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Can Tourism Be Sustainable?

Service Experiences from Tourism
Destinations in Europe



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Förord

Många doktorander beskriver doktorandtiden som en resa. Den liknelsen blir särskilt relevant för mig som har forskat om turism och marknadsföring. Mitt intresse för att resa föddes när mina föräldrar tog med mig på min första charterresa till Kreta vid 10 års ålder. Många år senare återvände jag till samma hotell på Kreta för att delta i en forskningskonferens om turism och skrev samtidigt de sista raderna på mitt avhandlingsmanus. Säcken knöts ihop och det är genom det här förordet jag sätter punkt för den här avhandlingsresan.

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Abstract

The tourism industry is growing rapidly, and thus there is an urgent need to developing sustainable tourism. The research objective of the thesis is to explore and discuss the concept of sustainability within the tourism industry from a marketing point of view, focusing on the perspective of tourist producers'. The thesis consists of four studies, each of which contains different perspectives to support this overall objective. The first study deals with how a hotel can achieve economic sustainability by creating a high level of customer service delivery using a refined GAP-model. The second study examines how tourist producers at mass tourism destinations work with sustainable tourism as a strategic marketing tool in their tourism product development. The third study addresses economic sustainability at the macro level by estimating the tourism demand for Sweden and Norway in five different countries. In the fourth study, the concept of sustainable mass tourism is developed and analyzed from a conceptual standpoint. Study 1 and study 3 concentrate on economic sustainability from a micro and national perspective. The main contribution of Study 1 is the refined GAP-model, which can be seen as a theoretical contribution to the service marketing research. Study 3 shows that exchange rate trends strongly affect tourists' choice of destination. Study 2 examines sustainable mass tourism as a strategic marketing tool at the destination level. The conclusions of Study 2 contribute to the findings of Study 4 and consider the tourist producers approach to sustainable tourism. One of the contributions of Study 4 is that the concept of sustainable tourism should be divided into three separate parts; economic sustainability, social sustainability and environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Mass tourism, Service-Dominant Logic, Service Marketing, Economic Sustainability, Social Sustainability, Environmental Sustainability.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in Europe and has been a prioritized area for the European Commission since the 1990s. The tourism sector is Europe's largest industry with over 60% of all the tourism in the world, and is expected to grow even more. The resources within tourism are limited due to the natural, economic, social, and cultural aspects, which will not survive continued growth (Tao and Wall, 2009). Demands are being made by the European Union that necessary steps should be taken in order to achieve successful sustainable tourism. The goal in Europe is to guarantee economically, socially and environmentally sustainable tourism (European Commission, 2003). Seemingly, there is a clear consensus within the EU that tourism development should be sustainable, but the question is how this should be achieved (Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Gössling, Peeters, Ceron, Dubois, Patterson and Richardson, 2005). The concept of sustainable tourism has its starting point in the Brundtland Commission Report (1987) which defined sustainable development. According to the report, it is a matter of finding a balance between economic, social and environmental issues. Within the tourism industry, there is a considerable focus on sustainable tourism. In fact, it is agreed upon by politicians, tourist producers and researchers that the tourism industry should be sustainable. In the thesis, sustainability is addressed from different perspectives and at different levels within the tourism industry.

The tourism industry represents a large part of the service sector. Within the marketing field, attention has been drawn to service marketing since the 1970s when the so-called Nordic School was founded, mainly by Grönroos (2007) and Gummesson (2002). The fundamental idea of the Nordic School is that there is a difference between selling services, such as a trip to a mass tourism destination, and selling products. Selling services is more of a process and the relationship between the seller and the buyer is constantly present. Furthermore, it is the value (e.g. value in use) created by the tourist and the tourist producer which is important. When purchasing service, tourists become part of the service process and thereby co-creators of their final customer value (Grönroos, 2007). Gummesson (2002) argues that marketing consists of interactions, relationships and networks. This

means that “relationships are developed from successfully managed interactions and this may take place in various types of networks” (Grönroos, 2007, p. 200). According to Grönroos (2007), the word service embodies at least three characteristics; it is physically intangible, it is an activity rather than a thing, and the production and consumption take place at the same time. It is also important that companies make certain that they offer high quality services (service quality is further examined in Study 1, in relation to sustainability). Moreover, Grönroos (2007) maintains that the theoretical research field of service marketing should be approached by using case studies (see Study 1 and 2).

In 2004, the publication of the Vargo and Lusch articles about the Service-Dominant Logic (henceforth called S-D Logic) changed the view on the concept of service in relation to customers (Vargo and Lusch 2004a; 2004b). There are several connections between the S-D Logic and the studies of the thesis. The concept of service has been discussed and developed for a considerable time but opinions differ on its meaning. There is still no consensus among service researchers and therefore no widely accepted definition of service (Spohrer, Maglio, Bailey and Gruhl, 2007). However, the various definitions of service all focus on “paying for performance” as well as the key role of customers in coproduction activities and in the co-creation of value (Spohrer and Maglio, 2006). Vargo and Lusch (2007) see the S-D Logic as a work in progress with the hope that researchers will continue to develop this perspective within service marketing. Moreover, Vargo and Lusch (2004a) argue that goods and products cannot be separated from service because all companies always provide final customer value. In contrast to this, since the 1970s, focus has been placed on dividing products from services (Grönroos, 2007; Gummesson, Lusch and Vargo; 2010). Furthermore, the concept of service has been given four main characteristics; intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perishability (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985). Nonetheless, these four characteristics are now being questioned with emergence of the S-D Logic according to which service is a process in which customer are always co-creators of the final value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; 2004b; Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) also discuss co-creation and its relation to experiences. It is important to “create an experience environment in which consumers can have active

dialogue and co-construct personalized experiences; product may be the same but customers can construct different experiences” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 8). Pine and Gilmore (1998) argue that there is a difference between services and experiences since “an experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event” (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, p. 98). For tourists, this means that the trip is an experience despite there being several tourist producers co-creating the value together with the tourists. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) see the tourists not as a passive audience but instead as an active partner (Payne, Storbacka and Frow, 2007). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue that there is a new logic for value creation where value is embedded in personalized experiences (Payne, Storbacka and Frow, 2007). Morgan, Elbe and Curiel (2009, p.201) argue that “the experience economy concept is closely related to tourism both in its origins and its implications”. The customer goes from being passive to an active participant in the experience (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009). People do not buy services for functional reasons but for the memory it creates in the future (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). At tourist destinations there is a need for a wider choice of things to do, such as shopping, restaurants, cultural and sporting activities; this need is due to the different segments among the tourists (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009). “The increasing importance of services is not limited to the service industry” (Abe, 2005, p. 6). Abe (2005) argues that added value through added services has become crucial for tourists companies that are in competition. Such added value could be sustainable tourism for the tourists.

According to the S-D Logic, marketing should become more of a management strategy which includes all parts of an organization instead of only the marketing department. Additionally, it shows that all kinds of companies provide customers with different services. A hotel does not sell a hotel night but sleep, the same way as selling a drilling machine means selling holes in the wall (Levitt, 1960; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). At a tourism destination, tourists buy a complete tourist experience which includes a large number of tourist producers, other tourists and activities. The tourist product, therefore, cannot be fully standardized considering that different tourists demand different

experiences. At the same time, tourists are co-producers of the value, which makes it difficult for tourist producers to control the quality of the tourist offer. Moreover, tourists are not alone at a destination; they interact with and meet other tourists who also become a part of the tourist experience. The tourist product is therefore complex and hard to control in view of the fact that there are many parts which must interact in order to co-create a high quality tourist experience. There are also a various number of stakeholders at a destination with their own goals and agendas (Grängsjö, 1998). Hence, the tourist experience depends on several different aspects in order to be satisfactory for tourists. Mass tourism is the most standardized type of tourism since mass tourists are mainly searching for sun, sea and sand at the destination (Butler, 1990). Mass tourism destinations can therefore be an area of extreme competition as tourists can chose between many different destinations. This means that tourist producers must offer something extra in order to encourage tourists to return and be loyal to a destination. They must provide a high quality tourism offer in order to be successful in the competition against other destinations. It is therefore important for mass tourism destinations to be sustainable. By being sustainable, they can attract tourists and consequently achieve a higher level of economic sustainability. Through the inflow of tourists the earnings will increase which also will help to create a higher level of social sustainability for the inhabitants at a destination. At the same time, it is important to offer a tourist product which is environmentally sustainable because if, for instance, the sea water is polluted the tourist might choose to travel to another destination. It is the interaction between the quality of nature, the quality of the human components, and the quality of the service experience that together make the tourist product.

1.1 Problem setting

The quick expansion of the tourism industry has inspired different stakeholders and tourist producers to make investments at the destinations without always considering the possible negative effects of such investment could have concerning the environment and the social life at the destination. The investments might also involve something that the tourists do not appreciate or ask for. Different tourists may also have different purposes for their trip, despite travelling to the same destination, and this could also apply to the stakeholders and the tourist producers. To keep a destination attractive the tourist producers must

listen to their tourists in order to find out what they are looking for at the destination. At a tourist destination, this is problematic since there are many different tourist producers with their own agenda that together deliver the experience to the tourists. Currently, there have not been many studies conducted on the connection between service marketing and sustainable tourism (Pomering, Noble and Johnson, 2011). In order to understand sustainable tourism from a marketing perspective, it is necessary to learn more about how tourist producers work with the concept of sustainability. This will help to gain better understanding of how studies on sustainable tourism can be continued and developed.

In the thesis, the focus lies on the different categories of tourist producers who offer services to tourists at a particular destination (e.g. hotels, restaurants and attractions). By studying the work of those tourist producers, it is possible to learn more about their co-creation in sustainable tourism. Furthermore, the thesis presents cases from tourism destinations in Europe, with the aim of identifying the differences between those destinations. The cases enable interpretation and a better understanding how the work with sustainable tourism should proceed. In fact, sustainable tourism could become a tool for tourist producers in their effort to improve their tourist offer. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that tourist producers might interpret and use sustainable tourism in different ways as all have their own agenda on how to attract tourists to their businesses.

It is relevant to explore and discuss the concept of sustainable tourism on different levels within the tourism industry. On the micro level, such as different hotels (stay), at different restaurants (eat) and at different attractions (do), it is interesting to explore how these locations work in a concrete manner with the concept of sustainability in their everyday work. Previous studies have focused on the co-creation of value between the producer (e.g. hotel manager or similar) and the tourist (Shaw, Bailey and Williams, 2011). These small tourist companies are interesting to study in order to find the best practice within the field of sustainable tourism in Europe. For a small condo owned hotel it is important to have satisfied condo owners as well as paying hotel guests in order to improve social and economic sustainability. A large number

of the tourist visiting condo owned hotels come from Sweden and are therefore not travelling very far; consequently they cause less environmental pollution due to transportation. It can also be of interest for a local restaurant at a tourist destination to serve locally produced food since this is both environmental as well as social sustainability (Sims, 2009). At destination level, it is important to address the issues of sustainability since the tourists see the destination as a complete experience despite the fact that their experience consists of different tourism products created by different tourist producers. The image of a destination has a large impact when tourists choose where to spend their holiday. A destination that has environmental problems might frighten tourists away, for instance, the destinations of Rimini where the sea water has environmental problems. For other destinations that are strongly associated with some attractions, such as the Alhambra in Granada, the social sustainability is of great importance for tourist producers. At a national level, the issue of sustainability also influences how a country should act in attracting tourists to the country. Tourism is an important industry for many countries and it is, therefore, important to address the issue of sustainability from all aspects not only from an economic perspective.

1.2 Research objective and research questions

The research objective of the thesis is to conceptually and empirically analyze and create an understanding of the concept of sustainability in the tourism industry from a marketing point of view. The study is conducted from the tourist producers' perspective. This research area of tourism derived primarily from a personal interest in travelling and exploring the world. Tourism is also an industry of great importance in the region where I live and work. For three years, I participated in an EU project focused on best practice regarding sustainable and vocational tourism (the SUVOT-project). It increased my research interest in issues related to sustainable tourism and gave me a pre-understanding of the research field. In the past decade tourism has grown rapidly, and discussions have been initiated as to how tourism should be performed in a more sustainable way, and what sustainable tourism actually means. It is a focus area discussed among researcher, among tourist producers and among public actors. The three dimensions of sustainable tourism are dependent on each other; however, there is also a contradiction. Tourism is a complex research

field based on several aspects. There are many different tourist producers at a destination that together create the tourists' experiences. Nevertheless, it is not only the tourist producers that are the creators of values, but also other tourists and the interaction that takes place at the destination affects the overall experience of the destination. Tourists have to be imported to a destination and different tourists have different reasons for travelling. Whatever the reason, the tourist is a co-producer and co-creator of value. Therefore, S-D Logic is suitable as a theoretical basis for the study of sustainable tourism as a phenomenon. S-D Logic discusses the final value for the customers and it is interesting to study sustainable tourism based on this theoretical view, since there are no other studies that have attempted this before.

The thesis consists of four studies, each of which contains different research questions to support the overall objective. The first study deals with how a hotel can achieve economic sustainability by creating a high level of customer service delivery using a refined GAP-model. The second study examines how tourist producers, at different mass tourism destinations, work with sustainable tourism as a strategic marketing tool in their tourism product development. The third study addresses economic sustainability at a national level by estimating the tourism demand for Sweden and Norway in five different countries. In the fourth study, the concept of sustainable mass tourism is developed and analyzed from a conceptual standpoint.

The specific research questions reads as follows:

1. How can the Service-Dominant Logic be used for developing sustainable tourism?
2. How can the concept of sustainable tourism be used by tourist producers at various destinations in Europe?
3. How do tourist producers work with sustainable tourism from a service marketing perspective?
4. How can tourist producers create and develop sustainable tourism in practice?

1.3 Limitations of research

The studies in the thesis are limited geographically to tourist producers located at different destinations in Europe. The reason why tourist producers in Europe are interesting is because mass tourism in Europe is a well-established tourism sector. The overall theoretical framework is limited to the tourism industry, sustainable tourism, and service marketing. Sustainable tourism is limited to tourism that focuses on economic, social, and environmental issues (see more in section 1.6 and 2.2). The thesis does not discuss the theoretical paradigm, eco-tourism, or cultural sustainability. UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" (<http://sdt.unwto.org/en/content/about-us-5>). This definition clearly excludes the fourth dimension, cultural, which is included by some researchers in the definition of sustainable tourism.

Service marketing uses S-D Logic as the research perspective where service quality, co-creation, and value in use are important aspects to be addressed. Regarding the theoretical approach, the thesis is limited to sustainable tourism of which the three dimensions (economic, social, and environmental) are the bases. There are several marketing approaches that could have been used, but the thesis has been restricted to S-D Logic since this approach was particularly well suited for the tourism industry. These theoretical areas will be the foundation for analyzing the data collected in the studies as well as the conclusions and contributions. The thesis addresses different levels of sustainable tourism, mainly from a tourist producer's perspective (see study 1 and 2). Study 1 is limited to a micro perspective using a case study at one hotel for a period of eight months. Study 2 is limited to studying tourism producers at four mass tourist destinations in Europe. Study 3 is limited to a comparison between tourists visiting Sweden and Norway due to exchange rate but the result is interpreted with a focus on the effects on tourist producers from a macro perspective. Finally, the fourth study is limited to discussing how sustainable tourism can be used in a more practical way for tourist producers (with a focus on literature review and discussion). The research design mainly uses interpretative case studies, observations, and secondary data (Yin, 2003;

Stake, 1995; Eisenhardt, 1989) regarding tourist producers and their work with sustainable tourism. From a time perspective, the studies were conducted from 2006 until 2010. Study one is a single case study on a condo owned hotel and examines the co-creation of value for the condo owners and the hotel guests. The second study consists of multiple case studies on tourist producers from four different destinations in Europe. The third study examines how exchange rate fluctuations affect the tourism demand for destinations in Sweden and Norway using secondary data. The fourth study contains a conceptual discussion on sustainable tourism and how the concept can be used by tourist producers. All the studies 1, 2 and 4 are interpretative in nature and aim at understanding and developing the theory on sustainable tourism from the perspective of tourist producers. Study 3, is a quantitative study that addresses economic sustainability by examining how tourists are affected by exchange rate fluctuations when deciding on their travel destination. This study, despite its quantitative approach, contributes to an understanding of sustainable tourism and how tourist producers can utilize these issues. The different kinds of data collected have created complementary data, which has enriched and contributed to the overall research objective. The emphasis in the thesis is mainly on the actors (e.g. the tourist producers), and how they work with sustainable tourism.

1.4 Approach and method

The method used consists predominantly of qualitative data since the results are interpreted and analyzed according to a social constructivist approach (Helenius, 1990; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Collis and Hussey, 2003). This standpoint is strongly influenced by my own view on existing reality and social relationships and a personal perspective on how the world is socially constructed (ontology). The overall unit of analysis is focused on making sense of and interpreting the data (see chapter 3 for further details about the method used in the thesis). There are always alternative ways that studies can be conducted. It would have been possible, for instance, to have distributed questionnaires to the tourist producers with a positivistic approach. Since I see the world as influenced by the researcher and my ontology is constructivist and the analysis is interpretative I do not think that a quantitative approach would have shown my view on what I believe is characteristic of sustainable tourism. The impression presented in this thesis is from

some tourist producers at some destinations and it is my interpretation of sustainable tourism. I am not trying to statistically make any generalization. The multiple data that was collected is rich and thick and the studies have been conducted close to the research objects. I am contributing to our understanding of sustainable tourism from a marketing perspective.

1.5 Key concepts

This section presents the theoretical and methodological terms used in the thesis. The following theoretical concepts are further elaborated in chapter two.

Tourists

"...people who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment for more than twenty-four hours and not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited." (World Tourism Organization, UNWTO)

Tourism

"Tourism is the act of travel for the purpose of recreation and business, and the provision of services for this act." (World Tourism Organization, UNWTO)

Mass tourism

Tourism based on fixed programs, which attracts a large group of tourists who mainly look for sun, sea and sand at the destination (Butler, 1990).

Sustainable tourism

"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" (World Tourism Organization, UNWTO). Tourism focused on economic, social and environmental sustainability (Swarbrooke, 2005).

Tourist producer

The supplier of goods and/or services for tourists at a destination (World Tourism Organization, UNWTO).

Service marketing

"...the activity set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large." (American Marketing Association, <http://www.marketingpower.com/AboutAMA/Pages/DefinitionofMarketing.aspx>)

Service Dominant-Logic

"...a mindset for a unified understanding of the purpose and nature of organizations, markets and society. The foundational proposition of S-D Logic is that organizations, markets, and society are fundamentally concerned with exchange of service...That is, service is exchanged for service; all firms are service firms; all markets are centered on the exchange of service, and all economies and societies are service based." (<http://www.S-D Logic.net>)

The following methodological concepts are further elaborated in chapter three.

Sensemaking

"The process of sensemaking is intended to include the construction and bracketing of the textlike cues that are interpreted, as well as the revision of those interpretations based on action and its consequences. Sensemaking is about authoring as well as interpretation, creation as well as discovery."(Weick, 1995, p. 8) In this thesis sensemaking is the method for understanding and analyzing qualitative data.

Case study

“... an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context: when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiply sources of evidence are used.” (Yin, 1984, p. 23)

Abduction

“... an approach to knowledge production that occupies the middle ground between induction and deduction.” (Järvensivu and Törnroos, 2010, p. 102)

1.6 Structure

The thesis is structured in the following way. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework of the studies and the way in which they are connected. The third chapter defines the research design of the thesis by describing how the studies are designed and performed to fulfill the overall research objective. In the fourth chapter, the principle findings from each study are presented. The fifth chapter includes the overall contributions and conclusions and in chapter six, different implications for the tourism industry are proposed. Finally, chapter seven presents the limitations and offer suggestions for further studies within the research field.

1.7 Summary

This chapter presents the theoretical research field; sustainable tourism in connection with service marketing from an S-D Logic perspective with a focus on co-creation and value in use. The problem setting is discussed with a focus on sustainable tourism from the actors' perspective, the tourist producers, and the destination. Furthermore, the research objective and research questions are presented. The limitations of the studies are clarified and the method used is briefly presented.

2. Theoretical perspective on sustainable tourism

The theoretical framework is presented in three parts; Tourism Industry, Sustainable Tourism and Services Marketing. This chapter gives an overview of the abovementioned research fields and a description of how they are connected to the studies and to each other. All of the studies are conducted within the tourism industry which makes it necessary to look into the definition of a tourist, of tourism and of mass tourism. Moreover, the four studies examine sustainable tourism from different but complementary perspective, which makes it important to analyze the true meaning of the concept. The part of the theoretical framework regarding service marketing deals with how sustainable tourism is used by tourist producers in relation to tourists.

2.1 Tourists, tourism and mass tourism

It is not easy to define a tourist. Holloway (2002) claims that it is a matter of people moving from their regular place of residence. Most scholars maintain that they must move a certain distance, but the length differs. In 1937, the League of Nations defined a tourist as a person who travels for at least 24 hours in a country in which he or she does not normally live. The weakness of this definition is that it disregards all domestic travel. In 1942, Hunziker and Krapf of Berne defined tourism as "...the sum of the phenomena and relationship arising from the travel and stay of non-residents, in so far as they do not lead to permanent residence and are not connected to any earning activity". Their definition includes both travelling and staying, but excludes all business travel. Holloway (2002) argues that it can be difficult to separate travelling from work or leisure, considering that it mostly is a combination of the two. Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shephard, and Wanhill (1999) maintain that the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) definition of tourism from 1991 should be applied: "The activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (UNWTO)". The definition implies that a tourist must stay away no less than one night. Tourists who do not stay overnight are defined as day tourists. The same organization defines

tourism as “...the act of travel for the purpose of recreation and business, and the provision of services for this act” (UNWTO). Tourism, as an industry, differs from ordinary industry in mainly three ways. Firstly, tourists must be imported to the production site (the destination). Secondly, tourists are co-producers and an active part in the production, delivery, and consumption. Thirdly, the destination involves many co-operative collective bodies but there is still individual business competition (von Friedrichs Grängsjö and Gummesson, 2006).

The different definitions of tourism also depend on which perspective is used; the tourist’s perspective or the tourist producer’s perspective. Von Friedrichs Grängsjö (2001) states that tourism research generally focus on tourist behaviour. With regard to tourist producers, the most important factors are their production system and the actors at the destination. Tourism from this perspective is defined by von Friedrichs Grängsjö as a collective term for several actors with different characters and activities, and must definitely include more stakeholders, such as tourist producers, than tourists. The tourism industry is often represented by small and medium sized companies with a local connection and traditionally focuses on five main areas; travel, live, eat, do and sell (Grängsjö, 1998). In study 1 and 2 the emphasis is on single tourist producers who deliver live, do and eat (e.g. offered at the destination).

A destination is a place to which tourists travel, such as countries, regions, cities or villages. It is a “geographical room” which offers tourists a complete “tourist product”. Elbe (2003) argues that the offer at a destination is divided into attractions and facilities. The attractions represent the motives of the trip while the facilities make the trip possible. The combination of these two creates the complete tourist experience (von Friedrichs Grängsjö, 2003).

Tourists are divided into four categories according to Cohen (1972); organized mass tourists, individual mass tourists, discoverers and vagabonds. Organised mass tourists are those who buy trips in which everything is included; these tourists rarely meet the local culture and people at the destination. Individual mass tourists are similar to the

previous category, but they are more flexible and let personal desire determine where to travel. Both of these categories are examples of institutionalised tourism. Discoverers, on the other hand, put their trips together themselves, but prefer comfortable hotels and reliable transport. Vagabonds also put their trips together themselves but try to get as far away as possible from the tourism industry. This type of tourist prefers to live with the locals and tries to participate in the local culture at the destination. Furthermore, tourists are a heterogenic group who can be segmented according to different principles. One difference is whether tourists travel domestically or internationally (Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Shephard and Wanhill, 1999).

Mass tourism often attracts tourists who look for sun, sea, and sand at the tourism destination. The tourist groups are usually large and they follow a fixed program (e.g. organized mass tourism) (Butler, 1990; Sharpley, 2002). Generally, destinations undergo a rapid development during which tourist producers try to maximize their profits, and often have a short-term perspective without any planning. As a result, new buildings are constructed without any control or social and environmental considerations. According to Wahab and Pigram (1997), the tourist map will be different tomorrow when compared with today. The difficulty lies in predicting where tourists want to go in the future. There is also a need for tools to create a more sustainable tourism in all three aspects. In this respect, study 3 focuses on the connection between exchange rate fluctuations and tourists' choice of destination. The objective of the study is to examine how to make tourism more economically sustainable.

For many mass tourism destinations, tourism is an essential part of the development and growth of the area, such as on the Greek Islands or in Emirates such as Dubai and Abu Dhabi (Sharpley, 2002). Archer (1996) argues that many countries are heavily dependent on tourism to maintain and increase their level of income and employment. Another dimension of tourism is the issue of seasonality of demand. There are many destinations to which tourists travel only during a few months each year, and this is not economically, socially, or environmentally sustainable (Edwards and Priestley, 1996).

2.2 Sustainable tourism

Today, sustainable tourism is a well-established research field but there is still no generally accepted definition of the concept. Sustainability as a concept can be connected to all kinds of tourism and environments (Clarke, 1997; Saarinen, 2006), but the problem is how the concept should be used in a practical and useful way (Hunter, 1995; Liu, 2003; Sharpley, 2000, Saarinen, 2006; Wall, 2002). According to Butler (1998), sustainable development is, nowadays, a well-established term but the adaptation of the concept and the implementation of the idea have not been successful. This can also be reflected by the uncertainty over the meaning of the term (Tao and Wall, 2009). In the Bruntland Commission Report from 1987, it was stated that "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Subsequently, sustainable development is discussed with the focus on three areas; economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Sharpley (2000) argues that the concept of sustainable development is very unclear as it has over 70 different definitions and that people use the concept in different contexts. It is unlikely that there will be only one interpretation of sustainable development in the future since the concept consists of two contradictory parts. While the first part means preservation, the second means growth. Therefore, the concept should be divided into two separate processes and considered as an equation (Sustainable development = development + sustainability) (Sharpley, 2000). On the other hand, development does not have to mean growth but rather improvement and change. Development can be, when discussing sustainable tourism a way of transforming and refining the present tourism into a more sustainable one.

During the 1990s, there was an intensive debate on how to define sustainable tourism (Muller, 1994; Butler, 1999; Hunter, 2002; Hind and Mitchell, 2004). Within the concept of sustainable tourism, there is a contradiction between the three aspects of sustainability that still represents a challenge to researchers. How can there be economic development without any environmental as well as social effects on tourism destinations? (Wahab and Pigram, 1997) Swarbrooke (2002) believes that sustainable tourism means a maximization of the economic, social and environmental benefits of tourism with a

simultaneous minimization of costs. This maximization of benefits of tourism, nevertheless, has a limit. It is not possible to increase tourism exponentially since there is a limit in terms of carrying capacity. Tourism should be kept at a level that allows both social and environmental sustainability rather than merely economic sustainability with maximization of profit.

Middleton and Clarke (2001) point out the need to find a balance between the three dimensions. Economic interests should be balanced against the environment with the long-term perspective in mind. Companies should maximize their profits, but at the same time take environmental responsibility. Today, companies prefer to mass produce with the intention of achieving high revenues and low costs, but tourists prefer quality and want to enjoy the social life and culture of a destination. However, the question remains: How can tourist producers find a balance between those three factors? If tourist producers are looking for high revenues through mass marketing without any concern for social and environmental issues there will eventually be problems at the destination. The three sustainability factors are dependent on each other. It can be difficult for a small tourist producer to work with all these elements alone; therefore, it should rather be in cooperation. Tourist producers and tourists interact at a destination and for this reason work with sustainability can be done through partnership and collaboration.

Bramwell and Lane (1993) state that sustainable tourism is a positive approach which intends to reduce the tensions between the different parts of the complex tourism system: the tourism industry, the tourists, the environment, and the destination. They also maintain that it is a way of working for long-term quality for both natural and human resources. Liu (2003) argues for a long-term perspective in development planning and encourage the inclusion of the different stakeholder groups in discussions about tourism, the environment, and the local community at the destination. Sustainability has its roots in environmentalism and it is therefore important to keep a balanced view of the concept. The task is not to limit the growth of tourism but to manage it together with the tourists, the environment of the destination, and the host populations (Liu, 2003). Middleton (1997), however, argues that sustainability is

primarily an issue of product quality. Therefore, it is best to work with sustainability in tourism through local partnership, at the destination level.

Clarke (1997) maintains that the concept of sustainable tourism has been subject to four paradigm shifts. According to the first paradigm, mass tourism and sustainable tourism are polar opposites; the former is unfavorable while the latter is good. The second paradigm sees sustainable tourism on a scale from weak to strong; very weak stands for well-being through economic growth and technical innovation, and very strong for extreme resource protection (Hunter; 1997; Turner, Pearce and Bateman 1994; Harris, Griffin and Williams, 2003). In the third paradigm, sustainable tourism is regarded as a movement which should include all types of tourism and, subsequently, make mass tourism subject to improvement. Furthermore, it implies that the main problem of mass tourism is represented by its magnitude (Krippendorf, 1987; Clarke, 1997; Swarbrooke, 2005). The fourth paradigm argues that all tourism should be sustainable (Clarke, 1997; Swarbrooke, 2005).

In tourism research, the principle of sustainable tourism undergoes a rapid development but among tourist producers, the implementation is limited. The reason for this is that tourist producers are willing to apply the concept only for their own benefit. They use sustainable tourism if it helps them to increase their revenues and improve their public relations. It can also be a part of the producers' marketing strategy. By investing in energy saving and water reduction systems, tourist producers see sustainability as a way of saving money. In terms of public relations, tourist producers use the concept to create goodwill for their companies, and in their marketing it can be a tool to attract customers. Undoubtedly, tourism has environmental impacts on a destination. Tourists are consumers of the environment since they have travelled to the destination to consume it. At many destinations the tourism development has been rapid and often unplanned (Buhalis and Fletcher, 1995). It is therefore possible that a hotel was initially built in the wrong location (Butler, 1998).

Today, sustainable development is to some extent applied to tourism, but many still think of sustainable tourism as an ideology. Saarinen (2006) discusses three traditions involving different ideas on sustainability. The resource-based tradition focuses on the need to protect nature (environmental approach), while the activity-based tradition focuses on the resource need of the industry (economic approach). The community-based tradition is concerned with the empowerment of the actors at the destination (social approach). These traditions represent both the advantages and disadvantages of the process of sustainable tourism.

Since the end of the 1980s, the rapid growth within the tourism industry has led to a demand for more sustainable tourism, especially concerning mass tourism destinations. When sustainable tourism development is discussed two main fields often stand out in the debate; one which sees environmentally sustainable tourism as a specific economic activity and one which focuses on tourism as a part of wider sustainable development policies (Sharpley, 2002; Berno and Bricker, 2001). For tourist producers sustainable tourism might be a tool for tourism development, particularly regarding the economic factors. For a destination, it is more important to preserve the natural resources (Erkus-Öztürk and Eraydin, 2010). One example is Cyprus, a large mass tourism destination in the Mediterranean. In 1975, the number of bed spaces was to 4000, however, in 2001, the total number was 86 000. This illustrates a rapid growth in tourism, which can be considered an unsustainable mass tourism development with environmental as well as social problems despite the economic benefits. On the other hand, the Cypriots have a high income per capita and the third highest standard of living of all the Mediterranean countries. The tourism has benefited them socially as well as economically (Sharpley, 2002). During the last few years, Cyprus has had a considerable financial crisis due to their large financial sector (the Cypriot banking sector is 7.5 times the size of the island's economy) which has had negative impact of the island, including a decline in the tourism.

There has been, and still is, a conflict between the three elements which together compose the concept of sustainability. There is often a need for economic development at a mass tourism destination because the locals

working with tourism need higher incomes in order to be able to make a living and stay at the destination. However, by bringing tourists to the created destination, the social and cultural structure of the destination is changed both by the tourists and the buildings, which are constructed to accommodate the tourists. By building at the destination, there are also environmental effects. The three concepts are full of contradictions and conflicts but for tourist producers there is a need for a long-term perspective. If tourist producers invest in sustainability, it might lead to sustainable tourism in the future. Swarbrooke (2005, p. 13) argues that "sustainable tourism is tourism which develops as quickly as possible, taking account of current accommodation capacity, the local population and the environment. The development of tourism and new investment in the tourism sector should not detract from tourism itself. New tourism facilities should be integrated with the environment."

Sustainable mass tourism should be developed from a global perspective (Hunter, 1995, 1996; Høyer, 2000), but ecological sustainability is often applied only at the local and regional level. Høyer (2000) argues that mass tourism has grown together with developments in the transport sector.

"There is of course no tourism without travelling. Admittedly, we may have sustainable development without tourism, but there can be no sustainable tourism without travelling. In order to travel, we need a means of transportation." (Høyer, 2000, p. 151.)

Mass tourism, as a phenomenon, started with private cars in the US in the 1920s and 1930s, and reached Europe in the 1950s. By having private cars tourists could travel to new places; mostly to domestic destinations by the coast and to rural areas. The starting point for international mass tourism was the development of civil airplanes. Nowadays, mass tourism destinations have become increasingly remote and mass tourism is subject to globalization (Høyer, 2000; Shaw and Williams, 1994). Tourists who travel to mass tourism destinations mainly travel by airplane and with the development of low cost airlines, it is not expected that airline travel will be reduced but, on the contrary, increase. Airplane transports constitute around 30 % of all tourism related to transports and produce greater environmental impacts than all road based tourist transports (Høyer, 2000). Aviation is estimated to account for 2-3% of CO₂ emissions and forecasts estimates that it will be

around 4% in 2050 (<http://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/air/environment/>). In fact, one of the main problems with mass tourism is the transportation of tourists to the destinations. Most tourists arrive by airplane, which results in severe environmental effects on nature. Høyer (2000) states that 40-60 % of the environmental effects caused by tourism, are due to transportation. Climate change due to airline traffic is an important factor when discussing sustainable tourism (Weaver, 2011; Scott, 2011; Barr, Shaw, Coles and Prillwitz, 2010). It is not only a matter of energy consumption; aviation also causes noise, pollution, waste, and encroachments into landscapes and housing areas. Only 20-30 % of the environmental damages caused by tourism is due to tourist activities at the destination, such as accommodation, restaurants and other services. Until now, the concept of sustainable tourism has been discussed without any focus on transportation (Høyer, 2000).

Fyall and Garrod (1997) state that sustainable development is a four stage process. The first step is to define and establish the concept of sustainable tourism. The second is to determine the conditions required to achieve sustainable tourism. The third step is to develop a framework for measuring the progress of sustainable tourism. The fourth and final step is to develop a set of techniques to create sustainable tourism.

At many destinations, the growth and impacts of mass tourism have created environmental problems, for instance at destinations around the Mediterranean (Saarinen, 2006). Butler (1980) has identified the different stages that destinations normally go through. The first stage is early exploration which is followed by development, consolidation and finally, stagnation. Every tourism destination has a limit to its growth and the stagnation stage appears when that has been reached. However, a destination can be changed, for example, by marketing, development and infrastructure and therefore grow even more popular again (Butler, 1980; Saarinen, 2006).

Employment is a key component when discussing economic sustainability (Hind and Mitchell, 2004). Another factor is the use of local goods and services (Hind and Mitchell, 2004). If local goods and services are used, there will be a recirculation of the money spent at the

destination. Furthermore, this leads to a reduction in transport costs, lower freight mileage, and also enables tourists to experience the location better and appreciate the destination (Hind and Mitchell, 2004).

According to the Bruntland Commission Report, the concept of sustainable tourism includes a clear focus on the protection of nature for future generations. Sustainable tourism starts with protecting the environment since nature is the base for existence, it also involve both economic and social sustainability. There will not be any tourism without economic sustainability since tourist producers must be able to earn their living on the income from tourists. This is also related to the issue of social sustainability. There must be tourist producers and employees at a destination to take care of the tourists. Sustainable tourism is therefore tourism which relies on a destination's economic, social and environmental conditions. There cannot just be a focus on high income and high revenues but also a focus on environmental issues since there is a carrying capacity of nature and a social aspect that must be addressed when discussing sustainable tourism.

2.3 Service Research

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and represents a large part of the service industry (Otto and Ritchie, 1996). Gummesson (2007, 2010) describes the service industry as a clutter and a patchwork. Therefore, it needs to be redefined and re-categorized. This part will be discussed by using the three key areas concerning service research that this thesis addresses; the Nordic school, the Service-Dominant Logic and the experience economy.

2.3.1 The Nordic School

In the 1970s marketing researchers in Sweden and Finland (The so-called Nordic School) started focusing on the role of services within marketing. The leading figures were C. Grönroos (e.g. 2007) and E. Gummesson (e.g. 2002) who in many articles argued that selling services meant something quite different from selling products. Within the tourism industry, this meant that a shift in focus was about to occur. At a tourism destination, tourists buy and use different services and the importance of good service is nowadays a well-known fact among

researchers and tourist producers (Wilkins, Merrilees and Herington, 2007; Grönroos, 2007).

With the emerging interest in service marketing, the concept of service quality became of interest to researchers in the 1980s (Grönroos, 2000). The word service has for many years been defined by four main characteristics; intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985). These four characteristics are now being questioned due to a new marketing paradigm, Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic). According to S-D Logic, service is a process in which value is created. (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; 2004b; Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004). Gummesson, Vargo and Lusch (2010) argue that the four characteristics (intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability, i.e. the IHIPs) of services and goods (which are well-established among marketers) are not compatible with the new paradigm. The idea that services are intangible and goods tangible does not present a correct picture. A belly operation, which is a service, cannot be looked upon as intangible. On the contrary, it is most tangible for the doctor as well as for the patient. Services can also be standardized and operated by machines, such as IT-services and cash machines. Services are no longer heterogeneous and instead are creating product-service offerings.

2.3.2 The Service-Dominant Logic

Vargo and Lusch (2004a) argue that the term “service” has gained a new meaning. In traditional service marketing, there has always been a difference between products and services. Vargo and Lusch (2004a) have defined service as the application of specialized competences. This definition has drawn attention to the importance of customer service delivery. It is important to note that S-D Logic uses the singular term, “service”, which reflects the process of doing something beneficial for and in conjunction with some entity, rather than units of output – immaterial goods – as implied by the plural “services” (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). The survival and growth of tourism companies’ depends on satisfied tourists that are offered unique and memorable experience. Tourists’ expectations are constantly changing and tourist companies must find ways to anticipate and respond to these expectations (Chathoth, Altinay, Harrington, Okumus and Chan, 2013). Hotels are regarded, for instance, as critical to customers experience and valuable

insights can be made by applying this new emerging conceptual framework, S-D Logic, to the tourism industry (Fitzpatrick, Davey, Muller and Davey, 2013). In S-D Logic, the co-creation of tourist experiences are experiences customized by the tourists and include the sharing of experience between each other (Wang, Li and Li, 2013). S-D Logic is originally based on the following ten fundamental premises (FPs) (Vargo and Akaka, 2009, p. 35):

1. Service is the fundamental basis of exchange
2. Indirect exchange mask the fundamental basis of exchange
3. Goods are a distribution mechanism for service provision
4. Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage
5. All economies are service economies
6. The customer is always a co-creator of value
7. The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions
8. A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational
9. All social and economic actors are resource integrators
10. Value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary

One important FP is that “The customer is always a co-creator of value” (Lusch and Vargo, 2006, p. 284). This means that companies should shift their focus from marketing to co-creation. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) discuss co-creation and its relation to tourist experiences and maintain that it is important to “create an experience environment in which consumers can have active dialogue and co-construct personalized experiences; product may be the same but customers can construct different experiences” (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 8). There are two ways for tourist companies to approach the customers’ expectations – co-production or co-creation. Co-production is focused on a good-dominant logic which means that the customer plays a passive role. Co-creation, on the other hand, is focused on a service-dominant logic, where the customer is engaged in every stage of the

value creation process (Chathoth, Altinay, Harrington, Okumus and Chan, 2013; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a).

Since the publication, Vargo (2009) has argued that four of these ten fundamental premises should be regarded as core premises. These are nr 1, 6, 9 and 10 and they are regarded as having greater importance than the other six. The first premise is that service is the fundamental basis of exchange. The other three core premises are all related to the customer as co-creator of value (Vargo, 2009; Warnaby, 2009).

S-D Logic shows that marketing is a management strategy which includes all parts of an organization, not only the marketing department. For tourist producers it can be strategic to focus their marketing on sustainability as a part of the final customer value. "S-D Logic sees marketing as a social and economic process in which the concept of interaction is central" (Lusch and Vargo, 2006, p. 285). Rather than being a core value, sustainability becomes an indirect value connected to a particular service. The paradigm, the S-D Logic, can therefore create new ways for tourist producers to work with sustainable tourism.

Vargo and Lusch (2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2008) maintain that every employee must be included in a company's service provision. In that sense, all employees become service deliverers of customer value (Bjurklo, Edvardsson and Gebauer, 2009). According to S-D Logic, there are several steps in the supply chain, but the most important is the experienced customer value. When a guest buys a hotel night, the purchase involves both positive and negative aspects. For instance, the location, good facilities, and great food at the hotel can be important. All these aspects affect the guest's final value perception and different guests have different expectations, needs, and wants from the hotel. Moreover, goods offers extra value if they are used for service provision. Products are only valuable if they are used. Consequently, they become a distribution mechanism for service. If a hotel owner buys a new bed, the final aim is to make sure that the hotel guest sleeps comfortably (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2008; Kristensson, 2009).

It is important for tourist producers to think beyond the marketing department and see the entire organization as a service provider. For this reason, tourist producers must see all employees as full or part time marketers (Ballantyne, 2003; Grönroos, 2000; Gummesson; 2002). When value is created the tourist must be part of the process as co-creator (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Value depends on the tourist because it is created during consumption. Accordingly, tourist producers cannot deliver value but only offer value propositions. In order to do that, they must understand the needs and wants of the tourists. Tourist producers need to create relationships with their guests to be able to meet their expectations. Furthermore, the needs and wants of a tourist are subjective. It is therefore possible to create individual value offers to ensure that a tourist receives exactly what he or she requests. Tourist producers need, more than ever, to invent methods to understand what tourists want (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; Kristensson, 2009), in particular when it comes to sustainability. Mass tourism destinations often attract tourists who want sun, sea, and sand. This means that a tourist can choose among a wide range of destinations. To be competitive, it is therefore necessary for tourist producers to work for economic, environmental, and social sustainability.

Since the Vargo and Lusch seminal article (2004a) was published, there has been a debate among researchers as to whether the S-D Logic is something new or not (Grönroos, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2007). Vargo and Lusch, founders of S-D Logic, and Grönroos, from the Nordic School have been on the frontline of the debate. According to Grönroos (2007), S-D Logic is comparable in meaning to service marketing and service management which have been on the agenda since the 1970s. As regards S-D Logic, Grönroos (2006) argues that the customer value is embedded in the exchange but “in reality there is no value for customers until they can make use of the product” (Grönroos, 2006, p. 354). Gummesson, Vargo and Lusch (2010) maintain that if S-D Logic is valid it means that service marketing and service management do not exist because service is an implicit element of marketing and management. Their interpretation of service marketing and service management from 1970 to 2000 is different when compared with S-D Logic.

S-D Logic should be looked upon as a philosophical foundation of service science (Maglio and Spohrer, 2008). Service science combines organization and human understanding to categorize and explain different service systems, and how they interact and helps to co-create value. Service science with its roots in IBM has a clear focus on IT and service. Maglio and Spohrer (2008, p. 18) state that “service systems are value-co-creation configurations of people, technology, value propositions connecting internal and shared information (e.g., language, laws, measures, and methods).” S-D Logic should be looked upon as a philosophical foundation of service science, and the service system might be the theoretical construct (Maglio and Spohrer, 2008). Service science is a combination and mix of many areas such as service management, service marketing, service operations, service engineering, service computing, service supply chain and many more (Spohrer, Anderson, Pass, Ager and Gruhl, 2008). Many governments see the need for service innovation to achieve important goals such as sustainability (Spohrer, Anderson, Pass, Ager and Gruhl, 2008). Service systems can be anything from a city, businesses, and nations to a destination or a hotel. Every service system is both a provider and a client of the service that is connected by value propositions in value chains, value networks, or value-creation systems (Normann, 2001; Maglio and Spohrer, 2008; Barile and Polese, 2010). The different service systems interact to co-create value, but they do not always succeed in co-creation or high value (Spohrer, Anderson, Pass, Ager and Gruhl, 2008).

Shaw, Bailey and Williams (2011) argue that tourism research has failed to incorporate S-D Logic. The tourism sector is increasingly based around the customer experience and focused on the relationship between different actors and their relationships. “Consumer relationships are at the very heart of the tourism industry and S-D Logic provides a conceptual framework for understanding how the customer is becoming central to the development and marketing of tourism products through a process of co-production with the producer” (Shaw, Bailey and Williams, 2011 p. 213). The hotel industry is, nowadays, highly competitive and the guests are becoming more aware when selecting and consuming the service experience. Therefore S-D Logic is appropriate when studying the tourism industry and also in alignment

with sustainability issues as a part of co-creation of value (Fitzpatrick, Davey, Muller and Davey, 2013; Han, Kim and Hyun, 2011).

2.3.3 The Experience Economy

Pine and Gilmore (1999; 2002a; 2002b;) argue that customers nowadays seek experience and are therefore no longer just consuming products and services. Tourism is seen as stages of experience where the tourists look for unique experiences when travelling to destinations. The idea is to create value added memorable experiences for the tourists (Richards, 2001; Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007). Pine and Gilmore (1998) believe that the economy has developed in four stages. The first step is the agricultural community, which is then followed by the industrial society. After the industrial society a service society developed, which is now replaced by an experience society. In today's society, there is a greater focus directed towards experiences, which should lead to the experience economy playing an increasingly important role in society. Today the experience economy is of great importance both economically and socially and it is said that we are moving from an information society to an experience society (Almqvist, Engström and Olausson, 2000). The experience industry includes people and businesses with a creative approach that has as its main task to create and / or deliver experiences in any form (Almqvist and Daal, 2002). Today there is no single definition for the experience economy, whether at national, EU, or international level. The experience industry in Sweden is a relatively new concept but it is well established in the United States, primarily through the superiority of the U.S. in the film industry. In English the experience industry has many different synonymous names, for instance, Experience Economy, Experience Marketing, Creative Industries, Cultural Economy, and Cultural Sectors (Abbasian and Bildt, 2007). In the UK the term "cultural industries" had a great impact and can now be considered to be well established. Britain has for several years been working on the concept of "creative industries" which influenced Sweden, through the Knowledge Foundation, which began the discussion on the subject. In other European countries, such as the Netherlands, there was discussion on "the cultural sector" as an important growth factor. In the U.S., the term entertainment industry is used which has a clear relationship to the film industry. The focus here is more on the commercial interests compared to culture. In Sweden, through the Knowledge Foundation, the concept "creative industries"

was seen too narrowly since it did not include the tourism industry. (Kolmodin, 2008).

Pine and Gilmore (1998) argue that there are four types of experience: entertainment, education, aesthetics and escapism. These four different experiences require both a passive or active participation and the customer either goes into the experience or the experience goes into the customer. However, there are also different experiences in these categories as well as different experience for different individuals. Hanefors and Mossberg (2007) believe that entertainment experience is about feeling and an educational experience is focused on learning. An esthetic experience means just to be there without active participation, and escapism is an experience with active participation of doing something different to the normal.

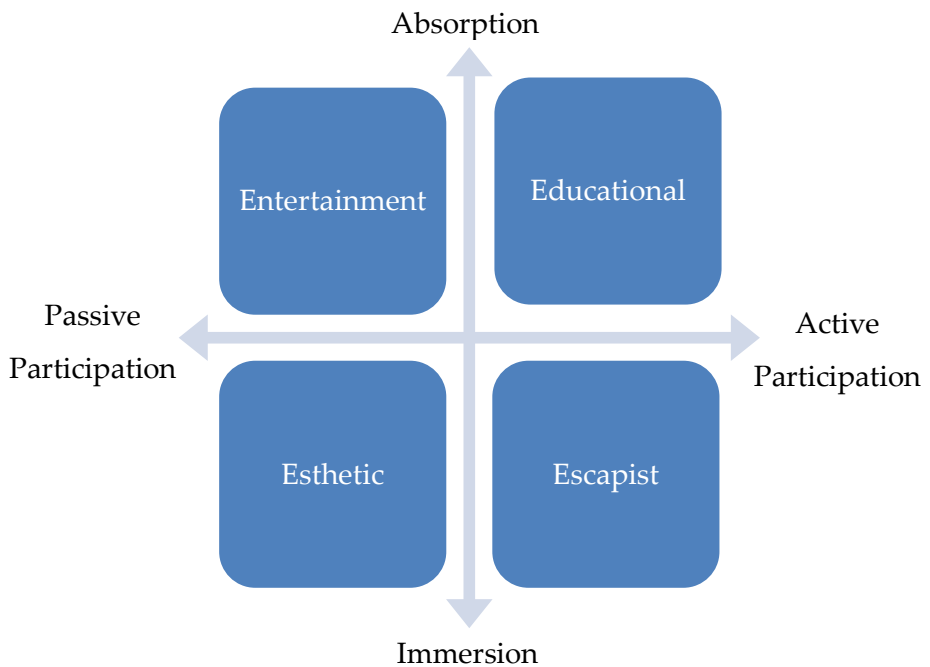


Figure 1: Different types of experiences (Adapted from Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p. 30)

One problem is that customers are different, with different needs, and that each of them has their preference with regard to experience dimensions (Karlén, 2004). Pine and Gilmore (1998) state that two people cannot have the same experience since it is co-created as an interaction between the staged event and the individual's state of mind. Gummesson (2007) argues that a car will be used by different customers in different ways and therefore the experience in value is different. There is also a difference between the supplier's value chain and the customer's value chain, despite the fact that they both lead to co-creation of a value for the customer. Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007, p. 119) argue that "tourist destinations are beginning to be positioned as experiences...tourism destinations are viewed as a means to stage the authenticity that cannot be found in the tourist's daily life". To date, the experience economy has only been introduced sporadically to tourism research. Pine and Gilmore (1999; 2002a; 2002b) argue that the experience economy as a paradigm is at an initial stage within a large range of industries, including tourism and hospitality. At present "the experience economy concept has been introduced to the tourism literature only at an introductory conceptual level" (Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007, p. 129). With this in mind it is interesting to study tourism producers and their work with sustainability with a focus on the experience economy. Furthermore, the network of the tourism industry impact in the experience industry. There is research that shows that a number of stakeholders interacting in complex systems to create experiences to tourists. The perceived value and economic development is created in collaboration between consumers, businesses, and other stakeholders. Collaboration in the experience economy can be seen as a prerequisite, since many projects require different skills in order to achieve results such as the production of a movie (Gustafsson, 2008). Similarly, a tourist in a destination meets several actors who together create the tourism product.

2.4 Summary

The three theoretical areas in the previous presentation and the appended papers can be concluded in the following figure in which the four studies are presented in relation to the theoretical framework. The research method for each study will be further discussed in the following chapter.

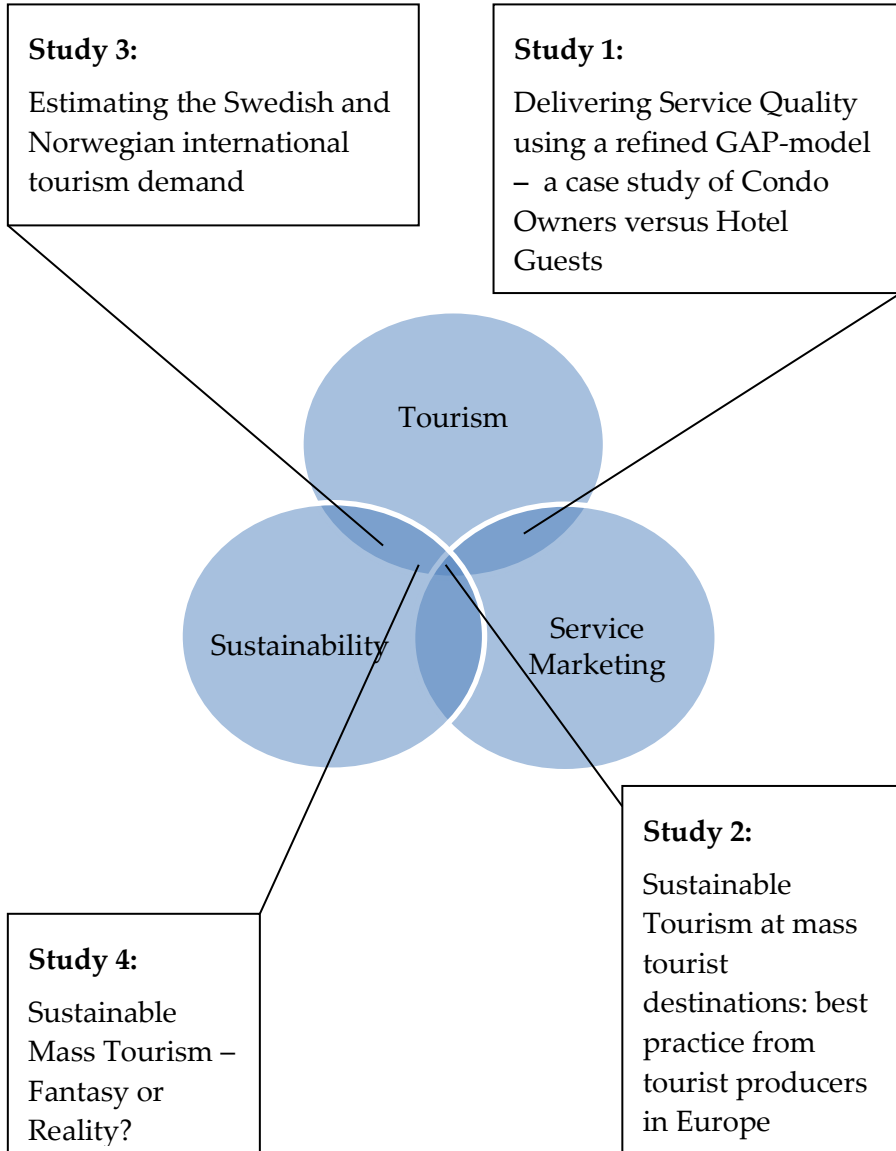


Figure 2: The theoretical framework in relation to the studies

3. Method and research design

This chapter scrutinizes the research process of this research. It presents the research design and method in connection with the objective of the research and the research questions of the summary part of the thesis as well as the four studies.

3.1 Starting point for the research

As has been indicated, the field of study and the keyword of this research is sustainable tourism, which is strongly related to my personal interest in the travel and tourism industry. The research process is demanding and complex and followed an intricate path. It is not assumed that there is only one reality or one truth, but many different perspectives which all depend on interpretations. Arbnor and Bjerke (1994) argue that researchers should only make assumptions about reality and how it should be studied, because there is no such thing as an objective reality. In fact, it is possible my pre-understanding of the tourism industry has influenced my view on sustainable tourism. This view is based on the experiential knowledge from the research process, the data collection, and my own interest in tourism and experience from different destinations around the world. The choice of designing the studies as qualitative case studies is strongly related to my approach to science and research as was positioned already (see also section 3.2 below).

Collis and Hussey (2003) argue that there are four types of research; exploratory, descriptive, analytic or explanatory and predictive research. Exploratory research is focused on gaining insights and familiarity with the subject area and can be conducted e.g. by using case studies, observations and historical analysis. This research uses case studies and observations in study 1 and in study 2 i.e. use exploratory research. In research different research paradigms can also be used. The means that a researcher's belief about the world influences the way the research is designed, performed, and analyzed. There are different aspects to a research paradigm. First, from a philosophical aspect it involves the researcher's basic beliefs concerning the world. Second, from a social aspect it gives guidelines as to how to study from a technical aspect including which methods to use, third, the techniques

that can be used when conducting research. There are different perspectives on a scale from positivistic to phenomenological (Collins and Hussey, 2003; Helenius, 1990). These paradigms address the researcher's ontological, epistemological and axiological assumption.

3.2 Ontology, epistemology and axiology

As has been stated previously, sustainable tourism can be approached in many different ways. A research design is connected with how a researcher interprets and deals with methodological issues in order to reach his or her objective. Zuboff (1988, p. 423) argues that "behind every method lies a belief". This leads the discussion towards ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Firstly, from a philosophical point of view, what are my basic beliefs about the world? I started this research where literature studies and empirical studies were conducted intertwined. First I conducted literature studies to find out what has been done previously concerning sustainable tourism from a marketing perspective. In this section, there is an in-depth discussion regarding my ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions about the world.

In ontology, researchers examine whether social reality is something common or shared. Bryman (2002) has discussed the difference between objectivism and constructionism. According to Bryman, objectivists maintain that the social reality exists without the involvement of social actors. Constructivists, on the other hand, argue that social reality is created and constantly developed by social actors. Personally, I believe that social reality is constructed by social actors, which influences my interpretation and description of sustainable tourism in the thesis. The tourist producers included in the studies, all create sustainable tourism according to their own social reality. The objective of the studies is to understand how sustainable tourism is perceived by tourist producers. My approach is therefore interpretative and I empathize with the tourist actors' standpoint on sustainable tourism. This falls well into the S-D Logic perspective and sustainability issues of tourism and service value through co-creation.

The analysis conducted in the thesis has been performed using an interpretive approach where my perception of sustainable tourism is at the center. This is illustrated by Burrell and Morgan (1979) who argue that four different paradigms for analyzing data exist. I have used the interpretive paradigm. Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. 28) state that “the interpretative paradigm is informed by a concern of understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experiences. It seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action.” In my analysis, this means that I as a researcher must understand the concept of sustainable tourism through the experiences of the actors. It is the tourist producers’ experiences and conception that I analyze. It is both my (the researcher) and the tourist producers (actors) that are interpretive in the research process (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Analysis is in this sense closely connected to interpretation. The tourist producers’ idea of what sustainable tourism means is also connected to the other actors with whom that they interact. For me, this means that they share a mutual idea of what sustainable tourism is in this practical context. It is through interactions that the social reality is created (Norén, 1995).

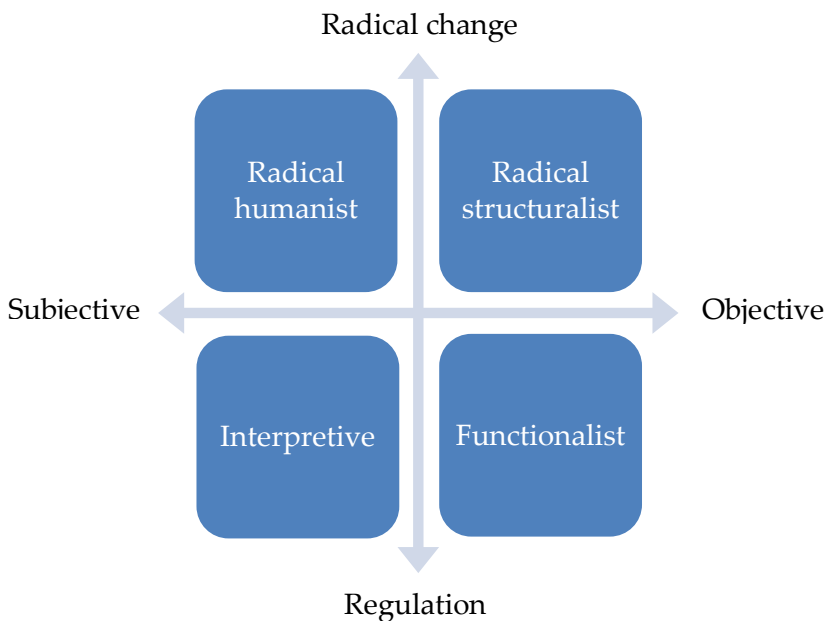


Figure 3: Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis (Adapted from Burrell and Morgan, 1979)

Epistemology is the study of how knowledge is acquired and created (Starrin and Svensson, 1994). In science, it is a question of what is accepted as valid knowledge and how the relationship functions between a researcher and her/his studies (Bryman, 2002; Collis and Hussey, 2003). Positivists, who believe in an objectivist approach, are of the opinion that knowledge is objective and independent. On the other hand, those having a social constructivist approach believe that knowledge is acquired through interpretation and observation of the feelings of others. This is the reason why a qualitative interpretative approach was chosen. I acted as objective as possible, but it is still my interpretation of the tourist producers' work on sustainable tourism which is presented in the thesis (Easton, 1995; Järvensivu and Törnroos, 2010).

Axiology relates to personal interest and values. With regard to the research process the question is whether the process is value-free or not. Positivists argue that the research process should be value-free and the research detached from the researcher. However, phenomenologists believe that the research process is value-loaded. According to the positivists, the research must be disconnected from the researcher to become completely objective. From my perspective, the research process is value loaded and experiential because researchers are always affected by their personal values and presumptions, throughout the entire research process. (Collis and Hussey, 2003) From my point of view, I influence the research since I interact with the tourist producers and I also observe at the tourist destinations.

3.3 Research design

Research within the tourism industry is often complex and dynamic and can therefore be approached from many angles. In this study, a collection of related studies, including different research questions and perspectives, is presented. The research consists of studies conducted within the tourism industry with the overall focus being placed on sustainability from a service marketing perspective. There are two main ways to design the research; with a deductive approach or with an inductive approach. Deductive research means that the researcher study theories and then tests the theories by empirical observations, while inductive research means that theories are developed from empirical

observations. My research did not follow any of these two research designs but rather combined them using an abductive approach. Kovács and Spens (2005) argue that most great research is neither fully deductive nor inductive but rather a combination. The objective of this thesis is to contribute to our understanding of sustainability within the tourism industry from a marketing point of view, focusing on the tourist producers' perspectives, which is done using abductive reasoning during the research process. The abductive approach involves a combination of studying theories and conducting personal studies. In some way, I am alternately using inductive and deductive methods during the different stages of the research process (Järvensivu and Törnroos, 2010). Following the abductive method means simultaneous and combined work with the theoretical framework, the empirical result from the studies and the analysis rather than following an inductive or a deductive approach (Dubois and Gadde, 2002; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 1994). I started my process by finding a research area through a project that caught my interest for sustainable tourism (from my background in marketing). I constructed a theoretical framework and started my studies on different tourist producers. Through observations and interviews I learnt more for next interview and next destination (study 1 and 2). During the research process I therefore returned to the theoretical framework and refined it through the research process. I then also made study 3 that has a rather a deductive approach and finally I made study 4 that is a conceptual discussion on sustainable tourism systematically combining according to Dubois and Gadde (2002) (also see figure 2).

3.4 The theoretical framework in relation to the studies

The theoretical foundation of the thesis is sustainable tourism and service marketing within the tourism industry. It is based on case studies, in which theory generation has mainly been applied (Eisenhardt, 1989; Grönroos, 2006). Grönroos (2006, p. 5) claims that "Research is often oriented towards action research, case studies and qualitative research, but, when appropriate, not ignoring surveys and quantitative methods". Study 1, 2, and 4 all have a qualitative approach to research, while study 3 has a quantitative approach. Despite the third study being based on quantitative secondary data, it is analyzed at a macro level to contribute to the overall objective of this thesis.

3.5 Qualitative case studies

The method in the first two studies uses qualitative case study research. Study 1 is based on a single case in which the studied hotel represents the case. Study 2 is a multiple case study in which the studied destinations represent the cases. Study 2 also contains several interviews with tourist producers from the different destinations. A case study as a research method is often used when a new theory is to be developed (Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995, Eisenhardt, 1989). In social science, it is hard to find proof because of the absence of “hard” theory. “Sometimes we simply have to keep our eyes open and look carefully in individual cases – not in the hope of proving anything but rather in the hope of learning something” (Flyvbjerg, 2001 p. 73). With an interpretative approach, case study research is a way of studying cases more thoroughly. The strength of case studies is that they can provide qualitative data containing profound information. Other data sources such as quantitative data, observations and conceptual discussions with the intention of applying triangulation are also used. Triangulation is a method used to improve the trustworthiness of data. The weakness of my case studies on tourist producers and destinations is that it can be hard to compare them to similar cases, simply because they might appear too specific (see more about my case studies in table 1). Moreover, the interpretative approach in the case studies could render it difficult to make generalizations. The studied cases offered rich and thick descriptions in context which is central to a qualitative approach.

3.6 Data collection

The four studies are conducted with several methods using predominantly qualitative, but also, quantitative data. Moreover, they contain different research questions related to sustainable tourism. Silverman (2006) argues for a combination of qualitative and quantitative studies in addressing research questions. Bryman and Bell (2010) maintain that triangulation involves using various data sources, methods, and theoretical perspectives. The concept of sustainability represents the main theoretical issue in the thesis, but is combined with tourism and service research. These three theoretical areas made the three pillars of the research (see figure 1). From a methodological view, triangulation was used combining an abductive approach, case studies/observations, and quantitative secondary data. Each study has

its own data collection and examines different levels within the tourism industry. Naturally, all the research methods have their advantages as well as disadvantages. Each method and study contributes to the overall objective of the thesis. Miles and Huberman (1994) discuss how triangulation can be used to show meaningful data that agrees or at least does not contradict the findings.

The first study is conducted as a qualitative single case study on a specific hotel in Sweden, applying the perspective of a service deliverer. The objective is to carry out a comprehensive study on the service quality of a micro tourism company (the aforementioned hotel) in order to improve the company's economic sustainability. Bryman and Bell (2010) state that qualitative interviews and participant observations are the most common methods in data collection within qualitative research design. From a sustainability perspective, it is suitable to use the case study method (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989; Grönroos, 2007). The data in article one was collected during eight months through daily participant observations. The observations were carried out by the complete participation of one of the authors and included interviews with the staff (May, 1997). After eight months, the data collection had reached a theoretical saturation point (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The strength of participant observations is its flexibility (May, 1997). Another positive aspect is that the method gives a deeper and more nuanced understanding of sustainable tourism. The weakness is that the researcher is involved in the process and participates in the social construct.

The second study is based on a multiple case study design and has a qualitative approach. The data in study 2 was collected from 2006-2009 through observations and semi structured interviews with, as a minimum, three different tourist producers at four destinations. The destinations are Rimini in Italy, Granada and Lloret de Mar in Spain, and Gotland in Sweden and represent four separate cases regarding how tourist producers work with sustainable mass tourism. The interviews were conducted both in English, and together with an interpreter. The strength of the interviews is that I was on site, and therefore could make my own observations of the tourist producers' companies. I also returned to the destinations after approximately one

year to make further observations. The weakness is that they reflect my personal interpretations of the destinations as well as the tourist producers' work on sustainable tourism.

The third study is designed according to a quantitative approach and the data was selected from Statistics Sweden (SCB) and Statistics Norway (SSB) on a monthly basis from January 1993 to December 2006. The objective of the paper is to estimate the international tourism demand for Sweden and Norway in five countries: Denmark, the United Kingdom (UK), Switzerland, Japan, and the United States (US). The study has a clear quantitative approach, but is meant to contribute to the overall objective of the thesis by interpreting the results, with reference to economic sustainability. In the theoretical field within sustainable tourism, the inflow of tourists and foreign currency is very important for the economic well-being of tourist producers and their work on sustainable tourism. The third study examines this particular issue, and also focuses on sustainable tourism from a national perspective.

The fourth study is designed as a conceptual state of the art paper. It regards the concept of sustainable tourism in relation to what I learned from my previous studies. The paper presents a general discussion on sustainable tourism and concludes the findings from the previous studies. In the research process, all the studies contribute to the fourth article.

The four articles study the different levels and aspects of sustainability within the tourism industry, and how they are linked to each other according to the following figure:

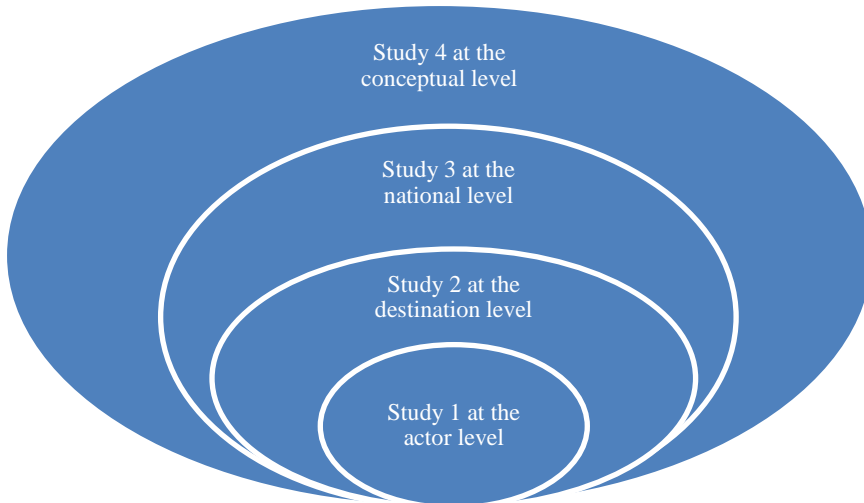


Figure 4: The different levels of the studies

3.7 Data analysis by sensemaking

“Sensemaking involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action.” (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409) The first question of sensemaking is “what’s going on here?” and the equally important second question is “what do I do next?” “Sensemaking is what it says it is, namely, making something sensible. Sensemaking is to be understood literally, not metaphorically” (Weick, 1995, p. 16). It is about detecting cues from events. A central theme in sensemaking is that people organize to make sense of equivocal inputs and enact this sense back into the world to make that world more orderly (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). Sensemaking starts with chaos and means basically inventing a new meaning (interpretation) for something that has already occurred but does not yet have a name. It is also concerned with labeling and categorizing to stabilize the streaming of experience. A crucial feature of labeling and categorizing is that they have plasticity. Categories are socially defined and therefore have plasticity.

Sensemaking is also retrospective because people can know what they are doing only after they have done it. It also includes expectations about the future. Sensemaking is not about interpretation but rather a process that results in an interpretation. "Sensemaking is about the interplay of action and interpretation rather than the influence of evaluation on choice" (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). The process of sensemaking arises in certain steps. First, something happens that needs to be sensed and realized. Secondly, cues are found that suggest a certain meaning. Thirdly, reasonable meaning creation occurs and these meanings are then spread through communication. These speculations become universal but might not be fully accepted immediately. Finally, consensus occurs (Weick, 1995).

Weick (2001) believes that sensemaking is a process which can be successfully used in research. Here this concept is used to understand and make sense of sustainability within the tourism industry. According to Weick, there is no such thing as an absolute truth because a researcher is always influenced by his or her prior understanding. It is for the researcher to find the embedded core of the social construct. Weick argues that reality is an ongoing process which constantly allows retrospection. By retrospection he means that the researcher will always remember and look back at previous cases. In the thesis, the different studies are linked to each other and each study is a contribution to the next. Furthermore, Weick discusses the importance of patterns. "An explorer can never know what he is exploring until it has been explored" (Weick, 2001, p. 189).

3.8 Unit and level of analysis

The different studies, as previously stated, explore the concept of sustainable tourism at different levels. Since the studies are conducted at different levels within the tourism industry this also has an influence on the unit and level of analysis. The studies cannot be compared but rather complement each other since they are conducted directly at different study levels. They are embedded in each other in an analysis of the data. This is illustrated in figure five:

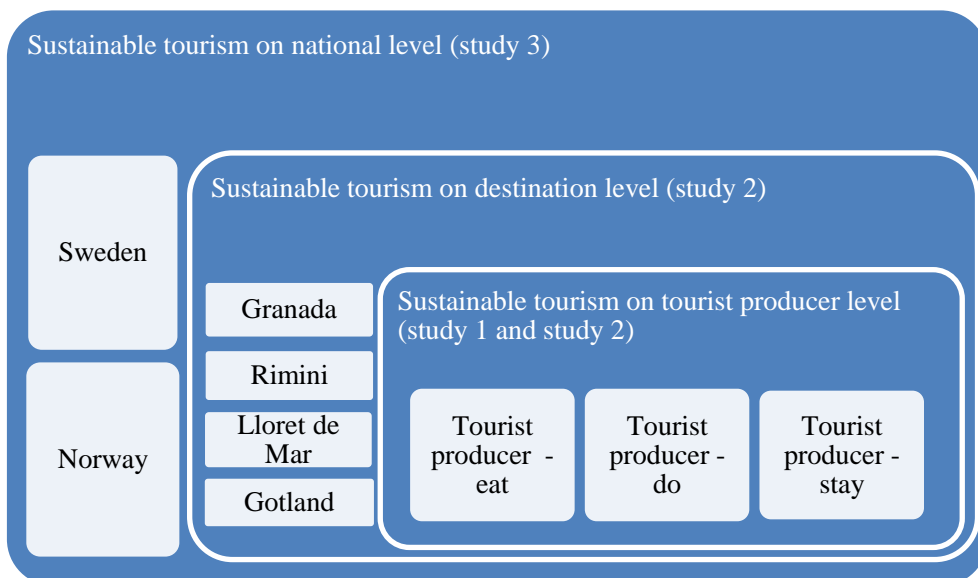


Figure 5: Data analysis on sustainable tourism on different levels

Study 4 is a conceptual discussion on the concept of sustainable tourism and should be viewed as a discussion that provides a framework for the other three studies. The analysis of the concept is based on previous research and the contribution made is a theoretically developed discussion on sustainable tourism.

The data from the first study is an analysis on a micro level where interpretation is made in order to make sense of the hotel's work with two main tourist groups; the hotel guests and the condo owners. The focus is on combining research on service quality with sustainability. The second study explores four different destinations in Europe and different tourist producers at each destination. The four destinations are regarded as different cases. In this study, there is also a comparison between different tourist producers at each destination (e.g. tourist producers that are focused on eat, stay or do). The third study's analysis is focused on two regions in Sweden and Norway and tourist arrivals from five different countries to both regions. This data is interpreted according to the overall research objective of this thesis, but has a much more analytical analysis compared to the other three studies.

3.9 Quality dimensions of interpreting case studies

Reliability and validity are common concepts used for evaluating quantitative research (Yin, 2003; Merriam 1998; Bryman and Bell; 2010). Today, they are also applied in qualitative research. Bryman and Bell (2010) argue that reliability is assured if the result of one study is repeated when the study is conducted again. The other form of, validity is the assessment of the results. However, within qualitative research, many researchers believe in developing more suitable criteria to assess and judge qualitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985; 2000) argue that reliability and validity should be replaced by trustworthiness and authenticity. Since qualitative research is socially constructed, it implies that there is no such thing as one reality. On the contrary, a phenomenon can always be interpreted in many different ways. Trustworthiness consists of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Bryman and Bell, 2010). Credibility is the same as internal validity, as argued by Yin (2003). Yin (2003) also discusses external validity which is compared to transferability. Dependability can be compared with reliability and conformability can be compared with objectivity.

The credibility of a thesis is determined by whether the reader is willing to accept the presented facts as plausible. I have used different types of data collection (case studies, observations, and secondary sources) in order to be able to compare and analyze. Merriam (1998) argues that using triangulation confirms findings through the use of multiple researchers, multiple data sources, and multiple methods.

Transferability might be difficult to present coherently since the studies was set in a specific context; sustainable tourism in Europe. As I am not generalizing my results, I rather aim to contribute to the current knowledge about sustainable tourism. The thesis contributes to the ongoing research debate about what sustainable tourism is and how tourist producers can work with these issues. My aim is to contribute to the theoretical discussion about S-D Logic and how this theoretical paradigm can be used in studies with tourism, and especially concerning sustainable tourism.

Dependability shows that the findings are consistent and could also be found by other researchers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that dependability can be achieved by an audit procedure consisting of; the researchers' documentation of data, methods, and decisions made during a project, as well as the final product. It has been shown in each article how the research process has occurred. I have also critically analyzed my findings and been systematic throughout the process. Three of the articles (study 1, 3, and 4) have been published and have therefore been reviewed by other researchers, and one is published in conference proceedings but has not been reviewed (study 2).

In qualitative research, conformability refers to the fact that a researcher should understand his or her data by applying an honest approach. It is also concerned with the extent to which the results can be confirmed by others. I have, throughout the research process, consistently presented what has been done and how it has been done. During this research I have learnt more from every study and this has led to a reformulation of the research questions and also changing the following study and the theoretical framework during the process.

Authenticity is mostly focused on practical implications. In chapter five I present my practical implications for tourist producers to help them understand the meaning of the concept of sustainable tourism and how it can be used in practice from a marketing perspective.

3.10 Summary

In conclusion, the following table gives a short synthesis of this research.

Study	Aim and Purpose	Method & Data	Perspective
Study 1: Delivering Service Quality using a refined GAP-model – a case study of Condo Owners versus Hotel Guests (Sörensson & Hansson, 2010 ¹)	The purpose is to narrow down the knowledge-gap in the existing literature on service quality regarding condo owned hotels using a refined GAP-model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative • Case study • Daily participant observations during eight months • Interviews with staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tourist producer at the micro level • Economic sustainability by delivering higher service quality
Study 2: Sustainable tourism at mass tourist destinations: best practice from tourist producers in Europe (Sörensson, 2010)	The aim is to examine how various tourist producers at different mass tourist destinations work with sustainable tourism as a strategic marketing tool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative • Multiple case studies • Interviews with different tourist producers at four destinations (12 interviews) • Observations at the destinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourist producers at the destination level • Economic, social and environmental sustainability at mass tourist destinations
Study 3: Estimating the Swedish and Norwegian International Tourism Demand using ISUR Technique (Khalik, Arnesson, Sörensson and Sukur, 2010 ²)	The aim is to estimate the international tourism demand for Sweden and Norway in five countries: namely, Denmark, the United Kingdom (UK), Switzerland, Japan, and the United States (US).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative • Monthly Statistics from Statistics Sweden and Statistics Norway from 1993-2006 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourists at the national level from five OECD countries • Economic sustainability: How exchange rate fluctuations affect tourists' choice of destination?
Study 4: Sustainable Mass Tourism – Fantasy or Reality? (Sörensson, 2011)	The purpose is to discuss and analyze the concept of sustainable mass tourism from a conceptual perspective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptual Paper • Literature Overview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An analysis of sustainable mass tourism at the conceptual level

Table 1: Overview of the four articles

¹ My contribution to the article was to create the theoretical framework and method development and carry out interviews and data analysis.

² My contribution to the article was to collect complete data for the two countries.

4. Conclusions

In this chapter, the conclusions from each of the attached studies are presented and then the results in relation to the overall objectives and research questions of the study.

4.1 Study 1: Delivering Service Quality using a refined GAP-model – a case study of Condo Owners versus Hotel Guests

The first article is focused on the service delivery at one specific hotel in Sweden. For a service company, such as a hotel, it is important to offer high value in order to attract the attention of the customers. By offering high quality, hotels can be more successful and achieve higher levels of economic sustainability. The principle finding from the study, in relation to the overall objective of the thesis, is that high service quality will lead to improved economic sustainability. In this particular study, there is also a focus on two separate segments related to the hotel; the condo owners and the regular hotel guests. Furthermore, the objective of the paper is to contribute to reducing the knowledge-gap in the existing literature on service quality with regard to condo owned hotels using a refined GAP-model. By using the GAP-model, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) have shown that there are several possible quality gaps in an organization, such as a hotel, which can cause service quality problems. This study concerns service quality in the context of condo owned hotels within the tourism industry. Condos are basically apartments which are individually owned. They should not be compared with timeshare apartments. Condo owned hotels are a relatively new phenomenon in Sweden with only a small number existing. This new way of organizing and running hotels differs from regular hotels, which often have only one hotel owner (see study 2).

Condo owned hotels have a completely different organizational structure compared with regular hotels, which affects the service delivery. In this case, there is only one owner of the hotel building and the common areas, such as the reception, the restaurant, the outdoor pool area, the parking lot and the land. The 119 condos are owned individually and can be used by the condo owners as much as they like.

When the condo is not used, it should be rented out to regular hotel guests. The hotel guests, as well as the condo owners, are served by a hotel operating company which runs the hotel. The hotel operating company is in charge of the entire hotel including the service delivery (reception, cleaning, restaurant, pool area etc.). For the hotel operating company it is not an easy task to deliver a high level of service quality which satisfies both the 119 condo owners and the hotel guests. The hotel industry is global and hotels do not differ much from one another as regards. The basic needs of hotel guests such as a bed to sleep in. The condo owned hotel in the study is newly built and aims to achieve a high level of quality and offer unique benefits to its guests. Within the hotel industry, the service quality is usually what makes a hotel unique and competitive. This is also the case for the condo owned hotel in the study. The regular hotel guests have similar expectations of the hotel, whereas the condo owners have different expectations both of the hotel and among each other. Moreover, this new way of organizing a hotel gives a new perspective on service delivery. One example is that the condo owners are entitled to demand a high service level; otherwise they can dismiss the hotel operating company and hire a new one through the condo board.

In a hotel, all employees should be part of the marketing process, not only the marketing department. Service is a process and a guest should always be seen as a co-producer of value (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). For the condo owned hotel in the study this is an essential knowledge since its organization is much more complex than that of a regular hotels. All the employees at the hotel are service deliverers of value, both in relation to the condo owners and to the hotel guests. Their principal concern is therefore to understand the expectations of their guests. This is not an easy task because the expectations differ between hotel guests and condo owners as well as among condo owners. Consequently, the hotel operating company needs to find models to overlap these potential quality gaps in service delivery.

The hotel operating company in the study has noticed that the service quality expectations of the hotel guests depend on whether they are condo owners or regular guests. One example is that condo owners

request more service from the hotel and its staff. In regular hotels, guests have strict check-in and check-out times so that there is enough time to clean the rooms before the next guests arrive. In condo owned hotels, the situation is the same since there are hotel guests who arrive the same day as condo owners leave. Nevertheless, some condo owners are reluctant to respect this; they expect VIP treatment since they are the owners. Similarly, they expect the restaurant to always have a table ready for them, despite the fact that all guests must normally make a reservation in advance. In conclusion, the service quality expectations of the condo owners are somewhat different in comparison with the ones of the regular hotel guests.

In this case, the condo owners are similar to shareholders in other companies. Therefore, further studies based on the refined GAP-model could be carried out on similar organizations in which shareholders communicate with the management through the board. The expectations of the condo owners and the regular hotel guests' at the hotel differ as does their power to influence the value creation. The former have the right to dismiss the hotel operating company whereas the latter only have the possibility to decide whether to return to the hotel or not. The conclusion is that the level of service quality offered by the hotel depends on whether the guest is a condo owner or a regular hotel guest, despite the fact that both categories stay at the same hotel. By applying the developed GAP-model, hotel operating companies have the possibility to detect the differences in expectations among guests and, subsequently, improve their service quality. This will lead to a higher level of economic sustainability.

4.2 Study 2: Sustainable Tourism in mass tourist destinations: best practice from tourist producers in Europe

The second article describes and analyzes sustainable tourism at mass tourism destinations in Europe. The objective of the study is to examine how various tourist producers work with sustainable tourism as a strategic marketing tool. An effective marketing strategy for tourist producers could be to include sustainability as a part of the customer value offer. Accordingly, sustainability would not become the core

value but an indirect value connected to the service provided by tourism companies.

The destinations presented in the study all face different problems and are therefore in need of different development strategies. As a tourism destination, Rimini is in decline and nowadays a tired brand. The destination must work for an improvement in quality in order to attract tourists. Lloret de Mar can above all offer tourists sun, sea, and sand and needs to focus on more than creating revenue to prevent tourists from abandoning the destination. Mass tourism destinations that offer sun, sea, and sand are not unique and tourists can easily choose other destinations around the Mediterranean. Granada, on the other hand, must work harder to make tourists stay at the destination. There are many tourists visiting the Alhambra during the day, but few who want to spend their whole holiday there. Gotland has a short season and needs to find a way to make tourists visit the island all year round, not only in the summer. At each destination, all tourist producers work with different strategic issues in order to create a more sustainable tourism. The results indicate that the product development of the tourist producers is consistent with the strategic issue of the destinations.

The concept of sustainable tourism consists of three aspects; economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The conclusion of study 2 is that tourist producers primarily focus on only one aspect at a time and by doing so they automatically neglect the other two. In Rimini, tourist producers have put their efforts into environmental issues since the seawater quality is one of their major problems. In Lloret de Mar, the economic factor is the most important and the environment is ignored in order to increase revenue. In Granada, tourism relies on the Alhambra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This means that tourist producers focus on the social aspect of sustainable tourism. The tourist producers in Gotland address environmental issues by using local products. In other words, it is very important to keep in mind that tourist producers choose different strategies to deal with sustainable tourism. The concept is full of contradictions and this multiple case study indicates that tourist producers mainly concentrate on one sustainability factor at a time. The results also show that the prevailing conditions at the destinations affect the reasons for which the tourist producers work

with sustainable tourism. They all use the concept as a strategic marketing tool, but they adapt their work to the specific conditions of their destinations.

Tourist producers who work at the same destination need a common approach to be able to offer their tourists a complete experience. The new marketing paradigm, S-D Logic, can be useful for further studies on sustainable tourism and marketing since it clearly shows that each link in the supply chain is essential for the final customer value. Hence, if tourist producers include the concept of sustainable tourism in their supply chain, it will undoubtedly be part of the final customer value. However, tourists are also co-creators of the final value. Consequently, if tourist producers want to promote sustainable tourism, they need to gain a deeper awareness of how tourists perceive the concept. Further research could therefore involve studies on mass tourists and their expectations regarding sustainable tourism.

4.3 Study 3: Estimating the international tourism demand for Sweden and Norway

The third article investigates the international tourism demand for Sweden and Norway. The main objective of the paper is to estimate the tourism demand in five OECD countries, namely Denmark, the UK, Switzerland, Japan, and the US. Monthly time series data from Statistics Sweden (SCB) and Statistics Norway (SSB) were collected from January 1993 to December 2006 to achieve this objective.

The article contributes to the overall objective by focusing on economic sustainability at a national level. Within the tourism industry, it is self-evident that a country (and a destination) needs tourists in order to secure foreign currency inflow. The study examines exchange rate fluctuations in relation to tourists' choice of destination. This is a factor of great consequence with regards to economic sustainability in the tourism industry. Sharpley (2002) argues that tourism is of enormous economic importance to a destination. Moreover, Archer (1996) maintains that many countries are heavily dependent on tourism to maintain and increase their level of income and employment, at the destination level as well as at the national level. In fact, study 3 indicates

that exchange rate fluctuations are linked to the number of tourists visiting Sweden and Norway.

In the article, there are separate equations for each country visited, and these are specified with the relative information included in the equation. We conducted several diagnostic tests in order to specify the five equations regarding Sweden and Norway. Subsequently, we estimated the equations using Zellner's iterative seemingly unrelated regressions (ISUR). The ISUR takes into consideration any possible correlation between the equations and is thus more efficient than other single equation methods, such as the ordinary least squares (OLS).

The results show that the Swedish and Norwegian consumer price index (CPI), lagged dependent variables and several monthly dummy variables representing seasonal effects that have a considerable impact on the number of visitors to Sweden and to Norway. Furthermore, we found that the relative price and exchange rate both have significant effects on the international tourism demand for the five chosen countries. However, although we could consider these conclusions compatible with a theoretical framework describing the relationship between variables in tourism demand models, our demand system lacks a travel cost variable. Nonetheless, our results could have important implications for decision-making processes in Swedish and Norwegian government tourism authorities. They could, in fact, encourage those authorities to integrating economic sustainability factors in their long-term planning.

4.4 Study 4: Sustainable Mass Tourism – Fantasy or Reality?

The fourth and final article focuses on the concept of sustainable mass tourism. The objective of the paper is to discuss and analyze the concept of sustainable mass tourism from a conceptual perspective. The paper should be seen as a conceptual discussion built on the other three studies included in the thesis.

Weaver (2009) argues that there is a need for a new paradigm with regards to tourism and sustainability. At a mass tourism destination, tourism can become more but never fully sustainable. It is possible to achieve improvements in mass tourism, but sustainable tourism can never become a complete reality since it is impossible for tourism to be economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable at the same time. In fact, previous studies have reached the same conclusion; mass tourist producers do not work simultaneously with all three parts of sustainability. On the contrary, they focus on one part at a time, which eventually has proven to have positive effects on the other two (see Study 2).

Sharpley (2000) has divided the concept of sustainable development into “sustainable development = sustainable + development” with the argument that there is a contradiction between the two words. I therefore suggest that the concept of sustainability should be divided into three elements; economic, social, and environmental. By including all three parts in one definition, a blend of contradictions is created which makes the concept hard to use. The three elements will always depend on each other, but if the concept of sustainable mass tourism is to be developed, they need to be separated. The three elements differ too much in meaning and the contradictions between them make it hard to use them together in a constructive way. It would be much easier if they were treated as three distinct concepts instead of one. A separation of the three elements would also make it possible to analyze each part more thoroughly. By only focusing on, for example, environmental sustainability, the issue would become far more emphasized than in a general discussion on sustainable mass tourism. Study 1 and 3 have a clear focus on economic sustainability at two different levels (the micro and the national level).

This study should be looked upon as a first step to create a new perspective and change focus in the sustainability debate. I want to continue the development of a more sustainable future but with a different focus compared to the present. Further studies must be conducted to examine whether this first implication for a new view of sustainable mass tourism is viable. Instead of trying to use the concept of sustainable tourism from the Brundtland Commission Report from

1987, which has not yet been proven practicable and which tourist producers find hard to implement, we need a new perspective, a new starting point. Today, sustainable mass tourism might just be a fantasy, but with a new perspective, it could one day become a reality.

4.5 Conclusions in relation to the overall research objective

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from these four studies in relation to the overall objective. The research objective of the thesis is to analyze and create an understanding of the concept of sustainability within the tourism industry from a marketing point of view, focusing on the tourist producers perspectives.

One of the main conclusions is that the concept of sustainable tourism is relevant to discuss and apply on different levels within the tourism industry from a marketing point of view. There is a need for a common idea about how to work with sustainable tourism at all levels: the small tourist producers, the destinations and countries, and the global level. Tourism as an industry is growing rapidly and the urgent need is to create a more sustainable tourism. As previously discussed in the thesis, there is a difficulty in applying sustainable tourism. First of all, the concept of sustainable tourism with its contradiction of economic growth and environmental concern is problematic to address. A conclusion from this thesis is that although tourist producers tend to focus mainly on one of the three elements the three elements should be seen nevertheless as one idea with sustainable tourism. The tourist producers' focus on one aspect often leads to an effect on the other two. One conclusion is therefore that there is nothing wrong with this focus if it, in the long run, address all three dimensions of sustainability. Changing existing tourism into more sustainable tourism will take time and it is rather better to start the work at some point, rather than not doing anything at all. This could also be done by seeing the benefits of being sustainable, for instance, by using less water and energy at a hotel that leads to economic savings.

The conclusions from the different papers are summarized in figure six:



Figure 6: Conclusions from the different levels of sustainability

Different tourist producers use the concept in their own way and there is still a need to question the practical implication of the concept. It is problematic to have a concept that has a strong contradiction and it is, therefore, important to find ways to make it easier to use in a practical way for the tourist producers. S-D Logic is also more of a philosophical approach to service marketing. There is the same need to make this theoretical approach more practical for the tourist producers. The conclusion from this thesis is that tourist producers can through S-D Logic co-create sustainable tourism with their tourists. The tourists must be included in the creation of tourism experiences and these should be done in a more sustainable way.

At the destination level one conclusion is that there is a need to working together at a destination level to create a more sustainable tourism. The tourists come to the destination and it is every tourist producers responsibility to create a memorable and yet sustainable tourism experience. It is also important to realize that tourists look for different experiences when travelling to different destinations and the co-creation process, therefore, can find different experiences for different tourists. The destinations often have some main attraction and if the destinations together work with the three sustainability elements this will lead to more satisfied tourists. The tourists will not travel to destinations that

have sustainability problems that are economic, social or environmental. At the destination level they must work together in creating sustainable tourism with regards to all three aspects.

At a national level, the conclusion is that the issue of sustainable tourism must be addressed with a common strategy by stakeholders within the tourism industry. If the tourism is not sustainable, it will not survive in the long term. Tourists are looking travelling not just to destinations, but often to countries where they travel around the country. It is therefore crucial that the countries work towards sustainable tourism.

Sustainable tourism is an important issue to address independently where it takes place within the tourism industry. The issue must be of concern to everyone who is involved in the tourism industry. All levels have a bearing on each other and each level is embedded in every other. International regulations, regulations from the European Union, as well as national regulations also have effects on the small tourist producers. Sustainable tourism as a concept should therefore be present at all times when tourism is discussed. It has been stated in previous research that there is a need for more research concerning tourism in relation to S-D Logic and the experience economy. The conclusion from this thesis is that S-D Logic is well suited to research within the tourism industry and sustainable tourism.

When discussing tourism especially, there is a clear application for S-D Logic as a theoretical framework since the tourists are buying an experience when travelling to a destination in Europe. All the tourists might have different expectations, needs, and wants and it is therefore crucial that the tourist producers focus on the co-creation of the tourism experience. The tourism destination is one experience and it is hard to separate the different tourist producers from the destination. There is an urgent need for a more sustainable tourism, from all three elements and the conclusion is that this might be attained with the help of S-D Logic and the creation of memorable experiences for the tourists. Tourists will not visit nor return to destinations with sustainable problems.

5. Contributions

The overall objective of this thesis as stated in section 1.2 is to explore and discuss the concept of sustainability within the tourism industry from a marketing point of view, focusing from the tourist producers perspectives. The thesis includes four separate, but at the same time, intertwined studies. Several contributions can be stated from the thesis; both from a theoretical (see section 5.2) and a methodological perspective (see section 5.3). The following section summarizes the answers to the research questions from section 1.3.

5.1 General contributions

1. How can the Service-Dominant Logic be used for developing sustainable tourism?

Service-Dominant Logic as a theoretical paradigm is well suited for studies within the tourism industry. The tourism industry as a context is complex with many different actors at a destination that interact with each other in order to create a tourism experience for the tourists. It is the value in use created by the tourist and the tourist producer which is important. When a tourist purchases a trip, the tourist becomes part of the service process and thereby a co-creator of the final customer value. The tourism product cannot be standardized since the tourists might have different reasons for their trip and co-creation is therefore individual. The tourist may have different interest in sustainability issues. A destination must attract tourists and they should offer a sustainable tourism experience. My studies have shown, for instance, that destinations with environmental problems have had a decrease in visiting tourists, which has had economic effects on the tourist producers' revenues. The tourist producers should focus their sustainability work on the aspect of greatest importance and can therefore use S-D Logic in their value creation. Tourists also interact with each other at the destination which also contributes to the tourist experience. S-D Logic as a theoretical framework emphasizes the creation of a final value and co-creation. S-D Logic highlights the importance of co-creation from a producers' perspective which is easy transferable to the tourist industry.

2. How can the concept of sustainable tourism be used by tourist producers at various destinations in Europe?

Tourist producers at mass tourist destinations work with sustainability depending on their situation concerning the three aspects of sustainability. Destinations with environmental problems tend to address the environmental sustainability since it is of concern for them. Other destinations with strong social attractions, such as Granada, focus their sustainability work mostly on the social aspects. It is the context specific issues that come into focus. The first study showed that economic sustainability and service delivery affects a condo owned hotel's performance, e.g. at the micro level. The study contains a refined GAP-model which could be used by other companies to improve their service quality and thereby reach a higher level of economic sustainability. The GAP-model should be seen as a theoretical contribution to service marketing research (S-D Logic) as well as a practical implication for the tourism industry. In contrast to Study 1, the second study examines the work of a number of tourist producers located at different mass tourism destinations, e.g. at the destination level. One of the contributions from the study is that tourist producers tend to work with only one sustainability factor at a time. Not one of the tourist producers participating in the study dealt with all three factors (the economic, social, and environmental) simultaneously. However, this way of approaching sustainability has eventually proven to have positive effects on the remaining aspects. An additional contribution is that the conditions at the destinations determine which sustainability factors tourist producers choose to work with. It is also evident that they use the concept of sustainability as a marketing tool to attract tourists to their particular business.

3. How do tourist producers work with sustainable tourism from a service marketing perspective?

It has been shown that the concept of sustainable tourism has not proven to be a very successful tool, either for tourist producers or for governments. The main reason seems to be that there are too many contradictions between the three sustainability aspects. For most of the tourist producers economic sustainability is of the greatest concern. They work with sustainable tourism with the hope of attracting the tourists to their destination. If the destination acquires environmental

problems it will lead to fewer tourists wanting to go there. The problem remains that the tourist producers only tend to address one of the aspects at a time despite the fact that the elements are intertwined. Accordingly, my suggestion is that the concept should be divided into three separate parts; economic sustainability, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability. The three aspects always depend on each other but by working with one issue at time it might be easier for the tourist producers to apply sustainable tourism to their tourist offer. By dividing the concept, it might place more focus on the environmental and social factors rather than just the economical. The three factors will always depend on each other and none of the can be omitted. There must, finally, be a clear understanding and focus on all three areas.

4. How can tourist producers create and develop sustainable tourism in practice?

The study shows that with regards to sustainability tourist producers tend to focus only on their own business without taking into consideration the work of other stakeholders at the same destination. Another problem is that they do not have a long term plan for their sustainability work but seem to concentrate only on one tourist season at a time. To create more sustainable tourism, it is therefore imperative that tourist producers start to cooperate with each other and make long-term strategic plans. An additional contribution is that the phenomenon of sustainable tourism is examined at different levels and from different perspectives, which contributes to the overall objective. The three parts of sustainable tourism still depend on each other and for every destination it is an important issue how they work with sustainable tourism. Tourists have a certain image of destinations, but this can be developed and further discussed in order to become more sustainable. Since the tourists are co-creators of the value they experience at a destination, and it is therefore important with sustainable tourism. By creating a more sustainable tourism, the tourist might return to the destination for another visit. Co-creation become a key tool in which all stakeholders, tourists, and tourist producers are part of an actor network in which they should work together to create more sustainable tourism for the future. It is hard, even impossible, for small tourist producers to work with social sustainability on their own – it must be in co-creation at the destination and at the national level. It is the same

situation concerning environmental sustainability – it must be a part in a network of different actors. The different issue concerning sustainability has a clear and strong contextual dimension. The tourist producers are focused on the issues of interest for them at their destinations.

The result is concluded in the following model where the destination is in the center surrounded by the three dimensions of sustainability. This implies that the destination must develop and work with a focus on all three dimensions of sustainability with the aim of co-creating memorable tourist experiences. The three dimensions of sustainability are always present at a destination.

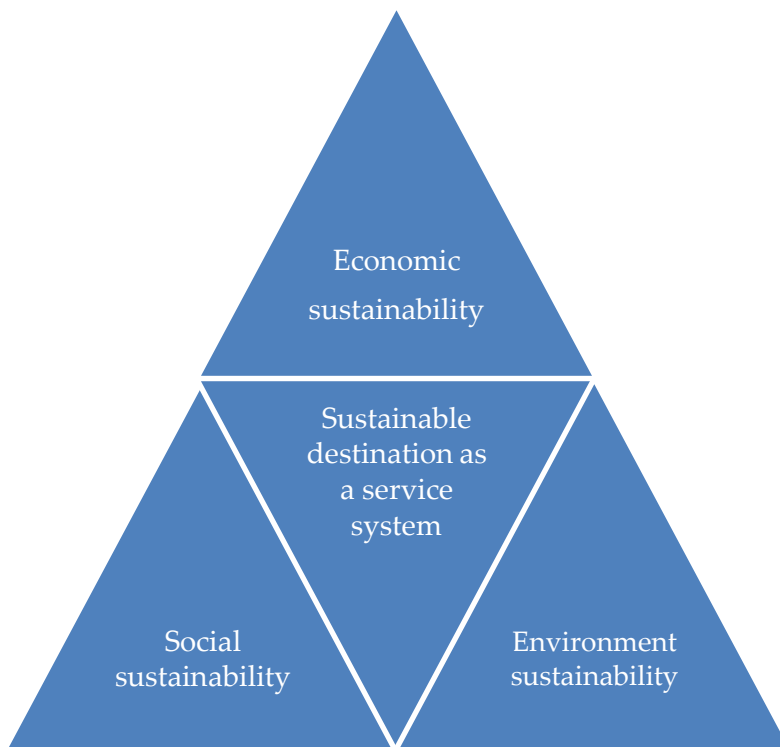


Figure 7: Sustainable destination as a service systems

5.2 Methodological contributions

With regard to the contributions this study makes from a methodological point of view, the conclusion is that tourism industry research should be carried out at a local level (e.g. at the destination). Here the observation has been used as a method which gives a deeper contextual insight and also contributes to studies about sustainable tourism. In my research, I have used observation as one of my methods. This method is considered to be a very comprehensive and the results can contribute to other studies on sustainable tourism. Sensemaking should be looked upon as a tool to understand the tourist producers' interpretations of in what way the concept of sustainable tourism is used, and how it is used. The tourist producers have a process at each destination where they share the understanding of the concept from their perspective. I have analyzed the data using sensemaking as a key tool.

First, I identified what tourist producers do when they work with sustainable tourism at their destination. I also looked back during my research process using retrospection when I listened to information they related about how and why they started working with sustainable tourism. My retrospection during the research process also is a good combination as regards an abductive research process. Tourist producers at each destination also enact and I also interacted with them during my research. At most of the destinations, tourist producers also meet discuss and interact in order to understand and to organize and cooperate with their work with sustainable tourism. Since tourism produces tourism offerings in cooperation it is a social activity. I also participated in the social process by performing my studies on site at the destination. The tourist producers cooperate and collaborate in co-creating a tourist product to the tourist visiting the destination. This thesis together with my studies is a snapshot of what tourists experiences as sustainable tourism, however, it is an ongoing process. The concept and work of the tourist producers is evolving and the tourist producers in Europe are becoming increasingly aware of the issue of sustainability and that they need to do something together. During the process, I extracted cues and became progressively aware of the problematic issues concerning sustainable tourism. At destinations,

the tourist producers interact with each other and also with the tourist to learn about sustainable tourism and its various aspects.

An additional contribution to this research field, is that it seems to be possible to change the existing mass tourism into more sustainable tourism. It is important to have a long-term perspective and it is important to make this change in co-creation with other tourist producers as well as with the tourists. One problem is that mass tourists are not looking for unique experiences but rather sun, sea, and sand are the main attractions. The tourist producers need to add value for the tourist through sustainable tourism. For example, excellent local foods that give the tourists a memorable experience increase the social sustainability at a destination. If the tourists enjoy the food it is possible that this can lead to more returning guests. At mass tourist destination the tourists look for sun, sea, and sand and it is therefore important to find other dimensions that will improve the tourist experience.

The research has also shown that S-D Logic can be more than just a philosophical discussion and the idea can be implemented in a more practical way. With the help of co-creation the tourists can experience more sustainable tourism at the destinations. Established tourist destinations must adjust to becoming more sustainable since it is impossible to have mass tourism without any consideration of the three sustainability dimensions. Although one aspect is often focused on, i.e. the economic dimension, the social and environmental are addressed in some cases. This change in the existing mass tourism can be seen as a process where the tourist producers' must first start with one of the three dimensions (but in the long-term all three must be in corporate since they are depending on each other).

Another contribution to the research area is that sustainability must be addressed at different levels in the society (from micro to macro level) and from many different perspectives (the tourists as well as tourist producers or other stakeholders at the destination, inhabitants at destinations, for example). Sustainability must be included if the tourism industry is to survive a continued growth. If countries and destination want to attract tourists they should find ways of creating

sustainable experiences for the long-term. The thesis also shows that sustainability can be used as an asset instead of something that will cost more for both the tourists and the tourist producers. The different cases from mass tourist producers in Europe show that smart sustainable investment can give economic benefits for the tourist producers.

5.3 Critical remarks

This thesis is my interpretation at a certain time and there is no assurance that another researcher would come to the same conclusions. My aim has not been to generate general results but rather to contribute to the academic discussion concerning sustainable tourism from a service marketing perspective. The findings from the studies might be transferable to other studies in similar settings. The theoretical framework that I have used could be used for other studies about sustainable tourism. My studies were conducted during 2006 until 2010 and the discussion about sustainable tourism is still evolving. The included studies are therefore a portrait of the tourist producers' work with sustainable tourism at a certain time and my interpretation of their work. If I was to conduct my studies later on the result might be a different or it might be the same. Even if research is strongly context-bound and associated within a certain time, there are still lessons to be learnt from this research process. Knowledge from this research approach cannot be generalizable in a traditional manner. It is rather a thick description that is the foundation for understanding and making sense of a specific context and course of events. Lincoln's and Guba's (1985; 2000) discussion on thick descriptions is based on similarities between the cases or contexts. Even if research is done in a different time and space there is still knowledge that can be applied. The research approach can also build novel theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). The research has studied and analyzed tourist actors in their context and their understanding of sustainable tourism in interaction with others during the research period.

5.4 Implications for the tourism industry

This thesis examines economic sustainability within the tourism industry at four different levels: the micro level (Study 1), the destination level (Study 2), the national level (Study 3) and the conceptual level (Study 4). The suggested implications are divided

according to their respective levels. Study 1, which looks into the service delivery at a condo owned hotel, contributes with a refined GAP-model which could be used by tourist producers to achieve higher service quality and thereby improve the level of economic sustainability in their companies. Study 2, which examines various tourist producers' approach to sustainability, and this implies that tourist producers should adapt their work with sustainable tourism to the specific conditions of their respective destinations. They should deliberately decide which of the three sustainability aspects they want to focus on in order to facilitate their future work. The third study presents important implications for decisions makers within the tourism industry. According to the results of the study, decision makers should be aware that exchange rate trends play an essential role with regards to tourists' choice of destination. Hence, this implication should be taken into consideration when setting up marketing plans. The fourth study is a conclusion of the three previous studies but also presents practical implications both for tourist producers and for governments. The study shows that the concept of sustainable tourism should be divided into three separate aspects (economic sustainability, social sustainability and environmental sustainability) to enable more thorough analyses of each aspect, but also to make the concept more practicable for tourist producers. Otherwise, there is a risk that the concept of sustainable tourism remains only an ideology, without any practical implications.

5.5 Further research

In research it is most important to understand that our society is constantly changing. During the course of my research, new facts that affected my studies constantly occurred. Hence, I am not entitled to say "This is how sustainable tourism functions from a marketing perspective". Further studies must be conducted to examine how tourist producers approach sustainable tourism and such studies should not only include mass tourism producers.

It could be interesting to enlarge the area and study other tourist producers in other geographical areas (e. g. outside of Europe). The main objective of this thesis is to study the work of tourist producers. Further studies could, as an alternative, examine tourists and their perspective on sustainable tourism from a marketing standpoint. What

decisions do tourists make in relation to marketing and sustainable tourism? What are the most important factors within sustainable tourism according to tourists? Do they know anything about environmental sustainability? Furthermore, it would be interesting to understand whether a division of the three sustainability aspects, as suggested in the thesis, could facilitate tourist producers' work with sustainable tourism.

This research has also shown the importance of relationships and networks. An interesting suggestion for further research could be to study sustainable tourism networks at destinations. The study has shown that building networks is crucial but this requires further work.

Yet another suggestion for further studies is to examine the concept in relation to destinations and destination planning. This thesis has focused on sustainable tourism from the perspective of tourist producers, but there is also a need to conduct studies at the destination level, which would include policy makers. Furthermore, it could be of interest to learn more about the role of governments and EU decision-making with regard to sustainable tourism. To conclude, much remains to be done in the field of sustainable tourism and its connection to marketing.

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