33%) of the respondents consider the brand to be important and are willing to pay 10% more when making the choice of destination. Only 1 respondent (4.76%) considers eco-labels and 3 respondents (14.29%) are willing to pay 20% more for when the destination is both branded and eco-labelled. None of the respondents states to prefer brands in combination with their CSR activities directly when it comes to the choice of a travel destination.

For the choice of travel mode as well almost half of the respondents (47.62%) do not consider either brands or eco-labels. Nevertheless, the number of considerations for brands increases to 8 respondents (38.1%). Further 3 of the respondents consider eco-labels and could therefore possibly be willing to pay 10% more for the choice of travel mode. However, no respondent states being interested or willing to consider the combination of eco-labels and brands or brands combined with their CSR activities.

For the choice of accommodation the respondents’ considerations are more spread out with 14 (66.67%) neither considering brands nor eco-labels. 3 of the respondents (14.29%) consider brands which represents a smaller amount than for the previous two
choices, whereas 2 respondents (9.52%) consider eco-labels which is, even though quite small, an increase from the previous two choices. When choosing accommodation respondents are further more willing to consider eco-labels & brands in combination and brands and CSR activities, where 1 respondent each (4.75%) could possibly be willing to pay 20% and 15% more for the choice of accommodation.

In the choice of activities 13 of the respondents (61.9%) are not considering brands or eco-labels. Similar to the choice of accommodation they are to a lesser extent referring to brands for the choice of activities with only 3 respondents (14.29%) choosing that alternative. Interestingly 4 respondents (19.05%) are considering eco-labels for the choice of activities, which is the highest amount of counts for the level of Eco-label + No Brand compared to the other choices. Only 1 respondent (4.76%) considers the combination of eco-labels and brands and is willing to pay a price premium of 20%. Finally again none of the respondents chooses the option for brand and CSR activities.

To summarise the respondents’ considerations and choices in the BYO section of the conjoint analysis, a consistent trend can be seen that at least 50% are neither interested in brands or eco-labels for all choices. Nevertheless, other respondents seem to a larger extent consider brands in the choices of destination and travel mode, but not for accommodation and activities. Overall, the rest of the levels’ given options (Eco-labels + No Brand; Eco-label + Brand; Brand + CSR) is considered to be less desirable in the choices of destination and travel mode. Those levels are also more spread out and considered by a minority of the respondents for the choices of accommodation and activities. In this context it should further be noted that 19.05% of the respondents consider Eco-labels in the choice of activities.

Unacceptable Counts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Counts</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-Label + No Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + Brand (+20%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand + CSR (+15%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Mode</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + No Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + Brand (+20%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand + CSR (+15%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + No Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + Brand (+20%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand + CSR (+15%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + No Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + Brand (+20%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brand + CSR (+15%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Screening Section - Unacceptable Counts
The unacceptable counts reflect the respondents’ choices of levels which they deem to be uninteresting and/or unacceptable. The results in table 6 present the attributes and levels which have been given counts by the respondents. Therefore the choice of length of stay is excluded since its levels did not receive any counts.

The counts for the levels which the respondents perceive to be unacceptable are strongly spread out which complicates a visualisation of trends between certain levels and attributes. As expected from the answers in the BYO section, the “No Brand + No Eco-label” option does not present many counts across all four choices (1 count each for destination, accommodation and activities; and 2 counts for travel mode). Many of the counts also reflect and relate with the choices made in the BYO section, where the attributes showing a higher count for the option of “No Brand + No Eco-label” have many of the remaining levels marked as unacceptable. This can be exemplified by the counts for the choices of accommodation, which in the BYO section has 14 counts for the consideration of neither brands nor eco-labels and were consequently the remaining levels receive higher unacceptable counts (Brand shows 5 counts, Eco-label + No Brand and Eco-label + Brand each get 4 counts and Brand + CSR has 6 counts).

### Must-Have Counts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Counts</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9,52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Mode</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14,29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eco-label + No Brand (+10%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>No Brand + No Eco-label (+0%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7. Screening Section - Must-Have Counts**

The must have counts reflect which levels in a specific attribute the respondents claim to be of particular importance in their choice making. In line with the previous section only the attributes and levels which are given counts by the respondents are shown. The results are presented in table 7 above. The level choices that participants state to be “must haves” are few (8 in total). 7 of the counts are distributed over the “No Brand + No Eco-label” option for each of the four attributes and 1 count is for “Eco-label + No Brand” in the choice of accommodation. Based on this, it can be suggested that a majority of the respondents does not find any of the alternatives to be “must haves” and would have selected the “none” option, which stands in contrast with the unacceptable section where few of the respondents must have found none of the alternatives to be unacceptable. Interesting from the results is that even though a large amount of the respondents seems to consider neither brands nor eco-labels in the BYO section it does not appear being a “must have” choice for the respondents either. In other words do the respondents not perceive the “No Brand + No Eco-label” option as unfavourable, but not favourable either based on the must have and unacceptable counts. This issue is going to be scrutinized more in-depth in the discussion section.
Hierarchical Bayes (HB) Estimations:

In order to obtain and estimate part-worth utilities from the five attributes included in the ACBC part of the survey, the authors have decided to use the recommended Hierarchical Bayes estimation (HB). Hierarchical Bayes offers the benefit of permitting estimations of individual-level models, which provide results that are more accurate towards individuals’ preferences and choices. Such estimates are made from each individual’s betas (parameters) as well as the mean and the covariance of the betas distribution, which are updated through an iteration process. The iteration process creates random draws from the conditional distribution, where estimates are made for each parameter being conditional on the current estimates of the others. In the beginning of the iteration process, these estimates are crude but as the iterations continue, the process converges and generates more correct estimates for each parameter. (Orme, 2000, p. 2-3). For their analysis, the authors use the default and recommended settings in the Sawtooth ACBC module, where 20,000 iterations (draws) are made. The following Figure 13 pictures the iteration process within the Sawtooth ACBC module.

The results outline the average part-worth utility for each of the attribute levels. The part-worth utilities for each level are all scaled to sum up to zero within each attribute (Orme, 2010, pp. 78-79). These calculations present an advanced form of the basic model and formula of the Part Worth Utility Model presented in figure 8 introduced in theory section 2.2.3. The ACBC program’s recommended approach can also be referred to as “zero-centred part-worth utilities” which reflects that the origin of the utility scale is unknown and that therefore one level of utility for one attribute cannot directly be compared to the level of utility of another attribute (SSI Web, 2014e). Further does this approach also reflect that the different levels of utility within each attribute should be seen as relative in importance between each other. This means that when for example a
certain level has a negative utility value (e.g. – 1) it does not mean that the option (level) is unattractive to the respondents but rather that the levels which have a higher utility value (e.g. +/- 0 or + 1) are considered to be more attractive. (Orme, 2010, pp. 78-79)

The part-worth utilities from the Hierarchical Bayes estimates for the four made choices (destination, travel mode, accommodation and activities) are exhibited in figures 14 to 17 below. Estimations for the choice of length of travel is not included since it only provides the perceived utility for either short or long trips, which is not a direct question of this thesis.

**Figure 14. Utility Scores for Choice of Destination**

For the choice of destination the level of “No Brand + No Eco-label” possesses the highest amount of utility (59,34775) based on the respondents’ choices. The level with the second highest utility score is “Brand” (9,73578) which according to the results presents a smaller utility than the level of “No Brand + No Eco-label”. In line with these results it should once more be noted that “Brand” is not six times less preferable than “No Brand + No Eco-Label”, but that it is relatively less desirable than “No Brand + Eco-Label”. The alternative which has the lowest utility is “Brand + CSR” (-47,98894). It could therefore be suggested that such an option is not considered to be desirable by respondents in the choice of destination. The alternatives “Eco-Label + No Brand” (-5,43012) and “Eco-Label + Brand” (-15,66447) on the other hand are more desirable than the combination of Brands + CSR activities, but less desirable than the alternatives of “No Brand + No Eco-labels” or just individual brands. Overall the results therefore suggest that tourists seem to find a higher desirability in not having to consider any options concerning brands and/or eco-labels.
In line with the foregoing results, the alternative of “No Brand + Eco-Label” (41,29149) presents the option which respondents perceive to provide the highest utility for the choice of travel mode. The second most desirable option is “Eco-Label + No Brand” (9,37886), where “Brand” (7,77436) is close third. The two least desirable alternatives are “Eco-Labels + Brand” (-28,09245) and “Brand + CSR” (-30,35226). Overall these results suggest that in the choice of travel mode tourists do not consider the option of brands or eco-labels (individually or in combination) to provide any greater utility. An interesting observation is that brands or eco-labels individually both have generally high utility scores and that the differences between the scores are very narrow. These results could therefore suggest that even though respondents (tourists) at the moment do not perceive the combination of brands and eco-labels desirable, the substantial utility seen for the two individually could possibly invite respondents in the future to perceive utility in options integrating the two.

In the choice of accommodation the alternative of “No Brand + No Eco-Label” (61,57666) is considered to be as well the option which provides the highest utility to the respondents. “Brand” (1,25874) is the alternative which provides the second highest utility.
utility, whereas “Eco-Label + Brand” (-0.31613) is close third. The least amount of utility provide “Eco-Label + Brand” (-16.90632) and “Brand + CSR” (-45.61295). In summary all alternatives in relation to the option of considering neither brands nor eco-labels hold a surprisingly low desirability for the respondents (tourists) in the choice of accommodation. Important to note is that the difference in utility scores between the options of brands or eco-labels individually is very small, which showcases that both individually generate a similar degree of utility for the tourist.

Figure 17. Utility Scores for Choice of Activities

As in the previous choices the option of “No Brand + No Eco-label” (61.00508) is considered to provide the highest utility to the respondents for the choice of activities. “Eco-Label + No Brand” (-0.43872) is perceived to be the alternative which provides the second highest utility and “Brand” (-7.87751) is considered the third. Overall these utility measures suggest that in the choice of activities the options of brand and eco-labels (individually or in combination) do not provide any greater desirability when put in relation of not having to choose. With that said eco-labels provide a greater utility in the eyes of the tourists than brands.

Average Importance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Average Importance</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of Trip</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination</td>
<td>23.57</td>
<td>6.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Mode</td>
<td>16.95</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>19.84</td>
<td>6.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>19.87</td>
<td>5.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>14.46</td>
<td>11.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Average Importance of Package Choices

Table 8 presents the average importance for each of the four tourism choices including the fifth choice of length of trip as well as the perceived importance of price. This data showcases how much utility each of the attributes is considered to have in relation to each other in the context of a tourism package (Orme, 2010, pp. 79-80). Overall the
utility for each of the attributes is, with the exception of length of trip (5.31083), evenly distributed where no attribute generates a salient amount of utility in relation to the other attributes. This can possibly be explained by the nature of tourism where each of the attributes destination (23.56551), travel mode (16.94746), accommodation (19.84164) and activities (19.87226) must be considered in order to create a satisfactory and functioning tourism experience. The low utility value for the choice length of trip can also validate the authors’ decision to not include the results from length of trip in the HB estimation section. The utility value of price (14.46230) should be viewed with caution since this survey only made use of price levels as a means to indicate the different price premiums each of the levels holds. From the results it could also be suggested that price in context of the package provides a certain amount of utility but as stated in the methodology section, the issue of the sunk cost fallacy has to be taken into consideration interfering with the perception about given prices.

4.3. Developing the Conceptual Model

This subchapter refers to RQ 3 and triangulates the findings from the qualitative and quantitative data collection within the mixed method research. As discussed in the methodology an interpretivist standpoint needs to be taken in order to develop the conceptual framework out of the findings.

The conceptual framework of this thesis is built on Meredith’s (1993) outlined steps on theory building presented in chapter 2.3.3. As stated a conceptual framework is a conceptual model first derived from descriptive elements and continuously using explanatory elements to transform the model stepwise into a conceptual framework. The third step of iteratively testing and refining the model lies out of the timeframe for this study but may present a starting point for continuous research in order to develop valid theory about brand and eco-label synergies in tourism.

The first, descriptive step of the theory building focusses on the different decisions of the tourism package choices. As found by Hedlund (2013) this comprises six choices in the context of sustainable charter tourism: the destination, travel mode, accommodation, activities, time of departure and length of stay (p. 1). The authors have decided to only use the four choices travel mode, destination, accommodation and activities since those can be directly related to the choice of brands and eco-labels in travel packages whereas length of stay and departure time are not dependent on labelling or branding. In order to visualize the five different levels combining the different

![Figure 18. Conceptual Model: Ideal Perspective](image-url)
possibilities of marketing brands in combination with eco-labels and CSR measures, a model is chosen depicting different layers of desirable utility scores. Since the purpose of this study is to research synergy effects between brands and eco-labels and find ways to increase by this the demand for more sustainable tourism alternatives the chosen visual depiction (figure 18 to 20) showcases the different ways of combining the alternatives with increasing desirability from the outer layer into the inner square.

The inner square within figure 18 is defined as providing a fully branded and eco-labelled travel package comprising the destination, accommodation, travel mode and activities. This provides an ideal situation (based on theory and long-term goals of the industry) in which the brand and eco-label are working in synergy and complementing its features in order to increase awareness, trust and credibility. The second most desirable package the authors argue in the light of sustainability is a package that is branded and comprises CSR measures rather than eco-labels for the different choices. This still focuses on increasing a more sustainable tourism behaviour in long-term. The third layer describes fully branded packages that at least show customer preference to this brand and may provide room for improving green standards from the company perspective in order to keep the brand loyalty. The fourth layer describes packages that are eco-labelled but not connected to any brand preference. The question was raised if the fully eco-labelled or the fully branded package should be more desirable. The result is argued for as the concepts of co-creation and brand loyalty are seen to be pivotal in order for a large scale increase of more sustainable travel options. Therefore the authors claim that utilities for brands are more useful on the pathway towards a brand plus eco-label approach than utilities for eco-labels as those do not imply loyalty and may lose trust quickly. The last and least desirable layer describes a situation where the packages are not favoured because of their brand or eco-labels but customers use different cues for their decision like availability or price. Here the providers’ influence through different actions is very limited, hence constitutes a stage farthest apart from the ideal situation.

Transferring this visual depiction towards the utility scores achieved in the conjoint analysis for the different levels within each choice by the tourists (figure 19), the colouring clearly shows a discrepancy towards the ideal model. As stated in the preceding analysis sections the highest utilities in all choices are seen in the level “No Brand & No Eco-Label” coloured in dark blue, whereas “Brand & CSR” is found to have the lowest utility coloured in the two light blue shades. Through the depiction an apparent relation between the choices “Destination” and “Accommodation” and between “Travel
el Mode” and “Activities” becomes visible since the composition of the utilities is the same within the two pairs. A marketing approach emphasizing this pairing may be useful to further investigate a possible connection. For the first two “Brands” can be seen playing a more important role than “Eco-labels” while for the second two it’s the other way round. The option “Brand & Eco-label” is also generally visibly preferred over CSR measures. A marketing approach from this could combine communication measures for these two pairs. Deriving from this, a travel package that puts a stronger focus on marketing the brand for the destination and accommodation and adding an eco-labelled travel option and eco-labelled activities could likely reach a higher acceptance among customers. Further possible actions are being discussed in the following discussion chapter.

Applying the model to the interpretation of the answers from the interviews (figure 20) the inner, most commonly marketed package from the company perspective is currently comprised of branded options for travel mode, destination and accommodation whereas activities do not seem to be marketed directly under the brand. What is visible is that for three (destination, travel mode and activities) of the choices CSR measures are more focussed on than Eco-labels, which is neither in line with the suggested ideal model based on theory nor the customers’ stated preferences. The outer layers are as can be expected due to the company orientation combinations of solely eco-labels and the option “no brand & no eco-labels” since a company is unlikely to market an unbranded product. The reason for the choice “activities” falling out of this pattern is that they seem as a conclusion from the interview statements not to be a focus for the current marketing of the packages in general even though the interviewees see potentials in it.

As shown within the colouring, there is a strong difference between the customer’s perceived model and the company model in comparison to the ideal model. Still the companies get closer to the ideal model with their current marketing since they, as a matter of context, focus on marketing their own brands. The customer perspective though is deviating strongly from the ideal state, which means that a greater focus on the customer needs to be taken as the messages from the companies’ communication efforts seem to be not received by the customers in the intended way. Reasons for this mismatch and how this can be possibly achieved will be discussed in the following discussion part of the thesis.
5. Discussion

Based on the presented analysis section and the introduced conceptual model, the discussion part focuses on connecting results with theoretical frameworks and eventually triangulating the different elements of branding, eco-labelling and decision making theory. By implementing explanations from these areas into the model, the next step is taken in order to develop a conceptual framework (Meredith, 1993). The discussion is ordered by answering the three research questions of this thesis.

5.1. Discussion of RQ 1: “Why does branding appear to be successful in influencing tourism choice while eco-labelling is found to have lower or no influence on consumers?”

5.1.1. Explaining Brand Performance

As elaborated in the introduction and theory section of this study, the tourism industry is facing a new challenge of increasing more sustainable behaviour in accordance with the sustainability triple-bottom line comprising economic, social and environmental performance. The economic objectives of tourism providers have been developed and refined for about 60 years and within this, strong brands have been established in order to differentiate the competitors on the market. After the publishing of the Brundtland Report in 1987 new objectives aiming at social and environmental considerations evolved gradually and eco-labels and certifications increased in both number and importance.

As discussed in the theory section both brands and eco-labels can based on a number of factors, such as strong material and immaterial attributes, position itself in the mind of the consumer influencing the chance of purchase (Kotler & Keller, 2012, pp. 242-243; Thøgersen, 2000, pp. 291-292). As brands and labels can be seen to share certain similarities the question of “why they currently perform with such unequal success” arose in the authors’ minds early in the review of previous research. Based on the explanations found through secondary research and opinions provided by the conducted expert interviews, this question is going to be discussed in the following representing the first of the three introduced research steps of this thesis. As stated in the study’s purpose and research gap, the objective of this step is to identify reasons for this performance gap. In the following possible reasons for brand performance are named and discussed.

Branding and brand building in particular is found to be a highly researched area in the field of business research. Because of this, elaborated theory on creating brand equity already exists and is, judging from the experts’ statements, widely established within the tourism industry. A successful brand in the market therefore holds a strong brand equity embracing the four introduced dimensions brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. Stepwise guidance towards creating a strong brand is considered important and provided by for example Aaker (1991) or Keller (2009).

Analysing the interview statements the necessity for a high brand equity is commonly acknowledged by the company representatives. A major focus is put on communicating the brands of the individual charter tourism providers in order to represent the company, its values as well as differentiating it from competitors. Here source credibility and source attractiveness play an important role since it comprises the customer’s perception on the source’s expertise, objectivity, trustworthiness and social value, which is provided to the tourists like self-identification and social status (Solomon et al., 2013, pp. 315-316). In the context of tourism, the brand is representing this source and must therefore
evoke those perceptions in order to influence the consumer’s behaviour. Source credibility and attractiveness could therefore be perceived to be connected to high brand equity since a high equity is defined by the awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and loyalty a consumer feels and holds towards a specific brand (Aaker, 1991, pp. 16-17; 1996, p. 103). Overall, brand awareness is stated to be high as only few charter tourism providers operate in the Swedish market and heavily promote themselves through online and classic communication tools like brochures in their bricks-and-mortar shops. Advertisement for example through the internet has been shown to influence consumer choices and by this help the brands succeeding in their market performance (Buhalis & Licata, 2002, pp. 218-219; Tierney, 2000, p. 219). Further brand associations from the viewpoint of the companies comprise quality statements and trustworthiness. These underlying associations are made visible through the brand’s distinctive logo which is widely placed on the different products/services offered providing reassurance to the customer within various steps of the service experience. If the promises made through the brand are fulfilled, the perceived quality of the brand can eventually result in customer loyalty (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 385). According to the interview, customers show a certain level of brand loyalty preferably requesting certain brands. Consequently, if those four elements are considered to be high in the mind of the consumer, the credibility and attractiveness of the brand in turn will be high. Connecting this to the seven P’s of the service marketing mix it becomes visible that the brands are currently playing a key role guiding the customers through the companies’ efforts referring to their product, price, promotion, place, people, physical evidence and eventually process considerations. The brand can be seen as summarizing the value provided throughout the whole service experience in one visual message (Wilson et al., 2012, p. 380). The statements throughout all interviews indicate that this is currently the case at least for the researched brands. This provides a possible explanation on why consumers answer positively towards individual brands since they are generally well developed.

5.1.2. Explaining Eco-Label Performance

Eco-labels in contrary to brands are found to currently underperform as consumers seem to either not have a considerable knowledge about existent eco-labels in general (Fairweather et al., 2005, p. 94; Hedlund, 2013, p. 16) or not transfer their stated high environmental awareness into actual behavioural responses (Buckley, 2002, p. 185).

As introduced by Thøgersen (2000) five steps need to be fulfilled in order for eco-labels to be successful bearers of information and affect consumers’ behaviour. The steps have to be seen as interconnected and enhancing each other and are used in this thesis as anchoring points to explain the consumers’ low consideration for eco-labels.

(1) First and foremost the consumers need to be aware about the label’s existence (Thøgersen, 2000, pp. 291-292). This is currently not found to be the case as the simple abundance of different applicable eco-labels is stated to create confusion within the market (Fairweather et al., 2005, p. 86). Generally customers in Sweden are found to be highly aware of eco-labels as a concept (Nordic Eco-Label, 2014; Krav, 2014) but in other studies no high levels of recognition are seen in the market for particular labels (Buckley, 2001, pp. 23-24). This moves the discussion on to the next identified step.
(2) The tourists have to know what the label looks like and where it appears (Thøgersen, 2000, pp. 291-292). A challenge here is that eco-labels can be applied in very diverse areas focussing for example on specific social or environmental issues or combining these (Buckley, 2002, p. 184; Zaman et al., 2010, p. 105). Different groups like companies, non-governmental organisations or policymakers are currently utilizing them in very different areas of the societal life. Further, a big diversity is found in how the visual statement about those standards is exhibited. Certifications like ISO for example guarantee environmental and social behaviour often without visually labelling the product/service offers. The interviews as identified in the analysis section confirm this issue by for instance stating “[...] a challenge in the travel business is the recognition factors and there is so much out there (eco-labels) on the market right now” (Interview 1).

(3) In order to tackle this challenge, the knowledge about the label’s meaning and its purpose becomes a pivotal consideration as well (Thøgersen, 2000, pp. 291-292). In this regard, consumers are found to be uncertain about the environmental outcomes behind the promises represented by eco-labels and the eco-label schemes since these vary considerably in their scope and depth generating a market situation of low transparency (Buckley, 2001, pp. 23-24). This is confirmed by the companies arguing that the eco-label Travelife was introduced because of this disorganized situation. One company uses this argument for preferring ISO over eco-labels. They claim that the institution of ISO appears to hold more customer knowledge for ensuring quality standards even though they are perceived to not know the detailed requirements behind this certification. According to them the ISO standard is associated by the customers claiming “[...] everyone understands that ISO is something good, that it is a certification that is a good and useful tool” (Interview 1). The official character the ISO standard is carrying may hence be seen as providing a trustworthy quality indication for consumers and serve as an example for successfully establishing sustainability standards.

(4) Translating from the foregoing steps, trust in the label’s message as well as in its accrediting organization has to be ensured (Thøgersen, 2000, pp. 291-292). Trust can be seen to strongly correlate with the theory of risk perception. As it relates to the confusion and uncertainty consumers feel about current eco-labels, this notion can possibly explain eco-labels’ low influence on consumers’ choices. Therefore must the possible monetary, functional, physical, social and/or psychological risks associated with the choice of eco-labelled products/services be thoroughly taken into account when designing a marketing strategy. Monetary risk (in other words the price premium) is often stated as one of the main reasons why eco-labels are not as highly accepted as brands (Gallastegui, 2002, p. 322; Horne, 2009, p. 179) but within the interviews a pattern indicates that the actual functional risk referring to expected individual benefits influences the choice for or against brands and eco-labels more than may be openly recognized by the tourists themselves. Social and psychological risk perception seem to only claim a minor part in the consideration set since, as revealed through the interviews, negative publicity relating to social or environmental issues evokes a strong customer reaction while the positive CSR measures are seen as a hygiene factor. The accusation of greenwashing needs to be taken into account in this context referring to the credibility of the certifying organization as the eco-labels’ awarding is likely to be ineffective or even damaging brand equity if the label is applied to products or services found unsustainable. This can result in companies finding themselves being for example listed in studies like “The Sins of Greenwashing”, and by this losing customer trust (Terrachoice, 2010).
(5) Eventually, if the four preceding steps are achieved, the customer still needs to believe that the label will benefit and fulfil his or her desires and intentions concerning the issue connected to the label’s certification (Thøgersen, 2000, pp. 291-292). Here it is stated by the tourism providers that currently customers appear to favour social issues relating to the local communities they are visiting at the destination over general environmental actions. In contrast to this, most eco-labels are found to refer to environmental claims (Ecotrans, 2014) and therefore may not convey the messages that consumers currently consider most important in the context of tourism.

Overall it can be stated for RQ 1 based on the secondary literature and data collection from the expert interviews that although sharing similarities in their features brands currently appear to be the more developed and thought-through visual tool providing information and consequently influencing tourists more strongly than eco-labels do. The next step of this research tests empirical data now against these findings by using the results from the conjoint analysis among tourists with the aim of identifying where tourists actually currently consider brands and eco-labels in their decisions.

5.2. Discussion of RQ 2: “Where do brands and eco-labels play a role in the decision making of tourists?”

5.2.1. Part-worth Utilities for the Four Package Choices

In order to discuss where in the tourists’ decision making brands and eco-labels play a role, their different part worth utilities as well as the overall importance for the different attributes indicating where the most weight in the decision lies, needs to be discussed.

Relying on the findings from the qualitative interviews it can be stated that brands have a higher influence on tourists than eco-labels as outlined in the discussion for RQ 1, but when studying the quantitative results the utility scores show that there is often little difference between the desirability of brands and eco-labels. The utility scores generally do not give insight into the reasons for why certain attributes and values are perceived to be desirable, but only on how high those are. In order to discuss possible explanations for the achieved utility scores existent theory about the decision making process in tourism and consumer behaviour is translated into the charter tourism situation.

As stated in the analysis section the conjoint analysis presents interesting utility measures, especially in comparison to the interview statements. The results from the overall part-worth utility measures for all the four choices indicate that currently neither brands nor eco-labels (individually or in combination) seem to provide a considerably high utility in relation to the other given choice options to tourists. Further across all of the choices brands in combination with their CSR activities are perceived to offer the lowest amount of utility to the tourists. The following discussion concerning the choices will be ordered after the achieved attribute importance: destination with the highest importance, followed by activities, accommodation and eventually travel mode (see table 8 for attribute importance).

Based on the results for the choice of destination (figure 14) it can be suggested that brands should be of greater importance in tourism companies’ marketing efforts when promoting the choice of destination. Activities (figure 17) are found to be the only option where eco-labels actually achieved a higher utility score than brands. Here it can be clearly stated that eco-labels can potentially increase demand for sustainable activities.
and that there is still room to market the travel brand more intensively than currently done. For accommodation (figure 16) on the other hand brand is stated to be only of a slightly higher importance than an eco-label, which means that the marketing of both could be equally effective and a combination may solve the challenge of the currently low importance within the consideration set. For travel mode (figure 15) both brands and eco-labels individually showcase a considerably high utility score but appear to be generally not as appreciated in combination.

The authors argue that a possible reason for the similar utility scores for brands and eco-labels achieved throughout all choices could be that eco-labels themselves may be perceived as being very similar to brands and therefore at some levels provide the same required visual cues for trust and quality. On the other hand it has to be taken into consideration that a similar (or high) utility does not necessarily translate into actual behaviour and favouring brands over eco-labels or vice versa (Orme, 2010, pp. 25-27). In fact, since a “no eco-labelled” travel package cannot exist without a brand in charter tourism, different motivations behind the similar utility scores can indicate the suggested possible synergy effects when combined. Building on this, the authors suggest that a combination possibly could become more attractive to tourists if designed and marketed right as the individual benefits for choosing a particular travel mode offer of brands and eco-labels and their interaction need to be clarified.

Using the visual depiction of the model including the utilities from the customers (figure 19) and answers from the companies (figure 20) about the different choices within the packages, it needs to be discussed how both perspectives can be influenced towards meeting at the suggested ideal model (figure 18). Since this can only happen through communication measures, the companies need to identify where their marketing activities may be already placed effectively and where there is a current mismatch between what messages they intend to convey and what actually reaches the customers. Different measures for this are discussed in the following sections and related to theory referring to the particular choice levels of brands, eco-labels, a combination and CSR.

5.2.2. Brand Utility

The results from the quantitative section indicate a common and after investigating RQ 1 surprising disinterest in brands and eco-labels when it comes to tourism choices. Relating these results to the presented theory about branding, eco-labels and communication a number of possible explanations can be derived. Generally can this disinterest imply that customers are reluctant to involve a higher amount of cognitive effort into their choices and instead use other heuristics than brands and eco-labels, such as for instance price, to evaluate the attractiveness of a package. If this is the case a marketing design that more clearly communicates the distinctive green and qualitative attributes of the whole packages that consumers favour may be of more effect. If the choice situation can be simplified towards a lower level of involvement for the customer, the more sustainably oriented packages may become more attractive and increase demand. For the case of brands, the low consideration can imply that current Swedish tourism companies and their brands are not perceived by the tourists to be clearly differentiated. In a choice context this means that different brands and their offers may be currently seen to be substitutable.
Consequently it can be questioned if Swedish tourism brands generally hold a low brand equity due to shortfalls within the brand equity dimensions or if the market standards are in average set so high due to the strong competition that customers assume equally high performance from all brands. It is important to note that this study does not aim to test the individual brands’ utilities but indicates an overall impression of the current market situation. Therefore the results cannot be utilized to measure the full potential of customer-based brand equity where consumers’ subjective perceptions and considerations for individual brands can be identified. Nevertheless, this presents an interesting point of departure for future research particularly from the viewpoint of the tourism companies since it shows that marketing potentials currently seem to be not fully exploited. Overall the suggestion provided above fit in with the signs and indications presented by Aaker (1991) that the brand-building process within the company is eroding and brand loyalty falling. In specific, the issue of brand associations should be taken into account as all companies seem to consider themselves clearly differentiated on the market at the moment whereas the utility results infer a different conclusion (Aaker, 1991, pp. 10-11).

As the participants consider themselves in 67% of the responses as medium or above brand conscious in general, the reasons need to be investigated for why this seems to be not transferred into their utility scores for brands in tourism. According to the theory reviewed brand equity is a key factor for the brand performance and positively influences financial performance (Keller, 1993; Lassar et al., 1995, p. 21-22). Therefore its four dimensions - brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty are used in the following discussion to enhance understanding on the results for the option of brands in the following.

**Brand awareness** is an important starting point. The results infer that customers are generally able to recognize the biggest tourism brands in Sweden based on their name and logo. All respondents seemed to be familiar with the presented brands in the survey and no questions were raised from the participants asking for definition of particular brands when they were exposed to them in the survey. Regardless, brand awareness needs to be strong enough to become part of the tourists’ consideration set (Baker et al., 1986, pp. 637-338; Nedugadi, 1990, p. 264). Connecting to this assumption, the results about the brand’s achieved generally low utility scores suggest that in the researched case participants seem to not strongly focus on a preconditioned set of preferred brands. As described in the preceding analysis section the utility score for brand for example within the choice of destination (figure 14) is 9.7 in comparison to the utility score of 59.3 for the choice “No Brand & No Eco-Label”. Concluding from this the authors suggest that the other dimensions of brand equity may pose the reason for the low utility scores for brands in tourism rather than major flaws in the brand awareness.

The second dimension is **brand associations**. The results indicate that customers in the field of tourism possibly hold no highly distinctive associations towards the different brands. This implies that the customers’ current information and perception connected to individual brands does not provide any greater differentiation from each other thereby resulting in the low utility score for brands throughout the study. In order to create a significant brand preference the charter providers need to secure that clear, distinctive brand associations are held by their customers towards their particular brand. Based on Keller’s (2009) brand building model depicted in figure 4 such an action implies that the brand should establish a meaning in the minds of the consumers based on perceived brand performance (features, reliability, price, etc.) and imagery of the brand (brand
personality, values, history, etc.) (pp. 143-144). As these associations are based on the customers’ experience and amount of exposure to a brand (Keller, 1993, p. 10) marketing communication needs to be focussed on to reinforce the brand attributes.

The next dimension comprises *brand quality*. As stated in the theory section, it is often hard for customers to assess the outcome of a particular service beforehand and that consumers therefore use cues and attributes connected to the service in order to evaluate its perceived quality (Zeithaml, 1988, pp. 4-5; Keller, 1993, p. 5; Aaker, 1996, pp. 109-110). Examples of such cues and attributes can be divided into consumers’ perceived judgement of the brand (its quality, credibility, superiority, etc.) and the consumers’ feelings (the brand being perceived as environmentally friendly, secure, caring, etc.) (Keller, 2009, pp. 143-144). Quality can also be connected to the theory of heuristics providing a relative preference dimension (RPD). This implies that a certain threshold of perceived quality exists that brands have to convey through their communication in order to become part of the consideration set of the tourist. Transferring this to the research’s results a reason for the low utility of brands could be that the competing tourism brands all provide the necessary threshold of perceived quality to the consumers and therefore no particular consideration set occurs as a result.

The fourth and final dimension in the customer based brand equity model is *brand loyalty*. It implies that a tourist holds a deep commitment to repurchase trips from a specific tourism brand (Oliver, 1997, p. 392). Using heuristics, brand loyal customers would use a rejection-inducing dimension (RID) and exclude other brands than their preferred one directly from their consideration set. The choices within the conjoint analysis in contrast suggest that tourists do not necessarily use this heuristic and do not choose and purchase their holidays based on their considerations for brands but seem to consider other factors. The low utility for brand refers to a low brand loyalty thus inducing unbound choosing between different offers from tourism brands. In order to change this situation the tourism providers may need to consider stronger relationship building measures although this can only be considered the last step in the customer-based brand equity model since the foregoing steps of awareness, associations and quality need to be secured first. In this context the authors claim the S-D logic approach may play an important role. The service-dominant logic approach provides guidance on how tourism companies could develop and alter their activities and processes in co-creation with their customers in order to improve the consumers’ perception about the brand and its offerings. Tourism brands need be aware of the different points within the service delivery process where the customer gets in touch with the company. These contact points are the actual service encounters and as stated in the S-D logic theory the sum of those forms the customers overall perception of the service quality. Hence the quality perception lies in the behold of the customer and brand loyalty can be argued to be both an influencing and influenced factor by a close collaboration and relationship with customers.
5.2.3. Eco-Label Utility

In the case of eco-labels the respondents’ low consideration may imply that current eco-labels and certifications hold a low level of recognition and/or are not perceived to be clearly differentiated by tourists. This is a suggestion that fits with the current theory concerning consumer perception on eco-labels discussed in RQ 1 (Buckley, 2001, pp. 23-24; Fairweather et al., 2005, p. 86 & 94). In order to overcome the low recognition and differentiation found with eco-labels Aaker’s (1991) suggested signs and indications that the brand-building process is eroding can be used providing guidance. Important in this regard is the measurement of knowledge of consumer’s awareness and attachment towards certain labels, measuring their satisfaction and loyalty in relation to eco-labelled tours and the implementation of a long term strategy for the usage of eco-labels (p. 10-11). In relation to the interviews, these steps are currently not being undertaken although all companies interviewed at least employ a position focussing on CSR and sustainability in general which can be a starting point for further progress in the usage of eco-labels.

From the study, 62 % of the respondents consider themselves to be medium or above average in eco-label consciousness. Those results therefore present an imperative to investigate why respondents’ consciousness for eco-labels in general does not transfer into the utility scores for eco-labels in tourism. As stated in the theory section, the authors believe that branding theory could be partially translated into the context of eco-labels in tourism. Therefore the following section discusses the four dimensions of brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty translated towards eco-labels as well.

The awareness for eco-labels in Sweden is generally claimed to be high, where big actors such as The Nordic Eco-label (called Svanen in Sweden) and Krav state to individually hold 98% in a public awareness (Nordic Eco-Label, 2014; Krav, 2014). The survey in the conjoint analysis of this research includes the eco-labels Zeromission, EU Ecolabel, FairTrade, Rainforest Alliance and Svanen in order to visualize and exemplify different labels to the respondents. During the survey no questions were raised about definition of particular eco-labels or any of the respondents appeared to be unfamiliar with the concept which suggests that in line with the official statements of Krav and the Nordic Eco-Label most of the respondents hold at least to a certain level knowledge about eco-labels. The authors however agree in their derived impression from the study with the interviewees and literature stating that eco-labels in tourism, like for instance Travelife, seem to not hold as high of an awareness as for example labels for food have already managed to achieve. This assumption connects to the results where eco-labels in summary show comparably low utility scores across all four choices, which could be explained by tourists not generally having a preconditioned set of preferred eco-labels or seeing a lack of differentiation between eco-labels based on a lower awareness for eco-labels utilized in tourism.

For the second dimension, parallel to the question of brand associations the low utility score for eco-labels across the four choices may indicate that tourists do not hold distinctive associations with the eco-labels active in tourism. This suggestion can be supported by theory finding that eco-labels are less trusted based on the uncertainty of the environmental outcomes (Buckley, 2001, pp. 23-24). In addition and as stated previously the large amount of eco-labels on the market confuses customers (Fairweather et al., 2005, p. 86). In order to create more clearly distinctive profiles for individual labels the
certifying organizations need to develop a clear image for the eco-label as it would be done for a brand (Keller, 1993, p. 3; Keller, 2009, pp. 143-44). The image in turn could help to evoke certain associations related to the category identification and consumer needs which in turn help the tourist to identify and remember the eco-label (Keller, 2009, pp. 143-44). Similar to branding should certification organisations develop and establish a meaning connected to the eco-label based on perceived label performance and label imagery (e.g. life cycle considerations, the labels stance of environmental and/or social issues, etc.). They need in other words associations which represent, inform and clarify to the tourist what the intentions of the label are (Spittler & Haak, 2001, pp. 231-232). Further, marketing communication needs to be utilized in order to both educate the tourists as well as reinforce the eco-labels’ attributes.

The dimension of perceived quality can in the context of tourism eco-labels relate to the tourists’ uncertainty about eco-labels and contribute to the low utility scores for eco-labels. This may occur since the cues and attributes that tourists use to evaluate the eco-labels’ performance may not be communicated through the certifying organization marketing efforts thoroughly enough. Here as well the concept of heuristics may be applicable again as presented previously for the branding quality assessment. The relative preference dimension (RPD) may here as well provide a subconsciously held threshold of the quality attribute that decides if a certain eco-label is placed in the consideration set of the customer or not. Due to this the challenge for eco-labels can either be that most of the labels are not perceived to reach this threshold or that too many provide the same cues. The authors argue that resulting from the low legal regulation and abundance of different eco-labels on the market the first explanation appears to be more likely.

The fourth and last dimension of brand loyalty may in the opinion of the authors not be directly applicable to eco-labels. Since eco-labels and brands fulfil different functions in a marketing context it can be argued that eco-labels are mainly used for their functional contribution communicating quality and performance standards that are actually provided by the brand and not the eco-label. Therefore eco-labels can provide a tool to increase loyalty towards the brand wearing it as a badge (GEN, 2004, p. 1; Bruce & Larioya, 2007, pp. 276-277). It is however important to remember that in order for eco-labels to have effect on consumers’ behaviour to purchase more sustainable services it must be able to generate trust between the issuing organization and the tourist believing and trusting its message and intentions (Thøgersen, 2000, pp. 291-292).

5.2.4. Brand and CSR Utility

A strikingly apparent outcome of the utility measurement within the conjoint analysis is the very low consideration of utility for the choice “Brand & CSR” which in all four package choices constantly achieved the lowest scores. This strongly implies a mismatch between what the companies perceive to be important to the customers and what the tourists seem to value. As corporate social responsibility is a complex topic by itself, different reasons can be named based on the reviewed literature in chapter two. Comparing the theory about CSR with the statements of the providers’ representatives it can be seen that the companies appear to follow both a quality oriented CSR by using ISO standards for instance and a transformational CSR by for example trying to improve working conditions and local circumstances at the destinations. The companies’ financial focus seems to lie here on CSR measures more than on the usage of eco-labels.
whereas the results indicate that customers considerably value eco-labels over CSR measures.

Different theories can be applied illuminating this issue. First of all, tourism as a service sector needs to focus on the service marketing mix to clarify the whole performance of the service to the customer including indirect services like CSR measures. The factors to focus on in this tailored marketing mix are the seven P’s “product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence and process” (Singh, 2008, p. 15). If the CSR activities’ role in the marketing mix was increased and perfected it could help tourism companies to build better relationships with the public (Kim & Reber, 2008, p. 341) and thereby help companies to better position their brands towards customers (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010, p. 2). The authors claim that the lack of CSR appreciation may be traced back to the lack of physical evidence and tangible cues towards what is really done with the customers’ monetary expenses while with the eco-labels at least a visual cue is provided that holds certain standards and connects to previous experience. CSR actions of the companies are in opposite harder to convey through a simple message and the necessary information to create understanding for certain issues may overstrain the customers’ cognitive capacity when searching for information about holiday packages.

Furthermore, the lack of perceived individual benefit that is mentioned by the tourism researcher in the interview and the missing of visual status symbols connected to CSR presents another possible reason. In this context the theory of risk perception can be applicable. According to theory five different forms of perceived risk exist: monetary, functional, physical, social and psychological risk (Solomon et al., 2013, p. 352-353). In this case the authors argue that monetary and functional risk may play a role in the subconscious decision making of the tourists since for most CSR measures no direct physical evidence of the actual outcome of the investment can be provided to the individual. A functional risk lies in this sense in the fact that the travel package despite the higher investment for additional CSR measures may not perform to the tourist’s expected standard and with this investment a more suitable package without CSR inclusion could have been purchased. Additionally, attitude theory may imply that the customers can certainly hold a positive attitude towards positive CSR measures by the company fulfilling with this for example the attitude functions defined by Katz “value-expression”, in which the customer holds an attitude to express the individual self-concept or “ego-defence” which implies a defence mechanism against possible internal or external harm coming from the attitude object. (Katz, 1960, p. 170; Solomon et, al., 2013, p. 293) Especially the last point can be used as an explanation why positive CSR is stated to be a hygiene factor, where it is not highly appreciated when existent but causing dissatisfaction among customers due to perceived internal harm when it is found missing.
5.3. Discussion of RQ 3: “Are there synergies between branding and eco-labelling that can be used in marketing communication?”

5.3.1. Synergy Effects

The third and final step framed by RQ3 in this study overlays the two currently identified standpoints of consumers and tourism providers regarding brands and eco-labels. Matching and mismatching perceptions have been analysed within chapter 4 and are now discussed in line with the reviewed theoretical knowledge the authors argue to be transferrable to the new situation of eco-labelling in the tourism industry. Possible synergy effects are developed by starting with providing possible explanations for the current situation of eco-label and brand combination in tourism, elaborating co-branding approaches and probable obstacles to this and eventually presenting implications for the companies’ communication measures if such synergies are wished to be implemented.

Concerning the question of possible synergies between brands and eco-labels - for instance positive brand association or quality perceptions being transferred to the eco-label or vice versa (Besharat, 2010, p. 1241; McCarthy & Norris, 1999, p. 279) it has to be acknowledged that the tourism companies are currently not using eco-labels directly as visual cues on their package offers in the form proposed by this study but rather seem to keep them in their background information sections of brochures or their internet pages. Therefore synergy effects can only be discussed in theory and not based on empirical data about actual purchases. This implies that the discussion about synergies can at this point in time only be introduced for possible synergies based on the assumptions made in previous research, statements from the company representatives and the triangulation with the results from the conjoint analysis.

Connecting to this premise the results from the quantitative section do not suggest that such synergies are currently perceived by tourists to provide utility. However, this does not necessarily mean that the possibilities for it do not potentially exist for future utilization. An explanation for the rather low scores for the combined option can be that this was clearly the highest priced package in the choice situation with a price increase of 20% compared to 10% each for eco-labels and brands individually. Consequently the price provided a clear decision heuristic in this context. It needs to be considered that this might have been relativized if more realistic package offers including images about the destination, accommodation or activities and more in-depth descriptions of the actually purchased packages and their individual benefits would have been presented. Such actions would provide the respondents with a broader basis of tangible cues to form their perceived utility of particular packages. Furthermore the choice situation provided in the conjoint analysis remains unrealistic in that sense that it offers a situation of almost perfect information, in which all the customers have the same and a clear overview of all available options and their pricing (Linton, 2006, p. 18). Decisions under perfect information are in reality a rather unlikely situation, which is as well considered in the presented theory about risk perception and heuristics.

In order to clarify this outcome, deeper research needs to be conducted regarding price elasticity for different versions of brands and eco-label combinations. Further since the concept of brand and eco-labels, at this point in time, is an unusual travel package combination, the tourists may lack familiarity and insight into the benefits that a combination may provide. When analysing the counts of “unacceptable” package elements a maximum of 20% (respondents) considered the choice of “Brand & Eco-Label” not being an option in the package for the different choices. This implies that a major part
of the respondents at least indicates willingness to consider a branded and eco-labelled package if marketed appropriately.

The authors however maintain to argue that the collaboration between those two marketing elements can be used and improved in order to generate value to tourists in the future as a combined usage by now is rather uncommon. Since both brands and eco-labels at least hold a considerable utility score in the conjoint analysis this indicates that a general interest for both options exist and only few consumers do exclude a co-branded option from their consideration set at first hand. Consentaneously representatives from the charter tourism providers state seeing a likeliness of such a synergy but caution must be taken which brands or eco-labels are chosen to collaborate with. This is a valid point to consider by tourism companies and certifying organizations for the future when aiming to generate the greatest amount of value in the eyes of the consumer.

Further the authors believe that the theory of co-branding plays a major role as it is stated that two brands can generate a better attribute profile when they are used in combination to extend into a new product category (Park et al., 1996, pp. 464-465). The authors claim that sustainable tourism can be seen as a new product category in this context as it extends the service of tourism by including more ecologically and socially oriented features. This new category refers to the triple-bottom-line of sustainability including economic, environmental and social factors (Pomering et al., 2011, p. 956; Belz & Peattie, 2012, pp. 129-132) and supports the long-term objective of increasing sustainability in tourism set by the World Tourism Organization (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2013). In order to achieve this co-branding effect the authors claim that the brands and eco-labels used in combination need to point out different benefits to the consumers. If both visual cues are associated with the same promises they may stand in competition and the consumer may not feel the need for purchasing both. To put it into context if the brand claims to stand for a high quality standard and the main association the customer holds for an eco-label is a high quality standard as well, this states a choice situation for which one to trust more. If the association for the brand instead may be “life-style” or “adventure” and the used eco-label presents the needed quality standard this is more likely to be seen as complementing and may be valued as such.

If the providers make the decision to offer the combination of their brand and an eco-label, the authors argue that the element of promotion within the service marketing mix requires particular focus. As shown in section 2.3.1. advertising provides an efficient tool in order to influence consumers decision making (Kim et al., 2005, pp. 47-48; Choe et al., 2013, p. 720) as well as having influence on how tourists, based on their budget (time and money), choose to exercise and choose their trip structure (Choe et al., 2013, p. 717). Referring to the theory of heuristics and the need for mental shortcuts in decisions that require a high amount of information processing a clear communication of the different travel package features and the individual benefits provided needs to be established. For this purpose information and visual cues related to the synergy need to be coherently integrated into the whole service marketing mix. However, the authors claim that the three P’s place, people and process are of particular importance to fulfil the promises made about sustainable values, attributes and associations connected to the brand and eco-label in combination. This requires a more holistic viewpoint from the operating tourism companies.

Taking the element of promotion a step further into the context of sustainability a shift from the traditional service marketing mix (seven P’s) to the sustainable marketing mix
(four C’s) and in particular toward the element of communication may be advisable. This implies that tourist companies should strive towards generating consumer value by focusing and developing their services after the concept of the four C’s presented in section 2.1.5. Customer solutions implies that tourism companies should focus more on the tourists’ actual needs behind their wants and how these can be fulfilled more sustainably through the combination of the brand and eco-labels. Tourism companies should also try to put focus on customer cost - how the resources (money, time, effort, etc.) required by the consumer throughout the whole service process is spent. For example could the combination of the brand and eco-labels help to reduce tourists’ time and cognitive effort through heuristics. The element of communication shifts one-way promotion towards a two-way relationship building strategy between the consumer and company. In this context indirectly conveyed messages need to be considered as well. Script and role theory needs to be taken into account in how the actual company representatives act upon sustainable issues, if they fulfil a role model function and by this indirectly influence the perception about acceptable behaviour among the tourists themselves. (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 31) The authors perceive this element as particularly interesting as they believe that once the communication is tailored and effectively reaches enough customers to overcome the segment of innovators and early adopters (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, p. 182) word-of-mouth and social imitation behaviour from customer segments that tend to follow trends in later stages may help accelerating the communication effects over-proportionally. Although these different customer segments and their influence on each other has not been a particular focus of this study, their existence has to be acknowledged and presents a starting point for further investigation. Additionally, in this context status and self-identification as motivators for cognitively accepting certain communication measures is seen being interesting and argued in line with the interviewed researcher to pose opportunities for further research as well. Finally the element of convenience infers that tourism companies need to develop their service offer toward becoming easy and convenient for the consumer to access and use throughout the whole service process and experience (Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 31).
5.3.2. Developing the Conceptual Framework

Building on this, ways of how the current two perspectives from the customers and companies can be changed and merged into the ideal package solutions have been discussed throughout the preceding chapters. The model suggested by the authors to be ideal is derived from the overall industry objective of increasing sustainable tourism in long-term, which is a notion fitting with the concept of the sustainable marketing mix. As argued for in this thesis’ methodology, an interpretivist standpoint is taken for creating the model by combining the company and customer perspective and evaluating relevant theory. The authors realise that this approach is value-laden and in order to decrease subconscious bias acknowledge being influenced by the issue of sustainability for the field of marketing and the wish to contribute to more sustainable tourism behaviour with this thesis. However, the theories and fields of studies that may be applicable for the study’s purpose reviewed have been made sure to be broad and scientifically developed. This was done in order to not leave out important aspects of consumer behaviour in tourism and was underlined by the critical realist standpoint within the data collection from the tourists. Nevertheless, it needs to be taken into account that the following proposed action steps are building on the provided insight from the introduced theory. Thus the authors claim their credibility but do not exclude the possibility of further applicable theory existent.

Based on the ideal model introduced in the analysis section (figure 18) the synergy of brands and eco-labels should aim to be perceived as the option holding the highest amount of desirability for tourists wanting to purchase a more sustainable charter package. This is derived from both the results of the conjoint analysis and the theory about risk perception, heuristics and service marketing in general as those as formerly stated focus on the individual’s benefits and point out the need to focus on this when marketing service options. In order to discuss the pathway to increasing consumer utility from the most outer layer towards the ideal inner layer, four subsequent steps are elaborated using theory and the collected data in order to suggest practical actions. For the four different choices, different activities may exist. Consequently, the authors have decided to focus on the more general suggestions improving the whole package than going into detail for measures for every single step within every choice option. This can be a starting point for further in-depth elaboration of this model. The steps should be perceived being subsequent starting from where the current utility is found to be lacking using the
The proposed marketing step for improving the position of the brand, eco-label or CSR towards the next layer.

The most basic and therefore stated outer layer within the proposed model (figure 21) describes a situation where consumers neither see utility in choosing a particular brand nor an eco-label. From an industry perspective this poses the least desirable situation and therefore the starting point for improvements. The next layer as discussed in the analysis section 4.3 refers to a theoretical situation when customers are seeing most utility in eco-labels but not brands. This choice has been deeply discussed by the authors amongst each other and decided to be the fourth layer as they claim that from the whole industry’s perspective it is more important on the way towards sustainable tourism to implement trust into eco and social certification measures and establish the necessary institutions before a focus on actual offers from brands and their differentiation can be laid. This more or less constitutes the currently found situation identified in the conjoint analysis and therefore poses in the opinion of the authors the step that should be taken in a short-term time period. The market basis connected to brands is existent and well developed, therefore a switch of focus towards marketing eco-labels appears more urgent in this context. The measurements consequently focus on transition from the choice “No Brand & No Eco-Label” towards “Eco-Label”.

**Marketing Step 1:**

- Reducing inefficient abundance of currently existing eco-labels by for example collaborating on the usage of eco-labels like it’s done with Travelife or ISO.
- Adding credibility to the labels by focussing on only trustworthy labels with official character as for example ISO, EU Eco-Label etc.

Since the next layer claims brands and their clear differentiation on the market to be the following step after ensuring availability of trustworthy eco-labels. The next marketing step focusses majorly on the introduced theory about brand building. The authors argue that distinctively positioned brands play a major role in the market as they ensure the economic factor within the triple-bottom line and strong brand equity and brand loyalty increases the likelihood of customers accepting new introduced travel options.

**Marketing Step 2:**

- Investigate opportunities to position the brands more distinctively by for example focussing on different customer segments as families, couples travelling, leisure or adventure travelling etc. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, pp. 216-225).
- Focus stronger on the service aspect than the product aspect in tourism and implement a consistent S-D logic thinking within the industry (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 2).
- Focus on relationship building and brand loyalty increase in order to achieve a two-way communication with customers and preserve a reliable customer base (Aaker, 1991, p. 39; Dall’Olmo Riley & de Chernatony, 2000, pp. 147-148).
The next layer is stated to include the brands’ CSR activities. Even though the conjoint analysis results showcased the option of Brand + CSR to have the lowest desirability across all of the four choices, the authors choose this option to be in summary the second most desirable layer for the utilities perceived in a travel package. Since CSR is needed in order to create more sustainable tourism, this option cannot be neglected but needs to be investigated in terms of how the communication can be improved for customers to appreciate the measures taken by the companies.

Marketing Step 3:

- Focus more on conveying the message about CSR activities towards customers through more easily accessible channels of information (Singh, 2008, p. 15; Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 31; Wilson et al., 2012, pp. 20-22).
- Prevent greenwashing accusations by involving official and credible partners like for instance WWF in the CSR activities.
- Consider script and role theory in order to create company representatives acting as role models for sustainable behaviour in all points of the service encounters (Solomon et al., 1985, p. 102; Wilson et al., 2012, p. 38).
- Provide personalized information about CSR activities for example tailored towards the destination chosen and provided with the general information about the purchased travel package for the individual customer (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, pp. 12-14).

The final and most inner layer of the model constitutes the intended synergy creation. As previously stated both brands and eco-labels are used individually to reduce customers’ perceived risk and cognitive work. Therefore do the authors believe that a synergy of the two could fulfil the same functions. At the same time could a possible synergy also be seen from the perspective of service marketing and in particular the issue of intangibility, where both the brand and the eco-label provides a visual cue for quality statement.

Marketing Step 4:

- Stronger company focus on S-D logic and value co-creation by involving customers into the choice of eco-labels. Social labels for example may be perceived of more importance for particular destinations than environmental ones and vice versa (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 2 & p. 6).
- Identify perceived risk from customers and directly tailor measures to it like for instance providing a more sophisticated satisfaction guarantee for eco-labelled packages in order to decrease the perceived monetary and functional risk (Lowrance, 1996, cited in Andretta, 2013, p. 2; Wilson et al., 2012, p. 22).
- Increase focus on providing tangible cues about quality standards using eco-labels and brands on various steps (Zeithaml, 1988, pp. 4-5; Aaker, 1996, pp. 109-110)
- Point out individual benefits to the consumers from choosing eco-labelled products from the particular brand as for instance higher quality standards and uniqueness involving local production and cultural influences.
- Ease the choice by making eco-labelled packages easily accessible and identifiable through for instance placing the eco-label and brand visually on the particular package advertisements.
6. Conclusion and Implications

This chapter presents the final conclusions drawn from the preceding analysis and discussion in chapter 4 and 5. The main findings from the triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data collection are summarized in order to present their theoretical and practical contributions and stating managerial implications. The study is evaluated against quality criteria, pointing out limitations and providing starting points for further research.

6.1. Conclusion

6.1.1. Conclusion to Current Market Situation

In conclusion to the current market situation the outcome of this study first of all shows that currently no directly applicable theory about the combination of brands and eco-labels seems to exist. This strongly indicates the novelty of the topic of combining brands and eco-labels for marketing in general. Although the idea for more sustainable behaviour initiated by business has been raised and elaborated continuously after the publishing of the Brundtland Report, the paradigm shift within society appears to be a slow process. Further has the issue just recently, based on the Millennium Development Goals, found its way into the objectives of the world tourism society. (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2010, p. 4) Therefore it is not surprising that currently no established eco-labelled packages from the major charter providers exist. Eco-tourism appears to be a niche in which small-scale providers and NGO’s like the Natures Best in Sweden (Natures Best, 2014; Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2013, p. 10) operate mostly focussing on partial packages instead of offering the whole experience from door to door. However the potentials for increasing sustainable tourism behaviour by integrating mass tourism into the consideration of tourism providers is both seen by scholars and the industry alike (Fairweather et al., 2005, p. 96).

It is commonly observed that tourists furthermore seem to “take vacation from their green behaviour” confirming the identified gap between consumers’ stating green attitudes but not behaving accordingly in their actual purchase choices (Sharpley, 2001, pp. 44-45; Becken, 2007, pp. 363-365; Barr et al., 2010, pp. 479-480; Hedlund, 2013, pp. 14-15). Several reasons have been researched in this study in order to explain this gap and contribute suggestions towards decreasing its width.

Since the challenge of eco-labels currently seems to lie mainly in the variety and disorganized appearance of applicable labels towards different parts of the tourism packages. The reduction of these eco-labels to commonly accepted standards about environmental and social goals needs to be achieved by collaboration among the providers. The label Travelife constitutes a step into this direction.

Swedish tourism presents an interesting market to study in this context. While only a small number of competing charter tourism providers was identified dominating the market (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2013, p. 10) it is still with yearly 2.7 million outbound trips through charter flights with overnight stays abroad in 2012 (Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, 2013, p. 83) of considerable size to show the effects of improvements. Agreements for collaboration and standard setting are therefore likely to be achieved easier if the number of competitors is rather small and the existent collaboration for example when designing the label of Travelife provides a valuable starting point for further improvements.
6.1.2. Conclusion to Research Questions

RQ 1: “Why does branding appear to be successful in influencing tourism choice while eco-labelling is found to have lower or no influence on consumers?”

The theoretical framework reviewed through the literature search and the conducted expert interviews from successful tourism companies provide indications on why brands generally appear to be successful in influencing tourists’ choices while eco-labels appear to be not. Based on this it can be concluded that brands in summary are a well-developed and widely established tool (both from a theoretical and company perspective) of which the brand equity building process clearly lies in the responsibility of the individual company. Eco-labels on the other hand are found to be a new but increasingly important form of visual cues to the customer which due to their third-party character do not provide the clear responsibility definition for the equity building. In combination with the abundance and intransparency of currently applicable eco-labels for tourism, a general state of insecurity about the usage of eco-labels among both customers and companies appears to exist.

RQ 2: “Where do brands and eco-labels play a role in the decision making of tourists?”

Based on the conjoint analysis and the customers’ responses on where brands and eco-labels play a part in their decision making process the utility scores overall reveal that neither brands nor eco-labels are currently perceived to generate the highest desirability to the majority of tourists within the four investigated choices of destination, travel mode, accommodation and activities. However do the conjoint analysis results also indicate that the perception of utility for the usage of brands and eco-labels varies among the presented four choices within the packages. These results therefore provide answers to the question if tourism companies could utilize a more tailored marketing approach concerning their brand and eco-labels. Based on the identified attribute importance the utility scores showcase that brands for example are perceived to provide a higher utility for the choice of destination; eco-labels in comparison are found slightly more desirable for tourist in the choice of activities; and that for accommodation and travel mode the utility score for both brands and eco-labels (individually) is generally on considerably high level and similar. This suggests that both options are considered to be desirable for those two choices. Overall the conjoint analysis results imply that tourism providers need to put a higher focus and effort on these two visual tools in order for them to have a greater influence on customers’ decision making in the future.

RQ 3: “Are there synergies between branding and eco-labelling that can be used in marketing communication?”

The authors found that tourism providers currently do not use the combination of brands and eco-labels in their promotion or on package offers directly. This causes a limitation since the possible synergy effect such a combination could provide can only be discussed in theory and not based on empirical data (i.e. conducting the research on tourists that maybe have bought a eco-labelled package by a preferred brand already). However, the representatives from the tourism industry do in the interviews give positive feedback for such an idea even though they state concerns that caution has to be taken for which eco-labels to partner with. The conjoint analysis reveals that little utility is seen at the moment in the combination of brands and eco-labels by the tourists. Nevertheless is the combination of brands and eco-labels still perceived to provide higher utility than the general CSR measures, which currently are more focused on by the companies. One of the main reasons for why the combination may currently not achieve higher
utility scores can be that this type of package is not in the proposed form available on the mass tourism market yet and tourists lack familiarity and imagination about it.

Triangulating the collected quantitative and qualitative data within the mixed method research as well as the theoretical framework the authors still believe that the combination of brands and eco-labels could in the future be used to provide enhanced value to tourists. In the light of the currently identified likelihood of a rather low level of differentiation in the consideration set of the consumers, tourism providers must put focus on and improve their brand and the eco-labels they choose to utilize. Analysing the decision making process it can be stated that it is not as rational as in many theories described. Preferences and loyalty, heuristics and risk perceptions seem to outweigh objective and rational choice steps. The developed conceptual framework proposes a stepwise approach towards this ideal situation in particular outlining the importance to communicate individual benefits from sustainable behaviour and overcoming the lack of awareness and trust. Particularly interesting is the proposed focus shift from communicating CSR measures since these are apparently not valued highly. Good business practise is seen rather as basis and is more likely to evoke strong negative reactions when violated instead of positive ones for good performance. Shifting the focus from CSR towards Eco-labels does not infer the neglecting of those measures but rather takes the certification of good practise towards a more advanced level and should be seen as a possibility for transition.

6.2. Theoretical Implications

Methodological Contribution:
Pointing out the methodological contribution of this study, the authors claim that their mixed method approach of combining a quantitative conjoint analysis with qualitative semi-structured interviews presents a new and up-to-date approach in marketing research. Something which has not been found to be undertaken in this form in the reviewed literature so far. A sophisticated marketing research software was acquired in this context providing a statistical depth towards the analysis that would have been unlikely to achieve within the given timeframe if calculated by the authors in Excel and SPSS Software. The idea of triangulating different fields of studies was challenging as framing the researched areas without leaving out important considerations required extensively analysing existent theory preceding the actual planning of the research design. The elaborated research design utilizing pragmatism including different philosophical stances where appropriate was perceived of particular benefit when the conceptual model had to be developed and explanations needed to be added from different theories.

Theoretical Contribution:
This thesis develops further theoretical knowledge by introducing a conceptual framework that embraces decision making theory, branding theory and eco-label theory in the context of tourism as a service industry. This particularly contributes to the current set research priority by the Marketing Science Institute to research the consumer decision making process as rather constituting a funnel or iterative process and focussing on the brand’s importance in this context (MSI, 2012). The current study contributes to this by identifying utility scores for the brands, eco-labels and their combination with each other or CSR activities referring to the four choices of the charter tourism travel package.
As sustainability is an increasingly important topic, theory needs to be developed from the current market situation on how to implement the consideration of the sustainability triple-bottom line into actual, utilizable marketing models and by this overcome the apparent attitude behaviour gap among tourists. Due to the stated novelty of the issue, the literature review shows a variety of fields of study that need to be connected in order to achieve a holistic theoretical framework. Through the usage of empirical data from both the business and consumer side, shortfalls in the current marketing approach for tourism providers become visible. A mismatch at different parts of the process is observed indicating a difference between the companies’ sent and the consumers’ received marketing messages. Building on this, steps are identified showcasing marketing approaches that are proposed to be undertaken in order to achieve a more sustainable and long-term beneficial tourism behaviour from the viewpoint of mass charter tourism.

According to the introduced theory building model, the provided conceptual framework combines descriptive and explanatory elements but needs to be tested and refined through iterative steps in order to develop into acknowledgeable theory.

**Societal Contribution:**
The societal contribution of this thesis clearly lies in the increased focus on sustainability issues intending to benefit both consumers and companies in a long-term context. This is tried to be achieved by creating a win-win-situation for both sides pointing out the need for customer co-creation and identifying the most sustainable solutions satisfying the actual needs behind the tourist’s wants. Through the introduction of eco-labels the companies benefit by switching their focus more towards qualitative competitive advantages. Identifying the most effective ways of communicating those to the customers prevents companies from wrong investments by misreading the marketing measures’ effectiveness like it appears to be currently in the CSR communication approach. The introduction of third-party supervised eco-labels further adds trust and credibility to the industry and may be able to prevent fraud situations for the customers if handled thoroughly. Overall this thesis argues that the impact small changes in a mass market can have is likely to be significant and that the influence on the general societal associations towards more sustainable behaviour may lead to a positive domino effect if responsible behaviour is shown to be uncomplicated and convenient for the customers. This can be exemplified by companies having a stronger focus on relationships with customers which can increase customers influence on the business. Such an influence in turn can help to put pressure on other companies to follow the demand if sustainable business practices among pioneering companies show effect.

**6.3. Managerial Implications**
The managerial implications are as discussed within the conceptual framework diverse but focus mainly on the positioning of the brand within a market increasingly in need for sustainable considerations. For tourism companies avoiding the chance of tourists holding low considerations for their specific brand, a number of actions is proposed in a sequential development from customers seeing most utility in the option of “No Brand & No Eco-Label” towards achieving a synergy perception for the option of “Brands & Eco-labels”. The different steps are discussed in-depth in chapter 5.3.2 referring to the visual statement of the ideal model and are in the following summarized in a short overview.
Implications for managing Eco-labels:
- Through collaboration reducing the abundance of currently inefficient and existing eco-labels.
- Partner with credible and trustworthy labels.
- More direct communication of the labels as for instance openly showing them on the products.

Implications for managing Brands:
- Position the brands more distinctively based on different customer segments (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, pp. 216-225).
- Stronger focus on the service aspect than on the product aspect in tourism (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 2).

Implications for managing Corporate Social Responsibility:
- Focus on marketing mix in order to convey the intended messages about CSR activities (Singh, 2008, p. 15; Belz & Peattie, 2012, p. 31; Wilson et al., 2012, pp. 20-22).
- Involving official and credible partners in order to avoid customer insecurity.
- Consider script and role theory in order to create role models for sustainable behaviour (Solomon et al., 1985, p. 102; Wilson et al., 2012, p. 38).
- Provide personalized information about CSR activities to reduce perceived risk and enhance individual benefits (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, pp. 12-14).

Implications for managing Brands in combination with Eco-Labels:
- Stronger focus on S-D logic and value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 2 & p. 6).
- Identify perceived risk from customers and directly tailor measures and service activities to it (Lowrance, 1996, cited in Andretta, 2013, p. 2; Wilson et al., 2012, p. 22).
- Use eco-labels and brands to provide tangible cues and associations about quality as well as point out individual benefits (Zeithaml, 1988, pp. 4-5; Aaker, 1996, pp. 109-110).
- Ease access to information and make purchase of sustainable packages convenient.

The authors argue that by focussing on these implications a stepwise improvement of both the customers’ perception about the brands and about eco-labels in charter tourism can be achieved. Step 2 in the model (figure 21) referring to eco-label improvement can be argued as being interchangeable with Step 3 for improving brand perceptions as the order of the importance can be seen an issue of subjective evaluation. The authors have chosen to put them into this order since they see value in creating a strong basis for applicable eco-labels before the already existent strong basis of brands that currently dominates the Swedish tourism market can utilize them.
6.4. Limitations

Due to the time and access constraints accompanying a master thesis limitations related to this study exist. The authors have been aware of this fact and have throughout the study tried to minimize the impact of possible limitations by thoroughly planning and scrutinising their choices and research design to an as large extent as possible.

The authors acknowledge the limitation of not being able to reach saturation through the qualitative study (Semi-structured interviews) since only four representatives were able to be interviewed. Therefore could alternative perceptions and answers connected to the company perspective from the remaining tourism providers be available which is not included in this study. However, the authors did not intend nor expect that saturation can be achieved since the number of charter tourism providers in Sweden is small and saturation of possible answers becomes unlikely even with interviewing 100% of the targeted population of charter tourism companies.

The quantitative study was divided into a conjoint analysis part and a complementary part. For the conjoint analysis the used software draws 20,000 iterations based on the 21 respondents who conducted the survey. These scores calculated from the iterations can be applied upon and be representative for a wider population. In contrast the complementary survey part of the conjoint analysis only represents the 21 respondents. It is therefore not statistically generalizable for a wider population but can be used to provide basic insight into the underlying motives for the choices of the respondents.

Finally the authors acknowledge that although they thought through different possibilities to visualize the conceptual framework, there may be a more suitable form existent to improve it. Adding more theory may lead to the need for rethinking the visualization to include additional elements.

6.5. Quality Criteria

Reliability questions if chosen data collection techniques and analytic procedures produce consistent findings if the research is repeated in the same research setting (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 192; Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 245). For qualitative research dependability presents the counterpart to reliability asking if findings can be applied at a different time setting (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 43). Concerning this, effort was put into minimizing the chance of errors and biases in both the qualitative and quantitative part. For the semi-structured interviews the chance of interviewer, interviewee and participation bias was reduced (Saunders et al., 2012, pp. 381-382) by various actions undertaken described in section 3.3.1. like gathering a representative selection of participants planning and pre-testing key-questions, audio recording and truthfully transcribing. For the conjoint analysis the issue was approached by the measures in detail described in chapter 3.4 and 3.5.2 as planning the survey’s design and pre-testing on several respondents.

Validity is stated by Johnson and Christensen (2012) as “the correctness and truthfulness of the inferences made from the results of the study” (p. 245). In the context of mixed methods Creswell & Plano Clark (2011) define it as “employing strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that might compromise the merging or connection of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn from the combination” (p. 239). Since this thesis
utilizes a mixed method, differences in qualitative and quantitative research methods are considered when scrutinising the study's quality criteria.

Reflecting internal validity, interviews are claimed to be constrained in their ability to generate internal and/or external validity (Johnson and Christensen, 2012, pp. 268-270). According to Johnson and Christensen (2012) internal validity refers to “the degree to which a researcher is justified in concluding that an observed relationship is causal” (p. 268). For qualitative research the quality criterion of credibility tests the finding’s trustworthiness instead (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 43). The authors deem the credibility of the expert interviews being high since the relevant number of charter tourism providers in Sweden is small and three of the six biggest companies could be interviewed for this study. These interview participants further all had a background of having worked for several years in the business and spoke from either a managing or CSR and sustainability related position within the company. This is claimed to add credibility to their reflections upon the questioned topics. This also applies for the interviewed researcher since scholars in the area of sustainable tourism in Sweden are found to be currently few and focussing on different research topics than for this study relevant. Additionally, a number of further factors contribute to the study’s credibility. The authors for example received answers for all their questions included in the interview guide. None of the interviewees chose to reject certain questions and the interviews are all argued to hold a high degree of contribution to the depth of information. External validity refers to the extent research findings can be generalised to other relevant settings or groups (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 194). Statistical generalizability is however not the general purpose of qualitative research (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 270) and replaced by the criterion of transferability testing if the findings are applicable to other contexts (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 43). The authors claim that the findings although presenting a new and under-researched area can be transferred to other marketing settings utilizing brands and eco-labels in combination in other areas of marketing like the service sector.

Discussing the validity for the conjoint analysis it needs division into the complementary and conjoint analysis part since the conjoint analysis part is deemed to hold a higher validity than the complementary part as discussed in section 6.4. The complementary part only includes 21 respondents, who were due to the explained situational setting not chosen at random, which for a quantitative study is perceived to be a low number hence considered to have low internal and external validity. This is though not perceived as a qualitative demotion as the descriptive data of this part are only utilized indicating possible explanatory elements from the theory. As the main part of the quantitative data collection consists of the conjoint analysis’ utility scores representing a sophisticated statistical tool by drawing 20,000 iterations this presents highly valid data.

Eventually objectivity for the quantitative and parallel confirmability for the qualitative research part testing the influence of values (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 43) requires assessment. The critical realist stance in the conjoint analysis was taken by providing objective information to the tourists with visual cues for brands and eco-labels from different areas without providing company biased information. Thus the study relies on the observable level of knowledge of tourists about the concepts while the authors acknowledged and tried to even out the possibility of different mental processing by providing help with misunderstandings. The interpretivist standpoint taken for the qualitative data collection and translation of theory into the conceptual framework proves confirmability as the author’s values were openly embraced and tried to be kept from distorting the study’s outcome as much as possible.
6.6. Future Research

According to Meredith (1993) theory building is divided into three steps with the final being testing and approving conceptual frameworks (pp. 3-4). As discussed, the current study does not reach the final stage but remains a conceptual framework and thus can only be perceived as a pre-theory. Future research should therefore focus on the testing phase in order to either validate or refute the framework.

Further, customer segmentation has to be taken into account studying the impact of an accurate segmentation strategy tailoring marketing towards distinctive customer groups (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009, pp. 216-225). The age distribution of the sample in this study does not give insight in this context since 12 out of 21 respondents are 25 years old or younger, whereas only 3 respondents are older than 30 years. Consequently this sample does not provide inferences being made about distinctive group preferences. Interesting in this context is the statement of one of the interviewees that younger customers tend to focus more on sustainability issues than the older generation does, which suggests a possible next step in refining the framework.

The usage of pricing and price elasticity for the introduced packages presents another interesting starting point for research. As stated in the methodology section do the authors acknowledge the possible influence of the concept of sunk-cost fallacy claiming that the respondents tend to spend differently when “given” a certain amount of money rather than when purchasing with their own capital (Solomon et al., 2013, p. 346). Future research could therefore try to put the respondents in a more realistic purchasing situation.

Finally, future studies can enhance the current study by investigating and testing which particular eco-labels and which messages (when combined with brands) generate positive/negative reactions from tourists. Here the focus could be on which environmental and/or social aspects the customers perceive most value in and thus affecting purchasing behaviour most.
References


Appendix 1: Qualitative Interview Questionnaire (Company English)

The interview will be split into four stages: introduction, questions about the brand and eco-labels and generally about the future of sustainability and tourism. It is composed of 13 questions and planned to take about 40 minutes.

1 Introduction/descriptive data (app. 5 mins)

1.1 Could you please tell us briefly about your position within the company?

1.2 If applicable - what is your previous professional experience in relation to brands and sustainability issues in tourism?

2 Brand (app. 10 mins): How do you use your brand for selling travel packages?

Now we are going to ask questions related to the branding aspect of this research. Those include your opinion about how your company positions itself through its brand in the market and differentiates from competitors.

2.1 Do you use your brand (Ving, Fritidsresor, Ticket, etc.) directly (clearly visible on the offer) when promoting offers regarding the choices of destination, travel mode, accommodation and activities?

2.2 If so: In which of those four choices do you think does the brand play a major and where a minor role?

2.3 From a company perspective: how sustainability oriented do you perceive your brand/company? Why?

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2.4 When you think about your customers’ perspective: how sustainability oriented would you say is your brand perceived to be? Why?

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3. Eco-labels (app. 10 mins): How do you use eco-labels for selling travel packages?

Now we are going to ask questions related to the eco-labeling aspect of this research. Those include your opinion about how your company positions itself through its brand in the market and differentiates from competitors.

3.1 From your current impression and knowledge, how much do consumers appear to care about sustainability issues in tourism? Why?

3.2 Do you use eco-labels (FairTrade, Svanen, EU Ecolabel, Travelife, etc.) directly (clearly visible on the offer) when promoting offers regarding the choices of destination, travel mode, accommodation and activities? Why and which ones or why not?

3.3 Do you use CSR measures directly (clearly connected to the offers) when promoting offers regarding the four tourist’s choices of destination, travel mode, accommodation and activities? Why and which ones or why not?

3.4 Do you consider increasing the usage of eco-labels or CSR measures in your marketing mix in the future? Why or why not?

4. The future, possible synergies. (app. 15 mins): Do you think there are synergies?

Finally we would like to ask for your opinion regarding the future of tourism.

4.1 “The concept of Co-branding claims that the combination of two brands can create a market synergy where both brands benefit through a 1+1=3 effect”. Do you think that a similar synergy can be possible between brands and eco-labels?

4.2 If yes, do you think that brands and eco-labels in combination can be a possible future way to increase the demand for more sustainable tourism offers?

4.3 Generally what do you think are the most important trends in tourism for the coming 10 years?
Appendix 2: Qualitative Interview Questionnaire (Company Swedish)

Intervjuguide

Intervjun kommer vara uppdelad i fyra sektioner: introduktion, frågor angående varumärken och ekomärkningar samt frågor gällande framtida utsikter inom områdena hållbarhet och turism. 13 frågor kommer att ställas och intervjun beräknas att ta runt 40 minuter.

1. Introduktion/beskrivande data (5 min)

1.1. Kan du överskådligt berätta om din position inom företaget?

1.2. Om tillämpbart - har du någon tidigare professionell erfarenhet som kan relateras till varumärken och hållbarhetsfrågor rörande turism.

2. Varumärke (10 min): Hur används ert företags varumärke i försäljningen av paketresor?

I denna sektion kommer frågorna relatera till företagets varumärke. Till exempel hur företaget, genom sitt varumärke, positionerar sig själva på marknaden och differentierar sig från konkurrenter.

2.1. Presenterar ni ert varumärke på ett visuellt och tydligt sätt när ni marknadsför erbjudanden relaterade till val av: destinationen, resesätt, husrum, aktiviteter?

2.2. Ifall ja på fråga 2.1: I vilket av de fyra valen tror du att varumärket har en stor påverkan respektive liten påverkan på kunden.

2.3. Ifrån ett företagsperspektiv: Hur hållbarhetsinriktade och miljö- och socialmedvetna uppfattar du ditt varumärke/företag att vara? Varför?

| 5 | Mycket hållbarhets-inriktad |
| 4 | Övervägande hållbarhets-inriktad |
| 3 | Någorlunda hållbarhets-inriktad |
| 2 | Svagt hållbarhets-inriktad |
| 1 | Uppfyller enbart minimikraven satt av lagstadgning |

2.4 Ifrån ett kundperspektiv: Hur hållbarhetsinriktade och miljö- och socialmedvetna skulle du säga att ert varumärke/företag är uppfattat att vara? Varför?

| 5 | Mycket hållbarhets-inriktad |
| 4 | Övervägande hållbarhets-inriktad |
| 3 | Någorlunda hållbarhets-inriktad |
| 2 | Svagt hållbarhets-inriktad |
| 1 | Uppfyller enbart minimikraven satt av lagstadgning |
3. Eko-märkning (Eco-labels) (10 min): Hur använder företaget eko-märkningar för försäljningen av paketresor?

Frågorna i denna del är relaterade till företagets ställning till hållbarhetsfrågor, eko-märkningar samt CSR.

3.1 Baserat på din nuvarande kunskap, till vilken grad verkar kunden bry sig om frågor relaterade till hållbarhet inom tourism? Varför?

3.2 Använder och presenterar ni (företaget) eko-märkningar (Fairtrade, Svanen, Travelife) på ett visuellt och tydligt sätt när ni marknadsför erbjudanden relaterade till val av: destinationen, resesätt, husrum, aktiviteter? Varför gör ni det? Vilka visas och vilka visas inte?

3.3 Använder ni CSR-mått (siffror, information, etc. relaterat till CSR-arbetet) på ett visuellt och tydligt sätt när ni marknadsför erbjudanden relaterade till val av: destinationen, resesätt, husrum, aktiviteter? Varför? Vad visas och vad visas ej?

3.4 Finns det något tecken på att användningen av eko-märkningar eller CSR-mått i framtiden kommer att öka i företagets marknadsförings mix? Varför? Varför inte?

4. Framtiden, möjliga synergi mellan varumärken och eko-märkningar (15 min): Tror du det finns synergi?

Till sist vill vi ställa några frågor angående framtiden och framtidsplaner för turismbranschen.

4.1 Konceptet om Co-branding handlar om att kombinationen av två varumärken kan skapa en synergi där båda varumärkena får fördelar de inte skulle kunna ha skapat själva (1+1=3-effekt). Tror du att en liknande synergi kan skapas mellan varumärken och eko-märkningar?

4.2 Om ja på fråga 4.1: Tror du att kombinationen av varumärken och eko-märkningar i framtiden kan skapa en ökad efterfrågan för mer hållbara turismalternativ?

4.3 Vilken trend tror du i allmänhet kommer att vara den mest viktiga och/eller framstående inom turismbranschen de kommande 10 åren?
Appendix 3: Qualitative Interview Questionnaire (Researcher Edition)

The interview will be split into four stages: introduction, questions about the eco-labels and decision making and generally about the future of sustainability and tourism. It is composed of 11 questions and planned to take about 40 minutes.

1 Introduction/descriptive data (app. 5 mins)

   1.1 Could you please tell us briefly about your previous professional experience in relation to brands and sustainability issues in tourism?

2 Eco-Labels and Sustainability (app. 10 mins):

   2.1 In your thesis you have found that there is a gap between consumer’s attitude and actual behaviour in tourism when it comes to sustainability questions. What do you think are the most important influences for this gap?

   2.2 When you think about the customers’ perspective: how sustainability oriented would you say do they perceive the currently available charter tourism companies (Ving, Apollo, Fritidsresor, etc)? Why?

   2.3 Can you think of a good example of a tourism company creating demand for sustainable tourism? What was in your opinion effective or new about their approach?

3. Decision Making in Tourism (app. 10 mins):

   3.1 Based on your experience in decision making theory in tourism: How rational do you think tourists really are when deciding about travel packages?

   3.2 Do you think there are considerable differences for short- and long trips?

   3.3 Do you think companies would benefit from an increased usage of a Service-Dominant Logic approach and involve their customers for co-creating sustainable tourism? Or do you think it is a better start to create company made sustainable packages and use them to teach sustainability to tourists through those?
4. The future, possible synergies. (app. 15 mins): Do you think there are synergies?

4.1 “The concept of Co-branding claims that the combination of two brands can create a market synergy where both brands benefit through a 1+1=3 effect”. Do you think that a similar synergy can be possible between brands and eco-labels?

4.2 Do you think eco-labels are a better approach to increase demand for sustainable tourist offers than establishing a positive brand image only through CSR measures? Are there disadvantages of using either one?

4.3 If a company decides to go green in tourism, what would be your personal advice for them?

4.4 Generally what do you think are the most important trends in tourism for the coming 10 years?
Appendix 4: Application for Sawtooth Software Inc. SSI Web and ACBC Module

Application for Sawtooth Software Grant for Master Students

Contact information:

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Mobile: +46 730922612

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Mobile: +46 762070584

Institution and Department: Umeå University, Umeå School of Business and Economics (USBE)
Supervisor: Vladimir Vanyushyn
Email: Vladimir. vanyushyn@usbe.umu.se

Title and brief description of our research project:

We are two Master of Marketing students at Umeå University currently working on our 30 CP master thesis. The title of our thesis shall be “Researching Synergies between brands and eco-labels in the context of sustainable tourism”. Since sustainability is an increasing issue and general trend of the 21st century we recognize its importance especially in the sector of tourism as this is commonly known for its controversy between providing benefits on the one hand and damaging the environment and cultures on the other hand. Therefore the demand for methods helping to achieve more sustainable tourism behaviour is increasing and we are researching the communication side of the tourism industry in particular as an influencing factor.

Our thesis will use branding and eco-labelling and their features as we believe they may provide currently unused synergies when communicating. Through our literature review we have found that this is an under-researched topic due to its novelty of relevance. While eco-labels are more established in everyday consumer goods like food, their usage in tourism is less common. Research has found that this is due to several factors like a lack of awareness and trust towards a vast number of different eco-labels. We believe that brands can provide those missing factors when combined as the eco-labels may gain trust and awareness transferred from the brands while the brands gain additional brand equity through credibility the eco-label can provide. The brands in this context refer to the brands of the Swedish tourist agencies and we will focus on their charter tourism offers.

The research will be designed as a mixed method, in which we intend to triangulate the company perspective by interviewing representatives and comparing this to the consumer’s perspective, which we believe can be best identified by using conjoint analysis. Charter tourism offers travel packages that include several decisions as destination, travel mode, accommodation and activities. This constitutes it as a complex decision
making process in which heuristics are used to narrow down options. We believe that brands and eco-labels refer to those heuristics and we intend to research in which parts of the decision making process those are playing a major or minor role and where consumers would perceive value from combining them. This would in combination with the company perspective show where the communication currently may mismatch its as ideally perceived approach. Here preference and utility theory play a role and we see particular benefit from using Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint (ACBC) since we want to get a picture of the consumer’s preferred levels within the attributes and their ideal combination. Consequently we would like to apply for SSI Web including the ACBC module.

The utility score describes the relative utility of a level within an attribute. The higher the level, the more desirable this level of an attribute is for the consumer. Since we researching Swedish travel agencies, the survey will be targeted towards Swedish customers at the airport of Umeå. The research is planned to be completed until June 2014. We confirm that we have downloaded the test version of the program and gone through the tutorial. This study will not benefit any company commercially since it is not written on commission but is conducted for the University’s theoretical master thesis requirements. We have been recommended to apply for SSI Web as our supervisor has already worked with students using it successfully in their master thesis and he believes that it is a very suitable tool for our purpose.
Appendix 5: Conjoint Analysis Survey
Thank you for participating in this study about tourism preferences!

We are Anders & Elena – two students at Umeå School of Business and Economics and you are helping us with our master thesis.

We hope that you will like the style of this survey.
### Before we start, we would like to get to know a few general things about you.

1. **Gender?**
   - [ ] Male
   - [ ] Female

2. **How old are you?**
   - [ ] Years

3. **Have you ever booked a complete holiday package provided by a charter tourism company?**
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Do not know / Do not remember

4. **Are you free in choosing your time of travel throughout the year.**
   - [ ] Yes (I can mostly decide when to go on holiday myself)
   - [ ] No (I am bound to national, school or company holidays)
Thank you! Now it's getting more interesting. We would like you to imagine a little background story:

It's a gloomy, grey and boring morning in Umeå.

You are walking down the alley and dreaming about going on vacation. Suddenly you stumble over a little box lying on the ground. Ouch! You pick up the obstacle and observe it a bit closer. It's locked. Hm... you hold it to your ear. Shake shake... empty? You turn it around and examine the bottom. It's dirty so you try to clean it with your sleeve. Instantly the box starts shaking and within green smoke a female spirit materializes in front of your eyes.

You blink at her, rub your eyes. She smiles and introduces herself:

Spirit: “Tjena! I’m Caireen the travel spirit. I’ve been granting wishes of travelers since 1948 (when the economy class in airplanes was introduced). I’ve cooperated with the Swedish charter tourism agencies Ving, Apollo, Fritidsresor and Ticket and now I’m a freelance consulting spirit. You have found my box so you will be granted your dream holiday. For this you have to make four wishes: Where to go (Destination), how to get there (Travel Mode), how to live and sleep there (Accommodation) and what to do there (Activities).”

You become a bit suspicious and stutter: “But what are the options? And where is the trade-off?”

The spirit laughs: “It’s a little challenge. You will be given a budget of 10 000 sek. With this you have to choose in every wish, how much you care about the brand and eco-labelling for each option. Of course due to quality and environmental friendliness options which are branded and labeled are a bit more expensive. Your budget is sufficient to choose the most expensive options. If you don’t and a rest of the budget remains, you can keep it for yourself. As a consultant spirit I am interested in finding out where you as a consumer believe those factors are important and where not. So please be as honest as possible with your answers.”

You grin: “Ok, let’s get started!”
Caireen: “Oh, here we go. Below, you see the available options for the four wishes you are granted. Please pick for each one the choice that you consider most preferable.

- **With the term “brand”, the brand of the travel agency is meant.** This can for example be Apollo, Fritidsresor, Ticket, Ving, etc.

- **With the term “eco-label”, labels like Zeromission, EU Ecolabel, FairTrade, Rainforest Alliance, Svanen, etc. are meant.** They certify environmental and social behaviour of a company through a third, independent party.

- **CSR stands for Corporate Social Responsibility and describes measures by the company with which they voluntarily contribute to a better society and environment.** They are normally not accredited by a third party.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choice</th>
<th>What do you want?</th>
<th>Cost for Feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Destination: Where am I going?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I consider it important to choose the destination based on the offer of a particular brand. [Apollo] (+ 500 sek)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I do not decide for a destination based on a particular brand’s offers but on the eco-labelling of the destination itself. [Fritidsresor] (+ 500 sek)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I prefer choosing the destination based on offers by a particular brand when it is eco-labelled. [Fritidsresor] (+ 1,000 sek)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I prefer choosing the destination based on offers by a particular brand and care about this brand’s general CSR measures. I do not think they have to eco-label it though. [Fritidsresor] + CSR (+ 750 sek)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Mode: How am I getting there?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I consider it important to choose the travel mode based on the offer of a particular brand. [Ticket] (+ 500 sek)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My choice of travel mode is not influenced by a particular brand but rather by if the option is eco-labeled (if for example CO2-compensation for the flight exists). [Ticket] (+ 500 sek)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I prefer choosing the travel mode provided by a particular brand when it is eco-labelled. [Ticket] (+ 1,000 sek)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I prefer choosing travel mode provided by a particular brand and care about this brand’s general CSR measures. I do not think they have to eco-label it though. [Ticket] + CSR (+ 750 sek)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Accommodation: How am I staying?

- **Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.**
  - ![Select](Image)

- **I consider it important to choose accommodation provided by a particular brand.** (+ 500 sek)
  - ![Select](Image)

- **My choice of accommodation is not influenced by a particular brand but rather by if the option is eco-labeled.** (+ 500 sek)
  - ![Select](Image)

- **I prefer choosing accommodation by a particular brand when it is eco-labelled.** (+ 1,000 sek)
  - ![Select](Image)

- **I prefer choosing the accommodation provided by a particular brand and care about this brand’s general CSR measures. I do not think they have to eco-label it though.** + CSR (+ 750 sek)
  - ![Select](Image)

### Activities: What am I doing there?

- **Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.**
  - ![Select](Image)

- **I consider it important to choose activities provided by a particular brand.** (+ 500 sek)
  - ![Select](Image)

- **My choice of activities is not influenced by a particular brand but rather by if the options are eco-labeled.** (+ 500 sek)
  - ![Select](Image)

- **I prefer choosing activities provided by a particular brand when they are eco-labelled.** (+ 1,000 sek)
  - ![Select](Image)

- **I prefer choosing activities provided by a particular brand and care about this brand’s general CSR measures. I do not think they have to eco-label it though.** + CSR (+ 750 sek)
  - ![Select](Image)

**Total**

- **Maximum: 10 000 sek**

![Progress Bar](Image)
Brands and Eco-labels in Tourism

Caireen: “Thank you. In the next stages I will provide you different exemplary holiday packages. Those will also include the choice of the Length of Stay that differ in the following ways:

- Short trip (1 week or less)
- Long Trip (More than 1 week)

For each package, please indicate whether it appeals to you or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Trip</th>
<th>Short Trip (1 week or less)</th>
<th>Long Trip (More than 1 week)</th>
<th>Short Trip (1 week or less)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination: Where am I going?</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.</td>
<td>I do not decide for a destination based on a particular brand’s offers but on the eco-labelling of the destination itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Mode: How am I getting there?</td>
<td>I consider it important to choose the travel mode based on the offer of a particular brand.</td>
<td>I prefer choosing the travel mode provided by a particular brand when it is eco-labelled.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation: How am I staying?</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.</td>
<td>I prefer choosing the accommodation provided by a particular brand and care about this brand’s general CSR measures. I do not think they have to eco-label it though.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities: What am I doing there?</td>
<td>I consider it important to choose activities provided by a particular brand.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Price

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>7,000sek</th>
<th>7,750sek</th>
<th>6,500sek</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>No, does not appeal to me</td>
<td>Yes, this looks interesting</td>
<td>No, does not appeal to me</td>
<td>Yes, this looks interesting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, this looks interesting</td>
<td>No, does not appeal to me</td>
<td>Yes, this looks interesting</td>
<td>No, does not appeal to me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Brands and Eco-labels in Tourism

*For each package, please indicate whether it appeals to you or not.*

(2 of 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Trip</th>
<th>Short Trip (1 week or less)</th>
<th>Long Trip (More than 1 week)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Destination: Where am I going?</strong></td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.</td>
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<td>I do not decide for a destination based on a particular brand's offers but on the eco-labelling of the destination itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Mode: How am I getting there?</strong></td>
<td>I consider it important to choose the travel mode based on the offer of a particular brand.</td>
<td>I prefer choosing the travel mode provided by a particular brand when it is eco-labelled.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accommodation: How am I staying?</strong></td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.</td>
<td>I prefer choosing the accommodation provided by a particular brand and care about this brand's general CSR measures. I do not think they have to eco-label it though. + CSR</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities: What am I doing there?</strong></td>
<td>I consider it important to choose activities provided by a particular brand.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Price</strong></td>
<td>7,000sek</td>
<td>7,750sek</td>
<td>6,500sek</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Yes, this looks intresting</td>
<td>☐ Yes, this looks intresting</td>
<td>☐ Yes, this looks intresting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ No, does not appeal to me</td>
<td>☐ No, does not appeal to me</td>
<td>☐ No, does not appeal to me</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Brands and Eco-labels in Tourism

For each package, please indicate whether it appeals to you or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(3 of 6)</th>
<th>Length of Trip</th>
<th>Short Trip (1 week or less)</th>
<th>Long Trip (More than 1 week)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Destination: Where am I going?</td>
<td>I consider it important to choose the destination based on the offers of a particular brand.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Mode: How am I getting there?</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.</td>
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<td>My choice of travel mode is not influenced by a particular brand but rather by if the option is eco-labeled (if for example CO2-compensation for the flight exists).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation: How am I staying?</td>
<td>I prefer choosing the accommodation provided by a particular brand and care about this brand’s general CSR measures. I do not think they have to eco-label it though. ☝ + CSR</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities: What am I doing there?</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.</td>
<td>My choice of activities is not influenced by a particular brand but rather by if the options are eco-labeled. ☝</td>
<td>I consider it important to choose activities provided by a particular brand. ☝</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
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<td>6,500sek</td>
<td>7,000sek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, this looks interesting</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>No, does not appeal to me</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0% 100%
Caireen: “Hm. I have noticed that you’ve avoided offers with certain characteristics. Would any of these features be totally unacceptable? If so, mark the one feature that is most unacceptable, so I can just focus on what really suits your interest.

- None of these is totally unacceptable.
For each package, please indicate whether it appeals to you or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Trip</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel Mode: How am I getting there?</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.</td>
<td>I prefer choosing travel mode provided by a particular brand and care about this brand’s general CSR measures. I do not think they have to eco-label it though.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation: How am I staying?</td>
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<td>Price</td>
<td>6,500sek</td>
<td>6,500sek</td>
<td>7,750sek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, this looks interesting</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No, does not appeal to me</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Caireen: “Hm. I have noticed that you’ve avoided offers with certain characteristics. Would any of these features be **totally unacceptable**? If so, mark the **one feature that is most unacceptable**, so I can just focus on what really suits your interest.

- Accommodation: How am I staying? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.
- Destination: Where am I going? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.
- Activities: What am I doing there? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.
- Travel Mode: How am I getting there? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.

None of these is totally unacceptable.
Caireen: “Great! Thanks! You have chosen those characteristics quite often. If any of it is an **absolute requirement**, it would be helpful to know. Please check the **one most important** feature.”

- Activities: What am I doing there? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.
- Travel Mode: How am I getting there? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.
- Accommodation: How am I staying? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.
- Destination: Where am I going? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.

- None of these is an absolute requirement.
### Brands and Eco-labels in Tourism

**For each package, please indicate whether it appeals to you or not.**

(5 of 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Trip</th>
<th>Short Trip (1 week or less)</th>
<th>Short Trip (1 week or less)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Destination: Where am I going?</strong></td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.</td>
<td>I prefer choosing the destination based on offers by a particular brand when it is eco-labelled.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel Mode: How am I getting there?</strong></td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.</td>
<td>Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.</td>
<td>I consider it important to choose the travel mode based on the offer of a particular brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Brands and Eco-labels in Tourism

Caireen: “Hm. I have noticed that you’ve avoided offers with certain characteristics. Would any of these features be totally unacceptable? If so, mark the one feature that is most unacceptable, so I can just focus on what really suits your interest.

- Activities: What am I doing there? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.
- Accommodation: How am I staying? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.
- Travel Mode: How am I getting there? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.
- Destination: Where am I going? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.

None of these is totally unacceptable.
Brands and Eco-labels in Tourism

Caireen: “Great! Thanks! You have chosen those characteristics quite often. If any of it is an **absolute requirement**, it would be helpful to know. Please check the **one most important** feature.”

- Activities: What am I doing there? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of activities.
- Destination: Where am I going? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of destination.
- Travel Mode: How am I getting there? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of travel mode.
- Accommodation: How am I staying? - Neither the brand nor an eco-label influence my choice of accommodation.

- None of these is an absolute requirement.
Brands and Eco-labels in Tourism

For each package, please indicate whether it appeals to you or not.

(6 of 6)

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Brands and Eco-labels in Tourism

Caireen: “Thank you so much. You are nearly done! I just like to ask you three little more questions about your general brand- and eco-label consciousness.”

| How brand conscious do you consider yourself to be? (1 = not at all, 5 = very much so) |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ![Circle](#) | ![Circle](#) | ![Circle](#) | ![Circle](#) | ![Circle](#) |

| How environmentally conscious do you consider yourself to be in your everyday life? (1 = not at all, 5 = very much so?) |
|---------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| ![Circle](#) | ![Circle](#) | ![Circle](#) | ![Circle](#) | ![Circle](#) |

In which purchase decision are you influenced by eco-labels? Multiple answers are possible.

- [ ] Clothes
- [ ] Household cleaning/washing products
- [ ] Food
- [ ] Other
- [ ] Electronics
- [ ] None
- [ ] Cosmetics

0% 100%
...You made it!

You're standing in front of the spirit. Full of expectation watching her scribble something into her notebook.

She looks up: "Awesome! I will now have to get back to my office and prepare your dream holiday. For now please accept this chocolate as a little thank you.

Thanks for participating, we hope you liked it. Have a nice day and safe travels!

Anders & Elena