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Designing a sustainable travel package: the case of Slovenia



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Abstract

Because of its continuous growth, tourism is becoming one of the largest industries in the world. The impacts of tourism and especially of mass tourism have proven to be harmful for both the natural environment and the local inhabitants of the visited areas. This leads to the necessity to develop alternative forms of tourism that will ensure a global sustainable development. This paper researches the possibility to develop a tourism package that would be responsible and respond to this global issue. Slovenia is a country in which sustainability is already rooted in the tourism management and activities. Subsequently, this paper aims at designing a responsible travel offer to Slovenia for the Swiss market. The research explains what is meant exactly by responsible tourism and sustainable tourism development through a literature review. The offer of Slovenia and its potential as a sustainable destination has been researched with the help of qualitative interviews with specialists of the field and with a thorough desktop research. The demand for such a product has been analysed in the literature and a survey to the clients of the travel agency *A Taste of Travel* has also been undertaken. The package has been created following the principles of sustainability and the guidelines of the manual for the creation of a tourism product that includes both nature and culture from the sanu. Although it has been discovered that the development of sustainable tourism activities and accommodations is growing and that these offers are becoming more accessible, it is not yet possible to admit that it is feasible to create a travel package that would be 100% sustainable.

Keywords: sustainable tourism development, packaged travel, Slovenia, responsible tourism

Foreword and acknowledgements

In the past years, I had the privilege to travel around the globe. From 2012 to 2014, I left my home and travelled around Australia, New Zealand and South East Asia. Since then, my passion for travel has never left me. During my different journeys, I have sadly realized the negative impacts of mass tourism on the environment but also on the local communities. It seemed to me that communities in such big touristic areas had lost some of their culture and traditions in order to please the demand of the visitors. This is something that made me rethink the way I wanted to travel. Also, taking the plane around five to six times a year sometimes is something that I really wanted to change. Hence, the question to find out whether it was possible to travel in a sustainable way made surface in my mind.

I am very interested in everything that is happening in terms of sustainable development in the tourism industry and I wanted to look deeper into the question. This is how the idea to develop and design a sustainable package had emerged for the purpose of this study. The necessity of not taking the plane to go to the destination made me realize that it should be in Europe. Moreover, I wanted to discover a new country with my research and develop a package that would promote a destination not very well known by the Swiss market. Slovenia seemed to be the perfect match. Indeed, it is reachable by train, it is not very well known by the Swiss market as it is such a small country and I remembered seeing the green promotion of Slovenia at the ITB Berlin on my visit in 2016.

It has quickly occurred to me that realizing a sustainable travel package for a country that is completely new to me was going to be a real challenge. It would not have been possible without the precious help of Tina Hudnik, a sustainable tourism guide trainer, who I want to acknowledge at this stage. Her knowledge of Slovenia and sustainable tourism has been incredibly helpful to write this paper.

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List of abbreviations

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GSST	Green Scheme of Slovenia Tourism
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STB	Slovenia Tourism Board
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	World Tourism Organisation
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WTTC	World Tourism and Travel Council

Introduction

On the 25th September 2015, the United Nations (UN) have reached a common agreement and created a new sustainable development agenda for 2030. They have adopted 17 sustainable development goals with the main aim “to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all” (UN, 2018). Although actions towards a global sustainable development have grown in the past decade, the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017 states that “the pace of progress observed in previous years is insufficient to fully meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets by 2030” (UN, 2017, p. 3). The travel and tourism sector is a key sector in the global economic development. In 2016, the direct contribution to the world’s GDP from travel and tourism grew by 3.1%, which was more than the global economy’s contribution, which only grew by 2.5% (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2017, p.2). This stresses the necessity for sustainable tourism in global development. Indeed, the travel and tourism sector accounts for one in ten jobs in the global workforce. And it is anticipated that by 2027, 380 million jobs will be supported by the tourism sector (WTTC, 2017, p.4). The global impact of tourism on the environment is also to be taken into consideration. In 2007, the travel and tourism sector was responsible for 4.6% of global warming. The transport sector generates the largest proportion of CO² emissions and accounts for 75% of all emissions coming from the tourism sector (United Nations Environmental Programme [UNEP] and World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2008, p. 9). Another fact that illustrates the importance of this evolution is the number of European flights that increased by 80% from 1990 to 2014 (European Commission, European Aviation Safety Agency, European Environment Agency and EUROCONTROL, 2016, p. 6).

The tourism industry will continue to grow reaching 1.8 billion global arrivals in 2030. This growth trend will be higher in the emerging economies and developing countries (UNWTO, 2013, p.16). The UNWTO has drawn attention to that fact that. Tourism in developing and least developed countries has been put as a priority in the national development policies. Sustainable tourism should be regarded as the only way to develop tourism, because it encompasses all major issues that economic development addresses.

The UNWTO's definition of sustainable tourism is: "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" (UNWTO, 2013, p.17). While great actions are encouraged by the UNWTO and with the agenda 2030, there is still a very unbalanced development: inequalities between regions, sexes, ages and social status are still very present. Moreover, the use of geographical resources is not balanced either and there is still an urge to transform the way things are being processed on a global scale (UN, 2017, p. 3). Tourism not only can but also has to be a lever for global sustainable development.

Responsible (or sustainable) tourism has the reputation of being expensive (François-Lecompte & Prim-Allaz, *Pour une consommation touristique plus durable: quel chemin reste-t-il à parcourir?*, 2011, p. 5). And it is a challenge, for the small travel agencies who promote true responsible travel, to compete with the big travel agencies and tour operators who claim to promote sustainable tourism, but who in fact use the willingness of people to be more responsible as a marketing opportunity. Marketing is often seen as encouraging unnecessary consumption and can hardly be compared to sustainability. But research has tried to assess the potential role of marketing to promote sustainable tourism in making it understandable to consumers and in encouraging sustainable consumer behaviour (Font & McCabe, 2017, pp. 870-871).

The idea of this research is to find out whether it is possible to create a travel offer that answers both challenges of marketing and sustainability. Can a fully responsible travel product, meaning that the journey will be conducted in a sustainable manner from the moment one leaves the house until one gets back, be attractive and accessible for the general consumer? And most importantly, is it possible to develop a touristic offer that would be 100% sustainable?

Slovenia is one of the 64 countries which has developed a Voluntary National Review (VNR) for the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda and it is one of the 41 countries who mentions tourism in their VNR (UN, 2017, p. 26). Indeed, Slovenia has developed a great implementation strategy and is ranked 17th (out of 149) in the SDG index with an overall performance rate of 76.6% (Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2017, p. 14). In the example of good practice for *Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic*

growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, Slovenia gives the example of its strong commitment to sustainable tourism. Indeed, the efforts of the Slovenian Tourism Board (STB) in promoting Slovenia as *Green, Active, and Healthy* are credible and have positioned Slovenia as one of the most environmentally rich and most bio diverse European destinations. Moreover, the STB has developed the Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSST) for the promotion of sustainable tourism nation wide (Government of the Republic of Slovenia, 2017, p. 40).

As Slovenia seems to be a country that already puts sustainable tourism as a priority, this research will analyse the opportunity for the creation of a sustainable tourism offer to be carried out from Switzerland to Slovenia and back. It is both an opportunity to promote Slovenia in Switzerland, and to promote responsible tourism as the only way people should travel in order to ensure a viable future development.

This research paper is written as a bachelor thesis for the school of tourism management at the HES-SO Valais-Wallis. It is mandated by a travel agency in Vevey called *A Taste of Travel*. The development of the paper will be the following. First an introduction to sustainable tourism will be developed; its evolution through time will be presented and put in relation for the purposes of this paper. An analysis of different sustainability labels will be undertaken in order to shed light on the label-jungle to which the consumer is confronted. Second, a market analysis of the potential of Slovenia as a sustainable tourism destination will be developed. The aim is to have a better grasp on the touristic offer of the destination, to understand the GSST and to make a critical analysis of it. Several interviews have been conducted in order to obtain information on sustainable tourism development, the outgoing industry in Switzerland and the Slovenian market. An attempt to get a better understanding of the demand of the clients of *A Taste of Travel* for a package to Slovenia has been done; if the results of the survey cannot be interpreted as representative of the poll, they represent relevant case studies. And thirdly, the development and creation of the package to Slovenia has been undertaken with the help of product development tools and guidelines.

1 Objectives

The main objective is to design a sustainable travel package to Slovenia, which takes into account the three pillars of sustainable development. This travel package will be conceived for the travel agency *A taste of travel* in Vevey. The aim is to propose a product that is both attractive for the consumer and respects the pillars of sustainable development. What would people like to have in the package and why? An undermining objective is to study the trends in terms of tourism travel behaviours, especially in terms of responsible tourism, so that the travel package can be addressed in the right way to the right people. The goal is to have an offer that suits the desire to experience something new, something different while opening a path for sustainable development both for the final user of the product and for all other stakeholders involved. Is it possible to create such a package or will there be the need to compensate things in order for the offer to remain attractive?

The offer of sustainable tourism in Slovenia will be analysed. The objective is to get an overview of the touristic offer of Slovenia in terms of sustainable tourism. Meaning to find out which service providers exist and under which certifications, what policies they have put in place and to create a non-exhaustive list of these service providers to be used in the package.

Overall, the aim of this study is to create a travel package that addresses the needs of the Swiss market while respecting the three pillars of sustainable development in the area of Switzerland and Slovenia and to assess its viability regarding today's tourism supply and demand in these specific countries.

2 Literature review

It was in the early 70's that the concept of sustainable development first emerged in a shocking paper elaborated by D. Meadows on the limits of growth on the on-going economical development (Diaconu, Stancu, Stoian, & Zaharia, 2010, p. 158). Sustainable development has now become a global concern and it can be understood as "an all embracing concept which involves all aspects of human activity" (Diaconu et al., 2010, p. 159). It is only in the early 90's that sustainable development has been linked to tourism and

that the idea of sustainable tourism development emerged (Corbos & Zamfir, 2015, p. 12711). Although many researches and definitions have been given for sustainable tourism development, the main critic made by the literature is that the definitions remain blur as they include very broad concepts. Moreover, a research on the evolution of management concepts of sustainable tourism and hospitality development in the regions from the state university of management in Moscow (2015) claims that all the research done in the area is underutilised and that there is a necessity to create a clearer management method (Bunakov et al., 2015, p. 39). The research also claims that oftentimes research done on sustainable tourism development focuses only on one aspect of sustainability, for example the impact on the economy, and that this enhances the lack of methodology for sustainable tourism development that involves all aspects of sustainability (Bunakov et al, 2015, p.40). According to R.-A. Corbos and A. Zamfir (2015, p.12710), there is a crucial need for sustainable tourism development and it is achieved only once the economical progress is balanced with the use and limitations of natural resources, especially considering their time of regeneration and the amount of emissions created by human-kind. Moreover, A. Budeanu (2003, p.96) claims that global sustainable development cannot be achieved without involving tourism in all activities, as it is one of the most important economic industries of our times. She also enhances the fact that tour operators could play a much bigger role that they do in promoting and involving sustainable development in all of their activities and to all their stakeholders.

The necessity of the involvement of the traveller in sustainable tourism development is now to be considered. Isabelle D. Wolf, Gillian B. Ainsworth and Jane Crowley (2017) have researched the question of transformative travel and its connection with sustainable tourism development. According to them, *transformative travel* means the personal transformation of the traveller. The experience that the traveller is living throughout his journey is transforming the person he is (Ainsworth, Crowley, & Wolf, 2017, p. 1651). In his book *Transforming Travel: realising the potential of sustainable tourism* (2017) Jeremy Smith argues the necessity to engage transformation towards sustainable development in all aspects of tourism: hotels, experiences, places, transport, and communication. Indeed, sustainable tourism development cannot happen if not all stakeholders are involved.

Packaged travel has emerged in the 1860's with the first organised tours of Thomas Cook (Gladstone, 2005, p. 17). It has since then taken an enormous place in the tourism industry. The competition in this sector is considered hypercompetitive and has forced organizers to develop innovative types of tourism packages (Della Corte, 2012, pp. 302-303). Della Corte states that the evolution of a tourism product has shifted from a supply perspective to a demand perspective with the increase demand of experiential involvement. The idea of co-creation and co-engagement is established and allows the customer to understand the creation of a tourism product as an always-evolving exchange and collaboration between the supply and the demand side (Della Corte, 2012, p. 329). As travel packages already involve a lot of the tourism stakeholders in the process and limit the choice of the traveller in the decision-making process, the intent to create a sustainable travel package has emerged. Indeed this would allow a transformative travel experience for the consumer and at the same time engage him in the global sustainable development. The concept of sustainable tourism development in a packaged tour will further be developed in this paper, as the main goal of this research is to create a sustainable tourism package to Slovenia.

3 Methodology

The methods used for this research paper consist of three different steps. First of all it needed to be clarified what is meant by sustainable tourism, what it represents in the industry and how it is developed. A literature review has been undertaken in order to analyse the evolution of the tourism industry in terms of sustainable development. In addition to this, it has also been clarified what a tourism package represents and more specifically, what a sustainable tourism package represents. A desktop research has also been undertaken in order to analyse the different sustainability labels that would help for the creation of such a package. A total of eight labels have been reviewed with a special focus on internationally recognized labels. For each label, an evaluation of the sustainability has been undertaken in order to consider whether the label would respond to all the demanding aspects of sustainability. The intent was to have a clearer knowledge on the main internationally recognized labels and to discover which of these labels are present in the Slovenian tourism market.

Second, in order to create the package, a market research has been undertaken for Slovenia. The intent was to shed light on the Slovenian tourism offer, its potential and opportunities and its position as a European destination. The Slovenia Green Scheme, a national sustainability certification, has been analysed in order to have a better grasp on the sustainable development in Slovenian tourism. Moreover, a visit to the different travel agencies based in Vevey has been undertaken in order to discover the competitors' offer. Each travel agency has been asked the same question: "Do you have an offer for Slovenia?". This helped to analyse the offers for Slovenia of the travel agencies of the region. Also, different people have been contacted in order to get more information about Slovenia and its touristic offer, especially in terms of sustainability. A questionnaire has been sent to the clients of *A Taste of Travel* via the monthly newsletter. Tina Hudnik, who works at G-guides in Slovenia, has been contacted via email in order to get information about the Slovenia Green Scheme. She also advised on which places to include in the package, or type of accommodation and activities. A meeting with her has taken in place in Slovenia and the package has been tested. Mojca Dvorak, who works for the travel agency Meersicht GmbH – Travel & Lifestyle has also been interviewed via email in order to have more information about the destination.

Furthermore, some additional qualitative research has been done in order to better understand sustainability in the tourism industry and more specifically in the outgoing tourism industry. Two interviews have been conducted. One was with Mr Martin Reber, a former outgoing teacher of the author, and he also runs a travel agency in Bern. And the other was done with Mr Matthias Leisinger, who used to work for Kuoni in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) sector and who is now a sustainability and CSR consultant in the tourism industry. An email exchange has also been undertaken with Mrs Michele Hungerbuehler, head of the sustainability department of Hotelplan in order to discover what are the actions of a big tour operator such as Hotelplan in terms of sustainable tourism development.

Thirdly, the package has been designed with the guidelines of the manual for the creation of a tourism product integrating nature and culture edited by the sanu, the ZHAW, the IUNR and the FS TNE (Forster, Göpfert, Gruber, & Roffler, 2011). The development of the package has followed the steps indicated by this manual and used the tools given by it as well.

Finally, a field trip has also been undertaken by the author in order to test the majority of the offers proposed in the package. Because of lack of time, the results of this field trip will not figure in this paper but will be given orally at the defence of the paper.

4 Sustainable tourism

4.1 From nature-based tourism to sustainable tourism development

In order to reach the objectives described in chapter 1, it is important to give a clear definition of what is meant by responsible tourism and sustainable tourism development. There is a tendency towards all kinds of forms of alternative tourism, such as ecotourism, green-tourism, voluntary-tourism, nature-based tourism and so on. The list is long. And oftentimes, these different terms are being confused with each other. It is essential to understand that responsible tourism operates on a greater scale of action. Hence to give a clear definition of what is meant by responsible tourism and sustainable tourism development for the purpose of this study. Responsible tourism can be understood as an evolution through time from nature-based tourism to today's care and necessity for sustainable tourism development.

Nature-based tourism has emerged from the increased awareness of people for ecology (Mehmetoglu, 2007, p. 112). Valentine (1992) defines nature-based tourism as "primarily concerned with the direct enjoyment of some relatively undisturbed phenomenon of nature" (in Mehmetoglu, 2007, p.112). Indeed, nature-based tourism as it states, happens in relatively untouched natural areas. It often includes activities such as camping, fishing, hiking or other adventurous activities related with nature. According to Mehmetoglu (2007, pp.112-113), the motivations for people to do nature-based tourism are changes in consumption, mass-tourism and also the contrast to the everyday life. Although it has often been compared to ecotourism, nature-based tourism does not necessarily involve socio-economic benefits for local host communities, but is mainly intended to enjoy natural areas.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) has given the following definition to ecotourism: "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education" (The International Ecotourism Society [TIES], 2015). The main principles of ecotourism are:

"to minimize impact ; to build an environmental and cultural awareness and respect ; to provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts ; to provide direct benefits for conservation ; to provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people ; and to raise sensitivity to host countries political, environmental, and social climate" (TIES, 2007)

and they represent the Code of Conduct that TIES members have to sign in order to be part of the ecotourism society. The International Ecotourism Society's motto is "uniting conservation, communities and sustainable travel" (TIES, 2015).

The UNWTO declares that ecotourism is defined by the following characteristics of tourism :

"all forms of nature based tourism, where the tourists' main objective is the appreciation of nature and the traditional cultural heritages of such natural areas ; [that] it contains educational and interpretation features ; [that] it is generally, but not exclusively, organised for small groups by specialized and small locally-owned businesses. Foreign operators of varying size also organize and operate and/or market ecotourism tours, generally for small groups; [that] it minimizes negative impacts on the natural and socio-cultural environment ; [and that] it supports the protection of the natural environment [...]" (WTO, 2002, pp. 4-5).

In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) clears the resolution "Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection" (A/RES/69/233). This resolution underlines the importance to promote sustainable tourism, including ecotourism as a tool for sustainable development. The

resolution encourages national policies and guidelines to follow such direction and financial institutions to support such tourism projects (UNWTO, 2018).

Responsible tourism has been discussed in the Cape Town Conference on Responsible Tourism alongside the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Responsible tourism has been explained as about "making better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit" (Fabricius & Goodwin, 2002). The Cape Town Declaration recognizes responsible tourism in various forms. It states that responsible tourism efforts should:

“minimise negative economic, environmental and social impacts; generate greater economic benefits for local people and enhance the well-being of host communities, improve working conditions and access to the industry; involve local people in decisions that affect their lives and life changes; make positive contribution to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, to the maintenance of the world’s diversity; provide more enjoyable experiences for tourists through more meaningful connections with local people, and a greater understanding of local cultural, social and environmental issues; provide access for people with disabilities and the disadvantaged; is culturally sensitive, engenders respect between tourists and hosts, and builds local pride and confidence” (Goodwin, 2018).

It is about identifying issues on a local scale and addressing them with tourism for sustainable development. It is about making tourism a great lever for sustainable development. Goodwin explains that responsible tourism and sustainable tourism are different in the sense that sustainability is the goal and responsible tourism is the tool to achieve the goal. Responsible tourism is about people taking responsibility by engaging with each other and with all the above aspects in order to make sustainable tourism happen (Goodwin, 2018).

Sustainability acts on three different pillars: the economy, the environment and the social aspect. Sustainable tourism considers all stakeholders involved in the process and prioritizes a better social, economical and environmental development.

4.2 The Global Sustainable Tourism Council

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) gives criteria for a global baseline in terms of tourism and travel. These criteria are the result of a worldwide effort to understand sustainable tourism development. The GSTC have created four pillars for those criteria: “[1] Sustainable management; [2] Socioeconomic impacts; [3] Cultural impacts; [4] Environmental impacts (including consumption of resources, reduction of pollution, and conservation of biodiversity and landscapes)” (Global Sustainable Tourism Council [GSTC], 2017).

These criteria are the minimum a destination, service provider or policy maker should follow for sustainable tourism development. There are two sets of criteria: the GSTC Industry Criteria (for hotels and tour operators) and the GSTC Destination Criteria. Both are designed so that each entity (industry and destination) can arrange locally to their own culture and language, and so that they can add other criteria (GSTC, 2017).

The GSTC gives certifications to hotels, tour operators and destinations. They also recognize other certifications as meeting sustainable tourism standards according to the GSTC criteria (GSTC, 2017). This organisation is seen as the most reliable organisation regarding sustainability in the tourism industry. They have a holistic approach and set standards for other certifications in the industry. It can be said that if a label or certification stands under the umbrella of the GSTC it can be trusted regarding sustainability (M. Leisinger, sustainability consultant, personal communication, 25 May 2018).

4.3 Tourism packages

As the objective of this paper is to conceive a responsible tourism package to Slovenia, it is important to understand the regulations of a tourism package and the differences to be considered when creating a responsible tourism package.

4.3.1 Federal Act on Package Travel of 18 June 1993

In Switzerland, there is one internal federal law, which “regulates the legal relation between the client and the contractual partner for a package tour” (Swiss Guarantee Fund, 2015). The Federal Act on Package Travel of 18 June 1993. In Section 1, Article 1, it states:

"Package travel means the pre-arranged combination of not fewer than two of the following when sold or offered for sale at an inclusive price and when the service covers a period of more than twenty-four hours or includes overnight accommodation:

- a) transport;
- b) accommodation
- c) other tourist services not ancillary to transport or accommodation and accounting for a significant proportion of the package" (The Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 1993).

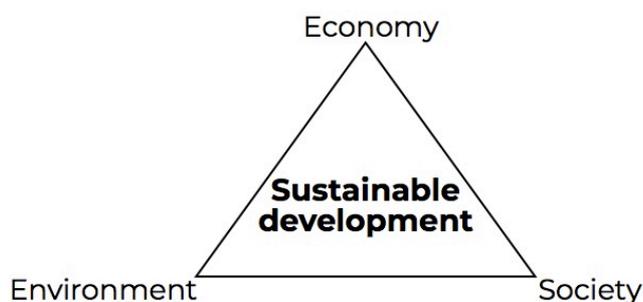
Article 2 explains the definitions of the organiser, the retailer and the consumer. Summarised, an organiser is the person who organises a package and sells it or offers it for sale either directly or through a retailer. A retailer is the person who sells the package put together by the organiser and the consumer is either the person who takes the package, either a person on whose behalf the package has been bought or a person who has agreed to buy the package (The Federal Assembly of the Swiss Confederation, 1993).

The Federal Act on Package Travel also states what should be included in a brochure, what information the organiser or retailer should give to the consumer before conclusion of the contract and what should be included in the contract and other regulations concerning price increases, significant changes to the contract. It also specifies other regulations concerning price increases, significant changes to the contract, cancellation policies, non-performance or improper performance of the contract and security.

4.3.2 Sustainable tourism packages

A sustainable package is a travel package as stated in chapter 4.3.1. It has to take the sustainability triangle into consideration.

Figure 1 The triangle of sustainability



Source: author's data

According to *fairunterwegs* – a non-profit travel portal informing about fair travel actions and behaviours to adopt – there are a few things that a customer can look at when preparing a holiday and when looking at different service providers. First of all, the relational aspect is to be considered. Is the enterprise respecting human rights standards? Examples of these standards are: a signature to the child protection code, or activities offered with host communities on spot. These things can assure that there is a fair relation between the enterprise and their stakeholders. It can reduce risk of having to deal with discriminative approaches against religion, gender or ethnical backgrounds and beliefs. It is also important to realize whether the business has stability in terms of its employees. If the enterprise offers a stable environment to its employees, an opportunity for developing their career, and a fair wage, it shows a good corporate social responsibility of the business. Furthermore, it is also important to find out what is being done about climate change issues. Either by compensation opportunities, sometimes already included in the price, or by an infrastructure that follows the right standards in terms of environmental protection. Examples would be to have good water and waste solutions, to use solar panels for electricity, but also to raise awareness about such issues amongst the clients and the business itself. A good local public transportation system is also an aspect to take into consideration (Fairunterwegs, 2018).

To summarise, the five aspects to take into consideration for *fairunterwegs* when preparing a travel are: “[1] Fair relationships; [2] A purpose for local communities; [3] Environmental protection and justice; [4] Price and Value; and [5] Transparency” (Fairunterwegs, 2018).

4.4 Corporate social responsibility

As stated above, it is important to consider a business’ corporate social responsibility (CSR) when considering the sustainable development aspect of it. In simple terms, CSR is how a business acts towards its sustainable development. The European Commission (EC) defines CSR as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society” (European Commission [EC], 2018). They say that a company can become socially responsible by “following the law, and integrating social, environmental, ethical, consumer and human rights concerns into their business strategy and operations”(EC, 2018).

In order to understand CSR a little better, it is possible to look at it as a pyramid. Indeed, Archie B. Carroll presented the four most important categories of CSR in a pyramid, explaining which category represents the base of a business’ CSR and which categories are built upon the others. The four categories are the economic responsibilities, the legal responsibilities, the ethical responsibilities and the philanthropic responsibilities. The economic responsibility represents the importance for a business to make profit and to be economically viable. The legal responsibility speaks for itself; it is essential for a business to follow the law. The ethical responsibility represents the obligation to be just, right and fair to all of the company’s stakeholders (employees, clients, partners, the environment, citizens and others). And the philanthropic responsibility is the idea that the company is supposed to contribute to the community’s wellbeing by putting financial and human resources at disposal (Carroll, 1991, p. 42).

Figure 2: The pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility



Source: Adapted from Caroll (1991, p.42)

In order for CSR to be well implemented in a business' strategy, it is essential to understand the context in which the business operates. In fact, there is not one rule for implementing CSR into a business, it varies according to the company's specific characteristics, values and perception of their different social responsibilities towards the society. Still, one thing can be stated as universal to all companies when implementing a CSR development strategy, the management and understanding of the company's stakeholder's expectations (Lund-Durlacher, 2015, pp. 4-5). Professor Kellie A. McElhaney developed the following definition for strategic CSR: "A business strategy that is integrated with core business objectives and core competencies of the firm, and from the outset is designed to create business value and positive social change, and is embedded in day-to-day business cultures and operations" (McElhaney, 2009, p. 35).

CSR is something that has to be implemented throughout a company's processes, operations and management. It is part of the company's values and mission statement. Nowadays, CSR in a company not only responds to the inequalities in the world, but it is a tool in achieving positive results for the company's financial objectives (McElhaney, 2009, p. 36). As it will look at reducing water and waste usage, hence reduce associated costs for

example. It can also be very effective with human resources, as giving employees a better working environment will get them to be more motivated and more loyal to the company. This will help the company to get efficient and dedicated workers. It can also be seen as a great marketing opportunity. Indeed, a good CSR program responds to today's consumer demand for a higher quality of life. This will increase the reputation of the company and create bigger brand awareness. McElhaney (2009, p.39) assumes that CSR strategies or initiatives will soon become a standard operating procedure for all companies.

4.5 Sustainability labels and certifications in the tourism industry

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) organises a contest to encourage businesses to develop their CSR strategy to its best. This contest is called "Tourism for Tomorrow" and the participants who receive the "Tourism for Tomorrow Award" are designated for their highest ethical standards in the sector and receive the industry's, the government's and the international media's respect. Indeed the awards aim at recognising best practices in terms of sustainability in the tourism industry. The awards are divided in five different categories: Community Award, Destination Award, Environment Award, Innovation Award and People Award (WTTC, 2018). But there are a lot of different labels that promote sustainability, or at least one aspect of sustainability and it is thus necessary to describe and compare them in order to find the most suitable labels to look at when designing a sustainable travel package.

The labels that will be analysed are the following: TourCert, the EU Ecolabel, Green Globe, Green Key, and Blueflag. Two ISO norms and certifications will be presented as well as the EMAS.

4.5.1 International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)

There are also more global norms and certifications such as the ISO, in particular the ISO 14000 family and the ISO26000. The ISO14000 is a family of standards, which provides practical tools for businesses in order to better manage their environmental responsibilities. ISO14001:2015 also stands as a certification. This means that if a business is ISO14001:2015 certified, it states that this business is following the ISO14001 framework and criteria for an effective environmental management system. This ISO certification is recognised worldwide

and is present in more than 170 countries (ISO, 2015). The ISO26000:2010 is related to social responsibility. These norms cannot be used as a certification unlike the ISO14001:2015, but they give guidance to businesses on how to be more socially responsible and on what it means to be socially responsible (ISO, 2018).

4.5.2 TourCert

One of the leading sustainable tourism certifications in terms of CSR and sustainability is *TourCert*. Active since 2009, *TourCert* has for mission statement: “Success by Empowerment”. Their goal is to advise and certify tourism businesses and destinations in their path to sustainability. In order to do so, any destination, tour operator or other tourism company can apply to do the “TourCert Check”. This check-up aims at providing the objectives, tools and measurements in terms of sustainability and CSR to the company or destination. The “TourCert Check” consists of five steps.

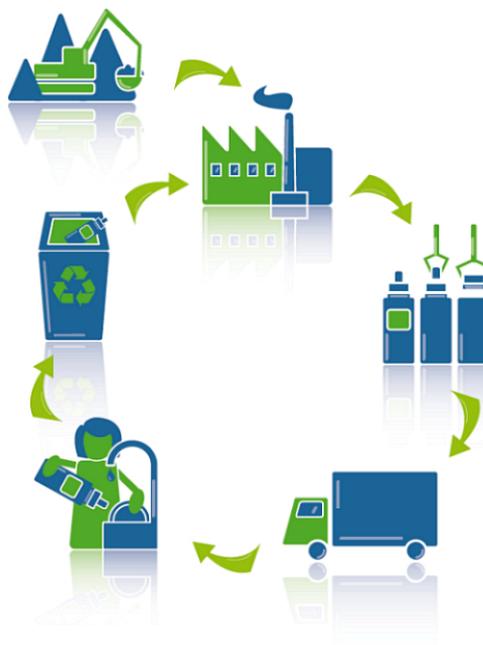
The first step is about sustainability guidelines, it consist of signing a commitment that the company takes for proving the quality of their products and services, the respect of human rights, the protection of the natural resources and fair working conditions for the employees and stakeholders involved. The second step consists of appointing a CSR manager into the company. This manager will be trained and certified by *TourCert* with the help of an e-learning course, which provides a test and a certification at the end. The third step is a checklist. The company will be provided a checklist according to their commitment; this will help defining the strengths and weaknesses of the business in terms of sustainability and CSR efforts. The results of the checklist lead to the fourth step, which consists of measures for improvements. The assessment of the checklist will give clear measurement tools and indicators for the company to improve their sustainability and CSR performance. And finally the last and fifth step consists of being awarded the *TourCert* certificate and becoming a member of the *TourCert* community. These five steps are adapted to the company, which means there are three types of “TourCert Checks” and certificates; one for tour operators, one for accommodations and one for other tourism companies. The prices for the “TourCert Checks” vary between 225€ and 450€ per year, according to the number of employees (or rooms for accommodation) of the company (TourCert, 2018a).

The *TourCert* certification is reliable in terms of sustainability as it covers the three pillars aspects. If one sees the *TourCert* certification in any tourism actor, it can be understood that there are sustainability efforts being made by the company, and that an external assessor has assessed the company's effort regarding sustainability. This also gives more credibility to it (M. Leisinger, PC, 25 May 2018). The fact that no organisations have been certified with *TourCert* in Slovenia so far (TourCert, 2018b) shows a potential of development.

4.5.3 EU Ecolabel

The EU Ecolabel is a label concerned with the life cycle of a product or service. Indeed, it seeks to certify the environmental impact that a product or service has from the beginning of its life cycle towards the end of it. Figure 3 is an example of a life cycle for a product. It goes from the extraction of raw materials to the manufacturing and packaging of the product, leading to its distribution and use and finally ending with the disposal of the product or its recycling (European Commission, 2017a). Indeed, the EU Ecolabel aims at going towards a more circular economy. This means, that they would like the products or services to be reused or recycled so that they stay in the loop instead of being disposed (European Union, 2017).

Figure 3: Example of the life cycle of a product.



Source: European Commission, 2017a

If a company wants its product or service to get the EU Ecolabel, it has to apply voluntarily for it. In order to get the label, the product or service will have to respond to specific criteria set by the European Parliament and Council. Regarding tourism, the products or services that can apply for the EU Ecolabel are hotels and campsites (European Union, 2017). The website of the label gives a clear outlook to all hotels and campsites that already have the EU Ecolabel. All the hotels and campsites, which have the label, are putting great efforts in energy, water and waste reduction.

In brief, the EU Ecolabel is a reliable label as it is known throughout Europe and regulated by the European Parliament and Council. But it is only focused on the environmental impact of a product or service. For the purpose of this study, it helps to discover whether a hotel is environmental friendly or not, but it will not give any information about the social conditions of the organisation nor to the economic benefit of it.

On the website of the EU Ecolabel, three hotels have been listed as having the label in Slovenia. The three hotels are (1) the Terme Snovik, which is a thermal spa resort located in the north of Slovenia (north-east from the capital Ljubljana), (2) the Thermana d. d., Druzba dobrega počutja, which is also a thermal resort located in Lasko in the eastern part of Slovenia, and (3) the Tourist Farm Urska located in the north east as well (European Commission, 2017b).

4.5.4 Travelife

Travelife is an international sustainability certification scheme, which aims at making holidaying more sustainable. It helps all travel and tourism stakeholders to improve their social, economic and environmental impact. It works with tour operators and travel agencies, but also with hotels and accommodation and holidaymakers. *Travelife* certifies businesses that prove their ability to meet the standards set by *Travelife* as a sustainable tourism business. This enables these businesses to promote their sustainability efforts to the general public.

The *Travelife* standards are based on well-known international CSR guidelines, such as the GSTC, the UNEP, the OECD, the ISO14001 and ISO26000 and others. There are more than 200 criteria and best practices set by *Travelife* for tour operators and travel agencies. These

criteria regard the overall management of a tour operator or travel agency, meaning: (1) General operations, (2) Office and retail operations, (3) Supply chain management and (4) Customers (Travelife, 2018a).

For hotels and accommodation, *Travelife* has created specific checklists to go through. There are two different certifications that an accommodation can get, either the Travelife Gold Award, or the Travelife Award of Excellence. The Gold Award goes to hotels or accommodation already achieving the sustainability efforts detailed in the checklist. Two different checklists exist, depending on the size of the property. The Award of Excellence goes to those properties wanting to ameliorate their sustainability, and being able to show it to their stakeholders. This enables a company to be audited by *Travelife* to get the Award of Excellence (Travelife, 2018b). The main standards for hotels and accommodation are the following: (1) Sustainability management systems, (2) Environmental management and energy, (3) Labour and human rights, (4) Community integration, (5) Suppliers and (6) Customers. All criteria have sub-criteria with specific requirements and indicators (Travelife, 2018c).

Travelife has created the Travelife Collection website to help holidaymakers find the best service providers in terms of sustainability. On this website, one can browse through the catalogue by using the search options. They are easy to use and very practical. One can look for a country, a region, a type of accommodation or a tour operator.

There were five results when looking for Slovenia's accommodation. All five have the Gold Award, these hotels are the following: (1) Rooms & Apartments Slovenian Istria located in Truske, (2) Hotel Park in Ljubljana, (3) Hotel Pr'Gavedarjo in Ljubljana as well, (4) Ramada resort Kranjska Gora and (5) Design Rooms Pr'Gavedarjo in Gora as well (Travelife, 2018d). It seems that the list might not be up-to-date on the website, as it is known that at least one other accommodation has also the Travelife Gold Award (hostel Celica in Ljubljana), but it does not appear on the results.

For tour operators and travel agencies, the result for Slovenia has given three companies who have the *Travelife* certification as a "Travelife Partner committed to sustainability". The first company is *Visit Good Place*, the second is *Roundabout Travel* and the third is *Atlas Express* (Travelife, 2018e). *Visit Good Place* is specialised in cycling offers around Slovenia

with an additional focus on Slovenia's wildlife (Visit Good Place, 2018). *Roundabout Travel* has a much larger offer, going from day excursions to cruise offers. They are also offering tours to the neighbouring countries (Roundabout, 2015). *Atlas Express* is a tour operator mainly active on the coast. They offer group programmes, shore excursions and also day tours (Atlas Express, 2018).

The certification of *Travelife* is a great tool for holidaymakers to choose the correct tour operator or accommodation when travelling. Unlike the EU Ecolabel, the *Travelife* certification looks at all three aspects of sustainability and is hence a reliable label when it comes to responsible tourism. Also, it is co-funded by the Eco-Innovation Initiative of the European Union, which gives even more credibility to it (Travelife, 2018a).

4.5.5 Green Globe

Green Globe is a worldwide certification for sustainable tourism and is based in Los Angeles, California (Green Globe, 2018). It provides certification for twelve different tourism industries, such as attractions, business centres, hotels and resorts, transportation and so on. *Green Globe* is the one of the oldest set of standards made for travel and tourism. It is more than 20 years old and positions itself as the most reliable certification in terms of sustainability (Green Globe, 2018a).

There are three different levels of certifications: the Green Globe certified member, the Green Globe Gold member and the Green Globe Platinum member. In order to be a certified member, a company has to apply to all criteria of the Green Globe Standards for Travel & Tourism. The certification criteria are organised according to four main aspects: (1) Sustainable Management, (2) Social/Economic, (3) Cultural Heritage and (4) Environment. Each company has to run audits every alternate year for the certification to be complete. Also, the certification is confirmed each year once the company has achieved more than 50% of the criteria. For a member to become a Gold member, it has to be certified during five consecutive years. After ten consecutive years of certification, a member becomes a Platinum member. But these two higher-level certifications are not automatically confirmed after five or ten years. The members go through a thorough review of the overall performance of the company concerning the four main aspects cited above and the effective continuous dedication in making the company more sustainable (Green Globe, 2018b).

To become a member, a company has to fill in a form, comply with the standards and pay an annual membership fee. The company has then access to all the help provided by *Green Globe*, such as the solution centre and auditors and counselling. The certification is valid one year from the date of the payment (Green Globe, 2018c).

As of today, there are three companies that are *Green Globe* members in Slovenia. The first one is the Bohinj Eco-Hotel, the second one is a tour operator (Liberty International) and the third one is Ortenia – Apartments in Nature. All three have the basic certification, which means that they have not yet reached five years of consecutive certification (Green Globe, 2018d).

As stated earlier, *Green Globe* positions itself as one of the most reliable certification for sustainability in the travel and tourism industry. Indeed, it is the oldest set of standards and is also based on important international standards and agreements such as the ISO, the GSTC, the agenda 21 and others. But one of the most interesting things to point out about the *Green Globe* certification is that it is checked annually, which ensures an annual update of the company's dedication to sustainability (Green Globe, 2018c).

4.5.6 EMAS

EMAS stands for the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme. This management instrument is available for all companies and organisations, which want to evaluate, improve or report their environmental performance, but with the willingness to improve their impact. It is available for any type of company and is applicable worldwide. The three key words that EMAS stands for are *performance*, *credibility* and *transparency* (European Commission, 2018a). Indeed, the scheme enables organisations to increase their environmental performance by providing the appropriate tools. It gives those organisations credibility because of the external and neutral audit procedures and it provides information about an organisation's environmental performance publicly.

It is important to underline that EMAS is available for all types of organisation and that it is not only focused on tourism. It has a register where one can browse specific criteria to look for organisations. Also, it is only focused on the environmental aspect of sustainability and not on all three aspects. Nevertheless, it is an important and well-recognized audit

scheme, which can provide great information for and about businesses. There is an online register available in order to find out more about a certain topic or business (European Commission, 2018b). But in order to find a business or information about a business, one needs to know a specific code attributed to it, and this makes it difficult to find information as a simple visitor.

4.5.7 Green Key

Green Key is part of the Foundation for Environment Education and is dedicated to hotels and other accommodations. 2900 establishments in 59 different countries have the *Green Key* label. The label awards excellent environmental responsibility and sustainable operation in tourism establishments. The label helps guests to know that by choosing this establishment, they also help to make a difference on a sustainable but essentially environmental level (Green Key, 2018a).

The three main aims of *Green Key* are to (1) increase better resource management and responsible operations in tourism establishments, (2) raise awareness about the environmental cause to all stakeholders involved and (3) create fundamental changes in the methods used and overall behaviours, so that they become more environmental friendly and sustainable (Green Key, 2018a).

The *Green Key* programme has six different categories of type of accommodation: (1) hotels and hostels, (2) campsites and holiday parks, (3) small accommodations, (4) conference centres, (5) restaurants and (6) attractions. All six categories are covered by the same 13 criteria themes (see Figure 4), but each has their own criteria file (Green Key, 2018b).

Figure 4: 13 areas of criteria



Source: Green Key, 2018b

To apply for a *Green Key* is fairly easy and consists of three steps. First the establishment has to fill in the forms and send the applications documents to *Green Key*. Second, the establishment receives on-site audits and finally, the decision is made whether or not the establishment can get the *Green Key*. The third part of the process is made by a third-party, which is an independent entity (Green Key, 2018c). The costs for such an application depend on the type of establishment and whether there is a national operator for *Green Key* in the country of the establishment or not. On *Green Key's* website there are several tools available, such as carbon calculation, and water calculation, but once an establishment is part of the *Green Key* programme, they get access to the Green Key toolbox, which has useful tips and best practice example that fit the 13 criteria (Green Key, 2018d).

Green key is a good label to look at regarding environmental issues such as resources management for example, but it does not give clear information on the social aspect. As for example do the people working there get a fair salary? This has to be taken into consideration when choosing a certain accommodation for a sustainable tourism package. One cannot only relate on the *Green Key* label when it comes to the three-pillar approach of sustainability. The name of the label itself with the word “green” already positions the environment as priority criterion.

4.5.8 Blue Flag

Blue Flag is also part of the Foundation for Environment Education and is a world known eco-label. It has its headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark and has been active for more than 30 years. It has labelled 4,423 beaches, marinas and boats in 45 different countries. The *Blue Flag* programme acts for water quality, safety and access for all to beaches and marine environments and wants to connect and educate people on their environment. To apply for the award, it is hence necessary to compile with a lot of criteria such as educating people about the environment they are surrounded by. The five key elements of the programme are: (1) Education, (2) Information, (3) Monitoring, (4) Management and (5) Safety (Blue Flag, 2018a).

There are three different criteria for beaches, marinas and sustainable boating tourism operators. There is also a boat owner's code of conduct and a sail training international code of conduct (Blue Flag, 2018b). *Blue Flag* also gives a set of best practices that one can research on their website. Or there is a set of publications available with themes such as beach cleaning and environmental education activities. In order to apply, the municipality for the beach, the marina owner or the boating tour operating business have to fill in a form and send it to the *Blue Flag* national jury who then evaluates the disposition to apply for the label and then one can get the *Blue Flag* label (Blue Flag, 2018c).

Figure 5: How to apply to the Blue Flag?



Source: Blue Flag, 2018c

Slovenia has 15 awarded sites on the *Blue Flag's* list. 12 sites are beaches and three sites are marinas. Although the coastline of Slovenia is small (46.6 km) there are a remarkable number of sites that have been awarded the label. This enhances the interesting landscapes of Slovenia and especially the great quality of the water, beaches and marinas. The educational aspect of the label enhances the social pillar of sustainability and with clean beaches there is a better chance to have more people on them, which means a greater economic value. This label remains mainly an environmental label, but it also includes both social and economical aspects of sustainability. It is a valuable label and is of great information regarding coastal areas and water management.

4.5.9 The “label-jungle”

The list of labels analysed in this paper is non-exhaustive. In fact there are a great number of labels that look at different aspects of sustainability. The association *fairunterwegs* prepared a label guide so that organisations and independent tourists could have a clearer scope of this so-called “label jungle”. The fact that there are so many labels does not help the traveller to have a good knowledge of what the organisation actually does in terms of sustainability because the traveller probably does not know all the labels, or what they refer to.

A German study from the Centre for Sustainable Tourism (ZENAT) and the Federal Association of the Consumer Initiative on certificates in the sustainable tourism field in Germany has given the following advice. It is necessary that the tourism sector not only takes the quality of the services and the environmental aspect into consideration but that it takes the whole aspects of sustainability into consideration and this throughout the tourism value chain. Also, it states that the social aspect is the least considered in the certifications and that this should be considered much more in the label's criteria, especially in terms of fair trade and working conditions. Another advice formulated in the study is that the sustainability aspect should be more strategy-oriented rather than punctual actions in the certification criteria. This study also points out that there is a blurry understanding of how some of the certifications check the certified organisations. Indeed, they advise that certifiers should have better methods for checking the dedication to sustainability of an organisation. The final aspect to be considered from this study is a normative one. The

authors identify the need of a national minimal legal standard for tourism, so that the tourism sector has a uniformed base when developing sustainability. These could be linked to the GSTC but on a national scale, here for Germany (Bundesverband der Verbraucher Initiative, ZENAT, 2017, pp. 50-51).

In conclusion, the main issue of these labels is that most of them mainly consider the environmental aspect of sustainability. In many labels the economical and especially the social aspect tend to be missing, thus most labels cannot be considered as completely sustainable. The financial aspect is not to be neglected either, as all certification schemes ask for a membership fee. Nevertheless, labels help to differentiate a business from another and certify of certain actions that the business does. It shows that the business can be trusted regarding certain aspects of sustainability. Oftentimes, the certification program also gives interesting and helpful tools for the business to follow, and in the end, with a better resource management in terms of physical and human resources, a business will most probably have a greater financial stability.

4.6 Compensation for climate change protection: MyClimate

It is very difficult to be completely sustainable, especially when it comes to climate and protection of the natural environment. In the tourism industry, transportation plays a crucial role as it brings the tourists to the tourism service providers. It is thus essential to use transportation when travelling and sometimes it is not possible to use the train, which is less polluting than cars or airplanes for example. That is why there is an alternative way to remain sustainable when travelling even when using a car or an airplane, although this is the least good solution for the protection of climate change. It consist of calculating the carbon offset of the transportation that has been used and changing it into a money value which will then be used to help sustainable projects grow throughout the world, but especially projects in developing countries. If for example someone takes a one-way flight from Geneva to Ljubljana in economy class, the MyClimate calculator gives a result of 0.172 t of CO₂ emissions and asks for five Swiss Franks (CHF) for compensation. The person can then choose where it wants its money to go. Either any international sustainable development project or it can choose a specific project or region, like for example help small hold farmers in Nicaragua with deforestation (MyClimate, 2018).

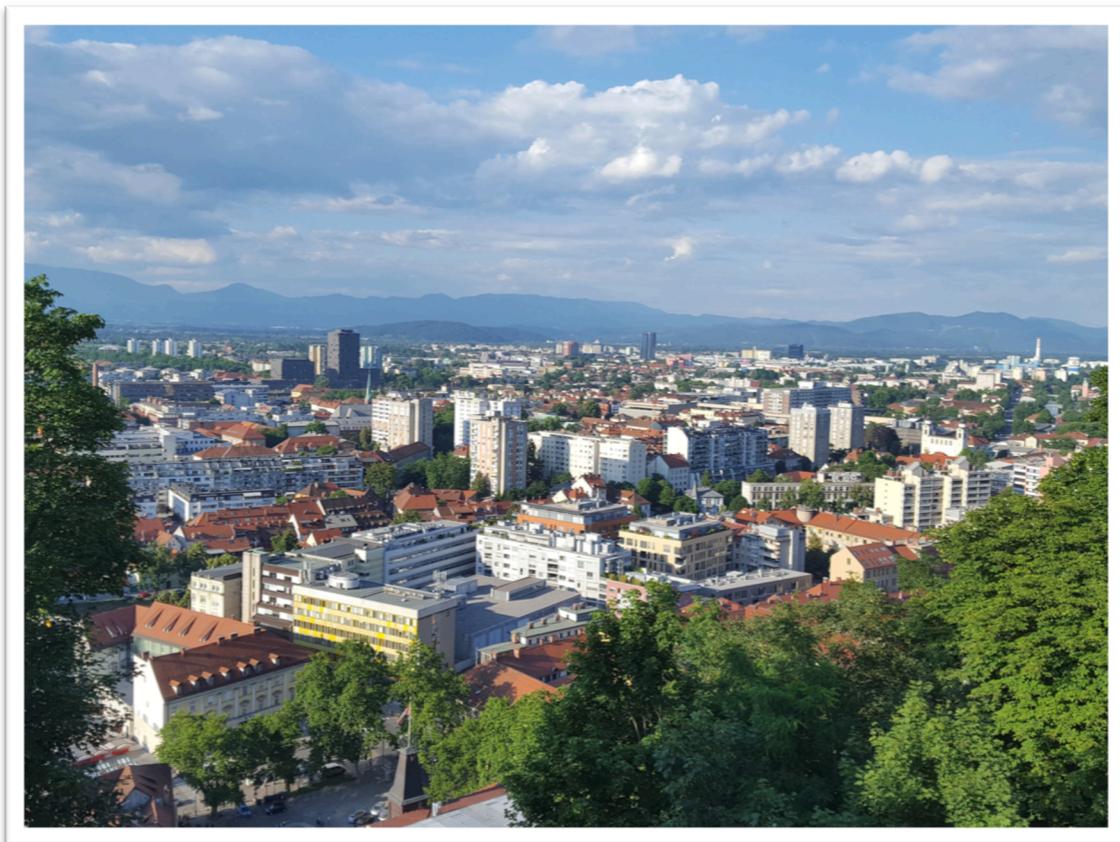
MyClimate is a Swiss non-profit organisation and it has been achieving a lot regarding international sustainable development in the past two decades. It has emerged in 2002 from a students project from the ETH Zürich and is now a team of more than 50 staff members. The MyClimate organisation works on three different levels: Education, Consulting and Climate protection projects (MyClimate, 2018, pp. 4-5). It provides education programmes for schoolchildren, apprentices, students, teachers and the general public for action-oriented knowledge in relation to climate change and effective climate protection (MyClimate, 2018, pp. 7-8). It also provides consulting for companies by giving them professional CO₂ management advice going from emission reports to efficient management advice on a better use of resources. It provides companies with the MyClimate label, which gives credibility to the company in terms of energy and resource management (MyClimate, 2018, pp. 11-13). Other than educating and consulting, the MyClimate organisation takes great action in climate protection projects all around the world. So far, they “have been creating over 70 climate protection projects in more than 30 countries” (MyClimate, 2018, p. 15). The annual report of 2016 gives a great insight of what has been achieved by the organisation. It states that five million tonnes of CO₂ have been reduced with MyClimate projects since its establishment and that 8,600 jobs have been created through those projects as well (MyClimate Foundation, 2017, p. 3).

According to Matthias Leisinger, freelance consultant for CSR and sustainability issues and former responsible for CSR at Kuoni, MyClimate is a good organisation. They have great projects and they have created great education potentials for all kinds of communities. It is hard to say whether this is the best solution for compensation – this is a broader question and discussion – but MyClimate offers great opportunities to support projects that work on better sustainable approaches on various levels (M. Leisinger, PC, 25 May 2018). This being said, MyClimate offers a potential for compensation that can be used in this package in the case that it would be needed.

5 Slovenia

Slovenia is situated in the heart of Europe, a country between the Alps, the Mediterranean Sea and more than 11,000 Karst caves (Slovenia Tourism Board [STB], 2018a). The variety of landscapes offered in this country makes it very unique. The population of Slovenia is of 2.1 million (Eurostat, 2018). Slovenia is a very small country; indeed Switzerland is two times bigger than Slovenia (MyLifeElsewhere, 2018). Eurostat, the statistical body of the European Union, developed several visual tools to get a better insight of statistical data of countries in the EU. One of them regarded the quality of life. According to them, Slovenians are overall satisfied with their life at a rate of 7/10 (Eurostat, 2013). Their job satisfaction stands at 7.3/10 (Eurostat, 2013) and the employment rate is of 73.4% in Slovenia compared to 82.1% in Switzerland (Eurostat, 2017).

Figure 6: View of Ljubljana from the Ljubljana Castle



Source: Author's footage

Regarding Slovenia as a sustainable tourism destination, the following aspects can be highlighted. Slovenia has been awarded Europe's Best Green destination at the ITB 2018. 16 destinations of Slovenia appear in the top 100 green destinations listing (Green Destinations, 2018). The capital city of Slovenia Ljubljana has also been declared European Green Capital of 2018 by Green Destinations. With efforts such as closing the city centre to motor traffic and creating a lot of green areas in the capital, Ljubljana is a role model when it comes to sustainable tourism management. Slovenian city Bohinj also appears in the top ten of the European trendiest destinations to visit in 2018 (European Best Destinations, 2018). This enhances the fact that Slovenia is an interesting tourism destination to visit.

5.1 Slovenia Green Scheme

The Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism (GSST) is a tool developed at a national level in order to carry out the tasks given by the Slovenia Green umbrella brand. The brand wants to:

“[1] bring together all efforts directed towards the sustainable development of tourism in Slovenia, [2] offer tools to destinations and service providers that enable them to evaluate and improve their sustainability endeavours, and [3] promote these green endeavours through the Slovenia Green brand” (STB, 2018b).

There are four different labels that can be certified by the Slovenia Green Brand, one for accommodations, one for destinations, one for parks and one for travel agencies (TA). The process in order to obtain the Slovenia Green label for service providers, meaning TA's and accommodation depends on whether or not the service provider has one of the internationally recognized labels that proves their sustainability as can be seen on Figure 6 (STB, 2018, p. 3). Once the TA or accommodation has sent proof of the label to the GSST, they sign the so-called “Green Policy”, that regulates their sustainability efforts and they can receive the Slovenia Green Label (Jana Apih, GoodPlace, 2017, p. 11).

Figure 7: Screenshot Slovenia Green Scheme Short Overview



Source: Slovenia Tourism Board, 2018, p. 3

When it comes to the destination label, the process is a little different. To obtain the label, a destination has to follow eleven steps. These steps are the following: (1) set an appointment with a green coordinator, (2) set up a green team in the destination, (3) increase awareness for sustainability in the destination, (4) sign the “Green Policy”, (5) carry out surveys, (6) gather information, (7) submit reports and apply for an assessment, (8) draft an action plan for measures, (9) determining the local character and Unique Selling Proposition (USP), (10) submit an application for a field visit, realising measures and (11) after three years, re-assess. All these steps are evaluated with a 1 to 10 point system (STB, 2018, p. 3). For destinations, there are three different levels for the label: gold, silver and bronze. In order to get the gold label, a destination has to get at least eight points in at least three of the five categories, which are: destination management, nature & scenery, environment & climate, culture & tradition, socio-economic situation (P. Čad, for Slovenian Tourist Board: Research, Development, Innovation and EU Projects, personal communication, 11 June 2018). Also, one of these categories has to be directly linked to tourism. In addition, the destination has to have at least one accommodation provider with the Slovenia Green label. In order to get the silver label, the destination has to have at least two categories with at least eight points, where one of the two categories is directly linked

with tourism. For the bronze label, the destination only needs to have one of the categories with at least eight points (STB, 2018, p. 3). For parks, the process consists of showing proof of having one of the two labels seen on figure 7. Or the park can also be assessed according to the Slovenia Green Standard.

For all categories, there is also a cost in order to obtain the label. Indeed, a service provider (travel agent or accommodation) or a park has to pay 150€ + VAT when joining. For a destination, the cost is higher. When joining the Green Scheme, a destination has to pay 1220€ + VAT. The cost for destinations in the third year after joining the GSST and subsequently every three years after that (for re-assessment, grade renewal) is €920 + VAT (STB, 2018, p. 3).

There are only five destinations that have the Slovenia Green Gold label, 24 have the Slovenia Green Silver label and eight destinations have the Slovenia Green Bronze label. There are 21 accommodations that have the Slovenia Green label all across Slovenia and three parks also have the Slovenia Green label. Two travel agencies have the Slovenia Green label: *Visit Good Place* and *Roundabout Travel*, both already mentioned in the *Travelife* section of this paper in chapter 4.5.4 (STB, 2018b).

Figure 8 shows all the service providers, destinations (bronze, silver, gold) and parks that have the Slovenia Green label all across the country (STB, 2018, p. 4). It can be noticed that the whole map is covered with labels, which makes it possible to use sustainable service providers and visit sustainable destinations for the purpose of conceiving a sustainable travel package for this paper.

Figure 8: Screenshot of map of all Slovenia Green Scheme Labels



Source: Slovenia Tourism Board, 2018, p. 4

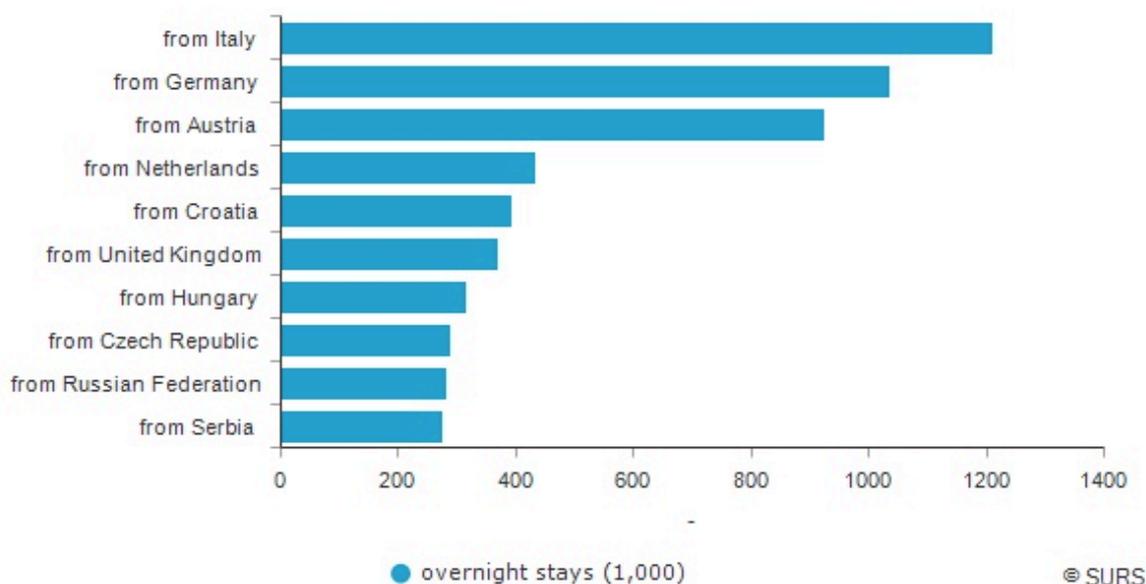
For the accommodations, the labels can be trusted as they rely on other international labels. Although one critic would be that one label is enough to get the Slovenia Green label, which promotes sustainability. But most of the accommodations have only the EU Ecolabel, which gives proof of good environmental resource management and a circular product management life cycle. This only covers the environmental aspect though, and the critic is that it does not really take the two other pillars of sustainability in consideration, meaning the social and economical aspect.

Petra Čad, who works for the STB has given the following information for the destinations: “Destinations have to present each year the report/evaluation of their action plan, we also make a field visit in a second year. Providers, as stated in the publication, have to submit proof of the label’s validity (each time expires)” (P. Čad, PC, 11 June 2018). This shows that there is a control on the actions of the destinations that have the label. Also, the eleven steps that need to be followed prove that there is a need of clear dedication in order to obtain the label and that it cannot only be granted when paying the fee.

5.2 Facts and figures

Slovenian tourism has increased remarkably in the past three years. 2017 has been a record year for Slovenian tourism with 12 million overnight stays achieved. The increase in overnight stays by tourists in 2017 is of 11.3% and the increase in arrivals of tourists is of 13.4%. Foreign tourist arrivals have grown to 3.4 million in 2017, which states the importance of Slovenia as a new European tourism destination. The main reasons for overnight stays are the mountains (26%), health – SPA's (28%) and the seaside (20%) (SORS, BS: UNWTO, 2018). This also enhances the uniqueness of Slovenia in terms of variety of tourism opportunities. Looking at the foreign overnight stays, the country has been visited mainly by Italian people (14% of all foreign overnight stays), German people (12%), people from Austria (11%), Dutch people and people from Croatia (5%), and people from the United Kingdom and Hungary (4%) (See figure 9) (Sabljic, 2018).

Figure 9: Screenshot of the foreign overnight stays of 2017 in Slovenia



Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia [SORS], 2018

5.3 Potential and opportunities

Figure 10: The Soča River near Kobarid



Source: Author's footage

Slovenia positions itself as a green and sustainable destination. This already shows the great potential this country has for the design of a sustainable travel package. In addition, Slovenia has won the “Destination Leadership” award 2017 from the National Geographic World Legacy Awards. This award recognizes destination leadership for demonstrating protection for the environment, the cultural and social heritages, natural sites, local communities and for educating travellers on the principles of sustainability (National Geographic Traveler, 2017). Slovenia seems to be developing in a sustainable way. Through its long-term efforts, it has achieved 96 out of 100 global sustainability indicators (National Geographic, 2018).

In Slovenia there are four distinctive regions in terms of different touristic attractions. There is the alpine part of Slovenia, situated in the northern part of the country. There is the Mediterranean and Karstic region of Slovenia in the west. There is the central part of Slovenia with the capital Ljubljana. And there is the thermal Pannonian region of Slovenia, located in the eastern part of the country (STB, 2018c). This diversity in landscape offers Slovenia a great potential in terms of tourism attractions. Slovenia’s tourism offer would

most likely be linked to natural heritages. Indeed the country has nearly 60% of its landscape covered in trees and more than 350 conservation sites (National Geographic Traveler, 2017). It is the third European country with the most important proportion of forests on its land and is the richest in water in terms of amount of river water per inhabitant (Korez-Vide, 2017, p. 383). Another factor for the potential of Slovenia as a tourism destination is that it has been ranked the seventh most peaceful country in the world (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017, p. 10).

A must-see is the Karstic region that offers over 11'000 karst underground caves, of which one is a UNESCO natural and cultural world heritage, the Škocjan caves. The thermal region of Slovenia is also a great asset in terms of touristic offer. Indeed, the country has 87 natural thermal springs (Korez-Vide, 2017, p. 383). Moreover, Slovenia has three big wine areas in the country and has hence developed a great wine tourism offer with several wine routes and special events (Gacnik & Kerma, 2015, pp. 311-323). All these factors show the undeniable potential of Slovenia as a tourism destination, especially regarding nature and health tourism.

5.3.1 Stories of Slovenia

Increasing competition in the tourism industry has brought marketers and managers to create new experiences for consumers. In fact, according to Wakefield and Blodgett (1994) consumers feel the need to “experience excitement and stimulation” (in Mossberg, 2008, p. 198). This is why most of the people want to consume leisure services. Consumers of tourism services will most likely search for hedonic benefits, the ones that provoke pleasure and excitement rather than utilitarian (functional) benefits. Subsequently, tourism marketers and managers had to create experiences that involve consumers through staging and storytelling (Mossberg, 2008, pp. 196-200).

Indeed, research has shown that a good storytelling and brand value both create a competitive advantage and increase the attraction of tourists to a destination (Soon Choi, 2016, p. 1). How a consumer feels and connects to a brand will be influenced by the story behind it. Jensen (1999) says that : “In general, stories speak to our human needs and make our life meaningful. [...] They stimulate our imagination, involve us emotionally and amuse us” (Salzer-Mörling, 2004 ; Twitchell, 2004 ; in Mossberg, 2008). Mossberg (2007) also

argues that nowadays, tourists are not only interested in buying the product, but most importantly they are interested in buying the story behind the product (in Korez-Vide, 2017, p. 380). Arnould (2007) says that marketers have to co-create with their consumers, for that they need to know more about their immersion within the framework of a story and their general behaviours and reactions according to it (Mossberg, 2008, pp. 196-197). Another important point that Mossberg (2008, p. 200) states, is that research has found that tourists leave a certain reality to enter a new one when consuming leisure services. She makes the proposition that: “to be immersed in and captivated by a story, a tourist needs to step out of the ordinary” (Mossberg, 2008, p. 201). But for this experience to be lived, Carù and Cova (2007) argue that this new and different environment in which the tourist is emerged, needs to feel safe and controlled (in Mossberg, 2008, p. 201). The idea of context is very much discussed as well. For an out of the ordinary experience in which the tourist is involved to work, the context has to be set very clearly. Mossberg (2008, p.202) gives the idea that for a context to be understood clearly, a guide can be of great help.

The Slovenian tourism board has developed a story around its *I Feel Slovenia* brand and has put a lot of effort to make it a national story. According to Seung Soon Choi (2016, p.1) storytelling is not only a matter of text and visuals but it includes all kinds of actions and stimulates all of the senses. The *I Feel Slovenia* brand has mastered this aspect of storytelling, as the word *feel* already shows that Slovenia is a country that has to be experienced with all senses, it has to be felt (Korez-Vide, 2017, p. 383). Romana Korez-Vide (2017) has analysed the challenges and opportunities to use storytelling as a tool for sustainable tourism management in Slovenia.

Slovenia has used stories as a marketing development tool on a national scale. In 2013, the project “Stories in Slovenian Tourism” was launched by the STB and a “pyramid of stories” was created. This pyramid collected all sorts of stories from all around the country and they were then classified according to five different levels. (1) The umbrella story level of the *I Feel Slovenia* brand, with the motto “Green. Active. Healthy.” (2) The top story level with stories that explain the uniqueness of Slovenia. (3) The regional and inter-regional level with stories about the different tourist regions of Slovenia. (4) The destination level with stories referring to destinations and their key components and offerings. And finally (5) the micro-story level, which contains stories about specific products or locations.

The aims of this pyramid were not only to collect and analyse stories behind Slovenia, but also to design a clear and distinctive communication scheme for all stakeholders involved in the tourism sector (Korez-Vide, 2017, p. 383). The *I Feel Slovenia. Green. Active. Healthy.* brand tells a sustainable story. The *Feel* aspect came out as the expression that the country has to be experienced both mentally and physically. The *Green* aspect considers the great amount of forests that covers the country, the number of protected areas and plants. It is connected to nature and excitement; the colour green sets a calm but interesting context for the story. The word *Active* enhances the numerous possibilities to experience the outdoors of Slovenia, it relates to the Alps, the rivers and all the activities that one can appreciate in the country. And the word *Healthy* is related to the thermal region of Slovenia with all of the benefits that one can get from a SPA holiday in Slovenia (Korez-Vide, 2017, p. 383).

It can also be argued that the *Green. Active. Healthy.* relates to the three pillars of sustainability. Indeed, the *Green* can be interpreted as the environmental issue as green refers to nature and environmental protection. *Active* can be interpreted as the social aspect of sustainability, it involves the activities that one does on holiday and hence the social interactions that this includes. And *Healthy* can be interpreted in an economical sense. It enhances the healthy economic status that the country wants to have.

Overall Slovenia's potential in terms of sustainable tourism management is to be considered as high. The country offers great attractions for tourists. The one thing that should be enhanced is that it is necessary to get the policy makers involved and the right infrastructure in order to develop a sustainable tourism industry in the country. Digital media and other creative industries should be encouraged for the increase of Slovenia's international awareness as a tourism destination. Sustainability is great, but it cannot be used as a marketing tool as such (M. Leisinger, PC, 25 May 2018). Hence the storytelling is clearly important for Slovenia to stand out as an attractive sustainable destination, a destination where one can relax, be active and enjoy the outdoors in all of its forms.

6 Preliminary results

6.1 Desktop research

6.1.1 Tourist motivation: new trends

It has been realized, that there is an attitude-behaviour gap in the way people treat sustainable tourism. People actually tend to know that their travel behaviour might affect the environment they are visiting, but seem to find excuses when acting in such a way that harms it. There is a cognitive dissonance between the attitude visitors usually have in their every day life and the way they behave when on vacation (Dolnicar & Juvan, 2014, pp. 91-92). This leads to having to define how one can travel in a sustainable manner from the beginning of his journey until the end, without having to find excuses. There is a need to change consumer behaviours in order to eliminate this cognitive dissonance.

A study about sustainable alpine competitiveness has discovered an emerging trend, namely the 4L tourism. The 4L's represent landscape, leisure, learning and limit. Indeed, the research states that there is a new demand towards 4L tourism. People ask for greater flexibility in the tourism offers, they do not want the same standardized offer like everybody else. They would rather have an authentic offer that makes them learn something and be part of the local environment, which differs from their own (Buffa, Franch, Martini, & Parisi, 2008, p. 6).

This research states, that there is indeed a new segment that takes greater consideration on the impact of tourism activities on the local environment. An important aspect of this tourism segment is that they consider the limitation aspects of an offer or a destination. For example, the fact that a destination puts limits on vehicle access may not be seen as negative but rather as a positive restriction, because it shows the ecological awareness of the destination. It shows that the destination takes action in the preservation of its environment, which is considered something positive and important from this new segment (Buffa et al., 2008, p. 11).

In order to respond to this type of demand, there is a need from both the public and the private sector to take action. The public sector will create the appropriate framework that responds to the 4Ls and the private sector will create the appropriate offer. For both sides, there are economic, strategic and competitive advantages to take this new segment into consideration and act in the appropriate way (Buffa et al., 2008, p. 12).

Another study questioning the path that still has to be covered towards a sustainable tourism consumption by A. François-Lecompte and I. Prim-Allaz (2011) asked 568 adults living in France about their sustainable practices when going on holidays and the motivations and restraints concerning sustainable tourism. The study has found that the environmental aspect is clearly in the mind of the respondents and that they know that their impact tends to be negative on the environment. The respondents are aware that behaviours need to change (François-Lecompte & Prim-Allaz, *Pour une consommation touristique plus durable: quel chemin reste-t-il à parcourir?*, 2011, p. 3). But the social aspect has been the least evoked by the respondents, which clearly states the necessity to better educate travellers on this particular issue (François-Lecompte & Prim-Allaz, *Pour une consommation touristique plus durable: quel chemin reste-t-il à parcourir?*, 2011, p. 4).

The principal restraints that the respondents had concerning sustainable tourism were the price (120 citations), the mentality of the traveller (117 citations), the fact that they have to give up some of the comfort (107 citations), transportation issues (100 citations), the easiness of the travel (85 citations) and the lack of time (66 citations) (François-Lecompte & Prim-Allaz, *Pour une consommation touristique plus durable: quel chemin reste-t-il à parcourir?*, 2011, p. 5). In opposition, the favourable aspects or motivations for sustainable tourism that the respondents cited were the change in behaviour of the traveller (236 citations), to ensure an easier sustainable tourism, to make it more accessible to all (202 citations), and to create pleasant sustainable tourism offers (122 citations) (François-Lecompte & Prim-Allaz, *Pour une consommation touristique plus durable: quel chemin reste-t-il à parcourir?*, 2011, p. 5).

What emerges from this study is that there is a clear need of education for the travellers about sustainable tourism development. The change in behaviours has to come from them at first (François-Lecompte & Prim-Allaz, *Pour une consommation touristique plus durable:*

quel chemin reste-t-il à parcourir?, 2011, p. 7). But how is it possible to enable such a change in behaviours? For François-Lecompte and Prim-Allaz, the impulse has to come from policy makers. By implementing new policies for tourism service providers, but also for travellers, the change can become more rapid and there is a better control of the attitudes and behaviours of all tourism actors. Even though a lot of tourism consumers tend to be aware of their negative impact, the actions taken towards a more positive impact when consuming tourism products are still lacking. The perspective of sustainable tourism development can be intensified when it comes from the service providers themselves. And if policies are created that do not give the choice to the providers to be managed in a sustainable way, the impact can clearly be changed; the tourist's negative impact will be reduced and awareness will be raised so that his positive impact will be raised as well.

6.1.2 A taste of travel

In order to respond at the necessity to travel in a more responsible way, some travel agencies have already started to develop in this direction and specialize in responsible tourism. The travel agency for which this package is created is a small business based in Vevey, Switzerland and has decided to specialize in responsible travel. The two owners of the business and only workers there are Emmanuel and George. They both have different backgrounds, George is a British who was born and raised in the Caribbean, he has a tourism background. Emmanuel comes from Switzerland and has a more scientific background with a specialization in molecular biology. But they both share a passion for the mountains and for travelling and have decided to share this passion by opening a travel agency. As they are both deeply convinced that sustainable travel is the necessary future, they have specialized in responsible tourism.

After several encounters with the owners in order to better understand how their business functions and what kind of offers they develop, a few important aspects have been identified. First, when asking about labels, and whether labels were a determinant factor for them when choosing a service provider, they replied that it is not. They usually “go with the guts”, it means that they go on spot and discover by themselves, whether such accommodation, or tour guide for example is trustworthy or not. They have noticed that so far, they have had good experiences in functioning in that manner.

An important critic that they have made to the label system, is that to obtain a label, a service provider has to pay a fee. They argue that some small businesses that really respond to responsible travel simply do not have the financial resources to obtain such labels. Hence it is very important to take that into consideration, that a company can be sustainable even without certain certifications. When promoting responsible travel, the social aspect is of great importance. For George and Emmanuel, it is by working with such small businesses that do not have the funds to obtain labels that the effect will be big. By supporting these service providers, the impact is direct and the money a guest spends there has an even bigger value for the host.

Second, when asking about how a “good” service provider can be recognized if not with a label, they have said that it is important to look at what is very unique about the place. Also by looking at who runs the business and what is their education, one can have a better idea of how the business is run and whether or not it can be interesting to collaborate with them. An example that was given is to check whether they give bottled water everyday in the hotel room, if they do, then they are probably less aware of the polluting impact that this can have. If they do not, this shows that there is awareness about the waste management issue for example. So it is important to check small details like these in order to evaluate whether the business owners are well educated and aware about sustainability issues or not, and especially whether they put them into good practice.

Third, they specified the importance to define a theme for the travel offer. When asking about how to communicate the offer and especially how to be “as sustainable as possible”, they replied that it is all about balance. Of course, for a travel offer to be attractive, it has to contain specific highlights, some of them would maybe not be as sustainable as one would want, but they are what makes an offer attractive. And then the offer should include other less important aspects, such as the accommodation for example that would respond much more to the sustainable issue.

Finally, Emmanuel said: “Travelling is a little bit like having a meal”. It means that the importance for them, when they promote their travel offer is the whole journey, not only the destination. It starts with an appetizer, which could maybe be an original means of transportation to get to the destination with an interesting stopover for example, then once

there, you get to the main dish: the destination with all of the highlights. And you come back with great memories, which form the desert.

This enhances the importance of the tourism value chain. The journey starts before actually departing or arriving at the destination, there is an excitement beforehand, the necessity to plan and organise, to get informed does not have to be neglected. Then there is the whole experience and after, once the holidaymaker is back home, he has the memories. But it is also important to get in touch with the clients once they are back, to show interest in how they felt, what were the highlights for them and also telling them that they will be welcome again. This not only gives the organiser a good insight on what people think about the offer, but it also creates retention from the customer. Emmanuel said that he usually prepares a little “roadbook” for their customers, so that they are well informed, not only about details such as timetables but also about the destination, the culture and customs of the local community. For this he also underlined the importance to have good pictures that need to be of high quality (HQ) and that it is even better if they are taken by the organiser of the trip.

For the design of the package in this paper, a balance between certified service providers and smaller service providers who might not have the funds to get certified will be necessary. Moreover, the creation of the roadbook is a great tool to educate the customers about the destination and how to behave in a sustainable way. Hence such a roadbook would have to be created in a latter stage of this research as well.

6.2 Quantitative research

An inquiry has been developed for the purpose of this study. The objective was to have a clearer knowledge of whether Slovenia would be a destination that the clients of *A Taste of Travel* would like to visit or not. More precisely, this survey aimed at discovering whether the clients had already visited Slovenia, whether they would like to visit the country and what they would like to do during their stay, with whom, where they would want to stay and how much they would be ready to spend for such an itinerary. The inquiry was made in the form of an on-line questionnaire made with the programme Google Forms. The link to the questionnaire has been electronically sent to *A Taste of Travel's* clients at the same time as their monthly newsletter on the 5th June 2018.

The method chosen is an exhaustive poll of sample, as it has been sent to all the clients of *A Taste of Travel*. The newsletter was sent to 1,352 clients, opened by 453 clients and the survey has had only 14 responses. It is clear that the results of this survey cannot be used as a general scientific result. And it was a risk at first, that not many clients would answer the questionnaire. This result can be interpreted in different manners. First, the number of people that opened the newsletter does not represent the number of people who actually read the newsletter. In fact, this represents the number of people that simply clicked on the email, but some might have just turned it from unread to read. Second, it is possible that the newsletter may not be very appealing and hence, the clients do not read it carefully and will not see the link to the questionnaire. Third, the explanation given by the authors of the newsletter about the questionnaire might not have been interesting enough for the customers to take the time to answer the survey. And there could be many other reasons why a person did not want to answer the questions, lack of time, of interest, etc. Nevertheless, this result can still be analysed for the purpose of this paper and the information gathered gives a small insight to the consumer's motivation to travel to Slovenia, at least for 14 people.

These are the results for the 14 responders. Concerning the first section of the questionnaire about personal information, 57.1% of responders are women and out of these 57.1% of women, 50% are single, the other 50% are married or in couple. The 42.9% of men have a different proportion. Out of all the men, 33.3% are single and the rest are married. None of the respondents are younger than 30 years old and only 14.3% are between 31 and 40 years old. The most represented age category is between 61 and 70 with 35.7% of respondents, followed by the category aged between 41 and 50. The majority of respondents do not have kids (57.1%) of which 37.5% are men and 62.5% are women. Concerning the travel habits, 57.14% of all responders generally travel in couple, and 21.4% usually travel alone. The majority of respondents would prefer to travel by train to Slovenia (64.3%) and are usually staying in Guesthouses or Bed & Breakfast's (57.1%).

And concerning the part about Slovenia, when asking whether they had already been to Slovenia, only two people answered yes (14.3%) and they both stayed for only one night. They both had the impression that the country has beautiful landscapes, that the people are warm and that the country is not expensive. One of them said that the country was

interesting whereas the other said that there was not much to it, but that the capital city was beautiful and that the alpine landscape was “nice”. The person that said that it was interesting only visited the capital city Ljubljana, whereas the other also visited the coast. For the people who have not yet visited Slovenia, 91.7% would like to visit the country.

The one person (8.3%) that does not want to visit the country gives the reasons that the country does not attract them and that they never heard of it, hence that it is probably not worth visiting. For the people who are interested in visiting Slovenia, the main thing that people would want to do is to discover the alpine region of Slovenia, go hiking and cycling and enjoy the beautiful landscapes and lakes. The second point of interest is the Mediterranean coast. Concerning the part about responsible travel, the majority (42.9%) would have a budget between 1,000 CHF and 1,500 CHF per person for such an itinerary out of which 66.7% are men and only 33.3% are women. The other respondents have a mixture of responses with 28.6% (four persons) having a budget between 1,500 CHF and 1,999 CHF, 7.1% (one woman) having a budget between 2,000 CHF and 2,499 CHF, 7.1% (one woman) having a budget between 3,000 CHF and 3,499 CHF, and 14.3% (two women) having a lower budget between 500 CHF and 999 CHF.

Four respondents (28.6%) have already used MyClimate to compensate their CO² emissions. Three of them are men and one is a woman. 50% of the respondents would pay 20% more for a sustainable tourism offer rather than a normal one, of which 57.1% are men and 42.9% are women. 35.7% would pay 10% more, of which 40% are men and 60% are women. And 14.3% would pay 30% more of which all are women. 50% of all respondents do not know any label, one person (7.1%) knows only one label (EU Ecolabel), 35.7% (five persons) know two labels and one person (7.1%) knows three labels. The label that is the most known is the EU Ecolabel (42.9%). And when asking which offer they would chose when having the choice between two similar offers, one having a sustainability label and the other not, 100% of the respondents would chose the sustainable one.

Knowing that these results represent only 3% of the people who have opened the newsletter, they cannot be used as useful information for the creation of the package. However, the results give precious individual inputs. Especially the fact, that all participants would chose a labelled offer between two similar offers, shows that sustainability is an

important matter for potential costumers. Further information on the demand for tourism in Slovenia and trends in the Swiss market in terms of travel habits are presented in chapters 5.2, 6.1.1 and 7.2.

7 Creation of a sustainable tourism package in Slovenia

7.1 The idea

The creation of a product or service always starts with an idea. In the case of this work, the idea has emerged from the desire to consider whether tourism and sustainable development could actually go together. Low-cost air travel has boomed in the past fifteen years, in Europe Easyjet passengers have doubled from 2009 to 2017 from 45.2 million passengers in 2009 to 80.2 million passengers in 2017 (Statista, 2018). The best way to discover whether sustainability and tourism can work together is by creating a travel package and by trying to analyse what the final impact of this package is. That means to find indicators that can measure the environmental, social and economical impact of the travel package. As a Swiss travel agency mandates this travel package, the idea was to remain in Europe for the final destination. Moreover, the destination needed to be less known as a tourism destination by the Swiss people and accessible by train.

In March 2016, the author visited the ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel trade show. The booth displayed by Slovenia, put forward the green aspect of the country and this remained in the mind of the author. That is how the idea of choosing Slovenia as final destination of the package has emerged. Also, Slovenia can be reached by train from Switzerland and it is not very well known by the Swiss market.

7.2 Tendencies in the Swiss market

The Federal Office of Statistics (OFS) has made a report on the travel habits of the Swiss residents in 2016 (OFS, 2017). This report states that in 2016, every Swiss resident has travelled three times on average with an overnight stay abroad. 21% of these trips have been to other countries in Europe than Italy, Germany and France. The people who travelled the most abroad in 2016 are people aged 25-44 followed by the segment of people aged 45-64 (OFS, 2017, p. 1). Moreover, 63% of the travels done abroad have occurred during the

summer season namely from May to October and the majority of the overnight stays have been motivated by holidaying, relaxation and leisure (OFS, 2017, p. 2). Concerning the means of transportation for people travelling abroad, the majority (45%) of the people used the airplane, followed by an individual motorized vehicle (42%). Terrestrial public transportation has only been used by 10% of the people travelling abroad. In terms of personal spending, people travelling abroad have spent approximately 160 CHF per person per day for private overnight stays (OFS, 2017, p. 3). The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SORS) states that the number of tourist arrivals in Slovenia from Switzerland in 2016 is 47,031 and the number of overnight stays from Switzerland in Slovenia is 102,076 (in STB, 2018).

Tourism demand is an always-evolving factor. Nowadays, things are changing rapidly with technological evolutions, advanced mobility and digital communication. According to the sanu, centre of competencies for sustainable development in Switzerland, “tourism is the mirror of its time” (Forster et al., 2011, p. 20). For them, the tendencies for nature and culture tourism are hard to grasp from a demand perspective because of the always-evolving times. They state that the guest’s needs and wants are harder to grasp as they vary from one person to another, even though they have a common base.

According to the research, the segment of people aged 65 and above is rising and people aged 50 and above are keener to nature-based tourism than families. The fact that people are seeking more unique and authentic experiences is also stated. Although there is a bigger awareness about a sustainable travel necessity, not many people are ready to pay more for such travel opportunities yet. According to the sanu (2011, p.23), one tourist out of five wants to travel more sustainably. The importance of the Internet and especially comments from other travellers on blogs and other community platforms is also mentioned. People tend to use the Internet for searching information and making reservations. One of the most important things to retain from this tendency report is that people want a qualitative journey and this throughout the tourism value chain.

7.2.1 Market segmentation

This product is specifically designed for the clients of *A Taste of Travel*. After several encounters with the owners of the business, it has been possible to clearly define the different segments that their database consists of. Generally they have single or divorced women with or without kids, aged around 50. They also have couples aged around 50. They say that in 90% of the cases, the woman is the one who decides. So the package should appeal to a more female segment. But they also have younger couples that are aged around 30, in these cases they both decide together. Generally people are looking for active holidaying with soft activities such as cycling and hiking. They want to discover new places and enjoy the natural environment. As this travel agency is specialized in responsible travel, their clients are inevitably concerned with the sustainability issue and are also keener to support small businesses even if they have to invest a little more for their holiday experience.

Table 1: Customer segmentation of *A Taste of Travel*

Segment name	Segment description
Young couples	Aged around 30 and 40, they are seeking active and adventurous holidays. They both take part in the decision making process. They are very environmentally conscious and are looking for alternative holidays. They want to be responsible travellers and that is why they come to <i>A Taste of Travel</i> . They want to escape their everyday life and get closer to natural wonders.
Single or divorced women	Aged around 50, this segment is the largest of <i>A Taste of Travel</i> . These are women that are still very active and who want to experience something different and new. They are looking at more “soft” activities such as trekking, hiking and cycling. Often they travel in groups, so that they can meet new people and enjoy their travel experience with others. They are nature-lovers and want to be amazed by the beauty of the landscapes.

<p>Couples with kids</p>	<p>This is a smaller segment of <i>A Taste of Travel</i>. This segment consists of families with younger kids (infant to teenager). These families are looking for a holiday to remember. Usually the wife is the decision-maker. She wants the family to experience something together and to create long lasting memories. They are also environmentally conscious and would like to travel in a more responsible way. The holidays would also be active and educative.</p>
<p>Couples above 50</p>	<p>Aged above 50, these couples are keen on experiencing a new adventure. It is time for them to enjoy themselves in a new environment. They want to be active and discover new natural landscapes and would also be looking at softer activities.</p>

Source: Data collected from *A Taste of Travel*

7.2.2 Target market

A comment that the owners made when talking about the market segmentation and the design of a new product, is that the product should not be specifically designed for one segment or another. The population base in which they operate is not very big and they said that they do not want to limit themselves to a certain type of customer. Nevertheless, table 1 shows the observation that they have made concerning the different customer segments that come to *A Taste of Travel*. One can conclude that the product that will be designed has to answer to active and healthy holidaymakers, seeking new encounters with people and landscapes. The product will have to be nature oriented and show the wonders of Slovenia.

7.3 The product

7.3.1 Situational analysis

As stated earlier, the travel product that this paper seeks to design is a sustainable travel package to Slovenia for the customers of *A Taste of Travel*. According to the sanu's manual for the design of a tourism product that integrates nature and culture (2011, pp.46-59) the design of a product consists of eight steps. The first step is to analyse and orient the

potential offer (Forster, Göpfert, Gruber, & Roffler, 2011, p. 46). For this purpose a SWOT analysis appears to be the right tool to explore the potential of the destination.

Table 2: SWOT analysis of Slovenia's tourism offer

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The diversity and amount of natural landscapes: the Triglav National Park with the highest peak of Slovenia Mount Triglav, the amount of land covered by forests, the rivers and gorges, the Adriatic coast, Lake Bled, the Julian Alps, the Postojna caves, the vineyards and much more. - The two cultural UNESCO World heritages (Idrija Mercury heritage and the prehistoric Pile Dwellings around the Alps) and the two natural UNESCO World heritages (the ancient and primeval beech forests of the Carpathians and other Regions of Europe and the Škocjan Caves) (UNESCO, 2018). - The small size of the country offers the possibility to visit a lot in the country in a small amount of time. - The natural thermes, which appeal to a healthy lifestyle - EURO as currency. It enables visitors to quickly understand their purchasing power as the EURO is used in so many countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slovenia is not very well known as a tourism destination in Switzerland. Also it may be mixed up with Slovakia. Indeed the tourism demand for Slovenia is very low, which is a determining factor for destination competitiveness (Gomezelj Omerzel, 2006, pp. 182-183). - Slovenia positions itself more as an active destination, which can be a limitation in terms of attracting other type of tourists.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Five destinations in the EDEN (European Destinations of Excellence) network: Bohinj, Lasko, River Kolpa, Idrija, and Radol'ca. The EDEN network is a project promoting sustainable tourism development models in the European Union (EDEN, 2018). - The effort of the STB to promote the <i>Slovenia Green</i> brand and the storytelling that is behind it. This appeals to the new tourism trends that look at a more active and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The neighbouring countries that have already attracted a lot of tourists, such as Croatia for the Mediterranean offers and Austria for the Alpine offers. They are well-known destinations and have thus a competitive advantage compared to Slovenia as they have similar offerings. - The language barrier. Even though a lot of Slovenes speak English, not all of them do and people nowadays expect service providers to speak

<p>healthy holiday experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of agritourism and the numerous tourist farms that offer accommodation and activities in Slovenia. There are around 800 farms in Slovenia which promote their culture, food and land (STB, Association of tourist farms of Slovenia, 2016, p. 2). - The opportunity to have a wine tourism experience in Slovenia with the numerous vineyards and wine tours. - The safety and political stability of Slovenia is a great advantage for the destination especially in times of frequent terror attacks in the main European cities. 	<p>English, otherwise, the touristic experience may be affected.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mainly outdoor activities (hiking, cycling, coastline), the offer for indoor activities (museums for example) is comparatively poor, which can be a determining factor for people who are scared of being outside when the weather is bad.
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Source: Author's data and multiple sources specified in the table

According to sanu's manual (2011, p.47), the first things to take into consideration in the process of the conception of a product are the tourism potential of the destination, the resources that the creator of the package has at disposal and the comparison with other similar products. Table 2 gives a good insight of the potential of Slovenia as a tourism destination. The positive aspects to retain from this SWOT analysis are that Slovenia has a great potential in terms of natural attractions and activities, that it is a safe place to visit and that sustainability is deeply rooted in the development strategy of the country. The less positive aspects to retain are that the demand for Slovenian tourism is not very high from an international perspective and that there is a great competition with the neighbouring countries, which have similar touristic assets.

Roundabout travel offers different packages around Slovenia. This tour operator has been certified as a sustainable tour operator as already mentioned in chapter 3.5.4. They offer day-trip excursions, three- and five-day tours and a ten-day ultimate experience (Roundabout, 2015). The ten-day ultimate experience tour can be both considered as a competitor and a great inspiration. This tour covers all highlights of Slovenia, Ljubljana, the Alps, the Soča Valley and river, the vineyards, the coast and the thermal part of Slovenia as well. The package that is being created here is also to be considered as an "ultimate

experience”, indeed it tries to both respond to the demand of the customers in terms of time of travel and make them discover as much as possible without being hustled around.

A travel agency that specializes in holidays in the Balkan is present in Zurich. This travel agency is called *Meersicht GmbH – Travel & Lifestyle*. The agency has been contacted to get information about Slovenia. (Refer to Appendix VII for email exchange.) This agency has been of precious help to understand the Slovenian offer. It is not considered as a direct competitor as the offer differs a lot from the package that is created for this paper. Indeed, they offer a tour around Slovenia with a rental car, whereas the offer that is created here focuses on public transportation (Meersicht GmbH - Travel & Lifestyle, 2018). Moreover, the fact that this agency is based in Zurich also enhances the fact that it cannot be considered a competitor. The customers from *A Taste of Travel* come from Vevey and the nearby region.

In Vevey, there are seven other travel agencies, but not all of them have offers to Slovenia. Indeed, two of them specialize in Switzerland, the others are either part of the Kuoni or Hotelplan group. When asking about offers for Slovenia, they all had the same brochure with only three pages about Slovenia and mainly indicating hotels in the hotspots near the coast. These pages were part of a brochure about Croatia and are mainly focused on beach holidays. This result shows that Slovenia remains an unknown destination from the Swiss tour operators, but also that people in Switzerland do not specifically ask for holidays in Slovenia. This enhances both an opportunity and a threat for this package. Indeed, the opportunity is great as none of the other agencies have a package to Slovenia, but the threat is that people do not ask for holidays in Slovenia. This could be interpreted in the sense that no one would buy the package that is being created. Fortunately, the few answers of the survey show an interest in the country of Slovenia, which tells us that people would like to go to Slovenia, but do not think of it as a tourism destination. Even though this can only be stated for a very small amount of people. It is part of the job of the agency to market this package in the right way, so that it will appeal to their clients and that they will buy it.

7.3.2 Slovenia’s creative offer

The second step stated by sanu’s manual (2011, p. 48) is the creativity aspect of the package. This step consists of discovering what are the authentic and unique offers of the destination, what steps out as being innovative and original, choosing the most important

ones. In appendix X there is a non-exhaustive list of innovative or authentic accommodations and activities. It has been discovered that agritourism is well implemented in Slovenia and that there are a lot of tourist farms. The only problem is that the majority of them is not accessible by public transport, or that it takes a lot of time to reach them by public transport. This is the reason why they have not been integrated in the package. Moreover, again because of the connections and time at disposal for the package (eight days), it has been decided to focus only on the western part of Slovenia. Hence some of the activities could not be integrated in the package either. In order to discover all of the activities, one should spend a month in Slovenia and deeply explore all of its wonders. But this is not the objective here. A focus has been put on the sustainability aspect of the accommodation and activities offered as well. Here are the main innovative activities and accommodation that have stood out from this search:

- Herbal Rooms and Slocally in Plave
- The Postojna Caves – Most famous caves
- The Skocjan Caves – Unesco World Heritage
- The Salt Pans in Piran
- BeeHappy (apiculture experience) in the Soča Valley
- CurioCity in Ljubljana.

7.3.3 Network

The third step proposed by the sanu's manual (2011, p.49) is to set up a network within the destination and the theme of the product. The idea is to look at the different contacts that one has and to create a link between them so that it creates a synergy and that the final product can benefit all of the people in the network. In the case of this paper, the author was confronted with a challenge, as she did not know anyone in Slovenia. But the idea was also to create a sustainable travel package and to discuss the link between sustainability and tourism. For this purpose, contact was made with several people. First, an outgoing teacher from the HES-SO Valais/Wallis and owner of a travel agency in Bern, Switzerland, Mr Martin Reber who could give great advise on how to create the package but also give contacts to people specialized in Slovenian tourism. This led to the contact of Meersicht GmbH – Travel & Lifestyle. An intense exchange of emails was then undertaken with Mr Mojca Dvorak, a Slovenian who works at Meersicht GmbH – Travel & Lifestyle.

Another contact was found through LinkedIn. First, contact was established with Mr Jeremy Smith, who is a specialist in sustainable tourism and works and writes articles for Travindy. Travindy is a website which has tourism industry news and articles and which focuses on sustainable tourism. As he is not a specialist for Slovenia, he could give contact details of two persons who are specialists. One of them answered, Tina Hudnik, she lives in Slovenia and works for G-Guides. G-Guides offers training for tourism guides for sustainable guiding. They do consulting for business that would like to be more sustainable. They are also tour guides themselves. Tina Hudnik has been a great help for the design of this product as she could give useful advice on locations to visit and activities in Slovenia. Several email exchanges have been undertaken with her in order to design the best possible package.

Another person that has been contacted is Mrs Michele Hungerbuehler, she is the responsible of the sustainable department at Hotelplan. She kindly answered a few questions about her work and what Hotelplan does in terms of sustainable development when selling their travel products. Another interview has been undertaken with Mr Matthias Leisinger whose contact details have been given by the responsible teacher for this bachelor thesis, Mrs Mila Trombitas. This network has helped to get better information about the sustainable travel industry and about Slovenia as a tourism destination.

Figure 11: Picture of Tina Hudnik and Lisianne Maffli on their encounter in Ljubljana on 18 June 2018



Source: Author's footage

7.3.4 Realization of the product

This is the part where the first draft of the product is sketched. As it is important to use storytelling and the right wording, it would have been interesting to do an A/B testing across a set of people to choose between two package titles. Unfortunately lack of time and answers coming from the clients of *A Taste of Travel* has not permitted to test out the name of the product. The advantage of this product is the diversity that one can see within one week.

From the capital city Ljubljana, to the Julian Alps and the Triglav National Park with the Soča valley and river into the Skojcan caves and out to the Adriatic Sea. The title of this package would be: *A tour through the natural wonders of Europe's hidden gem: Slovenia*. The Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of the product is really the diverse nature that one can experience throughout the trip. The important aspect of this step is also to define a checklist and key indicators that would help evaluate the sustainability of the product. In table 3 one can see the first draft of the product.

Table 3: First draft of final product

Day	Location and activity	Accommodation
0	Train from Vevey to Zurich and night Train from Zürich to Ljubljana	-
1	Ljubljana – Tour with CurioCity	Park Hotel (or Hostel Celica)
2	Day trip to Skojcan Caves	Park Hotel (or Hostel Celica)
3	Train to Bled – Day in Bled – hike around the lake – swimming – castle – end of the day train to Bohinj	Sleep in Bohinj Eco Park
4	Day in Bohinj – hike to Mostnica Gorges – end of the day train to Plave	Sleep at Herbal Rooms in Plave
5	Tour with Slocally in the Soča Valley – water sports/hike/swimming	Sleep at Herbal Rooms
6	Tour with Slocally – Bees and Wine	Sleep at Herbal Rooms
7	Train to Koper and bus to Piran – Day in Piran – Salt Pines and leisure in the old town	Sleep at Pacha Mamma

8	Departure from Piran to Venice – Lunch in Venice – Train from Venice back to Vevey (Switzerland)	- Possibility to stay one night in Venice to explore the city and come back the next day.
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Source: Author's data

The sanu's manual (2011, pp.79-81) gives a checklist to measure how the product that is being developed impacts the environment, the society and the economy. This tool has been used to analyse the offer that is being created in this paper. Overall, the analysis gives a positive result. Indeed only three categories need to be improved, all other categories are either good or excellent. Moreover, the categories that need improvement are not directly related to the product. Indeed, the package cannot change these aspects (public transportation system, events and animations on spot, management strategy of the travel agency). This checklist helps to have a better understanding of measures that need to be taken for the product to be more sustainable.

For this particular product, it has been realized that the public transportation system is good, but it needs improvement so that the whole journey can be undertaken with public transportation and this very easily. Indeed, the Slovenian public transportation network is good when travelling from a city to another. But if someone wants to reach the more remote places, which have great natural attractions, the connections are bad, and sometimes it is not even possible to get there by public transportation. This is also one of the reasons why this package mainly features cities that are easily accessible by train or bus. (Refer to Appendix I for the detailed analysis of the sustainability impact.)

7.4 The price

In order to define the price of the package, it is necessary to know what is included in the package and what is the cost of every point. After having defined this, the margin that *A Taste of Travel* usually takes is added to the price. In order to have a correct price, there are three things that need to be taken into consideration according to the sanu (2011, p.52): first the service providers, second the consumers and third the market. In the case of this paper, most of the service providers are already known, the consumers are the clients of *A Taste of Travel* and the market for such a package to Slovenia from Switzerland is quiet small.

A comparison of the different offers that *A Taste of Travel* has for destinations in Europe has been made to consider what should be included in this package and what should not. Moreover, as stated in chapter 3.3.1, a travel package should include at least two of the following offerings: transportation, accommodation and another activity or tourism related product. Hence, the following things will be included in this package:

Figure 12: Things that are included or not included in the package

Included	Not included
<p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train from Switzerland to Ljubljana • Train inside Slovenia • Train from Venice to Switzerland • Ferry from Piran to Venice 	<p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus trips inside Slovenia (Lesce-Bled to Bled, Bled to Bohinj Bistrica, Bohinj Bistrica to Bohinj Lake and return, Koper to Piran)
<p>Accommodation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two nights in Ljubljana • One night in Bohinj Bistrica • Three nights in Plave • One night in Piran 	<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrance fee to Mostnica Gorges (if going) 
<p>Activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tour with CurioCity in Ljubljana on day 1 • Guided tour of the Skojean Caves on day 2 • Tours with Slocally on days 5 and 6 • Bike tour in the Salt Pans in Piran region on day 7 	<p>Meals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All meals except breakfast from day 4 to 7, lunch on day 1, dinner on days 2 and 3
<p>Meals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast on days 4 to 7 • Dinner at Druga Violina in Ljubljana • Dinner at Strud'l in Bohinj Bistrica 	<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel insurance • Tips • Personal shopping 
<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qwetch personalized vacuum insulated bottle • Roadbook with practical information and information about the country, its history and culture • MyClimate compensation 	

Source: Author's data

In order to know the basic cost for this package, calculations for single or double occupancy have been made. Two different options will be considered, one with a higher range of accommodation and cabin type for the night train and the other with a lower range of accommodation and cabin type for the night train. See Appendix II for the detailed calculation.

The higher end for accommodation is only possible in Ljubljana and Bohinj. In Ljubljana, the park hotel that has the *Travelife* label, and a lower range is possible in a hostel. The hostel Celica used to be a prison that has been transformed into a hostel. It claims to be the first green hostel in the world, moreover this hostel has a *Travelife* Gold award that certifies

their sustainability efforts. In Bohinj, the higher range has a wellness package included and a superior room, whereas the lower range has a standard room and does not have the wellness package included. In Plave, as the accommodation is in the home of a small family, there is no other option. And in Piran, the guesthouse Pacha Mama has been advised by Tina Hudnik. There are no accommodations with labels in the centre of Piran. It appears to be necessary to stay in the centre of Piran on the last night because of the early ferry the next morning.

In addition to the accommodation, transport and tours, the Qwetch bottle and the roadbook that will be printed for each customer personally have to be added to the effective cost as well as the compensation of MyClimate for the ferry and the car ride during the Slocally tour. All this being calculated, the final effective cost of the package are:

1. For a single occupancy (lower range): **1,231.20 CHF**
2. For a double occupancy (lower range) : **2.136.40 CHF**
3. For a single occupancy (higher range) : **1,609.20 CHF**
4. For a double occupancy (higher range) : **2,549.40 CHF.**

These costs represent the effective cost of the package, but there needs to be a cost accounted for the amount of work that has been put together by the organizer as well. This cost will be represented in the margin. Usually, *A Taste of Travel* has a margin of 20% and they also add 10% for the amortization of prospects. As a result of all the above calculations, the final price of the package would be:

1. For a single occupancy (lower range): $1,231.20 \text{ CHF} + 30\% = 1,600.56 \text{ CHF}$
2. For a double occupancy (lower range) : $2.136.40 \text{ CHF} + 30\% = 2,777.32 \text{ CHF}$
3. For a single occupancy (higher range) : $1,609.20 \text{ CHF} + 30\% = 2,091.96 \text{ CHF}$
4. For a double occupancy (higher range) : $2,549.40 \text{ CHF} + 30\% = 3,314.22 \text{ CHF.}$

The prices per person rounded for the customer would be the following:

1. **1,599 CHF per person**
2. **1,389 CHF per person**
3. **2,099 CHF per person**
4. **1,659 CHF per person.**

7.5 The final product

This section presents all activities and accommodation of the package. This explanation aims at giving information on why the service provider can be considered as being sustainable and thus included in this package. Refer to Appendix XI to see the final and complete itinerary.

Table 4: Explanation of the sustainable aspect of the accommodations for the final product

Accommodation	
Accommodation	Explanation
Ljubljana Hotel Park	<p>The Hotel Park is a three-star hotel in the city-centre of Ljubljana. This hotel has the Travelife certification, which attests its commitment to sustainability. The certification documents that the working conditions in the hotel are fair. Moreover, the sustainability report 2017 of the hotel is available on the website. In the report, information on how the hotel reduced its energy, water and waste consumption is given. The hotel even has beehives and a garden on its rooftop, which shows its dedication to environmental issues. They also offer free yoga classes for the local community and are very active in this sense. The hotel also proposes “Go’n’Act Green” packages for their guests. They also developed an app that gives information to their guests on how much CO² they emitted for example (Hotel Park Ljubljana, 2017, pp. 3-4). The objectives of the hotel for 2018 are: “[to] ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all; [to] achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, [to] make [their] local area inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; [to] promote sustainable consumption and production; [and to] take action to combat climate change and its impact” (Hotel Park Ljubljana, 2017, p. 5).</p>
Ljubljana Hostel Celica	<p>The hostel Celica is located in the city-centre close to the Railway station. The lively hostel Celica is unique because it used to be a prison and has now been transformed into a lively hostel. It is a pioneer in sustainability implementation as it was awarded the Travelife gold award. They promote art and culture by organizing events in the hostel (concerts and art exhibitions) with local artists. The hostel has printed their “Think. Act. Share” campaign throughout the hostel so that the guests can see and get educated on how they should behave. They also put a focus on the employment, hire local people and give them opportunities to get training (Hostel Celica, 2018).</p>
Bohinj Bohinj-ECO-	<p>The Bohinj-ECO-hotel located in the region of Bohinj is Green Globe certified. It is the only hotel in Slovenia that is Green Globe certified. All actions taken by the hotel for energy and water usage are remarkable.</p>

hotel	To give a few examples, they have drilled a water well next to the hotel, the water park is used as a gigantic heat collector, window sensors shut the air-condition down when the window remains open. This hotel is a great example for sustainable development and the green globe certification proves it (Bohinj Eco Hotel, 2018).
Plave Herbal Rooms	Herbal Rooms is a very small accommodation proposition. Indeed, Vesna proposes two rooms in her family home for guests. Vesna and her family will welcome the guest in their home and show them how real locals live in this region. She also offers tours with her company called <i>Slocally</i> . With these tours, the guests will experience Slovenia with the knowledge of a local. As a herbalist, she is environmentally conscious. By staying at herbal rooms, the guests learn about herbs and what they can bring to them. For breakfast home-cooked jam and bread are served (Slocally, 2018a). Although it is not certified, a stay at Herbal Rooms guarantees an authentic experience in the company of a small family. The possibility to exchange with them about the region is given.
Piran Pacha mama	Pacha Mama is a guesthouse located in the centre of Piran. Tina Hudnik, the sustainable guiding expert, has advised this hostel. It does not have any sustainable label, but they show great involvement in the local community. Indeed, they have a lot of different partnerships with local service providers to propose activities (Pacha Mama, 2017a). At Pacha Mama they are very nature-oriented. For example, they organize a big celebration on Earth day. In their introduction, they state that they want to share their involvement in the respect of the earth and want to spread awareness about the importance to be respectful (Pacha Mama, 2017b). Moreover as already mentioned, it was necessary to have an accommodation in the centre of Piran because of the early ferry the next morning.

Source: Multiple sources, specified in the table

Table 5: Explanation of the sustainable aspect of the activities for the final product

Activities	
Activity	Explanation
Ljubljana CurioCity	CurioCity is socially involved. The tour chosen for Ljubljana is called <i>From Ljubljana with Love</i> and takes the participant to a different kind of tour, that consists in visiting social businesses around the motto "Think social. Buy local." (CurioCity, 2015). The tour takes the guest to a socially engaged restaurant, a fair trade café and encourages him to spend his money in local businesses. This tour underlines the social and economical dimension. By consuming locally, a great step is also made on the environmental aspect.

<p>Skojcan Caves</p> <p>Guided tour</p>	<p>This tour explores the unique Skojcan Caves, one of Slovenia’s highlights. Even though the most famous caves are the Postojna caves, it appeared that they are such a big touristic attraction that they cannot be considered as a very sustainable activity to do. The UNESCO world heritage Skojcan Caves are also impressive and famous. As a world heritage site, the caves are considered more sustainable than the Postojna caves. A guided tour is be organized once at the caves. Through the tour the guests learn more about the history and formation of the caves. An educational path exists above the caves (Park Skojcanske Jame, 2018).</p>
<p>Bled and Bohinj</p>	<p>No tours or activities are planned in Bled and Bohinj. Here the costumers will be free to do what they want in order to ensure some freedom and self-exploration in the package as well. The roadbook will give advise on what can be done in the region. For example a hike around the lake of bled, with great views on the castle in the middle of the lake. Or a visit to the Mostnica Gorge in Bohinj, with a dedicated path indicated to hike towards it. All activities proposed here will be soft-outdoor activities. This will ensure a little tranquillity to the traveller and enable them to experience the nature and sights of the region by themselves.</p>
<p>Soča Valley</p> <p>Slocally</p>	<p>As already mentioned for Herbal Rooms, Vesna will offer great excursions to her guests with her guiding organisation <i>Slocally</i>. Two tours will be organized with her, the first one is called “Natural Wonders Soca Valley Experience” and will take the guest to a wonderful discovery of the Soca Valley. They will visit the Triglav national park and walk across amazing gorges and natural pools, cliffs and waterfalls (Slocally, 2018b). This is a unique way to visit the valley with the knowledge shared by Vesna. It is in full respect with nature and can really be considered as a highlight of this package because of the beauty of the landscape.</p>
<p>Piran</p> <p>Salt Pans</p>	<p>This activity is not included in the package, but will be a suggestion given by the roadbook. The clients will be encouraged to rent bicycles and ride into the Sečovlje salt pans near Piran. This park is beautiful to visit on a bike because cars are not allowed inside. For visitors coming by bike, the museum of salt-making is free of charge (Portoroz, 2013). It is a great natural and cultural heritage of the coastal region of Slovenia. By encouraging customers to go by bicycle, the environment will not be impacted either.</p>

Source: Multiple sources, specified in the table

Table 6: Explanation of the sustainable aspect of the meals for the final product

Meals	
Restaurant	Explanation
Ljubljana Druga Violina	The Druga Violina restaurant has been advised by Tina Hudnik. Indeed, it is a very socially involved restaurant as it employs people with disabilities in order to reintegrate them to society. It is under the umbrella of the Draga Centre, which “is an institution for education, training, work, health care and rehabilitation of children, adolescents and adults with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disabilities and additionally impairments” (CUDV DRAGA, 2018). Moreover, the food is locally sourced.
Bohinj Strud’l	The guests will be advised that in Bohinj there is a certification that certifies food that comes from the region. The certification is called “Bohinjsko/from Bohinj” (Bohinj, 2017a). The Strud’l, close to the Bohinj ECO hotel offers typical Slovenian food and on the menu there are certified From Bohinj products.
Plave	Vesna has advised two restaurants in the region, both serve delicious Slovenian food. As this is a small town, the economic impact made there will be significant. By spending their money in the small restaurants there, the guests will participate in the local economy.

Source: Multiple sources, specified in the table

7.6 Organisation – Value delivery chain

The importance of the value delivery chain in tourism has already been mentioned, in this section it is presented more in detail. The value delivery chain in tourism consists of knowing each step in which the customer will be involved throughout the service delivery. It does not only refer to the period within the customer is at the destination, but also to the time before and after the trip. The sanu manual (2011, pp.54-55) gives a clear value delivery chain as shown in figure 14.

Figure 13: Value delivery chain



Source: Adapted from the sanu’s manual (2011, p.54)

In this value delivery chain, it is important to consider the clients throughout the process. Who is addressed to, and how is it possible to communicate with them? What do they like or dislike and what will appeal to them? Looking at each step individually helps with the organization of the product and prevents from forgetting any important information or detail to communicate to the customer. Most importantly, the sanu steps (2011, p.55) help to evaluate the sustainable aspect of the package. The following steps have been considered with a focus on the consumer and the sustainability aspect (Forster et al., p. 55):

- ⇒ **Get information and booking:** The package can be booked directly through *A Taste of Travel*, either online or directly at the agency.
- ⇒ **Travel and arrive:** The customer is given a welcome kit prior to departure, this will give a good impression as there are little gifts inside, but also information about the whole journey, which can be explored during the long train journey.
- ⇒ **Get installed and orient oneself:** In the case of this package, this will happen quiet often as the journey goes through different places and different hotels. It is essential that the customer feels at ease at each different location, this can be done by giving a quick round of the premises by the local host.
- ⇒ **Drink and eat:** Recommendations on where to eat are given in the roadbook, at this stage it is essential that the food is local and seasonal for the package to remain sustainable. Also, it is important that these places have fair working conditions.
- ⇒ **Live and sleep:** Here, it is important to have a nice room decorated with local arts and crafts, a little present on entry or some flowers will make the difference. For this package, the variety between hostel, hotel and small guest houses will please every taste as they all have a very personal touch.
- ⇒ **Activities and sport:** For the package to be sustainable, the activities will have to be in respect with nature and the rest of the environment. This is the case for this package, the hikes and cycling opportunities given in the roadbook are following dedicated paths and do not pollute. The guided tours are all taking their impact into consideration, that is why they have been chosen. For Ljubljana there will be a more social touch, the tour to the Skojcan Caves is enhancing the importance of the cultural and natural heritage as it is UNESCO world heritage, and the local guide from Slocally is a local person and environment-oriented.

- ⇒ **Nature and culture:** Here the importance to make the customer discover the local landscapes and cultural heritages is enhanced. With the different activities offered, the client will have a great insight of Slovenia's natural and cultural heritage.
- ⇒ **Entertainment and education:** The roadbook gives information on whether there are special events occurring during the travel dates.
- ⇒ **Shopping:** The customers are directed to the local arts and crafts shops, there is a list in the roadbook that signals shopping occasions. During the activities, they will get the opportunity to buy some souvenirs from local producers.
- ⇒ **Luggage and departure:** The organization of the departure is as important as the arrival. It should all be arranged and the organizer should remain at disposal in case of emergency.
- ⇒ **Memories and feedback:** After the return of the customers, an email or a phone call will be done to ask them how everything went. This enhances the proximity with the customer, but will also give great information on how to deal with the upcoming customers. Information about other offers can also be given and a subscription to the newsletter can be proposed for example.

A following step for the product development would be to consider the communication and the marketing for the product. As this package is created for the travel agency *A Taste of Travel*, there is no need to consider the communication and marketing as this is already developed by the agency. One thing that can be considered though is to create a story around the package and this could be enhanced by the communication and marketing efforts of the company.

7.7 Evaluation and control

As already mentioned, this step is essential to exchange with the customer once he is back from the trip. This will not only create loyalty and a good impression to the customer but also give information on what went well and what did not. The essential idea to retain from this step is to always consider revising the product. Once the consumer has made the evaluation of the package, the organizer has the possibility to improve the product to make the next customers even happier about their experience. One thing that needs to be

remembered is the importance of the quality of the products and services. This has been discussed in chapter 7.2 about the trends. The constant re-evaluation of the product that is offered will improve its quality. In addition, this can prevent to become mainstream and especially “out-of-date”. The organizer needs to see the product he is planning as an always-evolving product that adapts to both the demand and the market in which it occurs.

Moreover, before the actual selling of the product, it is necessary to do a field trip and to test the offer. This will enable the organiser to check whether what the service providers say is true, also it will be possible to realize the difficulty to use the public transportation system and overall to check the sustainability of the product. Like this, the organiser will also be able to have pictures of the offers that he can use for promotion. He will also be able to meet the local inhabitants and service providers and it will give him a better knowledge on the country, its culture and customs. This trip has take place from the 18th of June to the 23rd of June but the results will be discussed at the oral defence of this paper.

Conclusion

This research paper has pointed at the challenges of conceiving and developing a sustainable travel package, it has given practical information on how to do so. First, it has been realized that sustainable tourism is a very broad concept and that it needs to be clarified. Sustainability and sustainable development is a global goal. It aims at creating positive economical and social development while minimizing the environmental impacts. Tourism is responsible for 10.4% of the global GDP in 2018 (WTTC, 2018, p. 1). The necessity for such a big growing industry to be sustainable is non-refutable, but there is still a very long path ahead. The SDGs of the UN have given a framework for businesses to go towards sustainability and sustainable tourism. Responsible tourism is the answer to how tourism can contribute to sustainable development in this industry (Goodwin, 2018). This research has found that even though there are many sustainability labels on an international and national scale, the majority is lacking some aspects of sustainability, with oftentimes a special focus only on the environmental issue. Regarding Slovenia, it has been found, sustainability is deeply rooted in the management of tourism services. Indeed, the STB has developed a national development scheme that gives a framework for the tourism providers

to follow. If a service provider puts in place a sustainable management approach, it can get certified by the national certification scheme, the GSST. Nevertheless, this scheme, and other sustainable certifications, are only available for service providers with sufficient funds. Indeed, all certification programmes have a fee that can be considered as too high for a small business. Even if the business is very sustainable, it will not afford the fee to get the certification. Slovenia has a nature and culture oriented approach of tourism. The country has therefor a substantial potential for the development of sustainable package offers.

It has been very challenging to find the right service providers and attractions for this package, as the author did not know anything about Slovenia at first. Indeed, such a package seeks to have authentic, local and unique offers and those can be hard to find when a destination is unknown. Nevertheless, this research has found the right contacts, such as Tina Hudnik who are aware of the country's tourism offer and especially in what is being done in terms of sustainable development. In addition to her advice and her recommendations, a thorough research online has given good results to find the right activities and accommodations. Moreover, the sanu's manual (2011) has given a good framework for the creation of the package.

All these information, guidelines and tools have given the result of an eight-day itinerary through the western part of Slovenia. The package includes certified accommodation and a room in a family home. And also local and authentic guided tours of the capital city Ljubljana, the Soča Valley and an introduction to the beekeeping world. But it also highlights the unique natural attractions of this part of the country, such as the Soča river, the Bled and Bohinj region with their lakes, gorges and waterfalls, the Skojcan caves and the coastal salt pans. Moreover, through the interaction with the guides and local inhabitants, the guests will get a better knowledge of Slovenia's cultural heritage and traditions.

The most challenging aspect of this paper, and of the creation of the package, has been the only use of public transportation in the itinerary. This is the reason why the package is still following a touristic path, because the trains and buses are connecting places of great touristic flow. The challenge was to find the right activities to do within the tourism destinations. In other words, even though the itinerary may seem usual for Slovenian

tourism, the way that the services are consumed within this usual itinerary is what makes the difference and that is how this package can be seen as sustainable.

Regarding the question of whether a tourism package can be 100% sustainable, the answer is no. While being a responsible tourism offer, this package cannot be considered 100% sustainable. In fact, consuming tourism services will inevitably be harmful to the environment. Fanatic ecologists would argue that the simple fact to get printed tickets for transportation, entries to certain attractions, receipts from accommodation, can be considered as not sustainable.

Moreover, even though this package aimed at having the majority of activities and restaurants included, there is still some freedom given to the guests. The owners of *A Taste of Travel* gave this advice, because they know that their guests like to have some freedom and discover things by themselves. And whilst there are some recommendations given on what to do and where to eat when they have free time, one cannot control what they do and where they eat. Some of the attractions or restaurants they choose might not be sustainable, because they would provide imported food and drinks for example, or they might not have correct working conditions, nor an intelligent resource management.

Although this package cannot be considered as 100% sustainable, it can still be considered as being part of responsible tourism. This paper aimed at creating this package, but the question to ask now is whether this package would appeal to consumers. The author tried to get information from the guests regarding their willingness to travel to Slovenia, but the survey did not give sufficient results. For this to be known, a complementary survey should be undertaken.

Furthermore, the package should be tested by real consumers in order to get their feedback. This will give a greater insight on whether this package could suit the target market. And finally, a marketing plan should be created in order for this package to be sold correctly. The importance of storytelling has also been highlighted in this paper but it has not yet been developed for this package.

Slovenia is a country that has a lot to offer and hard choices had to be made for this package. It would be interesting to get to know the destination better and also focus on other parts of the country. In this paper a special focus has been given to the western part because of its accessibility, attractions and because of the amount of time at disposal for the itinerary. Another package could be initiated to discover other regions of the country. For example, a wine journey to Slovenia could be developed, as wine is a big part of the country's culture. Another idea would be to create a package that has a special focus on wellness, and the thermal part of Slovenia would be discovered.

There are many things that need further exploration in Slovenia in terms of attractions but also in terms of sustainable development. This paper looks at one side of the offer and, as already mentioned, one critic that can be done is that it still follows the usual touristic path. In order to explore Slovenia more deeply and get closer to other authentic and sustainable experiences, the use of a car should be considered, because with public transportation as means of travel limits what can be discovered. A package of Slovenia by car could have a compensation scheme or the use of an electric car could also be a sustainable solution.

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