



Master of Arts Thesis
Euroculture

University of Strasbourg, France (first university)

University of Olomouc, Czech Republic (second university)

July 2021

**Perceptions and Realities of Sustainable Tourism
Development in a Cross-Border Context**

A Case Study of the Upper Rhine Valley (France and Germany)

Submitted by:

Quentin SAMIER

Student number first university: 21919469

Student number second university: 80103297

Contact details: +33619623561 / quentin.samier@yahoo.fr

Supervised by:

Philippe Hamman (Université de Strasbourg)

Jan Stejskal (Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci)

Strasbourg, 31/07/2021

Declaration

I, Quentin Samier, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled “Perceptions and Realities of Sustainable Tourism Development in a Cross-Border Context: A Case Study of the Upper Rhine Valley (France and Germany)”, submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within this text of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the bibliography.

I declare that the written (printed and bound) and the electronic copy of the submitted MA thesis are identical.

I hereby also acknowledge that I was informed about the regulations pertaining to the assessment of the MA thesis Euroculture and about the general completion rules for the Master of Arts Programme Euroculture.

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Q. Samier', written in a cursive style.

Date: 29/07/2021

Abstract

This paper explores the topic of sustainable development in the tourism industry by attempting to determine, through the lens of local tourism operators, how sustainable tourism is defined theoretically and locally implemented in the French and German cross-border area of the Upper Rhine Valley. Empirical data has been collected from a sample of 20 respondents, equally divided into two subsamples of respectively 10 French and 10 German respondents working as tourism service providers in various touristic branches. Several dimensions are examined in this paper, such as the tourism operators' perception of tourism in general, sustainable development and sustainability in tourism, as well as their experience with the COVID-19 health crisis on the one hand, and with tourists who consume their services, on the other hand. The in-depth analyses conducted on their responses reveal that specific social mechanisms are at work behind these dimensions. This analysis is followed by a certain number of measures existing to foster a more sustainable way of travelling in the Upper Rhine Valley and solutions to overcome some of the problems that the local tourism operators have disclosed.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism; Sustainable Development; Social norms; Upper Rhine Valley; France; Germany

Number of words (including footnotes): 20,440

Table des matières

Introduction.....	4
1. Theoretical background.....	7
1.1. Definitions.....	7
1.1.1. Tourism	7
1.1.2. Sustainable development vs. Sustainability	8
1.1.3. Sustainable tourism.....	10
1.1.4. Ecotourism	13
1.2. Public action and policies for sustainability.....	15
1.2.1. In the Upper Rhine Valley	15
1.2.2. At European and international level.....	16
1.3. Literature review on tourism	18
1.4. Research question	20
2. Methodology.....	22
2.1. Scope and delimitations, and sample of my study	22
2.2. Description of method and data collection technique	23
2.3. Questionnaire content and expected results	24
2.4. Sampling method for the corpus creation	27
3. Data presentation.....	28
3.1. Statistical data.....	28
3.2. Statistical occurrence of highlighted characteristics	30
3.3. Business sizes	31
3.4. Labels and certifications	31
4. Analysis.....	34
4.1. Nature vs. urbanity, or vs. culture: conciliable concepts?.....	34
4.2. Fruitful host-guest interaction: an intellectual and social experience	36
4.3. Touristic advertising: between myth and reality.....	39
4.4. Rejection of sustainable tourism vs. conformity?.....	41
4.5. Ecotourism: excluded from urbanity?	44
4.6. The impact of COVID-19 on the transformation of tourism.....	46
5. Towards possible solutions.....	49
5.1. General recommendations.....	49
5.2. Protected Areas: key actors to implement EU policy.....	50
5.3. A more explicitly outlined tourism policy	51
5.4. Encouraging soft mobility and better access to hinterland	51

5.5. Developing waste management plans.....	52
5.6. Increasing visibility through channels of communication	52
5.7. Nudge marketing: a smooth way of educating tourists?.....	53
5.8. Urban resilience: COVID-19 as a catalyser	54
Figures and Tables	66
Appendices.....	67
Appendix 1: Concordance analysis on word “sustainable”	67
Appendix 2: Concordance analysis on word “cultural”	67
Appendix 3: Concordance analysis on “responsible”	68
Appendix 4: Concordance analysis on “social”	68
Appendix 5: Concordance analysis on “ecotourism”	69
Appendix 6: Questionnaire presentation page in French	70
Appendix 7: Questionnaire presentation page in German	71
Appendix 8: Extract of the German-language answers	72
Appendix 9: Extract of the French-language answers	72

Introduction

Tourism as an economic powerhouse was the third highest world category in export earnings in 2015, representing 10% of world GDP, 30% of services exports and 1 out of every 10 jobs in the world¹. This industry had grown rapidly all over Europe^{2,3} until the outbreak of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic strongly curtailed this growth. Yet, despite the resurgence of the pandemic in Europe, 54% of respondents to a survey⁴ released in November 2020 said they would take a trip in the following six months, with the majority (78%) planning to travel within Europe.

At the same time, the COVID-19 lockdown measures have caused the first global recession since 2009 and Europe is particularly hit by the crisis at sanitary and economic levels. While the current crisis could resemble previous ones, the exceptionally long consecutive lockdowns make today's situation unique. Several surveys and studies have shown how seriously this global health crisis has impacted many industries, including travel and tourism, and along with that, food, hospitality, leisure, and transportation sectors. As the European national authorities officially began unveiling their plans to end the lockdown, and launching a gradual reopening of their borders, the European Union was already advancing plans for tourism's vital restart, as this industry is reckoned to need, now more than ever, strong political support and joined-up action⁵. Meanwhile, tourism-reliant European countries are counting on the digital vaccination passport also known as the "Digital Green Pass" set up by the EU in March 2021 to gradually enable Europeans "to move safely in the European Union or abroad — for work or tourism⁶."

Even though the challenge now is to revive the economy, and more specifically local demand for tourism, the global health crisis of COVID-19 is a unique opportunity for Europe to rethink

¹ "Tourism & Sustainable Development Goals," *Tourism for SDGs*, accessed April 30, 2021, <https://tourism4sdgs.org/tourism-for-sdgs/tourism-and-sdgs/>.

² Jon Henley, "Overtourism in Europe's Historic Cities Sparks Backlash," *The Guardian*, January 25, 2020, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/25/overtourism-in-europe-historic-cities-sparks-backlash>.

³ "Implementing Solutions to Control Mass Tourism, a Challenge for European Cities," *European Cities Marketing*, February 19, 2015, <https://www.europeancitiesmarketing.com/implementing-solutions-control-mass-tourism-challenge-european-cities/>.

⁴ "Monitoring Sentiment for Domestic and Intra-European Travel – Wave 2," *ETC Corporate*, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://etc-corporate.org/reports/monitoring-sentiment-for-domestic-and-intra-european-travel-wave-2/>.

⁵ "UNWTO Welcomes EU Support and Urges Europe to Lead the Way in Tourism's Restart," *UNWTO*, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://www.unwto.org/news/unwto-welcomes-eu-support-and-urges-europe-to-lead-the-way-in-tourism-s-restart>.

⁶ "Ursula von der Leyen sur Twitter," *Twitter*, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://twitter.com/vonderleyen/status/1366352250302513156>.

tourism for the future⁷ and “an opportunity to build back better towards a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient tourism sector that ensures the benefits of tourism are enjoyed widely and fairly⁸”. However, this reconstruction process necessarily presupposes a careful identification of, and a critical reflection on, the multiple proven adverse effects⁹ of the most habitual models of tourism – usually known as ‘mass tourism’ or ‘overtourism’ – so that such a reconstruction avoids a resumption of such effects. A variety of ‘softer’, more ‘responsible’ ways of travelling, claiming a rejection of modern mass consumerism, are increasingly being hailed as an appropriate alternative to mass tourism. Some common examples include rural tourism, ecotourism, green tourism, adventure tourism, thematic tourism. Because the year 2020 has been defined by economic disruption, massive social protests around the world, and devastating natural disasters, the United Nations and other international organisations are increasingly alerting on the urgency and importance of achieving *sustainable development*. Therefore, sustainable tourism is becoming an ever more important topic in national agendas as it aims at fostering economic growth, social inclusiveness, protection of cultural and natural assets. However, sustainable development within tourism is quite a recent concern and has therefore not been researched as extensively as mainstream tourism. This is a gap which my research is hoping to fill in, nonetheless in a non-comprehensive manner as it is a constantly evolving phenomenon.

In 2017, the UNWTO developed 17 *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) out of which 3 have been tailored to the tourism industry and promoted through programmes like the *International Year for Sustainable Tourism for Development* and *Tourism for SDGs*. But what does ‘sustainable’ actually mean, and how can development be sustainable? To what extent can sustainable development within tourism, namely sustainable tourism, remedy the adverse effects of tourism? How do tourism operators experiment sustainable tourism in practice? To what extent do they believe in the legitimacy and soundness of this model? And how to *sustain* a world population of nearly 7 billion people?

The impacts and the related challenges are not identical and vary in form and depth from one country to another, and even more significantly from one region to another. This paper shall

⁷ “Après le Covid, le tourisme repartira. Il importe que ce rebond ne se fasse pas sur des bases identiques,” *Le Monde.fr*, May 7, 2021, https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/05/07/apres-le-covid-le-tourisme-repartira-il-importe-que-ce-rebond-ne-se-fasse-pas-sur-des-bases-identiques_6079473_3232.html.

⁸ “Tourism and COVID-19: Leading Tourism Recovery,” *UNWTO*, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.unwto.org/tourism-covid-19>.

⁹ “Tourism,” Briefing, *European Environment Agency*, accessed November 30, 2020, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/2015/europe/tourism>.

therefore limit is research scope to the Upper Rhine Valley, more specifically to its French and German parts, and identify precisely how these impacts and challenges are felt and faced by small and large tourism organisations in this area.

This paper first draws up a theoretical background of the research by providing already existing definitions of the main concepts used in this paper as well as an overview of the literature in sustainable tourism, followed by an outline of the research question. The second chapter describes the methodology used to address the research question, and is followed by a chapter describing the empirical data collected from the tourism operators for quantitative purposes. The fourth chapter contains the qualitative analysis conducted on the empirical data, and is followed by the fifth final chapter attempting to provide solutions, guidelines and recommendations based on past experiences and research into alternative paths and solutions to common problems in tourism.

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Definitions

1.1.1. Tourism

It is difficult to delineate the boundary beyond which a person becomes a tourist. Should someone be considered as a tourist as soon as they stay for at least one night elsewhere than their home, or rather from the moment that they visit the local museum, be it for two hours? There are conflicting views in the past academic discussion, especially before the 2000s, as to what defines a tourist and, hence, tourism. Different variables appear in the studies conducted, such as the duration of touristic stays (ranging from one to five days), age brackets (showing high heterogeneity), the categories of trips (all types of travel, or just leisure travel) and the populations (immigrants or not)¹⁰. The definitions of tourism, however, became homogenised under the influence of international organisations. The WTO, for instance, has published a statistical definition taking two patterns into account: the motivation of the stay and its duration.

Any person who travels to a country other than that in which s/he has his/her usual residence but outside his/her usual environment for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited, and who stay at least one night in a collective or private accommodation in the country visited¹¹.

However, the tourists' quest for tranquillity or entertainment is often made at the expense of the humanity–ecosystem equilibrium, as evidenced by compelling inventories of the negative environmental impacts of tourism^{12,13}. In the face of the devastating consequences of the expansive industrial development geared towards an ever higher economic growth that results in abusive exploitation of the earth's finite resources and of human workforce, many concepts have been coined to describe a set of actions, policies, behaviours, recommendations, presented as the right responses to these issues and as alternative solutions aimed at conserving an equilibrium between humanity and ecosystem.

Of all these concepts, the most used to this day is *sustainable development*. It originated within international organisations before spreading rapidly to the various levels of public action, from

¹⁰ Saskia Cousin and Bertrand Réau, *Sociologie du tourisme* (Paris: La Découverte, 2009).

¹¹ "Recommendations on Tourism Statistics," in *United Nations and World Tourism Organization*, Series M. 83, 2004.

¹² "Negative Environmental Impacts Of Tourism," *TheWorldCounts*, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/consumption/transport-and-tourism/negative-environmental-impacts-of-tourism/story>.

¹³ Chris Cooper, Lisa Ruhanen, and Bryan Archer, "The Positive and Negative Impacts of Tourism," *Global Tourism*, 2005.

the State level to local authorities, particularly cities¹⁴. It is now used as an umbrella term in a variety of fields where a better human–ecosystem equilibrium is sought. Nonetheless, the concept of *sustainable development* has been, and still is, subject to criticism due to its semantic ambiguity and the incompatibility of its goals.

1.1.2. Sustainable development vs. Sustainability

The concept of sustainable development appeared for the first time in 1987 in the Brundtland Report, where it is described as “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*”¹⁵. This definition points to the negative impact of the intense touristic activity on the environment and emphasises a collective responsibility towards the future. During the late 1980s, the particular historical context created a need to ease the tension between environmental concerns – resulting from the ecological consequences of human activities – and the economic, social and political issues. To this day, this need has not been fulfilled yet as evidenced by many famous examples, such as Venice city faced with air pollution produced by cruise ships. The local population and public authorities have voiced great concern about the long-term effects of this bustling activity on the ecological footprint, and local inhabitants have often expressed feelings of exasperation about the noise and incivilities of some tourists.

A rapid glance over the United Nations Organisation’s webpage dedicated to the topic uses a narrative aimed at convincing the reader that sustainable development is a clear-cut concept with precisely established goals. Indeed, the UNO calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet. The most highlighted requirement is the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, which can be achieved through promotion of sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth. Thus, economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection are the three core elements deemed crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies. Overall, 17 Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015 and are expected to be achieved by 2030 as part of the Agenda for

¹⁴ Philippe Hamman, *Sociologie urbaine et développement durable* (Brussels: Editions De Boeck Université, 2012).

¹⁵ Gro Harlem Brundtland (dir.), “Our Common Future,” Oxford University Press (United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, October 1987).

Sustainable Development. Today, progress is being made in many places, but, overall, action to meet the Goals is not yet advancing at the speed or scale required¹⁶.

In fact, the core principle of sustainable development lies in the concepts of *equity* and *social justice* for all. These concepts can be linked with Rawls' theory whereby social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged¹⁷. The principle of intergenerational solidarity, stating that today's resource management must not compromise the well-being of future generations, remains broadly shared.

However, since the Brundtland report, our understanding of sustainable development has evolved. Several international conferences, such as the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) of Johannesburg, have reasserted the need to change how societies produce and consume, in a way that sustainable development becomes achievable. In other words, the term 'sustainable development' points to a balance, i.e. the capacity to use the different types of capital (social, natural, physical) so that natural systems, on which life depends, do not become endangered¹⁸. The term has become politically more legitimate, as asserted by the Brundtland Commission. "The *environment* is where we live; and *development* is what we all do in attempting to improve our lot within that abode¹⁹". The two are inseparable.

Yet, despite this evolution, the semantic boundaries of sustainable development are not clear-cut. The concept itself is viewed by its critics as too normative and ambiguous²⁰ or unfit to bring practical solutions to the complexity of issues of development and environment²¹. This semantic malleability of sustainable development is viewed by Philippe Hamman as a condition for facilitating its cognitive and practical dissemination across all levels of society, from individuals over collectives to public action²². It can also be viewed, like Armin Grunwald and Jürgen Kopfmüller suggest, as a way of reassuring society regarding dramatic future problems and as a collective self-deception (*kollektiver Selbstbetrug*²³). It has also been disparaged for

¹⁶ "Viele Worte, wenig Taten: UN-Nachhaltigkeitsziele könnten scheitern," *Die Bertelsmann Stiftung*, accessed July 10, 2021, <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/themen/aktuelle-meldungen/2019/juni/viele-worte-wenig-taten-un-nachhaltigkeitsziele-koennten-scheitern>.

¹⁷ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1971).

¹⁸ Robert Kates, "Sustainability Science," *Science* 292, no. 5517 (April 27, 2001): 641–42, doi:10.1126/science.1059386.

¹⁹ Gro Harlem Brundtland (dir.), *Ibid.*

²⁰ Hamman, *Sociologie urbaine et développement durable*, 17.

²¹ Sander Happaerts, "Sustainable Development and Subnational Governments: Going beyond Symbolic Politics?," *Environmental Development* 4 (2012): 2–17.

²² Philippe Hamman, "La « ville durable », de l'incantation à la profession?," *Natures Sciences Sociétés* 19 (2011): 331–43.

²³ Armin Grunwald and Jürgen Kopfmüller, *Nachhaltigkeit* (Berlin: Campus Verlag, 2012).

its inability to rise to the global challenges faced by the 7 billion humans and dismissed as a variation of conformism as well as a way of concealing the fact that we are faced with a “stream of finiteness” (cascade de finitude²⁴). Munro, for his part, typifies a widely shared view in claiming that the term has been used to “characterize almost any path to the kind of just, comfortable and secure future to which everyone aspires²⁵.”

To circumvent this ambiguity, the term ‘sustainability’ has sometimes been used instead. Crawford Stanley Holling²⁶ defines this term as the *capacity* to create, test, and maintain *adaptive capability*; and development as the *process* of creating, testing, and maintaining *opportunity*. The phrase that combines the two, ‘sustainable development’, thus refers to the goal of fostering adaptive capabilities and creating opportunities.

1.1.3. Sustainable tourism

Bearing in mind the previous attempt to define sustainable development for general purposes, this section shall try to provide a definition specifically adapted to tourism. Broadly speaking, the role of sustainable tourism is to reduce the impact of touristic development on the ecology of an area.

Tourism is, indeed, one of the areas where the principles of sustainable development should definitely take root since human activity resulting from touristic travel has been increasingly considered to be in conflict with the environment²⁷. The effects of tourism development, especially on the environment, chiefly due to the volume of tourists and their heavy concentration in one particular area of a country or region have caused serious damage.

Global climate change, ozone loss, erosion of soils and beaches, deforestation, disappearing species, air, noise, water pollution and toxic waste are only some of the main detrimental impacts that the irresponsible and uncontrolled mass tourism has spread on the destinations it touched²⁸.

Therefore, the three core elements underlying the concept of sustainable development, and discussed in the previous section, have been repeatedly commended as a way of tackling the

²⁴ Dominique Bourg, “Arrêtons la farce du développement durable !,” *Acteurs publics*, June 14, 2010, www.acteurspublics.com.

²⁵ David A. Munro, “Sustainability: Rhetoric or Reality?,” in T. C. Trzyna (Ed.) *A Sustainable World: Defining and Measuring Sustainable Development* (London: Earthscan, 1995), 27.

²⁶ Crawford Stanley Holling, “Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems,” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4 (1973): 1–23.

²⁷ Erlet Cater, “Environmental Contradictions in Sustainable Tourism,” *The Geographical Journal* 161, no. 1 (March 1995): 21–28.

²⁸ Christina K. Dimitriou, “From Theory to Practice of Ecotourism: Major Obstacles That Stand in the Way and Best Practices That Lead to Success,” *De Gruyter Open, European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation*, 8, no. 1 (2017): 10.

problems of mass tourism. Research into these problems has thus examined, defined, and assessed the applicability of sustainable development to the specificities of tourism and recreation, resulting in a myriad of definitions integrating some, or all, of the social, cultural, economic and environmental guises of the sustainable development enigma. Definitions of sustainable tourism are, broadly speaking, underpinned by the principle of intergenerational equity, but differ in ideology from one author to another.

For instance, as early as 1992, Curry and Morvaridi contend that tourism, to be sustainable, requires the establishment of an industry which includes consideration of the *long-term effects* of *economic* activity in relation to *resources* and, therefore, concerns for the twin needs for this and future generations²⁹. The concept of sustainability is also central to the reassessment of tourism's role in society. It "demands a *long-term* view of economic activity, *questions the imperative* of continued economic growth, and ensures that consumption of tourism *does not exceed* the ability of the host destination to provide for future tourists³⁰". The authors thus oppose sustainability to consumerist society's short-sighted pursuit of infinite growth.

The World Tourism Organization also emphasises the intergenerational equity by describing 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". Other characteristics are highlighted by the Europarc Federation too, such as a meaningful quality experience, the safeguard of natural and cultural values, the support of local livelihoods and quality of life as well as economic viability³¹. These notions of safeguard and consideration of host communities have been repeatedly mentioned since the 1990s, e.g. by Cater and Goodall who argue that sustainable tourism depends on:

- (a) meeting the needs of the host population in terms of improved standards of the host population in terms of improved standards of living in the short and long-term,
- (b) satisfying the demands of increasing tourist numbers and continuing to attract them to achieve this
- (c) safeguarding the environment to achieve the two foregoing aims³².

Judging by a number of reports on many visited places, safeguard appears to be the crucial challenge to address. Indeed, examples of negative experiences on the part of tourism operators

²⁹ Steve Curry and Behrooz Morvaridi, "Sustainable Tourism: Illustrations from Kenya, Nepal and Jamaica," C.P. Cooper, A. Lockwood (Eds.), *Progress in Tourism, Recreation and Hospitality Management* 4 (1992): 131.

³⁰ Brian Archer and Chris Cooper, "The Positive and Negative Impacts of Tourism," *Global Tourism: The Next Decade*, Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1994, 87.

³¹ "Sustainable Tourism," *Europarc Federation*, accessed June 14, 2021, <https://www.europarc.org/sustainable-tourism/>.

³² Erellet Cater and Brian Goodall, "Must Tourism Destroy Its Resource Base?," A.M. Mannion and S.R. Bowlby (Eds.), *Environmental Issues in the 1990s*, London: Wiley, 1992, 318.

abound: cohabitation between tourists and local inhabitants, and acceptance of one another, are a recurrent major issue in touristic places. In the Basque country, for instance, shepherds have complained about many free running dogs frightening sheep or people running after sheep to take a selfie with it, causing harmful stress on the animals. In response to this problem, nature rangers have been deployed by the Auvergne Volcano Regional National Park management. Another example of tourism-related issue is experienced by the Allos lake in the Mercantour National Park – a Protected Area in the Alps. The area saw unprecedented touristic affluence in the summer 2020, resulting in a high degree of congestion in the main infrastructures, e.g. car parks³³. As a consequence, the Park management has taken anticipative measures for the summer 2021 by closing car parks near the lake after 5pm, while a survey conducted in April 2021 by Ipsos-Alliance France Tourisme on the favourite means of transport of French travellers revealed that the preference of 70% of them went largely for individual cars during the summer³⁴. This increased affluence of tourists in the summer 2020 resulted from lifting the lockdown but has caused serious site degradations, soil erosion and disruption of fauna and flora³⁵.

To curb these effects, the UNWTO has developed 17 SDGs out of which 3 are tailored to the tourism industry: SDG 8, SDG 12 and SDG 14 with more specific sub-targets which will be further outlined in the section on political action at international level.

From park management decisions to international organisations' action plans and extensive definitions, these dynamic sustainable tourism policies are consistent with Choi and Sirakaya's view that policies in this field "should provide workable definitions, principles, implementation strategies, action plans and a monitoring system of sustainable development for community tourism development (CTD) with consideration of the entire spectrum of economic, social, cultural, natural, technological and political environments³⁶".

Sustainable development and *sustainability* cannot be addressed without studying other concepts that pertain to the same lexical field as sustainable tourism, such as ecotourism, green, responsible, social, solidarity tourism. For the purposes of this research, which will be explained

³³ "Des mesures pour tenter de protéger le lac d'Allos," *LaProvence.com*, May 8, 2021, <https://www.laprovence.com/actu/locales-en-direct/6347859/des-mesures-pour-tenter-de-protger-le-lac-dallos.html>.

³⁴ "Les vacances 2021 des Français," *Ipsos*, accessed July 23, 2021, <https://www.ipsos.com/fr-fr/les-vacances-2021-des-francais>.

³⁵ "Rapport d'activité 2020," D'une année à l'autre (Parc national du Mercantour, March 2021).

³⁶ Hwan-Suk Chris Choi and Ercan Sirakaya-Turk, "Sustainability Indicators for Managing Community Tourism," *Tourism Management* 27 (2006): 1274–89., p. 1277.

in detail in section 3.2. of this paper, of *ecotourism*, which is a recurrent term when it comes to alternative, more responsible, forms of tourism.

1.1.4. Ecotourism

Ecotourism, like sustainable development, demonstrates various inherent contradictions related to its definitions: Higham and Luck, indeed, found that if defined too extensively as a catch-all term, ecotourism too will become meaningless, while if defined too restrictively, it will put intolerable constraints on ecotourism or result in an ecotourism mark being too small to be meaningful³⁷. The UNWTO considers ecotourism as the most rapidly growing tourism sector along with nature tourism, due to an increasing interest in remoter rural areas in Europe. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines it as responsible travel to natural areas that *conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education* and adds economic incentives as a way of conserving and enhancing *bio-cultural diversity* and protecting the *natural and cultural heritage* of the planet³⁸. The three core elements of sustainable development as set out by the UN are thus also found in this definition of ecotourism. In addition, the TIES also states “local capacity building and employment opportunities” and describes ecotourism as an “effective vehicle for empowering local communities”, which correlates with Crawford Stanley Holling’s definition of sustainability. Therefore, ecotourism and sustainable development as well as sustainability exhibit here a semantic proximity.

Bearing these definitions in mind, it is now possible to synthesise a certain number of commonalities between ecotourism and sustainable tourism through the following recurrent actions:

- *eradication* of poverty
- *conservation* of cultural heritage
- *protection and enhancement* of natural environment
- *empowering* local people
- *promotion* of social synergies
- *education* of people through *empirical experiences*
- contribution to a *resilient* future (focus on a *long-term* perspective).

³⁷ James Higham and Michael Luck, “Urban Ecotourism: A Contrdiction in Terms?,” *Journal of Ecotourism* 1, no. 1 (2002): 36–51.

³⁸ “What Is Ecotourism,” *The International Ecotourism Society*, accessed July 9, 2021, <https://ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism/>.

Furthermore, both sustainable tourism and ecotourism aim to mitigate the negative impacts associated with tourism development through thoughtful policy-making and planning, but they especially encourage change in tourists' attitudes and growing awareness on how to curb the detrimental effects of their touristic activities. In addition, both terms seem to have appeared approximately at the same period: the term ecotourism was coined in 1983³⁹, i.e. four years before the Brundtland Report in which sustainable development was first mentioned.

Differences can be found too, however only with regard to the type of place that is compatible or not with ecotourism. For instance, a German website about ecotourism clearly states that ecotouristic travel does not take place in *cities* or around *cultural attractions*; rather, it targets natural and unspoilt landscapes, such as national parks and pristine areas [personal translation of: "Ökotouristische Reisen finden nicht in Städten oder bei kulturellen Sehenswürdigkeiten statt: Sie haben natürliche und unberührte Landschaften als Ziel, beispielsweise Nationalparks und Naturschutzgebiete⁴⁰"]. This aligns with Maurice Couture's view that ecotourism stands out from other forms of alternative tourism as a *component* of nature tourism and a clear *expression* of sustainable tourism; sustainable tourism, on the other hand, applies to all forms of tourism, whether urban, rural or nature⁴¹. Sustainable tourism, for its part, is assigned various definitions none of which seems to exclude urban areas.

Noteworthy is that ecotourism is frequently presented as a tool, a means, or a vehicle for achieving sustainable development^{42,43} and not as completely synonymous with sustainable tourism. Some researchers underline, for instance, that ecotourism is an economic activity that is fit to promote both sustainability and development⁴⁴.

Consequently, is it possible to say that an ecotourism-oriented operator also practises sustainable tourism, but a sustainable tourism-oriented operator is not necessarily on the field of ecotourism?

³⁹ Tuğba Kiper, *Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Development, Advances in Landscape Architecture* (London: IntechOpen, 2013), doi:10.5772/55749.

⁴⁰ Rosalie Böhmer, "Ökotourismus: So geht nachhaltiger Tourismus," *Utopia.de*, August 21, 2020, <https://utopia.de/ratgeber/oekotourismus-so-geht-nachhaltiger-tourismus/>.

⁴¹ Maurice Couture, "L'écotourisme, un concept en constante évolution," *Téoros* 21, no. 3 (2002): 7.

⁴² Kiper, *Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Development*.

⁴³ "What Is Ecotourism."

⁴⁴ David Barkin, "Ecotourism: A Tool for Sustainable Development in an Era of International Integration?," *Forestry and Environment Studies (F&ES)*, 1996, 264.

1.2. Public action and policies for sustainability

1.2.1. In the Upper Rhine Valley

The Upper Rhine Valley owes its economic, cultural and social vitality to a dynamic governance structure made up of a multi-layered network of local public authorities and stakeholders. They all form its institutional cross-border landscape and provide the legal, regulatory framework underpinning the region's cross-border projects, including those pertaining to sustainable development.

Since 1989, the European Union has been investing in cross-border cooperation through Interreg, a series of programmes which are part of the EU Cohesion Policy and funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The aim of Interreg programmes is to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion through *cross-border*, *transnational* and *inter-regional* cooperation. Each programming period sets specific policy objectives to reach until the final year, and the new 2021-2027 programming period will have to take into account the challenges arising from the current health crisis, next to the ecological transition, the digital transitions and the demographic change that remain crucial issues to be addressed by the EU over the next decades.

The historical background of Interreg demonstrates that tourism in general as well as sustainable tourism has been the focus of attention in the Upper Rhine Valley. The following four examples that arose in different programming periods shall illustrate this long-standing interest.

- “Trois Pays à Vélo” (Three countries by bike), 2013-2015: encouraging cycling in the Basel metropolitan area. Goals: job creation in gastronomy, leisure and services, encouraging environmentally friendly mobility
- Art’Rhena, 2018-2021: developing a rich cultural and artistic programming in the Franco-German axis Colmar-Freiburg. Goals: creating a strong, dynamic, attractive cross-border cultural project to strengthen touristic and economic activities and create jobs, and ensure a touristic role as a representative of local tourist offices.
- “Forteresses d’été” (Summer Fortresses), 2020-2021: touristic Franco-German enhancement of fortresses in the PAMINA Eurodistrict. Goals: sustainable protection and enhancement of local cultural heritage assets.

- “Destination Rhin Vivant” (Destination Living Rhine), 2006-2008: experimenting new ecotouristic routes in natural areas along the Rhine strip. Goals: promoting ecotourism and sustainable tourism among tourists and tourism actors.
- “Coopération des Parcs Naturels” (Cooperation of Natural Parks), 1997-2001: developing sustainable tourism, sustainable agriculture and environmental education. The project could not be carried out entirely because of technical difficulties.

For the 2021-2027 period, tourism is not a separate priority area but among the five policy objectives set out for this period, it can be supported under policy objectives 1 (*for an ecologically more sustainable cross-border region*) and 3 (*for a more social cross-border region*)⁴⁵.

At the political level, a lot of municipalities invoke the notion of sustainability and sustainable tourism. The example of Strasbourg is interesting to analyse as ‘sustainable’ seems to be linked with economical concerns. The city council has recently elaborated a strategy geared towards what has been named a ‘more sustainable, inclusive and diversified tourism’⁴⁶. The stated aim is, seemingly, to push the city’s boundaries beyond the city itself and to optimise and enhance it by connecting it with its surrounding ‘gems’, namely Basel (Switzerland), Karlsruhe, Baden-Baden (Germany). Behind these general terms, no mention is made of the future needs of visitors or safeguard of natural and cultural values or environmental education.

1.2.2. At European and international level

Political expressions of interest can be observed at EU level in form of formal or informal ministerial meetings.

For instance, the European Commission has developed a ‘European Tourism Indicators System’ (ETIS) to help tourist destinations measure their performance in relation to sustainability as previously defined.

Among other recent actions, the High-Level Forum for Sustainable Tourism held in Porto (Portugal) in May dealt with the challenges of sustainability, as well as the challenges for a green transition in tourism. The 27 Member States will also be discussing a medium to long-

⁴⁵ “Les objectifs du futur programme Interreg Rhin Supérieur 2021-2027,” *Interreg*, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.interreg-rhin-sup.eu/les-objectifs-2021-2027/>.

⁴⁶ “Préparer l’après-Covid. L’Eurométropole de Strasbourg vers un tourisme « plus durable, plus inclusif et plus diversifié »,” *Dernières Nouvelles d’Alsace*, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.dna.fr/economie/2021/03/12/tourisme-plus-durable-plus-inclusif-et-plus-diversifie>.

term strategic vision, according to the concept of sustainable tourism and including the implementation of instruments like the EU Agenda for Tourism 2030/2050.

The 17 SDGs, adopted by all 193 UN member states, are the most prominent example at present that lay out quantitative targets for sustainable development to be achieved by 2030 under the *Agenda 2030*. They are linked with the Paris Climate Agreement (which is incorporated in SDG 13) and apply to developing and developed countries alike. Among the 17 SDGs, 3 are tailored to tourism: 8, 12 and 14. For instance, Goal 8 on inclusive and sustainable economic growth contains the sub-target 8.9 calling for nations to create jobs and promote local culture and products. Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) contains the sub-target 12b calling for development and implementation of tools to monitor sustainable development impacts. Even though tourism is explicitly mentioned only in three SDGs, it has an important role to play in all aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The introduction of this agenda encourages a more critical assessment of how the entire tourism industry impacts our environment and societies.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) were developed in 2012 as basic guidelines for the sustainable development of tourism worldwide and were later made destination-specific (GSTC-D). The aim of this globally applicable standard is to provide a baseline for destinations throughout the world and initiate processes for promoting the sustainable development of destinations.

The European Union has played a key role in the adoption of the Agenda 2030, the SDGs, and the Paris Agreement. The President of the European Commission has committed to achieving the SDGs in the EU through the European Green Deal and other policy instruments⁴⁷. In doing so, the EU recognises that it faces major challenges in achieving the SDGs, and the SDGs serve as a framework for its long-term strategy.

As for sustainable development of tourism, this concept has gained recognition through two events held at international level:

- The United Nations Summit of 25-27 September 2015 in New York, where the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) has been adopted.

⁴⁷ “The European Green Deal” (European Commission, December 11, 2019).

- 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development (#IY2017)

Since tourism is a continuous process and requires a constant monitoring of impacts, a set of indicators have been defined for the 2030 Agenda to measure and implement sustainable development within touristic destinations. The online platform Tourism4SDGs.org has been founded for users to access a wide range of resources, add their own initiatives, findings and projects, motivate discussion and collaboration, and share content related to tourism and sustainable development.

As for the #IY2017, this landmark year highlighted the importance of government policies, business practices and consumer behaviour for building a more sustainable tourism sector that can contribute to the SDGs. It promoted the role of tourism in the following five key areas:

- Inclusive and sustainable economic growth
- Social inclusiveness, employment and poverty reduction
- Resource efficiency, environmental protection and climate change
- Cultural values, diversity and heritage
- Mutual understanding, peace and security.

1.3.Literature review on tourism

Here is an analytical summary of the past work relevant to my topic and that have served as background information to answer the research question.

In the past few years, the concept of sustainable development has been discussed intensively either at a global level or from the angle of urban or rural areas. However, it can also be investigated on a regional scale from the angle of its regional translation and operationalization. So did, for instance, Nijkamp et al. by discussing and critically evaluating regional sustainable development models through three case studies⁴⁸. The scale of the investigation is similar to that of this research as it is regional, but the difference is that the three case studies (Netherlands, Greece, Botswana) are distant from each other whereas this research focuses on different places within the same geographical area. Also, the authors endorse the three fundamental dimensions of the UNWTO: economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social equity.

⁴⁸ Peter Nijkamp, C.J.M. Van der Bergh, and Frits .J. Soeteman, "Regional Sustainable Development and Natural Resource Use," *The World Bank Economic Review* 4 (December 1990): 153–88.

Further, a recurrent issue in the past research pertains to the measurement of sustainable tourism. In her critique to sustainable tourism development, Liu states that the measurement of sustainability is one of the issues that has to be addressed, since there is “an urgent need to develop policies and measures that are not only theoretically sound but also practically feasible⁴⁹.” Butler identifies the problems of measurement and monitoring as being the major unresolved issues in sustainable development due to “difficulties stemming from the ill-defined nature of the concept” of sustainable development⁵⁰.

However, measuring the sustainability level of a tourist destination is seen by Zamfir and Corbos as being one of the main barriers to achieve sustainable tourism. Having the city of Bucharest as a main case study, the authors argue that “there is no panacea for sustainable urban tourism development⁵¹”. Other authors have come to the same conclusion by describing such barriers as hindering the decision-making processes for fulfilling the needs of the tourism destinations⁵². Achieving sustainable tourism means thoroughly understanding the effects and needs and taking them into account in its planning and development⁵³.

Furthermore, one of the main challenges in achieving sustainable tourism is to fill the existing gap between the stages of planning and implementation. The stage of planning includes the design of methodologies, tourism policies, and technological know-how. The stage of implementation refers to the execution of tourism projects and plans by public agencies and tourism companies⁵⁴. In order to plan and manage sustainable tourism development, the present levels of sustainability need to be thoroughly evaluated in order to design effective and efficient policies⁵⁵. The definitions of sustainability indicators must consider the interconnectivity in the tourism system and reflect the distinctive environmental, economic, and socio-cultural attributes of the destination or entity to which they would be applied⁵⁶.

⁴⁹ Zhenhua Liu, “Sustainable Tourism Development: A Critique,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, no. 11 (2003): 472.

⁵⁰ Richard W. Butler, “Sustainable Tourism: A State-of-the Art Review,” *Tourism Geographies*, no. 1 (2007): 15.

⁵¹ Zamfir and Corbos, “Towards Sustainable Tourism Development in Urban Areas: Case Study on Bucharest as Tourist Destination.”

⁵² Fernandez and Rivero, “Measuring Tourism Sustainability: Proposal for a Composite Index,” 278.

⁵³ Rodica Minciu et al., “Commercialization of Holidays in the Protected Natural Areas - Form of the Sustainable Development in Tourism,” *The AMFITEATRU ECONOMIC Journal* 12 (February 1, 2010): 85.

⁵⁴ Fernandez and Rivero, “Measuring Tourism Sustainability: Proposal for a Composite Index,” 279.

⁵⁵ Ivan Koži and Josip Mikuli, “An Exploratory Assessment of Tourism Sustainability in Croatian Coastal Destinations,” *WORKING PAPER SERIES*, n.d., 4.

⁵⁶ Sherma Roberts and John Tribe, “Sustainability Indicators for Small Tourism Enterprises—An Exploratory Perspective,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, no. 16 (2008): 575–94.

Sustainable development has become a focus of attention of the tourism sector along with other sectors, leading to the statement that a tourist destination cannot become competitive if it is not sustainable⁵⁷. Some researchers even go further and assume that sustainable (or cultural, or fair) tourism, as a result of the ideal mobility it represents, has become a forum for the legitimation of international organisations promoting it, since tourism is a supranational elements enabling the WTO and the Unesco to promote a globalism which goes beyond the international scale and would play a role building a new conception of the world straddling protection of nature and cultural identities and their marketing⁵⁸. Less common are studies on how sustainable tourism and ecotourism products or services are marketed through the Internet. Research into ecolodge operators has, for instance, been conducted to examine their online marketing information⁵⁹. The online marketing approach to the corpus will also be adopted for the purposes of this paper.

1.4. Research question

Although sustainable tourism has frequently been examined in the literature, a consensus has not yet been reached globally as to what constitutes sustainable tourism, especially because sustainable development itself is not spontaneously expounded in the same manner and not mobilised unanimously by decision makers (personal translation of: “ne s’annonce pas d’emblée de façon similaire [...] et n’est pas unanimement mobilisé par les décideurs⁶⁰). This paper therefore suggests an identification of the characteristics of sustainable tourism, based upon the views of tourism operators on what it is (descriptive norm⁶¹) and what it should be (injunctive norm⁶²).

Bearing in mind that the term sustainable development is now widely used and to a certain extent approved, the purpose of this research shall be to identify the common trends emerging among tourism operators who claim to integrate sustainable development in their activities, and thus to better understand, in a practical planning context, what sustainable development actually covers from their points of view and how it is implemented locally. In doing so, this research intends to shed light on its semantic vagueness but also to identify more precisely its foundations as well as the societal gaps that sustainable development is seeking to fill within

⁵⁷ J.R. Brent Ritchie and Geoffrey Ian Crouch, *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective* (Wallingford: Cabi Publishing, 2003).

⁵⁸ Cousin and Réau, *Sociologie du tourisme*, 98.

⁵⁹ Po-Hsin Lai and Scott Shafer, “Marketing Ecotourism through the Internet: An Evaluation of Selected Ecolodges in Latin America and the Caribbean,” *Journal of Ecotourism* 4, no. 3 (August 2005): 143–60.

⁶⁰ Hamman, *Sociologie urbaine et développement durable*, 56.

⁶¹ Niels Christensen et al., “Social Norms and Identity Relevance: A Motivational Approach to Normative Behavior,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30, no. 10 (November 2004): 1295–1309.

⁶² Ibid.

the tourism industry, by characterising tourism operators' practices and strategies and conducting an in-depth analysis of this complex issue in its real-life context. At the same time, the geographical limit of this study enables to determine whether sustainable development presents features specific to the Upper Rhine Valley or whether these features are universal.

The response to this general research question will incidentally enable to address other sub-questions, such as: to what extent can sustainable development be considered a reality for tourism operators engaged in a process of models of tourism alternative to mass tourism? Is 'sustainable development' the correct term to describe tourism operators engaged in these alternative models? Where is the boundary over which a tourism operator becomes considered as practising sustainable development? How do tourism operators define and see themselves?

The focus on sustainable development, as defined in the previous sections, will result in my attempt to demonstrate in a critical manner how a tourism and event destination can reconcile, as far as possible, economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability in its tourism activity, and to what extent the SDGs - applied to tourism - are actually applicable by tourism operators in the Upper Rhine Valley to their own specific realities.

Underpinning the research for this paper are several theoretical concepts and analytical tools borrowed from different areas of expertise, such as tourism studies, social psychology, political science, socio-anthropology, discourse analysis and digital marketing, not least because "there is probably no other economic activity which transects so many sectors, levels and interests as tourism⁶³".

⁶³ Cater, "Environmental Contradictions in Sustainable Tourism," 21.

2. Methodology

2.1. Scope and delimitations, and sample of my study

The whole area of the Upper Rhine Valley extends across three States, namely France, Germany and Switzerland, encompassing the Black Forest and South Palatinate in Germany, the Alsace in France, and the cantons of Basel city, Basel-Landschaft, Aargau, Solothurn and Jura in Switzerland. In view of the limited time allotted for the realization of this study, a restrictive choice on two of the three States was felt as necessary to facilitate concentration on an in-depth qualitative investigation of the research object. Since a part of this paper analyses the research object in the political context of the European Union, it has been decided to limit the geographical scope to the EU Member States, that is to the French and German parts of the area.



Figure 1. The Upper Rhine Valley.
Source: Agence Régionale du Tourisme Grand Est.

Overall, this whole area accounts for 22.3 million hospitality nights in 2018, including 12.1 million for the German part and 7.2 for the French part⁶⁴, making the Upper Rhine Valley a major stream of touristic circulation. Furthermore, since this area is, on the one hand, a cross-border territory astride two countries but is, on the other hand, geographically limited to 40 km from west to east and 300 km from south to north, it offers a fairly homogeneous space with a shared historical background as well as a shared socio-cultural and economic identity, even though it also consists of two distinct subspaces—German and French—shaped by two distinct, yet coexisting, political, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This difference will allow for a comparative analysis of perceptions and experiences with respect to the tourism industry.

2.2. Description of method and data collection technique

The research question has been addressed using a predominantly qualitative approach as it is concerned with identifying the mechanisms behind the relationships between producers (hosts/operators) and consumers (guests/tourists) of sustainable tourism, as well as behind the producers' perception of sustainable development in tourism. This research aimed to answer the research question by collecting data from tourism operators through a questionnaire that has been entirely designed on the Czech online survey system Survio. It has been translated into French and German. The questions aimed to gather from the respondents different types of information which will be outlined in the next section. Worth bearing in mind is what the use of a questionnaire can bring what it cannot bring: this method cannot capture the way in which tourism operators really behave in social situations with regard to the topic of sustainable development in tourism, but it brings to light how they feel and think about this topic, or at least how they say they feel and think about it. Thus, recurrent patterns have been observed and analysed in great detail in the respondents' answers and have led to an identification of complex social processes that enable to determine why and how certain relationships operate and certain perceptions exist. Tourism producers' account and assessment of consumers' experiences is very important to shed light on sustainability practices.

The choice of a questionnaire to collect data fulfils specific functions required to address the research question. A written expression of thoughts through a questionnaire is of course not as extemporaneous as an oral production through a dynamic interview. Still, this data collection technique allows, hypothetically, the respondents for more time to think and thus a more structured expression of their thoughts. Manuscript speech is more controlled than oral speech,

⁶⁴ Sources: "ORT Alsace" for France, "Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Pfalz" for Germany; and "Bundesamt für Statistik, Beherbergungsstatistik (HESTA)©BFS" for Switzerland.

all the more so because their authors are aware that writing leaves a record of their ideas and that the content of what they are writing is therefore more self-committing. Thus, as they are writing, they presumably pay particular attention to the content they are producing.

This qualitative methodological approach has combined content analysis on my own data from a questionnaire, and secondary data analysis on existing datasets. For survey and content analysis, key words, phrases and subject matter have been identified to assess how they vary from one respondent to another. And secondary data analysis has served to compare the respondents' empirical data with primary source data (issued by public administrations, the European Union, local tourist offices) and describe relevant correlations whenever applicable.

2.3. Questionnaire content and expected results

A bottom-up approach has been retained for this research in order to induce the theory from the field observations. Consequently, the questions have been kept as broad as possible to leave sufficient leeway for the respondents to marshal, for each question, related facts, ideas or knowledge based upon their experience.

The respondents have been informed that their personal data—that makes them and their legal entities identifiable—would not be disclosed, except for the municipality where they operate (provide a touristic service). The latter information is essential to determine how, and if, the demographic profile of the municipality influences their approach to sustainable development.

Below is a comprehensive list of the questions composing the questionnaire:

1. Please indicate the name of your company and the municipality where you offer a touristic service
2. What is the size of your company in terms of workforce?
3. What touristic branch(es) is your business activity classified into?
4. In which languages can you receive guests?
5. What type of tourism do you identify your activity to?
6. What should a sustainable tourism project ideally consist of in your opinion?
7. Do you consider your activity as engaged in a sustainable development approach?
8. Whether you replied “yes” or “no” to the previous question, does your touristic offer have aspects considered as “sustainable”? If it does, how is it reflected concretely in its content?
9. What label(s) or certification(s) do you have?
10. What needs of consumers or touristic demand do you think your touristic activity fulfil?
11. Have you noticed any changes in the tourists' consumption patterns over the last decade?
12. Can you list a few of these changes?

13. Has the COVID-19 crisis changed the (current or future) content of your touristic offer?
14. Can you specify these new choices?
15. Can you list the main problems you have faced in your activity as a tourism service provider?
16. To finish with, what is your personal definition of tourism?
17. Would you like to give me feedback on the content of this questionnaire?
18. Do you agree that I contact you by phone soon for a complementary interview?

This questionnaire is comprised of 11 open-ended questions, 5 multiple-choice questions and 2 close-ended questions. The multiple-choice as well as close-ended questions have provided quantitative data that allow for tabulation and charting into percentages, while the open-ended questions have produced qualitative data that provide a wealth of subjective material to analyse. On the whole, the 18 questions were expected to yield specific results to achieve certain goals for the research. Some of the results have been obtained while others have not. In most cases, the expected results have been obtained, thereby meeting the pursued goals, but a few expected results have not been obtained, resulting in the goals being partly, or not being, achievable. The following table outlines the status of these expectations for each question.

QUESTION NUMBER	EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND PURSUED GOALS	EXPECTATIONS FULFILLED OR UNFULFILLED
1	Examining the respondents' websites and determine the population density of their working area	Fulfilled
2	Realising a statistical study on the size of their companies and propounding hypotheses on the correlation between the company typology and their engagement in sustainable development	Fulfilled
3	Observing in what touristic branches sustainable development is most claimed to be practised	Fulfilled
4	Evaluating the operators' degree of integration in the cross-border plurilingual context	Fulfilled
5	Evaluating the operators' self-identification	Fulfilled
6	- Sounding out their theoretical knowledge of the topic	Fulfilled

	- Possibly recognising any content drawn from identifiable external sources - Measuring actual project against their ideal, and assessing influence of norms on their perception	
7	Comparing their stated engagement with their actual tourism development plan and services	Fulfilled
8	Same as 7	Fulfilled
9	Assessing differences between those who hold a label and those who do not	Fulfilled
10	Measuring their online marketing strategy depending on what they think the tourists' needs are	Fulfilled
11	Same as 10 + assessing evolution of tourists' interest in sustainable practices + determining possible adaptations to changing mentalities	Fulfilled
12	Same as 11	Fulfilled
13	Measuring the hosts' resilience and the effect of the crisis on any transformation of their operations	Partly fulfilled. Many focused on the financial consequences and the drawbacks of governmental restrictions. Unexpected, but provided useful exploitable material.
14	Same as 13	Fulfilled
15	Problems with respect to the relation with guests and political views on decisions from local, national or European governments.	Partly. Only problems related to guest behaviour.
16	Assessing their level of demarcation from mainstream tourism	Fulfilled
17	Identifying points to be improved in the event of further research and leaving them the possibility to add any information	Fulfilled
18	Deepening certain unclear points	Not fulfilled. Very few agreed. Their reluctance on this aspect has been justified by the handling of the economic consequences of the health crisis

2.4. Sampling method for the corpus creation

The word “corpus” will be used in this paper whenever a reference to the empirical data provided by my own respondents is needed. Thus, the empirical data (collected for the purpose of this research) will be distinguished from primary source data (existing before my research). The construction of my sample involved a preliminary identification of different associations, agencies and regional authorities working with a network of small and large tourism organisations in the Upper Rhine Valley. I requested that each intermediary put me in touch with tourism service providers working and pursuing their activities in any places whose main purpose is to allow public access for entertainment, interest, or education.

The intermediaries contacted for my research were the local Regional Observatory for tourism (Observatoire régional du tourisme en Grand Est⁶⁵), the association “Agir pour un tourisme responsable”, gathering most tour operators engaged in a responsible tourism, and the “Comité régional du tourisme d’Alsace”. On the German part, the intermediaries were the Tourismus-Verband Baden-Württemberg e.V. and the Amt für Touristik, Kultur und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit.

It has been chosen to survey a small random sample. Twenty is a manageable number of respondents who represent a larger population. According to the laws of probability, random samples represent the population as a whole.

The next chapter describes the data collected from this sample.

⁶⁵ <https://observatoire.art-grandest.fr/destinations/alsace/>

3. Data presentation

3.1. Statistical data

The number of represented municipalities where the respondents operate is unequal on the German and on the French side (3 vs. 9). While the distribution of different municipalities is unbalanced, conversely the number of respondents is identical on both sides (out of the 20 respondents, 10 are from Germany, 10 from France). In addition, the sample exhibits a variety of municipalities where these respondents operate, with various degrees of urbanisation. Rural/urban classifications will not be retained for this study because national definitions of urban and rural areas differ significantly from one country to another. Not only does the minimum population size to define an urban area differ from one country to another, but some countries also designate urban areas by simple administrative decision, without statistical definition, while other countries use the sectoral employment or provision of infrastructure and services to distinguish between rural and urban. The concepts of urban and rural municipality are therefore subjective and arbitrary, and strongly depend upon differing political and administrative circumstances.

As a consequence, the retained discriminative criterion has been the population density, i.e. the number of inhabitants per km². The population density of each municipality represented in the corpus has been provided by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (Insee) for the French part⁶⁶, and by the Statistical Office of Baden-Württemberg for the German part⁶⁷. The result was that the proportion of respondents offering a touristic service in thinly populated municipalities was higher than for densely populated ones.

Gemeindegebiet, Bevölkerung und Bevölkerungsdichte seit 1961					
Stadt Freiburg im Breisgau					
Jahr ¹⁾	Gemeindegebiet ²⁾	Bevölkerung insgesamt ³⁾		Bevölkerungsdichte	
	ha	Anzahl	EW/km ²	Landeswert	
2017	15.304	229.636	1.501		309
2018	15.304	230.241	1.504		310
2019	15.304	231.195	1.511		311

*Table 1. Demographic data for the city Freiburg im Breisgau.
Source: Statistisches Amt Baden-Württemberg.*

⁶⁶ “Comparateur de territoire,” *Insee*, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/zones/1405599?debut=0&q=comparateur+de+territoire>.

⁶⁷ “Bevölkerung, Gebiet und Bevölkerungsdichte,” *Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg*, accessed June 22, 2021, <https://www.statistik-bw.de/BevoelkGebiet/Bevoelkerung/>.

Gemeindegebiet, Bevölkerung und Bevölkerungsdichte seit 1961 Baiersbronn (Kreis Freudenstadt)				
Jahr ¹⁾	Gemeindegebiet ²⁾	Bevölkerung insgesamt ³⁾	Bevölkerungsdichte	
	ha	Anzahl	EW/km ²	Landeswert
2017	18.958	14.565	77	309
2018	18.958	14.592	77	310
2019	18.958	14.705	78	311

Table 2. Demographic data for the city Baiersbronn.
Source: Statistisches Amt Baden-Württemberg

Gemeindegebiet, Bevölkerung und Bevölkerungsdichte seit 1961 Stadt Breisach am Rhein (Kreis Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald)				
Jahr ¹⁾	Gemeindegebiet ²⁾	Bevölkerung insgesamt ³⁾	Bevölkerungsdichte	
	ha	Anzahl	EW/km ²	Landeswert
2017	5.459	15.474	283	309
2018	5.459	15.606	286	310
2019	5.459	15.488	284	311

Table 3. Demographic data for the city Breisach am Rhein.
Source: Statistisches Amt Baden-Württemberg

Population	Strasbourg (67482)	Luttenbach- près-Munster (68193)	Wattwiller (68359)	Val-de- Moder (67372)	Obersteinbach (67353)	Orbey (68249)	Ingwiller (67222)	Ribeauvillé (68269)	Soultz- Haut- Rhin (68315)
Population en 2017	280 966	742	1 634	5 096	227	3 552	4 064	4 729	7 072
Densité de la population (nombre d'habitants au km ²) en 2017	3 590,2	94,4	120,1	565,6	24,7	77,2	225,2	146,8	239,2
Superficie en 2017, en km ²	78,3	7,9	13,6	9,0	9,2	46,0	18,1	32,2	29,6
Variation de la population : taux annuel moyen entre 2012 et 2017, en %	0,5	-0,3	-1,1	-0,6	-0,9	-0,5	-0,9	-0,3	-0,4
dont variation due au solde naturel : taux annuel moyen entre 2012 et 2017, en %	0,7	0,0	-0,0	0,1	-0,5	-0,3	-0,2	-0,4	0,1
dont variation due au solde apparent des entrées sorties : taux annuel moyen entre 2012 et 2017, en %	-0,2	-0,3	-1,1	-0,8	-0,3	-0,3	-0,6	0,1	-0,5
Nombre de ménages en 2017	133 950	314	699	2 051	103	1 529	1 688	2 120	3 034

Sources : Insee, RP2012 et RP2017 exploitations principales en géographie au 01/01/2020

Table 4. Demographic data of the respondents' municipalities.
Source: Insee.

The following tables outline in descending order the population density of the areas where the respondents operate. F stands for French respondents, G for German respondents, followed by the order number as featured in the Excel sheet containing their answers. This code will be used consistently throughout this paper whenever a reference to a respondent’s response is needed.

<i>Order number</i>	<i>Population density</i>
<i>F2</i>	3590,2
<i>F8</i>	565,6
<i>F3</i>	239,2
<i>F6</i>	239,2
<i>F9</i>	225,2
<i>F5</i>	146,8
<i>F7</i>	120,1
<i>F4</i>	94,4
<i>F1</i>	77,2
<i>F10</i>	24,7

Table 5. Population density French respondents.

<i>Order number</i>	<i>Population density</i>
<i>G1</i>	1511
<i>G2</i>	284
<i>G3</i>	284
<i>G4</i>	284
<i>G5</i>	284
<i>G6</i>	284
<i>G7</i>	284
<i>G8</i>	284
<i>G9</i>	284
<i>G10</i>	78

Table 6. Population density German respondents.

This structuration of statistical data serves to facilitate the conduct of certain analyses in the fourth chapter additionally to the analyses carried out on the results of the questionnaire.

3.2. Statistical occurrence of highlighted characteristics

Asking the respondents to select the types of tourism they identify to (question 5) fulfilled the purpose of conducting a quantitative measurement of the type of tourism that appears in a statistically significant manner in order to reveal the most used term other than sustainable tourism. To perform such a precise measurement, a computer-based analysis has been conducted on a file containing a compilation of the responses to question 5 with the freeware concordancer AntConc used by most researchers in lexicometry ⁶⁸ (see Appendix 1: Concordance analysis on word “sustainable”). The intuitive interface of this tool allows for a clear overview of how the words interact with each other and aligns occurrences, reoccurrences, and concordances of words from large texts, which saves a lot of time. This analysis reveals that

⁶⁸ Christopher Gledhill, *Collocations in Science Writing* (Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag, 2000).

the most frequently used term is “ecotourism” (Appendix 5: Concordance analysis on “ecotourism”). Considering the result of this quantitative analysis, qualitative analyses shall be conducted in this paper on the concept of *ecotourism* as a competing term of *sustainable tourism*.

3.3. Business sizes

Question 2 aims to understand the decisions and strategies developed, and the problems faced by, the different tourism organisations of the corpus, based on their size. To measure their size, different criteria may be used, but the most common is number of people employed. The set of indicators retained for this research is the one developed by the OECD⁶⁹.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employ fewer than 250 people. SMEs are further subdivided into micro-enterprises (fewer than 10 employees), small enterprises (10 to 49 employees), medium-sized enterprises (50 to 249 employees). Large enterprises employ 250 or more people.

The quantitative analysis reveals that the average size of the companies represented in the corpus is “fewer than 10 employees” (SME, micro-entreprise). Here is the precise distribution:

OECD indicators	Amount of tourism enterprises in the corpus
Alone	5
Fewer than 10	8
10 to 49	6
50 to 249	1

3.4. Labels and certifications

Quality labels are a well-established phenomenon within the tourism sector, particularly in hospitality, and they provide benchmarks for consumers purchasing decisions. There is currently no system for registering quality labelling schemes in Europe and so no clear estimate of the number in existence. The study of the Centre for European Policy Studies estimated that there are up to 100 labels related to quality, covering a wide range of aspects such as hospitality,

⁶⁹ “Entrepreneurship - Enterprises by Business Size - OECD Data,” *TheOECD*, accessed July 28, 2021, <http://data.oecd.org/entrepreneur/enterprises-by-business-size.htm>.

culture, recreation, hygiene, and other tourism services⁷⁰. However, there is considerable fragmentation and diversity in the criteria applied, principles, management and governance of the labels. Below is an overview of the respondents' stated labels, with a brief description of the criteria based on the labels' official websites.

FRANCE		
Label	Criteria	Figures
Clef Verte (3 resp.)	Respect for nature and people, in particular by controlling water and energy consumption, by environmental waste management, by leisure activities that do not harm nature and by enhancing the value of the actors and natural assets of the territory.	65 participating countries worldwide 714 labelled establishments
Valeurs Parc Naturel Regional (1 resp.)	Collective brand awarded by Regional Natural Parks, based on a voluntary and mutual commitment between Parks and companies. Values: attachment to territory, human and social dimension, enhancement of heritage.	Over 2,000 enterprises hold the brand in over 50 Parks
Accueil Vélo (1 resp.)	National brand guaranteeing quality reception and services along cycle routes for touring cyclists. The establishment is located less than 5 km from a cycle route, with facilities for cyclists and practical information/advice, and provides services of luggage transfer, laundry and drying, bicycle hire and washing.	Around 6,000 labelled establishments
Qualité Tourisme (1 resp.)	Only State-owned mark awarded to tourism professionals for the quality of their reception and services. Values include: warm reception, caring multilingual staff, customised services, cleanliness and comfort, discovery of a destination.	5,800 establishments
Ecocert (1 resp.)	Explicit statement on sustainable development. Respect for living ecosystems, better management of natural resources and energy, socially responsible supply chains, better product quality and safety.	17 UN SDGs covered by their businesses

⁷⁰ Andrea Renda et al., "Estimated Impacts of Possible Options and Legal Instruments of the Umbrella European Tourism Label for Quality Schemes," Final Report, Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) (Brussels: European Commission, September 21, 2012).

GERMANY		
Label	Criteria	Figures
Wanderbares Deutschland <i>(2 resp.)</i>	Renewed every 3 years. The establishment is located less than 2 km from a hiking route, provides practical information and advice, services of luggage transfer, laundry and drying, shoe washing, high-quality breakfast.	600,000 members
Dehoga Umweltcheck <i>(2 resp.)</i>	Careful management of residual waste as well as energy and water consumption and their use of regional, fair and food products certified as organic.	Not available
Gesellschaft für Ressourcenschutz (GfRS) <i>(1 resp.)</i>	Ecological wine production, if applicable, organic regional food products, trade and processing of organic products, no GMO, animal protection.	Not available
Klimaschutzwettbewerb der Energieagentur Regio Freiburg <i>(1 resp.)</i>	Awards an association, a school or a company that has made a contribution to the protection of the environment (installed photovoltaic system, planted own vegetable garden, switched to soft transport modes, etc.)	Not available

This descriptive presentation of the quantitative data from the corpus provides a useful overview of the socio-economic context and socio-demographic profile of the 20 tourism organisations represented in the corpus. These quantitative analyses can be useful for certain qualitative analyses that will follow in the next chapter.

4. Analysis

The following subsection titles correspond to salient or recurrent patterns identified in the corpus responses in which commonalities and differences have been analysed in depth. This analysis has, in turn, enabled to reveal deeper tourism-specific challenges, problems, or grey areas behind the patterns at issue, and the articulation between the former and the latter has brought to an attempt to identify as precisely as possible the potential of the political, institutional and economic context for sustainable tourism. Based upon these findings, the next chapter outlines possible solutions and alternative paths.

4.1. Nature vs. urbanity, or vs. culture: conciliable concepts?

The most common need of tourists emphasised by both German and French tourism suppliers is definitely the need for nature. It was mentioned with a high statistical salience in the question regarding the needs of consumers or touristic demand that they think their touristic activity fulfils. More specifically, however, the depicted motivation here is not to merely *go* into nature, but to *go back* into it. Many respondents have used the words “*get back*” [F1], “*return*” [F7; F8] or even “*reconnect*” [F9] to describe the tourists’ need for nature, as though there were a general desire to revert to an earlier, lost condition. This *reversion* to nature, moreover, implies a provenance from somewhere else that is oftentimes not explicitly mentioned but is assumed to be *urbanity* created by *culture*. Thus, a clear dichotomy is usually established between *nature* and *society*, or *nature* and *culture*, the latter being understood as the social organisation of life expressed through the building of *urbanity* resulting in people’s disconnection from *nature*. This type of dualism between *nature* and *society* has been especially researched by Hamman who has taken a critical look at common dual oppositions between *rurality* and *urbanity* as human creations and at their related mythical representations.

Nonetheless, this wish to re-connect with nature, or return to it, reflects a probable disenchantment with respect to urbanity understood as an ecosystem created by humans. This ‘way back’ to nature and its perceived benefits, or – viewed from a different angle – this ‘shift away’ from culture and its perceived detriment, also reflects a general feeling that increasing urbanisation and the rise of sedentary, indoor pastimes (such as television, the Internet, and video games) are felt negatively, due to what Pyle calls the extinction of experience⁷¹. This trend occurs in a context when the decrease in outdoor recreation has been proved to have

⁷¹ Robert Michael Pyle, “Nature Matrix: Reconnecting People and Nature,” *Oryx*, no. 37 (2003): 206–14.

potentially serious consequences on childhood development, mental and physical wellbeing, and environmental knowledge and concern⁷².

Besides, this reconnection with nature can occur either with a view to enjoying its quietness [F10] and spending “restful holidays” [F7; G2], predominantly mentioned by hiking and nature guiding providers, or with a view to learning [G8; F9] (or re-learning?) about nature presented as a type of environment from which people are severed through urbanisation. A respondent who offers nature-based well-being tourism, focused on showing the benefits of forest-based recreation, notes on the part of tourists an ever stronger desire to discover forests and to learn how to better preserve them [F8]. Besides, this tourism manager identifies their activity to ‘ecotourism’ but does not consider they are engaged in a sustainable development approach, but this contrastive phenomenon will be discussed in greater detail in another section hereafter. Also, many studies deem nature-based tourism as a major challenge for biodiversity conservation^{73,74,75}. Indeed, if people no longer experience and know their natural environments, how can they be expected to care about them? This role of nature as an educational tool for learning about life, and its function as a recreational place for city dwellers, was firstly documented as early as the 1930s and was strengthened in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the advent of ecology⁷⁶. That decade saw a large number of citizens settling in the countryside and therefore marks the beginning of the “returning to nature” trend.

Interestingly, those of the corpus respondents who mentioned this need to revert to nature also classified their respective activities into *health* tourism (3 of them, for instance sylvotherapy), *sports* tourism (3 of them too, for instance ziplining), and *rural* tourism (4 of them). While the link of nature and sustainable practise of tourism with rural areas is obvious, the link between health/sports, and nature/sustainability is interesting to examine. Indeed, this desire to merge with nature has been called “cosmosis” by Berque who analyses it as a wish to “*re-cosmise* the

⁷² Peter Kareiva, “Ominous Trends in Nature Recreation,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 8, no. 105 (2008): 2757–58.

⁷³ Pyle, “Nature Matrix: Reconnecting People and Nature.”

⁷⁴ Kareiva, “Ominous Trends in Nature Recreation.”

⁷⁵ Andrew Balmford and Richard Cowling, “Fusion or Failure? The Future of Conservation Biology,” *Conservation Biology* 3, no. 20 (2006): 692–95.

⁷⁶ Claire Delfosse and Monique Poulot, “Le rural, une catégorie opératoire pour penser les mutations socio-spatiales françaises. La géographie rurale d’hier à aujourd’hui,” *Bulletin de l’Association de géographes français*, Les espaces ruraux en France : nouvelles questions de recherche, 2019, 528–54.

earth” as a result of an intense re-enchantment produced by the engagement of the body in the ecologisation⁷⁷. Bernard Andrieu even goes further and speaks of “ecologisation of sports⁷⁸”.

The example of the German wine producer [G3] is also interesting as it illustrates an association of nature and countryside with authenticity. Guests are offered a genuine insight into the backstage of wine production while enjoying the authentic lifestyle of the countryside. The countryside is therefore changing from being a place of primary production to a place for providing recreation and tourism services. As a consequence, the number of visitors to the countryside is likely to grow in comparison to the actual residents of these areas, who are often declining in number. This means that two cultures – urban leisure and everyday rural life – are meeting each other.

Further, studies on wine tourism have proved it could be used as a model for sustainable economic development as it drives both economic growth and social development⁷⁹, thus meeting the requirements of sustainable development and ecotourism. Also, the combination of the leisurely dimension of wine tourism and the technical knowledge on viticulture makes wine tourism a polymorphic tourism product driven by tourists’ search for new experiences and typically taking place in rural areas.

4.2. Fruitful host-guest interaction: an intellectual and social experience

Pedagogy is at the forefront of most of the corpus respondents’ sustainable touristic offers, ranging from raising awareness on the importance of local, organic products [F2], over advising on how to start up boilers and informing on the existence of a compost bin [F3], to “explaining ecological attitudes” [F5]. Educational workshops on subjects like wild fauna and flora, permaculture and naturopathy [F9] are also part of the corpus respondents’ touristic sustainable projects. Last but not least, what is recurrently mentioned as a central part of their activities is “waste disposal” [F1; F6; F7; F9; F10; G1]. Most of them, especially on the French side, give their guests incentives to separate their waste and save energy. Waste prevention and management is, indeed, one of the most significant challenges for tourism destinations and establishments insofar as tourism flows bring high levels of unsustainable resource

⁷⁷ Augustin Berque, *Recosmiser la terre* (Paris: Éditions B2, 2018).

⁷⁸ Eric Perera, “Vivre pleinement l’expérience des loisirs émersifs : vers le bien-être intérieur ? Entretien avec Bernard Andrieu,” *Téoros. Revue de recherche en tourisme* 40, no. 40–1 (March 17, 2021), <http://journals.openedition.org/teoros/9976>.

⁷⁹ Marta Peris-Ortiz, María de la Cruz Del Río Rama, and Carlos Rueda-Armengot, *Wine and Tourism : A Strategic Segment for Sustainable Economic Development* (Cham (Switzerland): Springer International Publishing AG, 2016).

consumption and waste production. For that matter, the central place of this issue in a 2018 Interreg project⁸⁰ is proof that waste management is an area of expertise of its own and requires the input of several engineers and experts of various fields to develop a good waste management plan. Several aspects must be considered: economic (costs, cost savings, revenues) and operational (steps to be followed for local application).

It would seem, then, that the practice of sustainable tourism in our corpus differs from traditional models in the intellectual involvement: traditional travel is defined by a predominantly passive gaze, while the type of sustainable tourism practised in the corpus involves more active forms of engagement by tourists. In other words, the hosts are implicated in the learning process of their guests and the latter, in turn, become engaged in their guests' touristic activities. This teacher/learner relation is less common in traditional forms of tourism where tourists and hosts are bound by a commercial link. For that matter, this act of sharing is explicitly claimed by the corpus respondents as a central guise of their sustainable philosophy. They share either technical knowledge [F2: "raising awareness"; F3: "giving guests advice"; F5: "passing on knowledge of the vicinity"; F9 "organising naturopathic cooking workshops"; G9: "transfer of knowledge on agriculture"] or social moments to better know their guests individually [G7: "individual counselling"; "individual discussions"]. One of the respondents who manages a campsite and classifies it into social tourism even "breaks anonymity" by "favouring individual contacts with the received public" [F4]. All these responses have a common point: they all come from hospitality service providers (hostels, holiday centres, campsites), which corroborates Cousin's observation that touristic stays in bed & breakfast style hotels are governed by many codes enabling to "euphemise" commodity exchange and to build relations experienced as friendly⁸¹. Certain host-guest meetings result in long-term (if not 'sustainable') relationships of familiarity, confidence, exchange where the market-oriented service fades away⁸².

The fact that tourists engage actively with a place to produce their own experiences could be compared with "co-creation between consumer and producer⁸³". This could be correlated with

⁸⁰ "Linking Tourism and Sustainable Waste Management," *Interreg Europe*, accessed July 12, 2021, <https://www.interregeurope.eu/winpol/news/news-article/4476/linking-tourism-and-sustainable-waste-management/>.

⁸¹ Cousin and Réau, *Sociologie du tourisme*.

⁸² Christophe Giraud, "Recevoir le touriste en ami. La mise en scène de l'accueil marchand en chambres d'hôtes," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 170 (2007): 14–31.

⁸³ Albert Boswijk, Thomas Thijssen, and Ed Peelen, *The Experience Economy: A New Perspective* (London: Pearson Education, 2007).

Greg Richards' concept of 'creative tourism'⁸⁴ coined for one of his investigation fields, namely CouchSurfing. This worldwide accommodation platform makes travel a truly social experience in which 'creative tourists' not only *visit* places, but also *make* them. Comparatively, this is what happens in our corpus with the educational workshops and the information, explanations, incentives of all sorts to protect natural resources: they all require a co-makship that occurs through an exchange of skills and knowledge with those who are visited.

Also, the touristic offer of our corpus is designed to be lived as an "experiential learning" through a socio-cultural encounter. It is a transformative combination of learning and personal growth⁸⁵, thus creating a "complete social experience"⁸⁶. In the field of tourism research, this type of interaction fostering good practices during a touristic experience is more largely known as educational tourism⁸⁷ or ecotourism⁸⁸, but less as sustainable tourism. However, it is possible to speak of sustainable development *of* ecotourism, which largely depends on the behaviour of tourists. This experiential education in the field facilitates critical thinking, practical knowledge and participatory action which enable *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and *praxis* (social change). Indeed, environmental cognition, willingness to engage in sustainable activities, decision-making in tourism activities, and individual behaviour have a strong influence on the direction of ecotourism development. In response to this, some studies have been conducted to determine the factors influencing tourist environmentally friendly behaviours, focusing on environmental knowledge, environmental attitudes, beliefs, loyalty, responsibility, and attraction; green purchasing behaviour, and local attachment^{89,90}.

These "positive encounters" between hosts and tourists correspond to one of the three characteristics of Responsible Tourism articulated in the Cape Town Declaration on Responsible Tourism in Destinations, namely providing more enjoyable experiences for tourists

⁸⁴ Greg Richards, "Creativity and Tourism: The State of the Art," *Annals of Tourism Research* 38, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 1225–53, doi:10.1016/j.annals.2011.07.008.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Christine A. McGladdery and Berendien A. Lubbe, "Rethinking Educational Tourism: Proposing a New Model and Future Directions," *Tourism Review* 72, no. 3 (January 1, 2017): 319–29, doi:10.1108/TR-03-2017-0055.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Dimitriou, "From Theory to Practice of Ecotourism: Major Obstacles That Stand in the Way and Best Practices That Lead to Success."

⁸⁹ Pihui Liu, Minmin Teng, and Chuanfeng Han, "How Does Environmental Knowledge Translate into Pro-Environmental Behaviors? The Mediating Role of Environmental Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions," *Science of The Total Environment* 728 (August 1, 2020), doi:10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.138126.

⁹⁰ María Azucena Vicente-Molina, Ana Fernández-Sáinz, and Julen Izagirre-Olaizola, "Environmental Knowledge and Other Variables Affecting Pro-Environmental Behaviour: Comparison of University Students from Emerging and Advanced Countries," *Journal of Cleaner Production* 61 (December 15, 2013): 130–38, doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2013.05.015.

through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues. This consistency with natural, social and community values allows “both hosts and guests to enjoy a worthwhile interaction and shared experiences⁹¹.”

4.3. Touristic advertising: between myth and reality

Brand strategy is a crucial element of a firm’s corporate identity because the customer’s attention and loyalty depend on how successfully the firm has created emotional connections with its target audience, either through visuals or through narrative. This section shall examine the salient features that characterise sustainable tourism operators’ brand strategy based on the examination of the corpus respondents’ websites, especially the homepages, which typically deliver the most important general information on the firm, and the so-called *About us* pages that usually describe the firm’s history and philosophy.

A simple glance over each corpus respondent’s website transports the reader into an imaginary world. The first striking element common to many websites is the use of green as a thematic colour, either as a digital background for the webpage, or reflected in the pictures exhibiting a verdant garden, a tree-filled landscape or a leafy campsite. If not green, blue is also found, however on the website of the only operator offering a waterway tourism service [G5]. The colour is indeed an important visual guise of the message and can also be a powerful differentiator in the sense of Porter’s generic strategy⁹²: here, the visual differentiator serves to set sustainable tourism operators apart from non-sustainable ones. The visuals, more than the narrative, promise tourists environments defined by endless flora, fauna, as well as rich natural heritage, and are powerful enough to evoke positive, ecologically responsible imagery. This imagery fulfils the tourists’ needs and demands as depicted by the operators in the questionnaire and is thus targeted at distinct customer segments who want to reduce their environmental impact [F2], look for a genuine natural historical environment [F4], or need to respect nature [F1; F3].

Nevertheless, this imagery can even lie, not least regarding the location. One of the sustainable hosts, for instance, displays pictures of a seemingly dense forest and promises an experience of seclusion, far away from the city. Yet, upon verification on a map, this tourism accommodation is shown as located near a highroad and 3 km away from an urbanised area. This probably reflects a vital need to imagine another world that would be idyllic in contrast to everyday life.

⁹¹ Valene Smith and William Eadington, eds., *Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 3.

⁹² Michael Porter, *Competitive Advantage* (New York: Free Press, 1985).

Fiction surpasses reality by embellishing and transforming it. This calls to mind Franck Michel's "mythology of paradise"⁹³ illustrated by the example of Apia in the Samoa islands: this city has been, on the one hand, eulogised by a tour operator, Virgin Holidays, and on the other, depicted in grim realistic terms by writer Paul Theroux. These two diametrically opposed depictions of the same imaginary space are symptomatic of the modern *destination storytelling* culture in which the predominant requirement is less a true depiction of the destination than a devised, or embellished one, designed to market dreams. The goal here, avowed by an agency specialised in marketing campaign for the travel industry⁹⁴, is to increase "interest, brand loyalty and ultimately, a transaction".

A legitimate question that might legitimately arise from the notion of 'authenticity' invoked by the corpus respondents is whether this authenticity is real or staged, and to what extent. It has been commonly argued that the modern tourism industry's success relies on well-designed branding strategies and image creation⁹⁵. The information is usually acquired from travel guidebooks, lure books, travel programmes on TV, travel journals, novels or even from friends and relatives, which creates high expectations as to the 'authenticity' illustrated in these documents.

The brand strategy seems to be predominantly visual to such a point that the terms 'sustainability' or 'ecotourism' are missing on the websites of most of the respondents, although they self-identified as sustainable tourism or ecotourism operators in the questionnaire. Sustainability-related concepts like "eco-citizenship", "intercultural exchanges" or "off the beaten track" can be found thinly spread across their respective websites, but they do not explicitly display their sustainable engagement on their homepage nor on the *About us* page. Perhaps the terms 'sustainability' or 'ecotourism' need not be mentioned because of already powerful imagery geared towards sustainability? Noteworthy, though, is the stark contrast between websites defined by a total absence of descriptions that would demonstrate their engagement on sustainable tourism [F1; F2; F3; F4; F5; F10], and websites marked by a greatly detailed, and supposedly proud, description of such a position [F7 and F9]. Why do the terms related to sustainability permeate some narratives, while they seem totally absent from others? The only two respondents who have a rich sustainable narrative are compelling examples: [F7]

⁹³ Franck Michel, *Désirs d'ailleurs. Essai d'anthropologie des voyages*, 3rd ed. (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2004), 189.

⁹⁴ "Destination Storytelling 2020: A Guide to Telling Great Stories," *Skift*, accessed July 10, 2021, <https://skift.com/destination2020/>.

⁹⁵ Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan, "Culture, Identity and Tourism Representation: Marketing Cymru or Wales?," *Tourism Management* 22, no. 2 (April 2001): 167–79.

displays its different labels and explains at length its position by interspersing its narrative with *ecotourism* and *slow tourism* to qualify its accommodations or the experience, besides guaranteeing customers a *green* setting and *preserved* nature. Likewise, [F9] uses a narrative founded upon the concept of *adventure* depicted as *human* and *participative*, as well as the French concept of *terroir* referring to regional products and local arts and crafts. The contrast between the two categories leaves room for interpretation.

Perhaps those who have *not* mentioned ‘ecotourism’ or ‘sustainable tourism’ too explicitly on their websites are aware of the ideological connotations thereof. They may, indeed, fear that sustainable tourism, in the first place, might still be a too controversial topic, or at least a still much debated area, resulting in the term being not (yet?) unanimously accepted among the audience they target. This does, however, not prevent them from believing in the soundness of its theoretical principles, as evidenced by their answers in the questionnaire, but this conviction seems to remain veiled or discreet. As for ‘ecotourism’, in the second place, they are perhaps aware that a narrow focus on an ecotouristic audience would be too risky since avid ecotourists remain a small market segment and a narrow focus on the term “ecotourism” would exclude them from the view of planners and policy-makers⁹⁶.

4.4. Rejection of sustainable tourism vs. conformity?

Out of the 20 respondents, 4 have answered ‘no’ to the question whether they were engaged in sustainable development (F6 and F8 on the French side, and G2 and G5 on the German side, they will be designated under ‘no’ group). Among them, F8 and G5 have, conversely, self-identified as practising ‘ecotourism’. Interestingly, the ‘no’ group described a touristic offer similar to the ‘yes’ group. This unexpected phenomenon is the object of this section.

F8’s ideal representation of a sustainable tourism development plan is one that promotes local actors and products as well as green tourism, and offers unique experiences. G5 states that, without being officially engaged in sustainable development practises, they “pay attention to smaller things such as regional products, sustainable laundry processes, alternatives to fuel, reduced water consumption, seasonal menu, less printed media, more digitalisation, double-sided printing”. G5 even has the label Dehoga Umweltcheck, so is recognised for their careful management of residual waste as well as energy and water consumption and their use of regional, fair and organic food products. Both highlight features inherent to sustainable tourism as defined by the UNWTO: G5 addresses the needs of the industry by using regional products,

⁹⁶ “Self-Identification of Ecotourists,” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 23, no. 2 (September 2014): 255–56.

and the needs of the environment through a reduced water consumption policy. F8 addresses the needs of the environment and host communities by promoting the local natural heritage. As for the observed changes in tourists' needs and consumption patterns, they are fairly similar to other operators who claim to be engaged in sustainable development: F8's "more authenticity" echoes, for instance, F9's "need for REAL, concrete things, reconnection with nature and human, simple things", while F8's "more green" and "regional culture" echo F2's "reducing environmental impact" and "better know what happens at local level".

G5 even explicitly states that their consumers do not need a sustainable tourism development. However, they underline the possibility to "educate" consumers in this practise and to steer their company in what they consider to be the 'right' direction. F6 also answered 'no' to the question on sustainable development and did not select 'ecotourism' as the type of tourism they undertake. Rather, they underlined a social and solidarity tourism. G2 is neither engaged in sustainable development nor ecotourism, even though they have the label *Wanderbares Deutschland* which guarantees high-quality hiking tours in nature. How come, then, that they provide services that are sustainable but they do not self-identify as advocates of sustainable development?

The four respondents who do not self-categorise into sustainable development, and the two among the four who do into ecotourism, provide a useful key not so much to understanding their own practices than to understanding those of the 16 others who displayed in the questionnaire their engagement in sustainable development. This policy can, indeed, be construed as the expression of a symbolic framework linked with the main injunctive norms. The origin of these norms remains to be ascertained, but at least their existence is perceptible through the fact that no clear difference between those two groups can be identified as far as philosophy, service content and definition of tourism are concerned, and moreover, as it has been argued in 4.3., they do not explicitly display their engagement in sustainable development on their websites, at least not in these terms. This double analysis leads to the assumption that the declaration of 'sustainable development' may be linked in their minds to a socially desirable attitude that they are expected to adopt, and that they use it as a rallying term that encapsulates all those who rally behind the good cause, thus creating a "reference group" in Hyman's sense⁹⁷. F4, in answering question 6, expresses this idea of socially desirable attitude very clearly in a concise and efficient manner: "trying to do things well" ("essayer de faire bien"). To "do things

⁹⁷ Herbert Hiram Hyman, "The Psychology of Status," *Archives of Psychology*, no. 269 (1942).

well” denotes a social attitude influenced by a norm. It could even be argued that rallying behind the term ‘sustainable development’ shields its users from any negative consideration from their own peers. The mere declaration enacts their engagement, or gives it a legitimate ground, and appeals to self-image motivated by social conformity.

This duality (between the ‘no’ and the ‘yes’ groups) also brings out an implicit split-off line between two currents, one that makes sustainable development an anti-establishment figure of the established social order, that needs to find an expression through an explicitly outlined policy, and the other, that makes sustainable development a product of a merely political ideological communication tool and provides against any association with its negative aspects (political distortion, duplicity, green washing...).

Most of them may have automatically translated the questionnaire’s occurrences of ‘sustainable development’ into their own concepts and interpreted it irrespectively of its political connotations. Underpinning this assumption are a few examples of respondents, especially on the German side [G3; G8], who have claimed to be engaged in sustainable development but have exclusively used the word ‘sustainability’ in the open-ended questions.

This leads to examine the discrepancies between their representation of an ideal sustainable tourism project and their actual touristic offer.

Asking the tourism operators for their ideal representation in correlation with their definitions of tourism in general fulfils multiple purposes: sounding out their theoretical knowledge of sustainable tourism, and possibly recognising any content that draws from identifiable external sources, as well as evaluating the level of proximity or discrepancy between their theoretical ideals on the one hand, and their field experiences and actual concrete offers on the other. This analytical angle provides a tool for assessing how injunctive norms affect their perception of tourism as well as sustainable tourism, and their descriptive norms will be assessed through their definitions of tourism.

First of all, an explicit enumeration of the combined three core elements as stated in the Brundlandt Report’s general official definition has been provided by one respondent (F2) as constituting an ideal sustainable tourism project: “associating environmental, social and economic aspects of a territory in a fair and lasting way”. These fundamental theoretical principles tally only partly with the actual content of their service as the focus is especially on the economy (through measures to favour local organic products), and the environment (through measures to limit water and energy consumption and to promote local natural heritage).

As far as their definition is concerned, they restrict tourism to its leisurely purpose (bringing satisfaction and pleasure), its time limit (temporary) and the change of habits (outside habits), which demonstrates a discrepancy between their normative features of tourism and the form of tourism they offer.

Finally, it seems that those who have not self-identified as sustainable tourism nonetheless align with principles of sustainable development, at least in discourse.

4.5. Ecotourism: excluded from urbanity?

Böhmer and Couture's definitions of ecotourism—quoted in the related section of this paper—contend that ecotouristic travel does not take place in *cities* and ecotourism is a component of nature tourism. The corpus can be investigated to determine whether the respondents also consider ecotourism as inapplicable to urban areas. However, the difficulty in answering this question lies in the very small proportion of tourism operators in the corpus who work and operate in densely populated areas. Only 2 out of 20 respondents work in such an area: F2 (3,590 inhabitants per km²), and to a lesser extent G1 (1,511 inhabitants per km²). Since this little proportion affects the representativeness of the sample with regard to tourism operators' perception of ecotourism, the formulated hypotheses should be seen as initial steps for future further investigation. The analysis will therefore confine itself to making general comments on the indication of “ecotourism” given by F2 who depicted the content of their service as follows:

- raising awareness of the public and partners of the inn on local, organic products
- renovation projects to limit water/energy consumption
- promotion of local natural heritage
- favouring organic and local products.

This content tallies with part of the TIES definition of ecotourism, especially regarding the enhancement of bio-cultural diversity and protection of the natural heritage of the planet. This content is also a concrete example of some of the defining features, above all education of people through empirical experiences and conservation of cultural heritage as well as protection and enhancement of natural environment. encourage change in tourists' attitude and growing awareness on how to curb the detrimental effects of their touristic activities.

G1, who also operates in a fairly densely populated area, although less than F2, only claims to perform “several types of tourism” without specifying which one, but has answered ‘yes’ to the question on their engagement in sustainable development. Even though this respondent's self-

concept of ecotourism operator is unknown, one element in their response deserves closer examination because of its seeming incompatibility with Böhmer and Couture’s ecotourism definitions: this respondent declares that they “encourage tourists to use public transports.” They point it out alongside other actions which, conversely, align with their definitions: resource savings in office, promotion of e-bike tourism, initiatives for waste disposal and prevention. The allusion to public transports, correlated with the absence of explicit self-concept of ecotourism, provides an opportunity to shed a new light on the concept of ecotourism and to question the relationship between individuals and the concept of ecology. Indeed, Böhmer and Couture would content that it is incongruous to talk about ecotourism with respect to public transport mobility. Besides, it is very common to hear about ‘sustainable mobility’, especially in the field of public policies: Strasbourg’s local government, for instance, has proposed to invent a new type of sustainable mobility model by promoting “electromobility” and financially easing access to public transport under both the 2030 Climate Plan and the *SRADDET* (Regional Programme for Planning, Sustainable Development and Territorial Equality) but never alludes to ecomobility. The term ecomobility, for its part, seems to enjoy widespread popularity within the economic sphere among destination marketing organisations, NGOs or private commercials who use it for their brands (EcoMobility Alliance, Planet Ecomobility, Urban EcoMobility, Ecomobility Green World, etc.). But in the end, both sustainable mobility and ecomobility bear upon environmentally friendly mobility in cities. It therefore seems that what sets ecotourism apart from sustainable tourism is the context in which each term is used: behind them lies a dual opposition between an expression that has its roots in science—ecology was coined by German zoologist Ernst Haeckel—, and an expression rooted in politics. Both incidentally became marketing tools of different types: the former is used as an incentive by civil society to adopt environmentally friendly attitudes, while the latter is presumably constructed to relativise the seriousness of environmental problems. Could the expression ‘sustainable’ (tourism or mobility), therefore, primarily serve a strategic objective of manipulation *under the guise* of technical and scientific neutrality?

In addition, the practice of ecotourism could be considered as applicable within an urban area, not least because ecology, on which *ecotourism* is built, is defined as “the study of the relationships between living organisms, including humans, and their physical environment⁹⁸” and does not exclude cities. Living organisms are, for that matter, contained in “ecosystems”

⁹⁸ “What Is Ecology?,” *The Ecological Society of America*, accessed July 28, 2021, <https://www.esa.org/about/what-does-ecology-have-to-do-with-me/>.

and ecosystems are not limited to natural wilderness areas or suburban lakes or forests but also to heavily used areas such as cities⁹⁹. Böhmer and Couture’s definitions seem, therefore, to have lost this etymological link with ecology.

Indeed, the limitation of ecotourism to its sole rural applicability supposedly results from the modern society–nature opposition whereby the social and the natural are viewed as distinct and perhaps opposed realms of reality. This opposition took its modern form in the separation of town and country under the emergence of industrial capitalism¹⁰⁰ and this ideology seems to be still enduring in collective consciousness today, resulting in ecotourism symbolising rurality, and environmentally friendly attitudes only applying to natural areas. Cities should be considered as the future proving grounds for the relationship between human beings and their natural environment, as suggested by this recent edition of UN-HABITAT’s influential State of the World’s Cities report:

From a sustainable development perspective, the welfare of future generations depends on how well present generations tackle the environmental burdens associated with urban living. Environmental harmony—between rural and urban areas, and within cities—is a growing concern among urban planners, policymakers and environmentalists¹⁰¹.

The modern Western understandings of nature needs to be transformed to avoid any detrimental consequences of the society-nature opposition that has played a role in: (1) legitimizing both the human domination of nature in the name of progress, and (2) naturalizing socially produced injustices such as inequality, racism, sexism, war, and imperialism¹⁰², which are precisely the phenomena combatted by the United Nations through the SDGs. The COVID-19 health crisis has perhaps strengthened the role of SDGs in tourism, but it has especially shown the limits of industrial capitalism, thereby encouraging a reconceptualization of the city as a product of diverse socio-natural flows in keeping with an urban political ecology.

4.6. The impact of COVID-19 on the transformation of tourism

A number of tourism organisation leaders worldwide think that the COVID-19 crisis is more of a driver for than an obstacle to a sustainable transformation of tourism¹⁰³. In the light of this survey finding, this section shall verify and discuss how this question is perceived on the field

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ David Wachsmuth, “Three Ecologies: Urban Metabolism and the Society-Nature Opposition,” *Sociological Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (September 2012): 507.

¹⁰¹ “State of the World’s Cities 2008/2009: Harmonious Cities” (UN-HABITAT, 2008), 122.

¹⁰² Wachsmuth, “Three Ecologies: Urban Metabolism and the Society-Nature Opposition,” 508.

¹⁰³ “A Global Initiative for Tourism Executives – Recovery and Resilience Dialogue – Tourism for SDGs,” accessed May 28, 2021, <https://tourism4sdgs.org/tourrd/>.

of the corpus. A dichotomy clearly stands out upon examination of the corpus responses between French and German respondents. The question on the new direction they have chosen since the COVID-19 outbreak has chiefly yielded negative descriptions on the French side and positive descriptions on the German side. The French respondents especially highlight constraints [F5; F6], social restrictions and limitations [F3; F8] and difficulties such as the guests' failure to understand (without any further detail) [F10]. Conversely, the German respondents especially emphasise the guests' willingness to change their habits and heightened aspiration to sustainable tourism [G3]. As for G5, a waterway tourism operator, they admit that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the environmental friendliness of their operations. Since their ships could hardly be rented in the evening, they saved personnel costs as they did not have to pay a sailor or a skipper, but they also saved fuel, thereby preserving the environment.

The observations that were made during the Tourism Recovery and Resilience Dialogue held in November 2020 tally more specifically with the German responses of the corpus, inasmuch as “tourism actors have been forced to show unprecedented flexibility, agility and innovation¹⁰⁴”. This capacity and experience of change shall, in the panellists' views, benefit a sustainable transformation of the whole sector.

The main difference standing out from the corpus responses between French and Germans especially lies in the respondents' futurity – short-term perspective for the French respondents, long-term perspective for the German ones – as well as the explanatory style – pessimism for the former and optimism for the latter. Whether they exhibit a bias toward the positive or the negative consequences of the COVID-19, and although one of the German respondents [G9] dismisses the COVID-19-related measures as exaggerated, this pandemic has broadly made them more aware of the sector's vulnerability. This cognisance of the tourism's vulnerability seems to have translated into an enhanced awareness of the importance of a sound environment and a more sustainable development of their activities. On the part of the guests too, the “awareness of the post-COVID environmental emergency” [F9] has increased. However, the French respondents, by expressing a short-term view of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on their activities, seem to neglect a fundamental principle of sustainable tourism that “demands a long-term view of economic activity, questions the imperative of continued economic growth,

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

and ensures that consumption of tourism does not exceed the ability of the host destination to provide for future tourists¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁵ Archer and Cooper, "The Positive and Negative Impacts of Tourism," 87.

5. Towards possible solutions

Prescribing a unique set of corrective actions in order for the tourism industry to be more sustainable is a major challenge since it requires the double contribution of tourism operators and policy makers. The goal of this section is to attempt to formulate solutions to the problems described in the corpus responses, but also to provide additional general guidelines for tourism organisations to explore new ideas and directions to further develop their tourism development plans.

5.1. General recommendations

First of all, tourism operators should now more than ever pursue a sustainable transformation of their activities and even encourage other tourism professionals encountered on various professional occasions to set about such a transformation. A survey conducted among tourism operators in June 2020 revealed that 80% of the respondents, due to COVID-19, expected an increase of the demand for sustainable touristic supply¹⁰⁶. The demand for environmentally friendly, sustainable holiday trips will therefore increase and sustainably oriented tourism companies and destinations are expected to be favoured.

The observation of the tourism's vulnerability has translated into an enhanced awareness of the importance of a sound environment and a more sustainable development in different dimensions. For instance, guests have come to appreciate detailed and objective information on safety and hygiene measures as a basis for their decision-making. In the future, they will increasingly ask for such information also on a destination's or company's sustainability.

Employees' engagement and contentment must be actively encouraged as they are key for providing meaningful guest experiences. Local businesses as well as natural and cultural assets form the basis of tourism and must be increasingly strengthened, protected and supported. To achieve this, however, it is important to adopt a long-term view. Sustainable tourism requires a reflection of the long-term effects of economic activity and a relinquishing of the short-term detrimental pursuit of infinite growth.

On the field of terminology, it has been demonstrated that the polymorphism of sustainable development has spurred controversy around the concept. Without completely abandoning it, an option could be to enhance the two facets of sustainability – social and ecological – which are entirely intertwined and inseparable, as evidenced by the experience of the corpus

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 10.

respondents. This is a crucial notion to explore and to further develop in the future. To reach this objective of sustainability, it is essential to change from sustainable development to “prosperity without growth¹⁰⁷” as depicted by Jackson, or “ecological transition” as defended by Bourg¹⁰⁸.

5.2. Protected Areas: key actors to implement EU policy

Protected Areas—locations which receive protection because of their recognized natural, ecological or cultural values¹⁰⁹—are populated with many tourism operators. The newly settled operators can follow the recommendations of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, but they should especially become business partners thereof through a membership in the EUROPARC Federation. Becoming a partner plays a role in strengthening cooperation, which in turn enhances the beneficial effects on a sustainable development of tourism.

Protected Areas cover nearly 20% of land area in France against 38% in Germany. The Upper Rhine Valley counts around 10 Protected Areas, including *Ried de Colmar à Sélestat*, *Forêt domaniale de la Harth* or *Ballons des Vosges* on the French side; and *Schwarzwald*, *Kaiserstuhl*, *Blauen* or the *Markgräfler Hügelland* on the German side, which means that the Upper Rhine Valley boasts a huge variety of valuable natural resources. The political boundary shared by France and Germany in this area creates artificial barriers to the management of these resources. As a result, the “Transboundary Parks” programme has been developed to respond to this cross-border issue by creating efficient cooperative management tools between transboundary Protected Areas. Those of the Upper Rhine Valley could participate in this programme and receive a certification.

An active membership in The EUROPARC Federation is also importance because the Federation closely works with its members to ensure the full implementation of the *Biodiversity Strategy 2030* and the *Farm to Fork Strategy* which are both part of the 2020 EU Green Deal. Crucial decisions are expected to be made over the next few years and require the contribution of the local stakeholders.

¹⁰⁷ Tim Jackson, *Prosperité sans croissance, la transition vers une économie durable*, Planete en jeu (De Boeck, 2010).

¹⁰⁸ Bourg, “Arrêtons la farce du développement durable !”

¹⁰⁹ “International Union for Conservation of Nature,” IUCN, accessed July 28, 2021, <https://www.iucn.org>.

5.3. A more explicitly outlined tourism policy

The qualitative analysis has demonstrated a compelling contrast between the respondents' discursive production in the questionnaire regarding sustainable development and their official presentations on their websites where their engagement is mitigated. They should make a more explicitly outlined policy out of this engagement, not least because a German study on the domestic demand for sustainable tourism¹¹⁰ has shown that many Germans wish to travel in an ecologically and socially sustainable way, but they frequently find this impossible in practice due to insufficient availability of sustainable products and services on offer. These are few and far between and access to reliable information is poor. The website presentation plays a major role in conveying an engagement and a set of indicators that prove this engagement.

5.4. Encouraging soft mobility and better access to hinterland

According to G1, tourists increasingly use bus and trains, cycle tourism is more and more common, and tourists often ask for electric car charging points. G9 and G10 explain that tourists want a better public transport network because they explore the region with this new type of spatial mobility. Moreover, it entails an efficient system of openness and integration of the countryside and encourages new inter-territorial solidarity, thus helping to maintain the economic and social fabric of the hinterland while further structuring the departmental territory.

Many of the corpus respondents have a touristic business in rural areas located far away from public transport routes. These places suffer poor accessibility unless tourists have their own cars. But individual cars generate proportionately more pollution than public transport. Also, the difficult access to an area can deter the people who cannot afford to buy a car from going to this area, which discriminates against a certain proportion of the population.

Because of poor accessibility, the area turns out to be unsustainable as it complies neither with ETIS D1 criteria (reducing transport impact) through the D1.4 indicator (average carbon footprint of tourists), nor with ETIS C4 (inclusion/accessibility). For that matter, a comment on this C4 criteria is necessary as the only indicator under C4 that refers to public transport is C4.3 but it only refers to accessibility to people with disabilities and specific access requirements. Another indicator numbered C4.5 should be added to measure the accessibility of the area by public transport in general. In this respect, tourism operators could take action by reporting the problem to the local authorities through branch committees or through tourism trade unions.

¹¹⁰ "GESIS - Leibniz-Institut Für Sozialwissenschaften," accessed July 28, 2021, <https://dbk.gesis.org/dbksearch/SDesc2.asp?ll=10¬abs=1&af=&nf=&search=&search2=&db=E&no=6983>.

This is why being actively involved in the local branch committee is very important. In case public transport cannot be connected to a given area, they can develop partnerships with car rental companies, such as *Citiz* in France, or *deer GmbH* in Germany.

5.5. Developing waste management plans

A Horizon2020 project called URBAN-WASTE was launched in 2016 to support policy makers in answering these challenges and in developing strategies that aim to reduce the amount of municipal waste production and to further support the re-use, recycling, collection and disposal of waste in tourist cities¹¹¹. Tourism stakeholders could draw on the 22 waste prevention measures and practices that were run in 11 pilot cities and regions. This project involved technical and political stakeholders in a fruitful collaborative work that resulted in identifying the most prevailing waste streams originating from tourism establishments (hospitality and accommodations sectors) but also the tourists themselves. These measures address food prevention and offer a large variety of different activities and practices that could lead to waste prevention while involving various local stakeholders. The operational steps to be followed to implement the measure are also clearly outlined on the related website.

The project has been using smart solutions and ICT tools combined with evidence-based policies to tackle certain occurrences and unsustainable practices related to tourism's impact on waste management. For example, a mobile phone application, the so-called WasteApp, has been developed by project partners to promote users' good behaviour regarding waste, to have a positive impact on waste management and to monitor cities' litter policies. Other applications, like *Food Waste Tracker*, are used by URBAN-WASTE pilot cities and regions to facilitate and enhance greener practices in tourism and to provide tourists, locals and tourism operators with tools to improve their waste management performances.

5.6. Increasing visibility through channels of communication

The lack of visibility is a frequent issue in tourism operators engaged in sustainable tourism, especially because the local and slow approach to tourism adopted by most sustainably oriented operators, as well as the usually small size of their business, hinders a large visibility as mainstream mass tourism destinations usually enjoy. A frequent problem on the part of tourists too is that they sometimes have difficulty finding sustainable tourism destinations precisely because of their small size. As a consequence, tourism operators who lack visibility could use

¹¹¹ "Eco-Innovative Measure Forms," *Urbanwaste*, accessed July 12, 2021, <http://www.urban-waste.eu/eco-innovative-measure-forms/>.

channels of communication other than their own websites to increase their visibility, and dedicated to the topic of sustainable or green tourism, for instance blogs or newspapers like le Journal de l'écotourisme¹¹² or Voyageons autrement¹¹³, tourist offices focusing on green tourism like Alsace verte¹¹⁴, or collaborative platforms where hospitality establishments are promoted, like Vaouvert¹¹⁵ and Vaolo¹¹⁶.

Creative spaces on this topic have been thriving in the last decade on the Internet, usually with an educational purpose, from travel blogs explaining how to be a responsible traveller (Go Travel And Talk) over online portals raising awareness of how to behave responsibly towards people and nature on a trip (fairunterwegs.org) to foundations like myclimate calling for environmental protection within tourism. Moreover, in the sole context of France and Germany, many associations have placed this topic at the core of their activities: ATEs, Terre d'Est, the "forum anders reisen", while many specialised touristic reservation platforms are dedicated to promoting touristic experiences in organic farms, organic hotels or ecolodges: bookitgreen, biohotels.info, Good Travel.

An increasing number of meetings, conferences and fairs have been organised on the topic of sustainable tourism. In France for instance, the so-called "Universités du tourisme durable" are held once a year (the last one was in Troyes on 8th and 9th October 2020) and offer tourism stakeholders and destination managers a networking platform to exchange good practices. Round tables and workshops are organised, and practical experiments on regional sustainable initiatives are presented regarding urban and rural tourism alike. Some of the participants are professionals who want to engage in a transition towards sustainable development while others want to deepen their sustainable practices. The coordinators of such events usually describe their approach as sustainable, humane, cooperative, interdisciplinary, innovative and of excellence.

5.7. Nudge marketing: a smooth way of educating tourists?

As G5 underlined, there is a real need to educate the tourist in sustainable practices, while G8 complains about tourists' ruthlessness. Even though tourism operators have observed changes

¹¹² "Le journal de l'écotourisme | Tourisme vert et campings écologiques," *Le Journal de l'Ecotourisme*, accessed July 29, 2021, <https://lejournaldelecotourisme.com/>.

¹¹³ "Voyage responsable et tourisme durable," accessed July 29, 2021, <https://www.voyageons-autrement.com/>.

¹¹⁴ "Office de Tourisme de l'Alsace Verte, Alsace, France," accessed July 29, 2021, <https://www.alsace-verte.com/>.

¹¹⁵ "Vaouvert - Séjours Écoresponsables En France | Vaouvert," accessed July 29, 2021, <https://www.vaouvert.fr/>.

¹¹⁶ "Voyage Équitable, Tourisme Durable & Responsable - Vaolo®," *Vaolo*, accessed July 29, 2021, <https://vaolo.com/>.

in consumption patterns in some contexts, they also feel elsewhere a need to change other types of behaviours or to encourage tourists to act differently to meet the SDGs. An effective behavioural marketing tool for achieving this is *nudging*. Nudging aims to influence behaviour by directing people in a desirable direction, thanks to the way in which information is presented.

For instance, in some areas, cigarette butt boxes with two different transparent compartments have been installed for smokers to simulate a vote for a football team or a political idea. These mock ballot boxes show which side is the most or least filled and gives smokers and incentive to vote by throwing their cigarettes in instead of throwing them on the floor.

Another example is a small mock wooden TV set placed on the table of a touristic establishment where the ‘screen’ displays that the activity programme is close at hand. This nudging technique, aimed at enthusiast TV watchers, gives an incentive to ask the host for the programme and tourists have been shown to show more interest in the activities organised around the area¹¹⁷.

Another compelling example is the reuse of towels in hotel rooms. From collecting over transporting to washing, towels involve a whole logistical chain that impact the environment. Some hotels have had the idea of writing an incentive such as: “75% of the people who lived in this room before you have reused their shower towel several times. A good intention for the planet”. This type of wording leads to a change in behaviour, even though, in fact, everyone is allowed to change their towel every day. But behavioural psychology tends to prove that individuals are much more sensitive to information that expresses the idea of a loss rather than the feeling of a gain, and make choices based on emotions, social norms, beliefs, mimicry, and on what effects we think our choice is likely to produce¹¹⁸.

Webinars are increasingly organised to train tourism operators in the implementation of nudge marketing¹¹⁹.

5.8. Urban resilience: COVID-19 as a catalyser

This section is rather aimed at policy makers as it provides an overview of measures already implemented in some cities. Its purpose is to show the level of resilience of these cities in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and to encourage resilience in other cities. It shows how this

¹¹⁷ Dominique Kreziak, “Les motivations de la consommation verte : une approche par les chaînages cognitifs” (PhD thesis in Management Science, Université Pierre Mendès France, 1998).

¹¹⁸ Richard H. Thaler and Cass Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New York: Penguin, 2009).

¹¹⁹ Florie Thiélin, “Webinaire: le nudge marketing pour un tourisme durable,” *LinkedIn*, accessed July 29, 2021, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/webinaire-le-nudge-marketing-pour-un-tourisme-durable-florie-thielin/?originalSubdomain=fr>.

crisis has led to an exploration of new ways to deliver a stronger, more resilient, equitable and sustainable post-pandemic recovery while addressing the challenges caused by the recession.

Several European mayors have transformed whole roads into cyclable areas during the COVID-19 restrictions to fit their cities out for the post-lockdown period. For instance, Milan, a strongly affected city, has launched the “Strate Aperte” programme and transformed 35 km of roads into pedestrian or cyclable ways. Analogous measures have been taken in Roma, Berlin, Barcelona, Budapest and Paris. Structural changes to a system (the city) generally reflect changes in the behaviours of its users (the denizens), although it is not clear yet whether they are designed to be sustained, or if they are a provisional substitution for temporarily unused roadways. In public authorities’ discourse, these policies are presented as a sustainable and practical way of building a livable, viable post-Covid future.

Joel Kotkin thinks future cities may no longer be defined as physical places, but as interconnected virtual networks. He imagines they will become flatter and less dense, in a way similar to Frank Lloyd Wright’s Broadacre City, rather than to Le Corbusier’s Radiant City project. This crisis therefore seems to be an opportunity to develop a new economic, social, more human model, linking cosmopolitanism to a better, safer lifestyle¹²⁰.

Many are even assuming that the COVID-19 crisis is, in a certain way, creating the same organisational changes as those produced by past outbreaks of medieval epidemics and diseases until the 19th century¹²¹. Georges Haussmann’s urban renovation of Paris in the second half of the 1800s is an example of reaction to the abundant outbreaks of cholera caused by the medieval narrow streets and overcrowded areas that were no longer adapted to the modern health standards. Similarly, on the German side in the 1920s, the architects of the New Frankfurt valued air and light instead of confined places of the old town and proposed to spread housing estates across the countryside. Hence, it seems sensible to question whether the COVID-19 crisis is also producing new ways of seeing, if not measuring, distances between people in cities, and how it may in turn affect the future of tourism.

¹²⁰ “La fin des mégalo-poles,” *Le Courrier International*, May 14, 2020, 17.

¹²¹ “Rendre la cité vivable,” *Le Courrier International*, May 14, 2020, 16–17.

Conclusion

Although sustainable tourism has become a popular form of tourism and has been much studied by many researchers in various places, there is no universally accepted definition as to what constitutes sustainable tourism. This is primarily due to the complexity and comprehensiveness of sustainable tourism on the one hand, and the gap between the reality and ideal thoughts implied by sustainable tourism on the other hand.

Few satisfactory solutions seem to have been found to the fundamental paradox of sustainable development, inasmuch as continued global economic growth and development can hardly be achieved without the degradation or destruction of the planet's natural resources upon which such development and growth depends. This paradox remains a primary challenge to the notion of sustainable tourism development. Also, even though its theoretical principles appear as a solution to tackle the problems of mass tourism, they sometimes fail to meet a growing demand for leisure travel, nor replace the economic benefits generated by mass tourism.

The contemporary prevalence of this concept hides, in fact, a multi-faceted understanding among tourism professionals. Although 16 out of the 20 respondents claimed to be engaged in a sustainable development of their touristic services, the marketing strategy of most of the corpus hosts is designed in a way that includes an as wide audience as possible by focusing primarily on the promotion of comfort and satisfaction. This means that sustainable tourism marketing and its correlate ecotourism marketing provide a reconstitution of mainstream developmentalist ideas, embracing the primacy of economy over ecology, and bureaucratic planning over local participation. Therefore, sustainable tourism development needs to be interpreted both in terms of what it is and how it should be if the competing demands of tourists, governments and host communities are to be reconciled in the future.

On balance, the corpus tourism operators demonstrate heterogeneous levels of understanding as to what constitutes sustainable tourism in theory and a degree of richness in sustainable plans which varies very much from one operator to another. Overall though, most of them show compliance with the principles of sustainable tourism insofar as they strive to minimise tourist impacts on the natural environment, demonstrate efforts to sustain the local economy and attempt to influence guest attitudes or behaviours. But seldom do they incorporate all the principles of the official definitions of sustainable tourism. Is that because they ignore part of them, or because the official definitions lack a local adaptation? This research tends to show a combination of both: none of the hosts offers their guests, for instance, better acquaintance with

the local community to improve their social well-being; and conversely, preserving cultural traditions, which is part of the sustainable, is something that can only be achieved through political protective measures.

As for the terms 'sustainability' or 'sustainable', and to a lesser extent 'ecotourism', this research tends to prove that they are more frequently used in political discourse from administrations or institutions for citizens than in social discourse produced by citizens in a professional or commercial context. It has been shown that the term 'sustainable development' seems to be a ready-made tool widely disseminated across all levels of society from top political levels to the bottom level of civil society. Ultimately, the so-called 'sustainable' touristic products and services turn out to be complex, multi-faceted and extremely various from one tourism operator to another, but whether they self-identify to sustainable tourism or any other type of tourism, they undertake measures that encourage a 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, each in their own ways. 'Sustainable development' as such is maybe seen by them as a tool of conformity to a set of common, collective actions. This research has confirmed that the semantic boundaries of sustainable development are still too blurred, not yet standardised, which would explain the reservation of most tourism operators about explicitly and officially displaying it. And perhaps the term would even be too risky to use on a website and detrimental to their image?

This research has revealed encouraging changes in individuals as to their ecological footprint, the impact of their consumption patterns on the economy and the environment, and the limits of an exclusively pleasure-seeking tourism. For that matter, even though most of the corpus respondents' websites do not explicitly state an engagement in sustainable tourism, they attract an audience who seek news ways of travelling that are sustainable, which proves that the number of responsible tourists is growing and the boundary of what constitutes sustainable tourism is evolving. No tourism development can, single-handedly, fulfill the numerous lofty aspirations listed in most definitions of sustainable tourism and ecotourism, as it is a question of collective answer to the problems of ecology. The highly coveted resilient future must be built by each tourism operator's contribution at local level.

The strength of this research lies in its successful identification of the challenges faced by the tourism industry in the Upper Rhine Valley and an informative articulation of these challenges with the European political context in which they are integrated. The weakness of this research, however, is that some of the corpus answers would sometimes require complementary

explanations and discussions, but these have been difficult to obtain due to the lack of time stated by the tourism professionals who have been contacted during the research period. As a result, some questions remain unanswered but could be the object of a future PhD thesis that can use the findings already made in this research to investigate further on the topic of sustainable tourism. In the perspective of a further research, interviews could also be complemented by participant observation.

Also, a PhD thesis could analyse sustainable tourism from the economic angle and study for instance the underlying mechanisms of the current pleasure-seeking “desire-based” society, as opposed to a “need-based” society, that pushes mass tourists to continue consuming touristic products and services that cause environmental damage. Our everyday lives are defined by market economies where consumers are supposed to be sovereign. But do the consumers’ economic decisions actually determine what goods and services are produced in the economy, or does supply create the consumers’ needs and drive their economic decisions? Can desire be reeducated without creating a new dogma? Is the cost of sustainable tourism practices a prohibitive factor and can political action balance out this cost? What is the profile of the tourists who practice sustainable tourism and those who do mainstream tourism (social class, educational background, socio-professional category, geographical origin, etc.)? Such a study demands profound preliminary research on consumer psychology.

Bibliography

- “A Global Initiative for Tourism Executives – Recovery and Resilience Dialogue – Tourism for SDGs.” Accessed May 28, 2021. <https://tourism4sdgs.org/tourrd/>.
- “Après le Covid, le tourisme repartira. Il importe que ce rebond ne se fasse pas sur des bases identiques.” *Le Monde.fr*, May 7, 2021. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2021/05/07/apres-le-covid-le-tourisme-repartira-il-importe-que-ce-rebond-ne-se-fasse-pas-sur-des-bases-identiques_6079473_3232.html.
- Archer, Brian, and Chris Cooper. “The Positive and Negative Impacts of Tourism.” *Global Tourism: The Next Decade*, Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1994, 68–91.
- Balmford, Andrew, and Richard Cowling. “Fusion or Failure? The Future of Conservation Biology.” *Conservation Biology* 3, no. 20 (2006): 692–95.
- Barkin, David. “Ecotourism: A Tool for Sustainable Development in an Era of International Integration?” *Forestry and Environment Studies (F&ES)*, 1996, 263–72.
- Benveniste, Émile. “Structure de la langue et structure de la société.” In *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, 2:91–102. Gallimard, 1974.
- Berkowitz, Michael, and Arnoldo Matus Kramer. “Helping Cities Drive Transformation: The 100 Resilient Cities Initiative.” *Field Actions Science Reports*, no. Special Issue 18 (December 15, 2018): 52–57.
- Berque, Augustin. *Recosmiser la terre*. Paris: Éditions B2, 2018.
- “Bevölkerung, Gebiet und Bevölkerungsdichte.” *Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg*. Accessed June 22, 2021. <https://www.statistik-bw.de/BevoelkGebiet/Bevoelkerung/>.
- Böhmer, Rosalie. “Ökotourismus: So geht nachhaltiger Tourismus.” *Utopia.de*, August 21, 2020. <https://utopia.de/ratgeber/oekotourismus-so-geht-nachhaltiger-tourismus/>.
- Boswijk, Albert, Thomas Thijssen, and Ed Peelen. *The Experience Economy: A New Perspective*. London: Pearson Education, 2007.
- Bourg, Dominique. “Arrêtons la farce du développement durable !” *Acteurs publics*, June 14, 2010. www.acteurspublics.com.
- Brundtland (dir.), Gro Harlem. “Our Common Future.” Oxford University Press. United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, October 1987.
- Butler, Richard W. “Sustainable Tourism: A State-of-the Art Review.” *Tourism Geographies*, no. 1 (2007): 7–25.
- Cater, Erlet. “Environmental Contradictions in Sustainable Tourism.” *The Geographical Journal* 161, no. 1 (March 1995): 21–28.
- Cater, Erlet, and Brian Goodall. “Must Tourism Destroy Its Resource Base?” *A.M. Mannion and S.R. Bowlby (Eds.), Environmental Issues in the 1990s*, London: Wiley, 1992, 309–25.

Choi, Hwan-Suk Chris, and Ercan Sirakaya-Turk. "Sustainability Indicators for Managing Community Tourism." *Tourism Management* 27 (2006): 1274–89.

Christensen, Niels, Hank Rothgerber, Wendy Wood, and David Matz. "Social Norms and Identity Relevance: A Motivational Approach to Normative Behavior." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 30, no. 10 (November 2004): 1295–1309.

"Comparateur de territoire." *Insee*. Accessed June 22, 2021. <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/zones/1405599?debut=0&q=comparateur+de+territoire>.

Cooper, Chris, Lisa Ruhanen, and Bryan Archer. "The Positive and Negative Impacts of Tourism." *Global Tourism*, 2005.

Cousin, Saskia, and Bertrand Réau. *Sociologie du tourisme*. Paris: La Découverte, 2009.

Couture, Maurice. "L'écotourisme, un concept en constante évolution." *Téoros* 21, no. 3 (2002): 5–13.

Curry, Steve, and Behrooz Morvaridi. "Sustainable Tourism: Illustrations from Kenya, Nepal and Jamaica." *C.P. Cooper, A. Lockwood (Eds.), Progress in Tourism, Recreation and Hospitality Management* 4 (1992): 131–39.

Delfosse, Claire, and Monique Poulot. "Le rural, une catégorie opératoire pour penser les mutations socio-spatiales françaises. La géographie rurale d'hier à aujourd'hui." *Bulletin de l'Association de géographes français*, Les espaces ruraux en France : nouvelles questions de recherche, 2019, 528–54.

"Des mesures pour tenter de protéger le lac d'Allos." *LaProvence.com*, May 8, 2021. <https://www.laprovence.com/actu/locales-en-direct/6347859/des-mesures-pour-tenter-de-protoger-le-lac-dallos.html>.

"Destination Storytelling 2020: A Guide to Telling Great Stories." *Skift*. Accessed July 10, 2021. <https://skift.com/destination2020/>.

"Die Corona-Krise und ihre Implikationen für die nachhaltige Entwicklung des Tourismus." *Kompetenzzentrum Tourismus des Bundes*, August 19, 2020. <https://www.kompetenzzentrum-tourismus.de/wissen/studien/394-die-corona-krise-und-ihre-implikationen-fuer-die-nachhaltige-entwicklung-des-tourismus>.

Dimitriou, Christina K. "From Theory to Practice of Ecotourism: Major Obstacles That Stand in the Way and Best Practices That Lead to Success." *De Gruyter Open*, *European Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation*, 8, no. 1 (2017): 26–37.

"Eco-Innovative Measure Forms." *Urbanwaste*. Accessed July 12, 2021. <http://www.urbanwaste.eu/eco-innovative-measure-forms/>.

"Entrepreneurship - Enterprises by Business Size - OECD Data." *TheOECD*. Accessed July 28, 2021. <http://data.oecd.org/entrepreneur/enterprises-by-business-size.htm>.

Fernandez, Juan Ignacio Pulido, and Marcelino Sánchez Rivero. "Measuring Tourism Sustainability: Proposal for a Composite Index." *Tourism Economics* 15 (2009): 277–96.

- “GESIS - Leibniz-Institut Für Sozialwissenschaften.” Accessed July 28, 2021.
<https://dbk.gesis.org/dbksearch/SDesc2.asp?ll=10¬abs=1&af=&nf=&search=&search2=&db=E&no=6983>.
- Giraud, Christophe. “Recevoir le touriste en ami. La mise en scène de l’accueil marchand en chambres d’hôtes.” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 170 (2007): 14–31.
- Gledhill, Christopher. *Collocations in Science Writing*. Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag, 2000.
- Grunwald, Armin, and Jürgen Kopfmüller. *Nachhaltigkeit*. Berlin: Campus Verlag, 2012.
- Hamman, Philippe. “La « ville durable », de l’incantation à la profession ?” *Natures Sciences Sociétés* 19 (2011): 331–43.
- Hamman, Philippe. *Sociologie urbaine et développement durable*. Brussels: Editions De Boeck Université, 2012.
- Happaerts, Sander. “Sustainable Development and Subnational Governments: Going beyond Symbolic Politics?” *Environmental Development* 4 (2012): 2–17.
- Henley, Jon. “Overtourism in Europe’s Historic Cities Sparks Backlash.” *The Guardian*, January 25, 2020, sec. World news.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/25/overtourism-in-europe-historic-cities-sparks-backlash>.
- Higham, James, and Michael Luck. “Urban Ecotourism: A Contrdiction in Terms?” *Journal of Ecotourism* 1, no. 1 (2002): 36–51.
- Holling, Crawford Stanley. “Resilience and Stability of Ecological Systems.” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4 (1973): 1–23.
- Hyman, Herbert Hiram. “The Psychology of Status.” *Archives of Psychology*, no. 269 (1942).
- “Implementing Solutions to Control Mass Tourism, a Challenge for European Cities.” *European Cities Marketing*, February 19, 2015.
<https://www.europeancitiesmarketing.com/implementing-solutions-control-mass-tourism-challenge-european-cities/>.
- “International Union for Conservation of Nature.” *IUCN*. Accessed July 28, 2021.
<https://www.iucn.org>.
- Jackson, Tim. *Prosperité sans croissance, la transition vers une economie durable*. Planete en jeu. De Boeck, 2010.
- Kareiva, Peter. “Ominous Trends in Nature Recreation.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 8, no. 105 (2008): 2757–58.
- Kates, Robert. “Sustainability Science.” *Science* 292, no. 5517 (April 27, 2001): 641–42.
 doi:10.1126/science.1059386.
- Kiper, Tuğba. *Role of Ecotourism in Sustainable Development. Advances in Landscape Architecture*. London: IntechOpen, 2013. doi:10.5772/55749.

Koži, Ivan, and Josip Mikuli. "An Exploratory Assessment of Tourism Sustainability in Croatian Coastal Destinations." *WORKING PAPER SERIES*, n.d., 12.

Kreziak, Dominique. "Les motivations de la consommation verte : une approche par les chaînages cognitifs." PhD thesis in Management Science, Université Pierre Mendès France, 1998.

"La fin des mégaloilles." *Le Courrier International*, May 14, 2020.

Lai, Po-Hsin, and Scott Shafer. "Marketing Ecotourism through the Internet: An Evaluation of Selected Ecolodges in Latin America and the Caribbean." *Journal of Ecotourism* 4, no. 3 (August 2005): 143–60.

"Le développement durable à l'Université de Strasbourg." *Université de Strasbourg*. Accessed June 13, 2021. <https://www.unistra.fr/developpement-durable>.

"Le journal de l'écotourisme | Tourisme vert et campings écologiques." *Le Journal de l'Ecotourisme*. Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://lejournaldelecotourisme.com/>.

"Les objectifs du futur programme Interreg Rhin Supérieur 2021-2027." *Interreg*. Accessed July 12, 2021. <https://www.interreg-rhin-sup.eu/les-objectifs-2021-2027/>.

"Les vacances 2021 des Français." *Ipsos*. Accessed July 23, 2021. <https://www.ipsos.com/fr-fr/les-vacances-2021-des-francais>.

"Linking Tourism and Sustainable Waste Management." *Interreg Europe*. Accessed July 12, 2021. <https://www.interregeurope.eu/winp0l/news/news-article/4476/linking-tourism-and-sustainable-waste-management/>.

Liu, Pihui, Minmin Teng, and Chuanfeng Han. "How Does Environmental Knowledge Translate into Pro-Environmental Behaviors? The Mediating Role of Environmental Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions." *Science of The Total Environment* 728 (August 1, 2020). doi:10.1016/j.scitotenv.2020.138126.

Liu, Zhenhua. "Sustainable Tourism Development: A Critique." *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, no. 11 (2003): 459–75.

McGladdery, Christine A., and Berendien A. Lubbe. "Rethinking Educational Tourism: Proposing a New Model and Future Directions." *Tourism Review* 72, no. 3 (January 1, 2017): 319–29. doi:10.1108/TR-03-2017-0055.

Michel, Franck. *Désirs d'ailleurs. Essai d'anthropologie des voyages*. 3rd ed. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2004.

Minciu, Rodica, Delia Popescu, Mihaela Pădurean, Remus Hornoiu, and Andreea Băltărețu. "Commercialization of Holidays in the Protected Natural Areas - Form of the Sustainable Development in Tourism." *The AMFITEATRU ECONOMIC Journal* 12 (February 1, 2010): 83–98.

"Monitoring Sentiment for Domestic and Intra-European Travel – Wave 2." *ETC Corporate*. Accessed November 30, 2020. <https://etc-corporate.org/reports/monitoring-sentiment-for-domestic-and-intra-european-travel-wave-2/>.

Munro, David A. "Sustainability: Rhetoric or Reality?" In *T. C. Trzyna (Ed.) A Sustainable World: Defining and Measuring Sustainable Development*, 27–35. London: Earthscan, 1995.

"Negative Environmental Impacts Of Tourism." *TheWorldCounts*. Accessed June 14, 2021. <https://www.theworldcounts.com/challenges/consumption/transport-and-tourism/negative-environmental-impacts-of-tourism/story>.

Nijkamp, Peter, C.J.M. Van der Bergh, and Frits .J. Soeteman. "Regional Sustainable Development and Natural Resource Use." *The World Bank Economic Review* 4 (December 1990): 153–88.

"Office de Tourisme de l'Alsace Verte, Alsace, France." Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://www.alsace-verte.com/>.

Perera, Eric. "Vivre pleinement l'expérience des loisirs émergents : vers le bien-être intérieur ? Entretien avec Bernard Andrieu." *Téoros. Revue de recherche en tourisme* 40, no. 40–1 (March 17, 2021). <http://journals.openedition.org/teoros/9976>.

Pérez, Víctor, Flor Guerrero, Mercedes González, and Fátima Pérez. "Composite Indicator for the Assessment of Sustainability: The Case of Cuban Nature-Based Tourism Destinations." *Ecological Indicators* 29 (2013): 316–24.

Peris-Ortiz, Marta, María de la Cruz Del Río Rama, and Carlos Rueda-Armengot. *Wine and Tourism : A Strategic Segment for Sustainable Economic Development*. Cham (Switzerland): Springer International Publishing AG, 2016.

Porter, Michael. *Competitive Advantage*. New York: Free Press, 1985.

"Préparer l'après-Covid. L'Eurométropole de Strasbourg vers un tourisme « plus durable, plus inclusif et plus diversifié »." *Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace*. Accessed July 12, 2021. <https://www.dna.fr/economie/2021/03/12/tourisme-plus-durable-plus-inclusif-et-plus-diversifie>.

Pritchard, Annette, and Nigel Morgan. "Culture, Identity and Tourism Representation: Marketing Cymru or Wales?" *Tourism Management* 22, no. 2 (April 2001): 167–79.

Pyle, Robert Michael. "Nature Matrix: Reconnecting People and Nature." *Oryx*, no. 37 (2003): 206–14.

"Rapport d'activité 2020." D'une année à l'autre. Parc national du Mercantour, March 2021.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press, 1971.

"Recommendations on Tourism Statistics." In *United Nations and World Tourism Organization*. Vol. E.94.XVII.6 (para. 29). Series M. 83, 2004.

Renda, Andrea, Lorna Schrefler, Luchetta Giacomo, Can Selçuki, and Federica Mustilli. "Estimated Impacts of Possible Options and Legal Instruments of the Umbrella European Tourism Label for Quality Schemes." Final Report. Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS). Brussels: European Commission, September 21, 2012.

"Rendre la cité vivable." *Le Courrier International*, May 14, 2020.

Richards, Greg. “Creativity and Tourism: The State of the Art.” *Annals of Tourism Research* 38, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 1225–53. doi:10.1016/j.annals.2011.07.008.

Ritchie, J.R. Brent, and Geoffrey Ian Crouch. *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective*. Wallingford: Cabi Publishing, 2003.

Roberts, Sherma, and John Tribe. “Sustainability Indicators for Small Tourism Enterprises—An Exploratory Perspective.” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, no. 16 (2008): 575–94.

“Self-Identification of Ecotourists.” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 23, no. 2 (September 2014): 255–79.

Smith, Valene, and William Eadington, eds. *Tourism Alternatives: Potentials and Problems in the Development of Tourism*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

“State of the World’s Cities 2008/2009: Harmonious Cities.” UN-HABITAT, 2008.

“Sustainable Tourism.” *Europarc Federation*. Accessed June 14, 2021.

<https://www.euoparc.org/sustainable-tourism/>.

Thaler, Richard H., and Cass Sunstein. *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. New York: Penguin, 2009.

“The European Green Deal.” European Commission, December 11, 2019.

Thielin, Florie. “Webinaire: le nudge marketing pour un tourisme durable.” *LinkedIn*.

Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/webinaire-le-nudge-marketing-pour-un-tourisme-durable-florie-thielin/?originalSubdomain=fr>.

“Tourism.” Briefing. *European Environment Agency*. Accessed November 30, 2020.

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer/2015/europe/tourism>.

“Tourism & Sustainable Development Goals.” *Tourism for SDGs*. Accessed April 30, 2021.

<https://tourism4sdgs.org/tourism-for-sdgs/tourism-and-sdgs/>.

“Tourism and COVID-19: Leading Tourism Recovery.” *UNWTO*. Accessed March 15, 2021.

<https://www.unwto.org/tourism-covid-19>.

“UNWTO Welcomes EU Support and Urges Europe to Lead the Way in Tourism’s Restart.”

UNWTO. Accessed June 13, 2021. <https://www.unwto.org/news/unwto-welcomes-eu-support-and-urges-europe-to-lead-the-way-in-tourism-s-restart>.

“Ursula von der Leyen sur Twitter.” *Twitter*. Accessed March 15, 2021.

<https://twitter.com/vonderleyen/status/1366352250302513156>.

“Vaouvert - Séjours Écoresponsables En France | Vaouvert.” Accessed July 29, 2021.

<https://www.vaouvert.fr/>.

Vicente-Molina, María Azucena, Ana Fernández-Sáinz, and Julen Izagirre-Olaizola.

“Environmental Knowledge and Other Variables Affecting Pro-Environmental Behaviour: Comparison of University Students from Emerging and Advanced Countries.” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 61 (December 15, 2013): 130–38. doi:10.1016/j.jclepro.2013.05.015.

“Viele Worte, wenig Taten: UN-Nachhaltigkeitsziele könnten scheitern.” *Die Bertelsmann Stiftung*. Accessed July 10, 2021. <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/themen/aktuelle-meldungen/2019/juni/viele-worte-wenig-taten-un-nachhaltigkeitsziele-koennten-scheitern>.

“Voyage Équitable, Tourisme Durable & Responsable - Vaolo®.” *Vaolo*. Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://vaolo.com/>.

“Voyage responsable et tourisme durable.” Accessed July 29, 2021. <https://www.voyageons-autrement.com/>.

Wachsmuth, David. “Three Ecologies: Urban Metabolism and the Society-Nature Opposition.” *Sociological Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (September 2012): 506–23.

“What Is Ecology?” *The Ecological Society of America*. Accessed July 28, 2021. <https://www.esa.org/about/what-does-ecology-have-to-do-with-me/>.

“What Is Ecotourism.” *The International Ecotourism Society*. Accessed July 9, 2021. <https://ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism/>.

Zamfir, Andreea, and Razvan-Andrei Corbos. “Towards Sustainable Tourism Development in Urban Areas: Case Study on Bucharest as Tourist Destination.” *Sustainability*, 2015.

Figures and Tables

Figure 1. The Upper Rhine Valley. Source: Agence Régionale du Tourisme Grand Est.

Table 1. Demographic data for the city Freiburg im Breisgau. Source: Statistisches Amt Baden-Württemberg.

Table 2. Demographic data for the city Baiersbronn. Source: Statistisches Amt Baden-Württemberg

Table 3. Demographic data for the city Breisach am Rhein. Source: Statistisches Amt Baden-Württemberg

Table 4. Demographic data of the respondents' municipalities. Source: Insee.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Concordance analysis on word “sustainable”

The screenshot shows the AntConc 3.5.9 (Windows) 2020 interface. The search term is 'sustainable'. The concordance results are as follows:

Hit	KWIC	File
1	"rural, business, environmental, sustainable, ecotourism" "ethica	Type of touri
2	cultural health urban restaurant sustainable ecotourism respons	Type of touri
3	ure ecotourism" urban "cultural sustainable leisure ecotourism"	Type of touri
4	ronmental, ecotourism, health" "sustainable responsible ethical e	Type of touri
5	: entertainment" "cultural urban sustainable responsible social sc	Type of touri
6	ment holiday centre ACM" "rural sustainable social environmental	Type of touri
7	uth" Restaurant cultural, urban, sustainable, sports, leisure	Type of touri

Search Term: sustainable
 Search Window Size: 50
 Show Every Nth Row: 1
 Kwic Sort: Level 1 1R Level 2 2R Level 3 3R

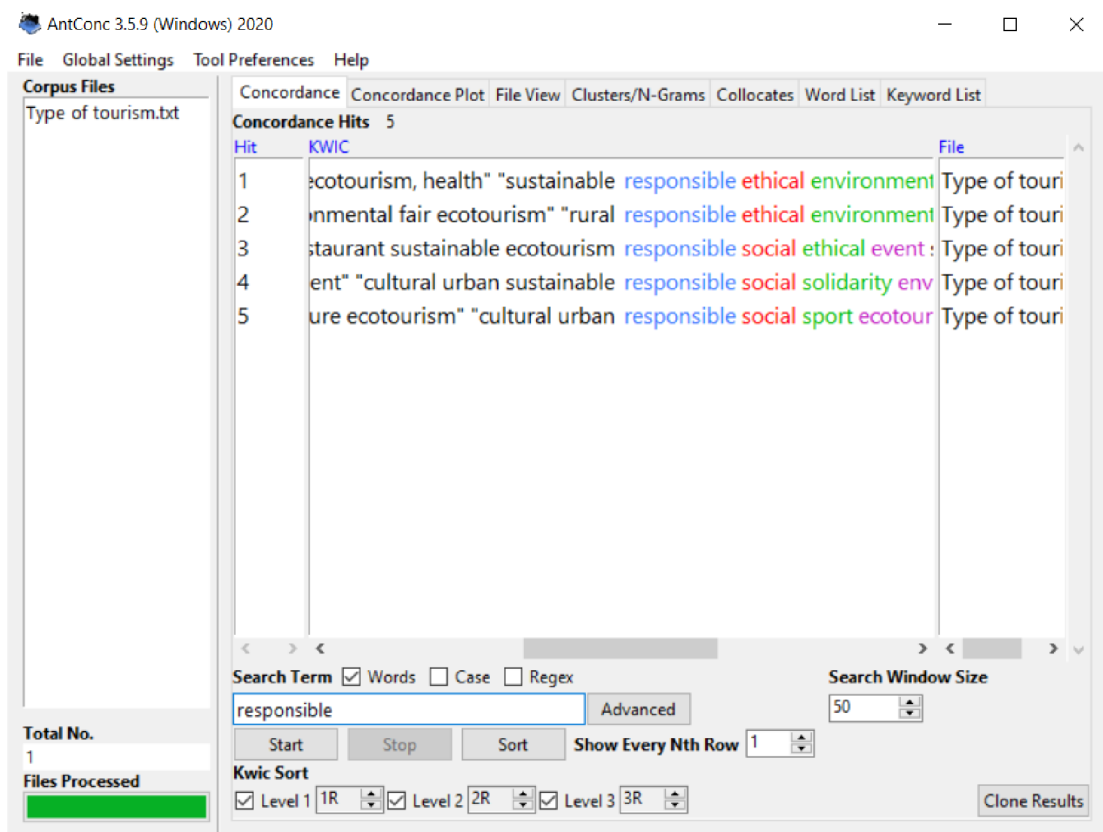
Appendix 2: Concordance analysis on word “cultural”

The screenshot shows the AntConc 3.5.9 (Windows) 2020 interface. The search term is 'cultural'. The concordance results are as follows:

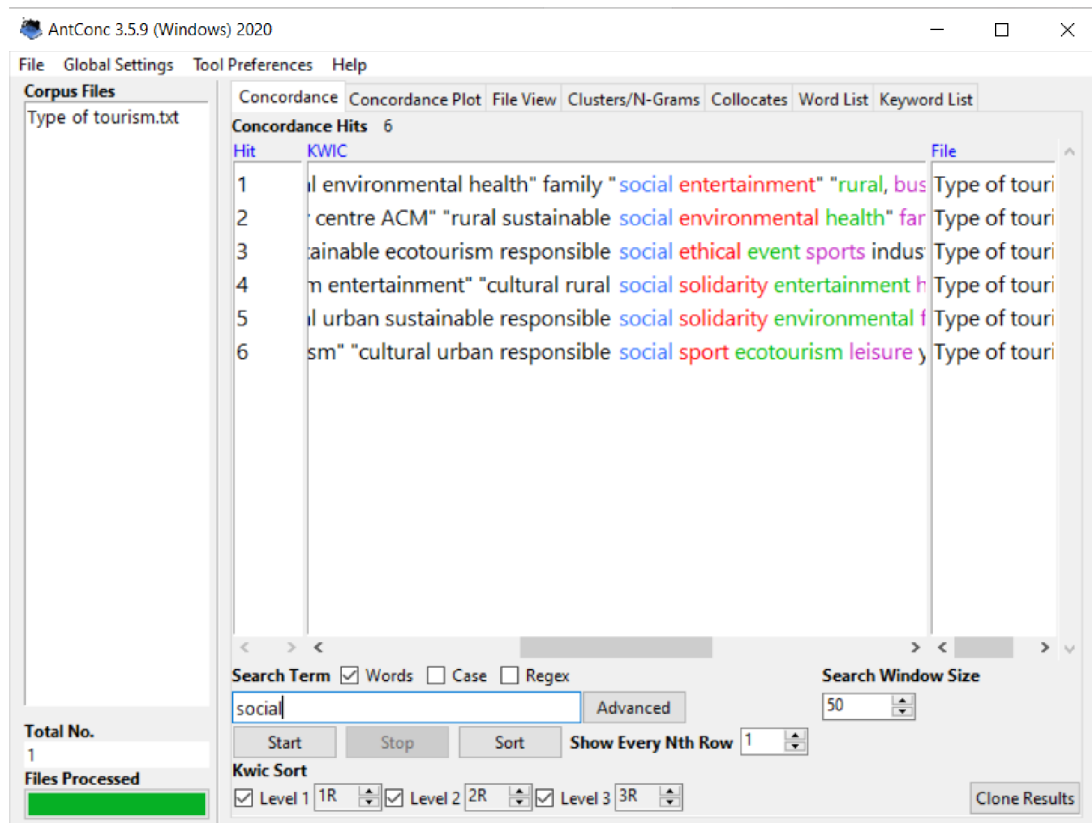
Hit	KWIC	File
1	ypes of tourism "urban leisure" "cultural health urban restaurant	Type of touri
2	event sports industrial leisure" "cultural restaurant event ecotou	Type of touri
3	fair ecotourism entertainment" "cultural rural social solidarity en	Type of touri
4	vent leisure ecotourism" urban "cultural sustainable leisure ecot	Type of touri
5	sustainable leisure ecotourism" "cultural urban responsible socia	Type of touri
6	Type "sports entertainment" "cultural urban sustainable resp	Type of touri
7	urism leisure youth" Restaurant cultural, urban, sustainable, spo	Type of touri

Search Term: cultural
 Search Window Size: 50
 Show Every Nth Row: 1
 Kwic Sort: Level 1 1R Level 2 2R Level 3 3R

Appendix 3: Concordance analysis on “responsible”



Appendix 4: Concordance analysis on “social”



Appendix 5: Concordance analysis on “ecotourism”

AntConc 3.5.9 (Windows) 2020

File Global Settings Tool Preferences Help

Concordance Concordance Plot File View Clusters/N-Grams Collocates Word List Keyword List

Concordance Hits 10

Hit	KWIC	File
1	pan "cultural sustainable leisure ecotourism" "cultural urban resj	Type of touri
2	ial solidarity environmental fair ecotourism entertainment" "cult	Type of touri
3	ess, environmental, sustainable, ecotourism" "ethical, environme	Type of touri
4	ourism" "ethical, environmental, ecotourism, health" "sustainable	Type of touri
5	l urban responsible social sport ecotourism leisure youth" Resta	Type of touri
6	th urban restaurant sustainable ecotourism responsible social et	Type of touri
7	isure" "cultural restaurant event ecotourism" "restaurant waterw	Type of touri
8	nsible ethical environmental fair ecotourism" "rural responsible e	Type of touri
9	nsible ethical environmental fair ecotourism" several types of t	Type of touri
10	staurant waterway event leisure ecotourism" urban "cultural susj	Type of touri

Search Term Words Case Regex Search Window Size 50

Show Every Nth Row 1

Kwic Sort Level 1 1R Level 2 2R Level 3 3R

Corpus Files
Type of tourism.txt

Total No.
1

Files Processed

Appendix 6: Questionnaire presentation page in French

Accessible via <<https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/F8E4A2L7M2R5Z8A7O>>

Les pratiques dites "durables" dans votre activité touristique

Ce questionnaire comporte en tout 16 questions, dont 8 à choix multiples, et 8 en réponse libre. Il vise à analyser la perception qu'ont les prestataires touristiques du "développement durable" dans le tourisme. **N'hésitez pas à donner des réponses aussi précises que possible, pour que mes analyses puissent être réalisées en profondeur.** En moyenne, ce questionnaire nécessite environ 10 minutes.

Il s'inscrit dans le cadre d'un travail de recherche en **master « Euroculture »** de l'**université de Strasbourg**. D'avance, je vous remercie chaleureusement du temps que vous y consacrerez.

Si vous avez des questions ou des remarques à me faire, ou si vous souhaitez accéder aux résultats, n'hésitez pas à me contacter à l'adresse **quentin.samier@yahoo.fr**

Règlement général sur la protection des données (RGPD)

Conformément aux articles 12, 13 et 14 du RGPD, les informations recueillies sur ce formulaire sont enregistrées dans un fichier informatisé à des fins de recherche universitaire et dont je suis le seul destinataire. Ces données sont conservées jusqu'à septembre 2022. La base légale du traitement est votre consentement dont les conditions sont définies aux articles 4 et 7 du RGPD.

Vous pouvez accéder aux données vous concernant, les rectifier, demander leur effacement ou exercer votre droit à la limitation du traitement de vos données, et retirer à tout moment votre consentement au traitement de vos données. Pour exercer ces droits ou pour toute question sur le traitement de vos données dans ce dispositif, vous pouvez me contacter par mail (quentin.samier@etu.unistra.fr).

LANCER LE QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix 7: Questionnaire presentation page in German

Accessible via <<https://www.surveio.com/survey/d/G6R4F2E1N9K8V1T7F>>

Der sogenannte "nachhaltige" Ansatz in Ihrer touristischen Dienstleistung

Der vorliegende Fragebogen umfasst insgesamt 16 Fragen, darunter 8 geschlossene (Ja/Nein) und 8 offene. Er zielt auf die Identifizierung der aktuellen Erfahrungen und Wahrnehmungen der touristischen Dienstleister in Bezug auf die "nachhaltige Entwicklung" ab. **Bitte beantworten Sie die Fragen so präzise wie möglich, sodass ich die Analysen entsprechend gründlich durchführen kann.** Der gesamte Zeitaufwand für die Beantwortung der Fragen beträgt maximal 10 Minuten.

Der Fragebogen wurde im Rahmen des **Masters „Euroculture“** an der **Universität Straßburg** entwickelt. Vielen Dank schonmal im Voraus für die Zeit, die Sie sich für seine Beantwortung nehmen!

Sie können sich jederzeit mit Fragen oder Anmerkungen an mich wenden:
quentin.samier@yahoo.fr

Datenschutzgrundverordnung (DSGVO)

Gemäß Artikel 12, 13 und 14 der DSGVO werden die mit diesem Formular erhobenen Daten vertraulich in einer elektronischen Datei zu universitären Forschungszwecken gespeichert. Ich bin der einzige Empfänger dieser Daten.

Ihre personenbezogenen Daten, die ich im Rahmen meines Forschungsprojekts verarbeite, werden grundsätzlich gelöscht, sobald sie nicht mehr für die Zwecke, für die sie erhoben wurden, benötigt werden, d. h. September 2022. Die Rechtsgrundlage für die Verarbeitung ist Ihre Einwilligung gemäß Art. 6 DSGVO.

Sie verfügen über das Recht auf Auskunft, Berichtigung, Löschung, Einschränkung der Verarbeitung Ihrer Daten und haben das Recht, Ihre Einwilligung jederzeit und ohne Begründung zu widerrufen. Um diese Rechte auszuüben oder für jede Frage zur Datenverarbeitung darin, kontaktieren Sie mich bitte per Email (quentin.samier@etu.unistra.fr).

UMFRAGE STARTEN

Appendix 8: Extract of the German-language answers

(Backend office of Survio where all the answers are stored)

#	ENREGISTRÉ	Q. 7	Q. 8	Q. 9
#10	juin 12, 2021 16:58	Ressourcenschonend, im Einklang...	Ja	Regionale Produkte
#9	avril 14, 2021 19:58	Wissensvermittlung über Ökolog...	Ja	Energieschonender
#8	avril 9, 2021 10:01	Nachhaltiges Bauen, Nachhaltige ...	Ja	Anteil von Bio-Leben
#7	avril 8, 2021 15:24	Ein nachhaltiges Tourismusangeb...	Ja	Individuelle Gespräc
#6	avril 8, 2021 14:01	Stadtführungen, Gastronomie, Aus...	Ja	umweltfreundliche F
#5	avril 8, 2021 10:52	Heutzutage scheint es fast unmögl...	Nein	Öffentlich engagiere
#4	avril 8, 2021 10:36	schonender Umgang mit Landsch...	Ja	Einsparungen an Ve
#3	avril 7, 2021 17:40	Aus unserer Sicht die Formel "Vom...	Ja	Von Kellerführungen
#2	avril 7, 2021 17:28	Wanderwege, gut ausgebaute Ra...	Nein	Angebot für Radfahr

Appendix 9: Extract of the French-language answers

(Backend office of Survio where all the answers are stored)

#	ENREGISTRÉ	Q. 7	Q. 8	Q. 9
#10	juin 4, 2021 10:30	Constructions des bâtiments en m...	Oui	auto construction de
#9	mai 31, 2021 13:49	Valoriser et promouvoir les acteurs...	Non	découverte d'un par
#8	mai 31, 2021 13:05	Réduire l'impact environnemental ...	Oui	incitation au tri et à l
#7	avril 28, 2021 11:32	DANS LE RESPECT DE LA NATURE...	Non	TRI SELECTIF
#6	avril 27, 2021 17:46	Pouvoir attirer et fidéliser la clientè...	Oui	Communication - Co
#5	avril 27, 2021 12:50	Principes théoriques : respect envír...	Oui	tourisme social et fa
#4	avril 23, 2021 08:15	Respect de la nature, de l'environn...	Oui	conseils sur la mise
#3	mars 22, 2021 10:45	Un projet qui met en valeur et asso...	Oui	Sensibilisation du pu
#2	mars 11, 2021 10:51		Oui	Produits locaux, tris