French tourism decision-making and conception of Ecotourism

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Table of Contents

Table of figures, graphics and tables

Introduction

Eco touristic traveling has been a growing trend in the past years and has completely transformed tourism for some destinations in the world. Countries like New Zealand and Australia have already developed an important strategy concerning this form of tourism making it important for the country's economy; other countries have started to realize the importance and also have started to develop this field. In France for the past 10 years this has been a growing trend that promises to be an important part of the tourism in the country.

France is one of the top countries in tourism having many visited places throughout the year and it's an attractive country to any kind of tourist. This growth is all thanks to the many improvements done; nowadays French tourism is not focusing only in urban areas such as Paris or Lyon, but it is starting to be more diverse. For instance, Rural and Mountain locations have an important portion of the total of the hotels that tourist visit, 16% for rural space and 4% for mountain in chain hotels, also for independent like hotels, the percentage is even higher, because between rural and mountain hotels cover a total of 38% of the distribution of the French hotel sites. Equally the growth of camping activities show how it is becoming a trend and a new attraction to travel to rural places, because the positive variation of 16% in 2006 against the -7% it was in 1999. It's suitable to establish the growing importance of different types of tourism.

In my investigation, studying the French tourist in general can be something interesting, because it will help understand how consumers are starting to act in a market that has come a long way and it is still growing, and by doing this it will be possible to understand the kind of consumer the French really is. The best way to study this consumer is by primary recollection of data at the beginning, and supporting the investigation with related information from other sources.

Therefore, a behavioral trend could be seen, giving a good approach on the way French are traveling, and the key facts of their purchase decisions in the moment they travel. So analyzing the process they make in the moment of choosing from the decision making process.

 Then, after defining the kind of consumer the French tourist is, is when it is important to know what they understand what ecotourism is, and which concept the French consumers have in mind already, and if this concept of ecotourism is because of a cognitive process, which means that ecotourism is something learned from observation or from things seen in their country or by previous knowledge; also what they would expect of it and if they are interested or would do it.

Grasping the key factors of a market is important to provide better management strategies, and comprehending the behavioral attitudes and preferences of a market can facilitate this. So realizing this of the French tourism market, gives an important edge on how to act, in this case in ecotourism.

All of this is important to see if it's possible to connect the French to a market like ecotourism, because it can become an important opportunity, and it would be a way of taking advantage of a new touristic trend.

Part 1 Literature review

1 Ecotourism Concept

1.1 History

In the global summit of environment and development, organized by the UN (United Nations), the discussion of the deteriorating relationship between man and nature, leads to the development of a sustainability model, and by this arguments the concept of Eco Development arises. Then, in 1987 in the report titled, "Our Common Future", presented in the general assembly of the United Nations for the global commission of environment and development, the model of Sustainable Development surges, and it's defined as something that addresses the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The international union of conservation of nature then gives a more explicit definition of the one established in 1987, and it is the process of which development occurs without damaging or depleting the resources that make it possible. This is achieved generally by managing resources in a way in which they can be renewed at the same rate that they are being employed, or changing from a resource that is generated slowly to one that moves at a faster pace. In this way the resources will continue to support present and future generations. It was at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro, which strengthened the concept of Sustainable Development, as well as considering new measures relating to the relationship between tourism and development worldwide. The same is founded on three principles:

- Ecological sustainability ensures that development is compatible with the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and biological resources.
- The social and cultural sustainability ensures that development will increase the control of men over their own lives, is compatible with the culture and values of those affected, and maintain and strengthen community identity.

- Economic sustainability ensures that development is economically efficient and that resources are managed so as to preserve for future generations.

Not surprisingly, tourism is the one of the most important economic activities in the world, and it's a perfect way to apply the sustainable development concept, so in this stage is where sustainable development begins, starting in the 90's decade. (Alternative)

1.2 Definition

There are different ways of understanding what ecotourism really is, it depends on each person, and in their experience in activities related to this. It is also used by tourist operators as a strategy to attract customers, mainly as a marketing tool.

These companies often use terms such as adventure travel, and the popular word of ecotourism. But there are other renamed concepts that are used: sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, and nature based travel, green travel, multi-sport adventures, geo tourism and cultural tourism. It is important to establish the differences of all of the mentioned concepts.

Having a main insight in the mentioned definitions is important to understand the reason why this type of tourism is interpreted in many different categories.

To begin with, adventure travel is a kind of tourism that focuses mainly on two aspects; the first one is offering the user a different experience, something that is unusual and unconventional; the second is to stimulate a certain degree of risk and uncertainty. There is a distinction in this category of traveling; being that it contains two types, soft adventures which have a clear lower level of risk, less physical effort and greater comfort in accommodation, and hard adventures are the contrary.

Secondly, a very popular word that is often used as a sales hook is sustainable tourism that is defined as: "Any form of tourism that does not reduce the availability of resources and does not inhibit future travelers from enjoying the same experience. If the presence of large numbers of

tourists disturbs an animal's mating patterns so that there are fewer of that species in the future then that visit was not sustainable" (Path, 2007)

Equally, green tourism is often used as a synonym of sustainable tourism, and ecotourism, but they differ in the extent of what the activities developed are aimed for. Green tourism focuses in any activity that is environmental friendly. For example a lodgment with solar powered system fits perfectly in this category.

Another important category is the cultural tourism one, that is simply the interaction of someone in another culture, but this interaction needs to have a high level of involvement with the culture.

Likewise, the term geo tourism is very much what cultural and green tourism definitions explain, and even many other of the concepts of this specific type of tourism. The one mentioned is defined as a Tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place its environment, heritage, aesthetics, culture, and the well being of its residents (TIES, 2006). So this definition is a clearly a general approach that meets many of the elements of the various kinds of this travel style profile.

Also, three concepts that are also mentioned but are a much more wide category; firstly nature based tourism, which is just tourism based in an experience with nature, for example a safari in region of Africa; secondly responsible tourism seeks for tourism to leave no negative traces in the environment and the nature; finally multi sport adventures which are all of the sports such as rock climbing, kayaking, surfing, etc that are conducted in eco areas, and this is mainly used as a way to arise of awareness of taking care of the places and to conserve them.

All of the mentioned above aim and are part of what ecotourism is, but a general and worldwide known definition is the one given by The International Ecotourism Society that defines ecotourism like *"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."* (TIES, www.ecotourism.org, 2010)

Following what this definitions explains it is important to determine the principles that should be followed to be considered someone engaging eco touristic activities, and these are:

- Minimize impact.

- Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect.

- Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts.

- Provide direct financial benefits for conservation.

- Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people.

- Raise sensitivity to host countries political, environmental, and social climate.

It is possible to assume that there are two completely different views of what ecotourism and its numerous definitions; the first one is mainly a marketing tool, in which the environment is used to market a product; the second one envisages on the public interest but not to use the environment as a marketing strategy but to conserve the resources in which the product is based, that is clearly the environment.

Even though there are many of this concepts, and are often misused, or misinterpreted, the concept and meaning is ambiguous, and it isn't clear which one is the correct. Clearly in some activities it is easier to determine, but in the end the interpretation of the meaning of ecotourism, and the way people see it is very different.

Probably in some countries the concept is seen differently, because of the activities that are commonly engaged, leading to different ways of thinking what it is, mainly because people are more used to seeing a certain type of touristic offers and the activities that are usually done so the concept is taking from cognitive experience, more form what they see.

In the end ecotourism is the best way of concretizing the sustainable development model that is established worldwide.

1.3 Purpose of Ecotourism

Ecotourism seeks to contribute to the conservation of natural resources, as these are the basis for ecotourism supply, together with local cultural events. Also another aspect is to highlight the assessment of natural and cultural heritage, in view of being natural and cultural resources the

key elements of the eco touristic product. Logically, these products are valued for the economic benefits they provide, improving the quality of life and perpetuating it through time.

Equally, it leads to the planning and management of natural and cultural resources, by generating jobs and economic benefits to local people, improving the quality of life.
Ecotourism also promotes scientific research and investigation, especially regarding natural resources, which is important to the development of sustainable alternatives, concerning energy and other matters.

It integrates all of the population in the development of the national economy.
It's an important tool for training and making the population and eco tourists in general more aware of the environment. And this is one of the key elements of ecotourism, which is what it seeks to disseminate.

1. Effect on the Ecotourist

increasing success of strategy

Enjoyment satisfaction → Behaviour lifestyle change

2. Effect on Natural Environment

Passive Minimise disturbance to environ. → increasing success of strategy → **Active** Actions that contribute to the health of environ.
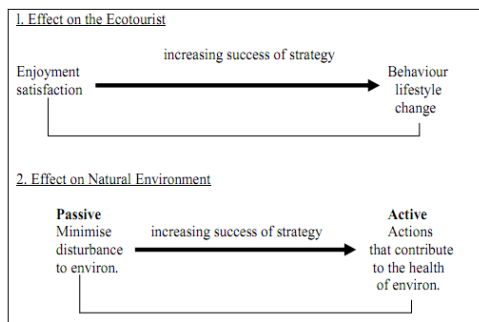
Figure 2. Objectives of ecotourism management strategies

(IOAN COSMESCU, 2007)

Figure 1 Main objectives of ecotourism

The previous figure states that eco touristic activities look to affect positively the consumers' way of thinking, and diversifying the impact of tourism, that is generally satisfying; what ecotourism changes is lifestyle, by making society much more conscious of the environment, and the way of measuring it is how active are consumers with their actions of contribution to the environment; a higher change in behavioral lifestyle and activeness in the actions to contribute positively the environment, demonstrate the success of eco touristic strategies.

Other important aspects that it seeks, is the encouragement of creating medium, small and micro enterprises of eco touristic activities, so it's fomenting and incentivizing new businesses to start an activity.

One very important aspect that is generated by this type of tourism is that it is contributing to the economic improvement of tropical countries with depressed economies, and channels funds, donations and technical assistance for natural resource conservation and community improvement, which generates development greatly.

Also the economic improvement is done by growing the touristic activities of countries, and some which have the natural resources and can develop ecotourism easier than others.

2 Tourism and Ecotourism

2.1 Tourism Overview

The global growth of ecotourism over the years has been exposed to many different changes, in size of market, importance as an economic activity for countries among other elements.

The changes over the years can be synthesized in important events and significant changes, named below.

- 1950: 25 million tourist arrivals.
- 1990's: Tourism grew globally at 7% per year.
- 2004: 760 million tourism arrivals corresponded to a 10% global growth.
- 2005: The number of international tourist arrivals recorded worldwide grew by 5.5% and exceeded 800 million for the first time ever
- 2020: Global tourism is forecast to reach 1.56 billion international arrivals.
  (TIES, 2006)

In the terms of business size tourism is the largest business sector in the world economy. The travel and tourism industry is responsible for 230 million of jobs and 10% of the total gross domestic product in a worldwide scale.

For many economies, tourism is significant for the countries growth and progress. Globally for over 150 countries, tourism is one of the top five earners for the economy, and in 60 of them it's the most important in terms of exportation. So this data clearly states the importance of this sector in all of the countries, clearly some depend of this economic activity differently than others but it still is an essential element for the economies development, and many of the countries resources are designated for this economic activities; in 2006 Travel & Tourism (consumption, investment, government spending and exports) is expected to grow 4.6% and total US$6.5 trillion. (TIES, 2006)

The importance of this sector for developing countries is high, and many of their economies depend directly of tourism, and it's their direct source of income. Therefore, for 83% of the

developing countries tourism is the principle basis of income of foreign exchange currencies such as US dollar, and it's also the leading activity for 33% of the poorest countries. Continuing with the figures, the projected growth figure of international tourism is of 9.5% a year, compared to the 4.6% growth worldwide.

Accordance with the above, tourism for poor countries has a strong connotation in the nation's economy, and for 40 of the world's poorest countries this activity is the most important, or in some cases the second most important, after oil production.

In the last decade, for poor countries, tourism has been the only sector in international trade in services where surplus is generated, and in a general and constant way.

Even though, tourism does bring a lot of positive elements to the countries and is also providing production and development in some areas, it does have a negative impact to the environment.

For example, in 109 countries that have coral reefs and it's estimated that 90 of these are being damaged, so the deterioration of these is generated by cruise ship anchors and sewage, tourist damaging them, and by commercial harvesting of tourists. So the preservation of the natural resources has been an important subject for countries, and even more, for those who depend directly in it, and the solutions such as making tourism more sustainable have started to become much more appealing.

2.2 Current Tourism situation

Tourism has been having diverse downfalls in the past years due to many factors that slowed down the most important sector in the world in terms of productivity.

In first place, the economic crisis the world faced, made people travel less, causing a decrease in the revenue of the business, also the credit crisis, the raise in the unemployment rates and even the flu pandemic that has been present just recently un a global scale. But even though these

problems made the industry slow down and be affected during 2008, and having a notorious worsening in the following year, as the general secretary of WTO (World Tourism Organization) Taleb Rifai mentioned, in 2010 the problems of these years would begin to cease making room for growth, but anyhow it would be a slow year. (OMT, 2010)

In 2010, the concerns for the market where put mainly on the risks of A(H1N1) virus, a slow growth in the global economy, also unemployment was expected to grow. But even though at first these variables and some others were expected to slow down the industry had an important rebound.

A very important fact in 2010 is that China reinforced its position as a top destination, in both number of arrivals and total receipts by touristic activities; since 2000 China has multiplied its expenditure by four times, making it the fastest growing country over the last years . In arrivals, it overtook Spain and is ranked third, after United States and France, and in receipts it's ranked fourth, overtaking Italy, and also Hong Kong has started to become one of the top cities to generate high expenditure. Also France maintains a top position in the tourism market, since it's the first in arrivals and the second in total receipts, following the United States that is ranked first in total receipts.

So in terms of numbers, during 2010 the estimate for receipts is estimated to have reached US$919 billion worldwide, a higher number compared to the one in 2009 which was US$ 851 billion. In real terms if the numbers are adjusted to the exchange rate fluctuation and inflation, tourism receipts have had a 5% increase, and also there is an increase of 7% in arrivals, so if the relation between the two numbers, it is seen that arrivals tend to pick up faster than the total receipts. (WTO, 2011)
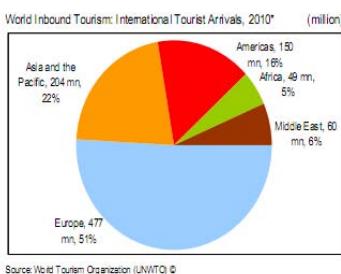
Graphic 1 International Tourism Arrivals

This graphic shows the total arrivals in 2010, so it's in terms of the number people that went to a certain region in the world. Looking at the graphic, it is clear that Europe is still the number one destination in the world, followed by Asia that has been growing ion the touristic market because of the increase of visitors to China.

World: Inbound Tourism
International Tourism Receipts, 2010*   (US$ billion)

Asia and the Pacific, 203 bn, 24%

Americas, 166 bn, 20%

Africa, 29 bn, 3%

Middle East, 42 bn, 5%

Europe, 411 bn, 48%

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©
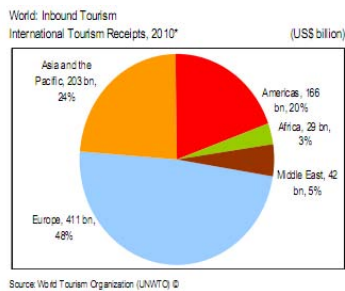
Graphic 2: International Tourism Receipts

This graphic represents the total receipts of tourism during the year, and the influence in the total income that each continent took part, and it maintains the same tendency as the arrivals in the order of importance, where Europe continues to be the most important source of income for tourism, followed by Asia and the Pacific, continued by the Americas and so on.

In 2011 during the first two months, in most of the regions of the world the growth of tourism with the exception of the Middle East and North Africa is perceived; for example in South America and South Asia there was a raise in 15% which was the highest, flowed by the sub-Saharan Africa with a 13% of total growth, and finally Central and Eastern Europe with an important raise of 12% (WTO, 2011).

Based on a sample of almost 100 destinations that reported results in the first two months of 2011, the growth of touristic arrivals has reached 4.7%, which means that the total arrivals surpass 124 million, an important growth compared to the 118.5 million seen in 2010. Then, in this growth, emerging economies took an increase of 6% which is faster pace growing than advanced economies which grew 4%.

International Tourist Arrivals, monthly evolution
World   (% change)

International Tourist Arrivals, monthly evolution
World   (million)

2008
2009
2010
2011*

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©

Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©
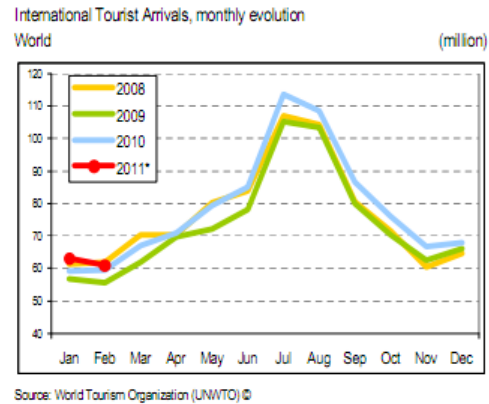
Graphic 3-1 & Graphic 3-2: International Monthly Evolution in Tourist Arrivals

This two graphics show the monthly evolution of tourism on a world wide scale. And comparing the periods of 2011 with past years, the growth in 2011 is much higher in January, and with both of these months the growth is very positive for tourism. In comparison to 2009 where tourism suffered strong decline in number of arrivals, and 2010 which had a slightly less number of arrivals in the first period of the year, 2011 has a positive prospectus of growth in this year.

Observing each of the regions of the world separately and their performance it can be seen that: "Asia and the Pacific, the region of the fastest growth rates in 2010, saw its pace of growth slowdown (+6%) in the first two months of 2011. Results were better than expected for Europe (+6%), boosted by the recovery of Central and Eastern Europe, and the temporary redistribution of travel to destinations in Southern and Mediterranean Europe due to the developments in North Africa (-9%) and the Middle East (-10%). The Americas (5%) was in line with the world average growth, posting strong results for South America and the Caribbean, but rather weaker ones in North and Central America" (WTO, 2011).
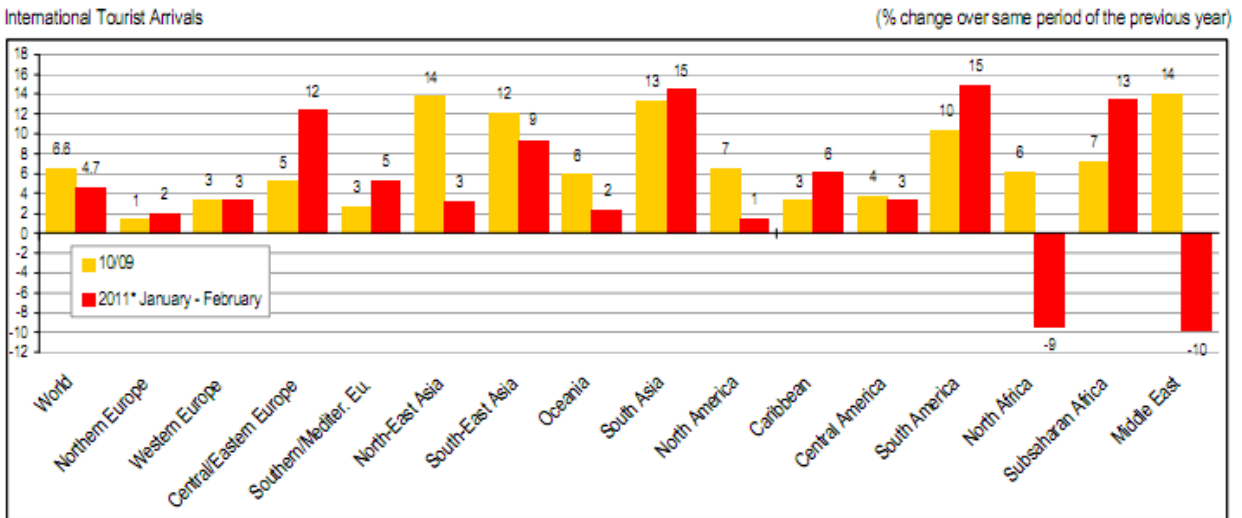
Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) ©

Graphic 4 International Tourist Arrivals

This graphic is the visual representation of the facts mentioned above, where the important points to highlight are the poor performances if North Africa and the Middle East, the slight decline of Oceania, the growth of South America, but in general the sudden changes in each region and compared to 2010, a lower % change in arrivals worldwide.

These results show an international recovery of tourism, even though there have been natural disasters and other problems, the tourism industry is improving.

2.3 Ecotourism Globally

The size of the ecotourism market has been growing since 1990 where it started, from 20% to 34% a year, and also the Nature Tourism segment has been having a percentage growth of 10% to 12% per year in the international market (TIES, 2006).

The ecotourism market and nature based tourism segment in general has a promising future in the industry. The following are some important facts that show the importance ecotourism has built itself over the years in the tourism industry, and also the growth this segment of tourism has on the long term:

- "Sun-and-sand resort tourism has now "matured as a market" and its growth is projected to remain flat. In contrast, "experiential" tourism—which encompasses ecotourism, nature, heritage, cultural, and soft adventure tourism, as well as sub-sectors such as rural and community tourism—is among the sectors expected to grow most quickly over the next two decades"

- "United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Conservation International have indicated that most of tourism's expansion is occurring in and around the world's remaining natural areas".

- "Sustainable tourism could grow to 25% of the world's travel market within six years, taking the value of the sector to £250 billion (US$473.6 billion) a year".

- "Analysts predict a growth in eco-resorts and hotels, and a boom in nature tourism — a sector already growing at 20% a year — and suggest early converts to sustainable tourism will make market gains".

(TIES, 2006)

On the other hand, ecotourism has significant advantages next to regular tourism in many different aspects. For example, 80% of the money that is received from all included tourism package tours go to airlines, hotels and other companies involved in the process of the touristic destination, but when tourism is involved in an eco touristic activity almost 95% of the money that is earned locally, because eco-lodges usually do everything locally, so this money remains on this scale, making all of this resources be invested on the home economy.

Also, the profitability is much higher when comparing the quantity of money tourist spends in a vacation, daily. For cultural profile tourists the expenditure in the activities in a day is more or less US$90, which is significantly higher than other activities, like visitors on a touring holiday that generally spend US$67; on beach holidays an average of US$62 or US$54 on city breaks.

In terms of the consumer demand, in more than 66% of the United States travelers, Australian travelers and 90% of the British tourists, consider that the active protection of the environment depends of the hotels, and it's their responsibility to ensure that this is preserved, also another important responsibility is to be a main support of the local communities, to help make progress

and development. Another important part of this responsible attitude towards responsible environmental activities of these countries, is that people are willing to pay more to see conditions that are positive for the environment met, and a survey revealed that 70% would be ready to pay up to US$150 for a two-week stay in a hotel that offers responsible environmental attitudes. As for only United States travelers, a third of them (46 million travelers), purchase their touristic plans from companies who generally donate to charities.

In this same line of ideas, the consumer demand in Europe on ecotourism and sustainable friendly holidays has been growing, and the numbers for this trend are even higher than countries like United States, Australia or the United Kingdom, so:

- 20-30% of travelers are aware of needs & values of sustainable tourism
- 10%-20% of travelers look for 'green options'
- 5%-10% of travelers demand green holidays
  (TIES, 2006)

Deepening in the behavior of the consumer demand in Europe in many countries the numbers are clearly different but point out to the same direction, and that is to be in favor of environmental friendly activities. For instance, in Germany, 65% which represents 39 million of travelers expect a high environmental quality, and 42% "that represents a total of 25 million travelers think that it is particularly important to find environmentally-friendly accommodation" (TIES, 2006). In the case of Britain, for almost half of the people that were surveyed said that they would prefer companies that have good working conditions, have protection to the environment and also support charities on a local scale, so all of this factors point out that British have a strong adherence to Ethics, so this clearly applies for the tourism. In numbers, in the United Kingdom 87% of travelers say that their holidays shouldn't damage the environment, and also 39% pointed out that they would pay extra if there were ethical guarantees. Another example of a European country is Switzerland, which has a high affinity towards culture, so their tourism is highly related to this; 95% of the total Swiss tourist relates a positive traveling experience with what they learn of a local culture. And for Americans, this same trend is also very important, since 53% of them relate their travel experience with how involved they were with the local customs and culture.

The trend of preserving the environment and the culture worldwide has grown enormously over the past years, and tourists have developed a bigger conscious of taking care of this, so the sustainability activities are growing, not only as a method of preservation of the environment but also as a tool for development.

3 French Tourism

3.1 Inbound Tourism

France is one of the main touristic destinies on the world, and over the years it has maintained this tendency. In 2007, approximately 82 million tourists visited this country, which compared to past years is important because it's always having a growing tendency, just comparing it with 2006 there was a 3,8% growth in touristic arrivals (Proexport, 2008), but this isn't one of the best years in growth for the country.
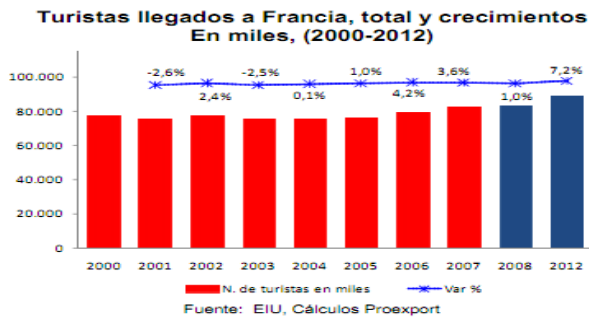
Graphic 5 French touristic arrivals and growth

This graphic shows the total number of arrivals of tourist in France from 2000 until 2007, and the projected figures of the arrivals from 2008 to 2012. And from this graphic it can be seen that France maintains a constant in the number of arrivals with little variation over the years, but the tendency on the long term is to keep growing.

This country is very important for global tourism, and its part of an important part of the global tourism's receipts.

Tourism in France is frequented mainly by European countries, the make part of almost of all of the total tourism in this country. In 2007, tourists in provenance of the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg where the ones to constitute 46% of the total visits to the country, and where the ones that visited the French Territory in a higher proportion, also Italy

was an important country in the total arrivals in France since it took part of 10.3% and Netherlands was the following with an 8.9%.

Fuente: Direction du Tourisme - Francia
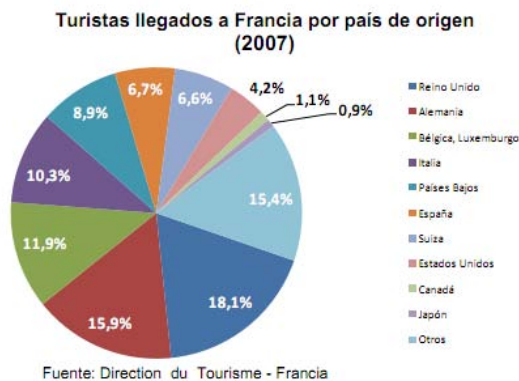
Graphic 6 Tourist Arrivals in France 2007

The past graphic represents clearly what was mentioned above, and that is that the French tourism is highly frequented by European countries, and tourists from the United States (4,2%), Canada (1,1%), Japan (0,9%) and other countries (15,4%) represent a very small proportion of the tourism of France. This states that tourism for countries other than European is much less attractive, approximately a total of 20 million tourists are not from Europe (Proexport, 2008).

3.2 Tourism Emitter

France is an important emitter for tourism, and constitutes an important country for the tourism globally. According to the EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit), in a comparison of 60 countries, with the number of tourists that leave their countries on vacation taken in account, France occupied the ninth place, below Germany and Italy, but still in top of Spain. In numbers, in 2007 approximately 24 million of French tourists left for their vacations, to visit different international destinations (Proexport, 2008). Projected figures by the EIU estimate that by 2012 France will maintain its position as one of the most important countries for tourism in the emitting section, and it will still be in the 10 most important countries in this matter. The numbers are expected to

be a total of 25,958,000 French tourists, overwhelming the Japanese tourists (19,483,000) and surpassing the Italian tourists (25,514,000), and others. (Proexport, 2008)
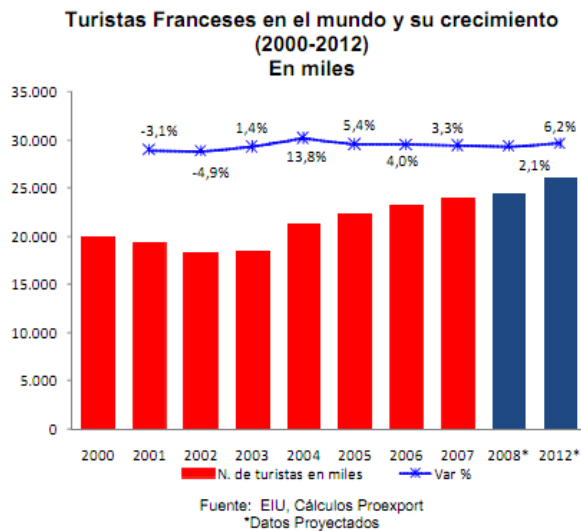
Graphic 7 French tourists behavior and influence in the Emitting Tourism

This graphic illustrates, the tendency of the behavior of the French tourists in the Emitting Tourism, and this numbers as projected have a tendency of increasing in a slow rate, but this reassures what was mentioned above, of France still being in the upcoming years a fundamental piece in tourism worldwide. During 2007 the 24 million of tourists which corresponded to the 39% of the total population, which means that from each 100 French 39 performed and aided Emissive Tourism globally, in a much higher proportion than countries that even though have high participation in Emissive Tourism were still significantly lower than France, like the United States with 22.3% of the population and Brazil with only 2.8% of its population (Proexport, 2008).

Therefore, according to the projections of the EIU, the numbers for 2012 will continue to be very positive since 41.1% of the French will make international emissive tourism, and compared again with the figures of United States (24.% % emissive tourism production) and Brazil (3.6% emissive tourism production) France continues to be very important for tourism; in a four years count short-term besides the increase of French tourists, there will be a higher proportion of French tourist visiting different international destinations.

Destinos de turistas franceses en el mundo (2007)

67,8% — Europa
14,6% — España
12,2% — Italia
5,7% — Belgica,Luxem...
4,3% — Alemania
4,5% — Reino Unido
3,7% — Portugal
2,4% — Grecia
8,3% — Américas
2,7% — Estados Unidos
15,1% — África
4,4% — Túnez
4,3% — Marruecos
2,4% — Egipto
5,6% — Asia, Oceania
3,2% — Otros

Fuente: Direction du Tourisme - Francia
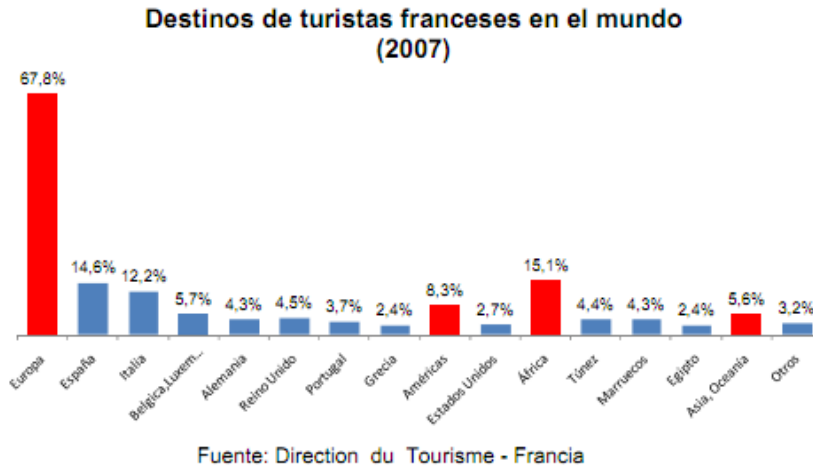
Graphic 8 French Tourist's Destinations

This graphic demonstrates that the touristic activity of French is within Europe almost entirely, actually 67.8% of the tourist's destinations are in this continent having Spain as the main destination (14.16% of the tourists go to Spain), followed by Italy, Belgium and Luxembourg, as the main courtiers. To other continents the activity is clearly lower, there's more activity in Africa than the rest, and the most visited countries are Morocco and Tunisia, the rest in Americas, Asia and Oceania there's a low frequency in arrivals of French tourists, with just 13.9% in the total arrivals of the three continents, and the only important country to highlight is the United States with a total of 2.7% of French tourist arrivals.

3.3 Total Expenditure

During 2007 the total expenses of the French tourists (24 million tourists approximately) was of 34.604 millions of dollars when international tourism activities took place. And it is the sixth country in total expenditure studied by the EIU.

The relationship of the costs of expenditure and the total number of travelers during this year averaged a total of US$ 1450, which compared to the behavior if the last year there was an increase of 7.6% (Proexport, 2008).

The projected figures for the year 2012 show that 25.958.000 of the total French tourist will have a total expense of 33.094 millions of dollars, which will permit France to still be in the first six countries to spend more in the realization of the tourism on a international scale, on top of countries like Spain (27.572 expenses in tourism) and Italy (31.557 expenses in tourism), but still beneath of countries like China, the United States and Germany (Proexport, 2008).

Following the projections for 2012, the relationship in this year between the expenditure of the French tourists and total number of travelers form this country will be equivalent to US$1.215, which is lower of the relationship that tourists of Brazil (US$1.684) and Japan (US$3.378) will maintain by that year; but the French will be higher than Americans, Germans and Spanish.

In the following graphic shows the total expenditure of the French tourism, that has a tendency to grow, but not in an accelerated way, and also it's very stable in its changes, without abrupt increases or decreases. The same behavior can be seen to the individual overheads for each of the tourists; it's always on a tendency to increase since the year 2000, but has a dramatic decrease on the projected figures in 2012, just like the decrease in total expenses in tourism, so there is a direct relationship between these two variables. So this graphic represents important numbers, because they provide a high flow to the tourism market, and like it was mentioned before this country is one the top 10 countries that spend in tourism.
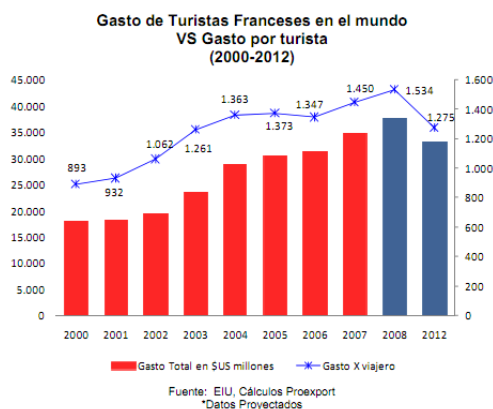

Graphic 9 French Tourist Expenditure VS Tourist expenses

3.4 Rural Territorial Definition

In France, the 'Ministère des Transports, de l'Equipement, du Tourisme et de la Mer' establishes an integration of what ecotourism is in a big field, and that is rural tourism, and they first establish rural tourism's category as the following states: "The rural is not a fixed concept. It is always a default category. Whatever the method used to delineate the perimeter, the rural is not that what is not urban. Three types of schemes can be chosen to approach his scope: the urban units, urban areas and living areas" (ARMAND, 2006).

At first, the INSEE (Institute National de la statistique et des etudes economiques), established the rural territory as everything that not fulfilled the conditions of an urban perimeter, without any clear distinctions in the demographic characteristics of the territory, so in the next image every green section is what is considered as rural in the French territory.
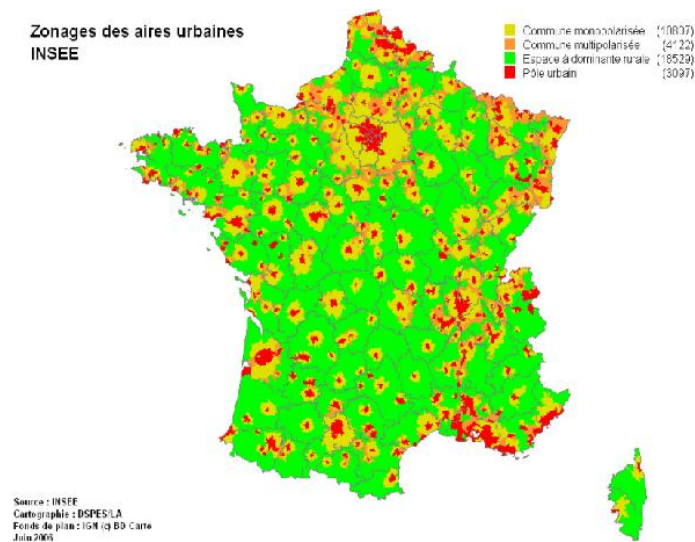
Figure 2 Territory distribution in France

For tourism the INSEE made a different establishment of the territory in France, and it's much more specific and not only making a distinction in whether it's urban or rural. And this kind of distinction is much more relevant, especially since the available data to understand the behavior of tourists from two types of investigation, monitoring of tourist demand and the survey of the hotels, to see preferences and interests.

- For the monitoring of tourist demand the following categories were recovered and perceived in the survey: sea, mountain, lake, city, and other areas.
- For the survey of hotels, tourism areas are classified in: urban coasts, rural coasts, mountain (outside stations and stations), Paris and periphery, other urban, other rural.

These new distinctions where made to have tourism in the country much more specified and to see the behavior of each of the touristic activities of the country, something that facilitated the analysis of the countries tourism. This precision permitted a diversification of a basic rural or non rural distinction, even if it was just for tourism, and the rural concept was expanded and now more factors integrated this 'field'.

The following image represents what the surveys information showed, and the coverage of each area within the French territory.
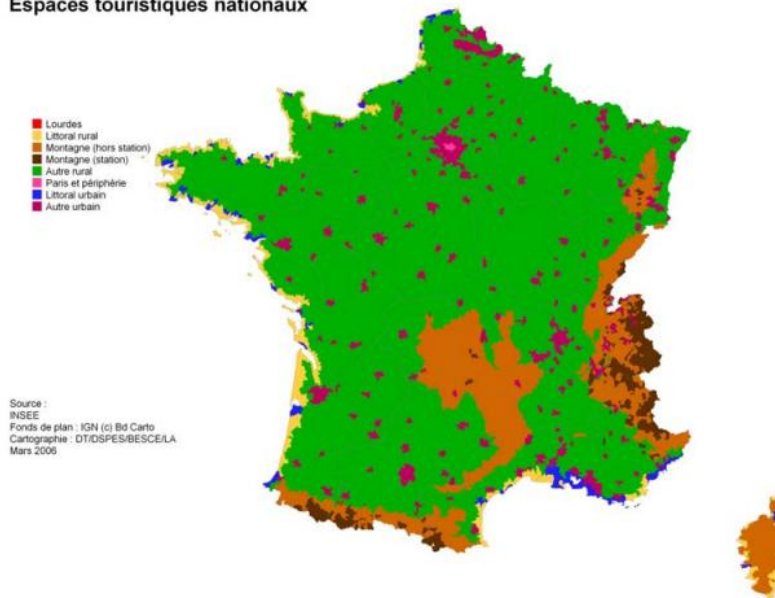
Figure 3: French National Touristic Territory

3.5 Eco touristic Offer and Demand

Eco touristic offer is greatly represented in the quantity of visitors in can receive totally, and if the total of hotels or places to that con house tourists shows how much the total demand of a destination grows or decreases, so the change is represented and measured in this aspect. In the touristic totals size, in terms of the change in the park between 1999 and 2006, the rural areas have greatly increased the fleet of three star camping (+16% against 11% of France) and locations of the same category (+17% against 11% of France). The same is in the hotel district; the rural recorded a sharp increase for categories of luxury properties (21% and 26% respectively for three and four stars). This trend is reflected in the changing room's capacity; between 1999 and 2006 rural areas is increasing its fleet of four star rooms in 45%, the highest rise (ARMAND, 2006)

The following table shows the changes an evolution of the locations of the camping sites during the period of 1999 until 2006, and the drastic changes are represented in the three stars hotels, where there's a higher change and positive variation along with the four stars locations, and the lower stars have decreased significantly in the rural space, and the same behavior is seen in the mountain and the coast areas, where the major increases are in these hotels (three and four stars). Only in the coastal locations the one star hotel has a positive change in one star.

Table 1 Evolution of Camping Locations 1999-2006

| | Evolution du nombre de camping 1999 2006 | | | | | Evolution emplacements camping 1999 2006 | | | | |
	Total	*	**	***	****	Total	*	**	***	****
Littoral	0%	1%	-8%	9%	10%	2%	6%	-10%	10%	10%
Montagne	-5%	-15%	-6%	6%	6%	-2%	-11%	-9%	8%	11%
Rural	**-3%**	**-10%**	**-10%**	**16%**	**2%**	**1%**	**-7%**	**-10%**	**17%**	**9%**
Urbain	-7%	-14%	-15%	6%	21%	-8%	-33%	-16%	0%	25%
Total	-3%	-10%	-9%	11%	7%	1%	-6%	-11%	11%	11%

(ARMAND, 2006)

The following tables explains the evolution of the number of hotels differentiated by the their classes, and the same behavior as the camping sites in the three and four stars the behavior is much more higher than in the other classes, which decreases drastically; in the table, the total

capacity of rooms has the same trend as number of hotel's behavior, increasing in the three and four stars locations, but having important decreases in the other classifications.

Table 2 Evolution of the number of hotels and room capacity 1999-2006

| | Evolution du nombre d'hôtels classés 1999 2006 | | | | | | Evolution capacités en chambre 1999 2006 | | | | | |
	Total	0*	*	**	***	****	Total	0*	*	**	***	****
Littoral	-5%	-10%	-40%	-5%	12%	20%	0%	14%	-38%	-6%	10%	18%
Montagne	-10%	-23%	-34%	-5%	5%	24%	-10%	-18%	-37%	-10%	2%	18%
Rural	**-6%**	**-25%**	**-33%**	**-3%**	**21%**	**26%**	**-2%**	**-8%**	**-33%**	**-6%**	**17%**	**45%**
Urbain	-1%	10%	-26%	-5%	10%	41%	10%	53%	-13%	-1%	8%	39%
Total	-5%	-13%	-33%	-4%	12%	30%	3%	23%	-27%	-5%	9%	32%

(ARMAND, 2006)

Also the types of hotels that are offered differ in the characteristics, in the type of services, so this clearly would change the type of tourist that will frequent the locations. And two of the main hotels or at least how they're established by ministry in charge of tourism, are the chain hotels and the independent hotels.

In terms of type of hotels, the countryside is characterized by a high prevalence of independent hotels (37% of the park in 2005, all space understood against only 16% of hotel chain). (ARMAND, 2006)

Répartition des hôtels de chaine par espace en 2005

Littoral 19%
Montagne 4%
Rural 16%
Urbain 61%
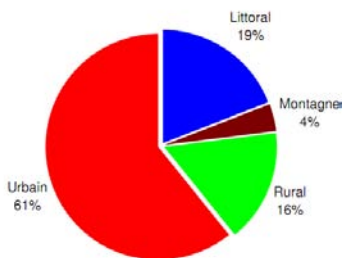
Graphic 10 Chain hotels distribution by space

The urban territory has a higher affluence in the French territory, and as the graphic clearly demonstrates the chain hotels are represented in almost their two thirds in the urban, something that even though isn't low percentage is relatively small.

In the following graphic, the distribution of the independent hotels is graphically represented, where the rural and mountain territories have a higher representativeness than the urban territories, like mentioned above 37% of the total independent hotels are in rural territories.

Répartition des hôtels indépendants par espace en 2005

Urbain 18%
Littoral 25%
Montagne 20%
Rural 37%
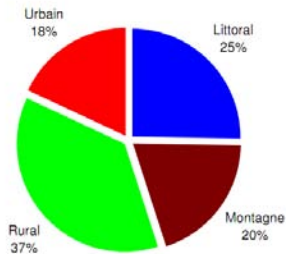
Graphic 11 Distribution of independent hotels in 2005

Among the activities that are developed in around the different territories in France, the rural territory has a very low specificity; with slightly more equestrian activities, sports (tennis, golf, jogging, collective sports) and food for other areas. But the main activity is still hiking and walking at a size of 40% for the rural territories, and its importance is for all of the territorial space. (ARMAND, 2006)

In Other words, if each space has a particular activity that marks the territory (the ski in the mountains, nautical activities for coastal activities, cultural tourism for the city) in addition to hiking and walking that's clearly found in all spaces, the rural space has a striking phenomenon and this is to be territory with an identity of multiple identities. (ARMAND, 2006)

The following, shows all of the most popular activities in the French territory all over the different spaces of all of the spaces in France.
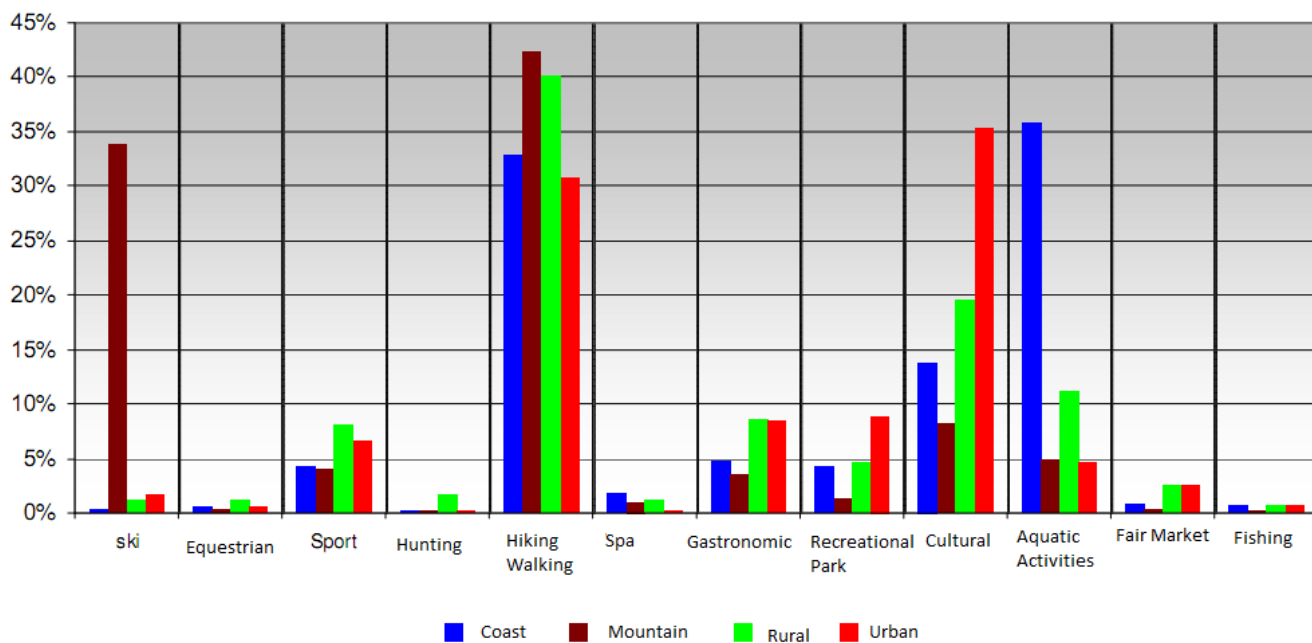
Graphic 12 Activities in the different spaces in the French territory

4 Decision Making

4.1 Consumer Decision Making

All consumers before making a purchase go under a process known as the decision making process. The steps of the process can be described as: (1) problem recognition, (2) information search, (3) evaluation of alternatives, and (4) product choice.

After the decision is made, the quality of that decision affects the final step in the process, when learning occurs based on how well the choice worked out. This learning process, of course, influences the likelihood that the same choice will be made the next time the need for a similar decision occurs. An overview of this decision-making process is shown in Figure 8.1. This chapter begins by considering various approaches consumers use when faced with a purchase decision. It then focuses on three of the steps in the decision process: how consumers recognize the problem, or need for a product; their search for information about product choices; and the ways in which they evaluate alternatives to arrive at a decision (Solomon, Bamossy, Askeegrad, & Hogg, 2006).

Figure 4 Stages in Consumer Decision Making
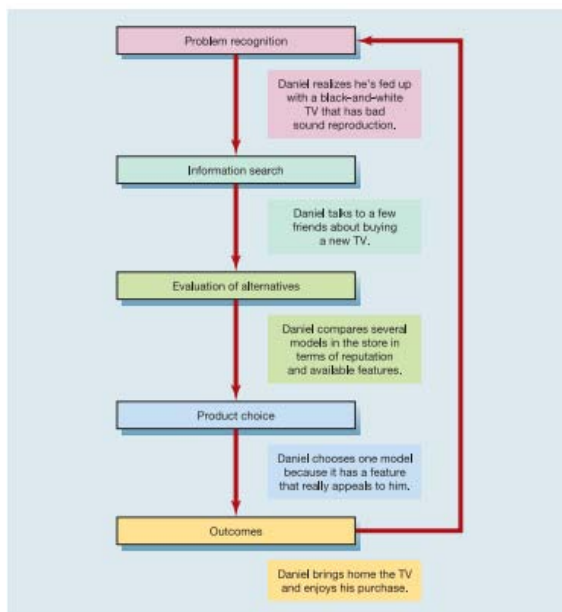
(Solomon, Bamossy, Askeegrad, & Hogg, 2006)

4.2 Holiday Decision Making

Holiday decision-making has proven to be an ongoing process which was not necessarily characterized by fixed sequential stages, and which did not stop once a decision has been made. Firstly, the generic decision about whether or not to go on a holiday was not always the starting point; and sometimes this generic decision was irrelevant. For example, a young family had two possible holiday plans, they had already decided on transportation, accommodation, activities and organization, however in April they didn't know if they were going or not on the vacation.

Secondly, there's rarely a linear evolution of holiday pans. Elements such as situational factors as well as levels of involvement are responsible for changes in the kind of holiday, and other influences are nostalgia and anticipation (Solomon, Bamossy, Askeegrad, & Hogg, 2006).

Thirdly, tardiness is a constant when final decisions and bookings are made, and being the reasons risk reduction, expectancy, availability, loyalty and personality.

Finally, tourist showed cognitive dissonance or post-decision regret, in a study made to 20 Belgian groups of tourists with different characteristics that often went on vacations, but they looked to reduce this.

The search for information is not well defined stage in the process of the decision-making process in holidays; information collection has a tendency to be ongoing, and this process doesn't stop when the holiday is booked, so an important amount is gathered by the tourist during the holiday experience and even just after the holiday has passed. And this process of recollection of information is done by tourists mainly because of cognitive dissonance and prolonged involvement (hedonic consumption). Moreover, information search is much less intensive and purposive than is usually assumed. A majority of holiday makers could be described as low information searchers, and they don't usually prepare their trip in much detail, or at least nor for a long time beforehand, and rather prefer fortuitous discoveries and unexpected experiences. In the study, when the tourists where asked about whether or not they had already made already made a collection of information about the coming holiday, in one of the cases the interviewee replied the following:

- "Vincent (M, 26, friend party): 'No, it's on the spot. That's better unplanned, to decide on the day: "we'll go and visit this, we'll go and visit that". It's... Planning everything in advance is a bit annoying.' "
- "Vincent: 'Yes, it's better...to say already, to see the images and everything. When you arrive, you no longer see it in the same way. You pass it by and you do not even inquire about it because you have read about it, you are... It's better to go without having seen anything. You go, you discover and you're more amazed because you're discovering that...' " (Solomon, Bamossy, Askeegrad, & Hogg, 2006)

Searching for holiday information tends to be memory-based (internal) rather than stimulus-based (external). Information is collected accidentally and passively, and when information is collected it isn't always used, and in some cases left aside for it to be used later on (Solomon, Bamossy, Askeegrad, & Hogg, 2006).

Finally, information collection is a weak predictor of actual choice but rather it indicates preferences of the consumer, in this case the tourist, but the quantity of information that is collected depends directly on the tourist making the holiday's level of involvement and the aversion he has towards risk.

On the other hand, holiday decision-making is an ongoing circular process, as one persons holiday ends the planning for another one begins.

The time during and just after a holiday, is particularly productive for the beginning of other projects. Most of the holiday makers are involved in more than one holiday plans at the same time. So this means that one person is involved in more than one time horizon, different types of decision making processes and units.

Holiday decision-making seems to be adaptable and opportunistic. Incidental learning seems to play a bigger role than intentional learning. Holiday decision-making often takes account of contextual contingencies, and is triggered off incidentally through information collection of opportunities (Solomon, Bamossy, Askeegrad, & Hogg, 2006).

The adaptability and opportunism in decision making are clearer when looking at the strategies employed by the tourists. These strategies are usually adapted depending on the situation and the decision making unit involved. Heuristics tend to be constructed on the spot rather than being

planned beforehand, and most of the people observed in the study did not use any well-defined strategies in making their holiday decisions. "Needs and desires were connected with choice solutions just because they were evoked at the same time. Finally, holiday makers preferred simple decision rule although these might not necessarily be accurate. Holidaymakers' decision strategies are characterized by a limited amount of processing, selective processing, and qualitative rather than quantitative reasoning, attribute-based and non-compensatory rules, and the lack of an overall evaluation for each alternative" (Solomon, Bamossy, Askeegrad, & Hogg, 2006).

Emotional factors are particularly powerful in shaping holiday choices, and people tend to make decisions depending on their moods or emotions in the moment. So taking this in account, people will take their decisions according to sudden impulses, sudden pleasures or by falling in love. So in fact, emotional reactions are more powerful than the processing of information in tourism-like products.

Accordingly, the emotional factors can be influenced by different means to have a higher impact on the holiday-makers, for example "exciting sports events are a better arena for advertising exciting rather than serene vacations, not only because an exciting vacation may match the audience's general preference but also because the exciting vacation will match the audience's current feelings. Similarly, advertisements that induce emotions matching the product's claims through the appropriate verbal tone, music, and visuals may facilitate the impression that the product will deliver". As this states the emotional factor of a holiday is very important to a tourist and its decision can depend even on delicate changes (HAKKYUN, PARK, & SCHWARZ, 2010).

Even though, there is a strong influence of emotions in the decisions there still are systematic themes; holiday plans (destinations) move from being dreams (ideal level) to reality (expectation level) as time passes. In some cases, the preferred aspects of a holiday are replaced by second choices or other alternatives. So tourists have a tendency to be optimistic and idealistic at the beginning of their holiday but become more realistic as time passes. "This happens because of the objective intervention or subjective perception of contextual factors is the major reason for this shift" (Solomon, Bamossy, Askeegrad, & Hogg, 2006).Contextual factors are taking first in account while contextual inhibitors like money come second.

Finally, all the elements point out that holiday decision-making is linked to emotions, adaptability and opportunism, and there's not one unique process, there are many of them.

Part 2 Information Recollection

1 Methodology

1.1 Methodology used

The methodology employed for the gathering of the data was of primary by doing 15 in depth interviews, with the characteristic of semi-structured interviews, and it meets these elements because of the guided topics throughout the process of the interview. These interviews were done to students between the ages of 21 and 27 and that their nationality is French and that can speak English. The importance of the interviews is that they provide qualitative information of how French people travel, the key factors they take in account in the moment they make a decision of where and how to travel, and more importantly provide the perspective of a French tourist towards eco touristic travel, and what they think this ambiguous definition is for them.
This kind of interview (in depth interview) was used because of the characteristics of the information that can be extracted. Firstly, the observation of the interviewee in the moment of talking about the different topics during the interview can determine behaviors of the person. For this methodology to be effective, it is very important to determine the objective of the interview, this means to know what would be the purpose of doing it so the information that it gives is analyzed properly; also developing an interview guide, so the interviewer has a clear of what to discuss so establishing different topics is important; then when the interview is being done having an effective recompilation of data is key and the last phase of the process of the interview is analyzing the information.

1.2 Topics

For the interview to have a smooth development, like it was mentioned above, it is crucial for the interviewer to make the interviewee all he can, but for this method to be effective it's important

that the conversation doesn't have any type of pauses because of lack of things to discuss about and also for the information that the study is seeking is much more precise and relevant to the study, so the topics and questions posed have to be established clearly beforehand.

The topics that were determined before the interview where the following:

1 Preference in type of tourism: This topic was important to determine to determine which were the factors that initiated in the person the need to begin a holiday, so this topic made way to answers related to the mainly the reasons.

2 Expectations of touristic destinations: The expectative of a tourist varies from each person but sometimes it some elements have the same type of tendency, and in all of the interviews, to the interview the question of: *When you go on a vacation looking for new experiences is an important part in the election of the destination of your vacation?*; this was asked to see if French are looking for this or not, since eco touristic activities revolve around witnessing new experiences, for example.

3 Factors to take in account before going on a holiday: This topic revolved around mainly on the interviewee to determine the things he this are more important before travelling aside form expectations (e.g. time, costs).

4 Own definition of ecotourism: Which elements according to the interviewee have to be met for a destination to be considered as eco touristic. Also in this topic it was important to determine if whether the interviewee knows or doesn't not knew eco touristic destinations in France or any other places.

5 Level of involvement with preserving the environment: Ecotourism is touristic activity that states that tourism has to have a positive impact on the environment and not the opposite, and this topic came up in the interviews to observe mainly if some of the people have this kind of concern which is mainly the basis for the ecotourism concept and the scoop to all of the activities which are contained in it.

1.3 Interview Guide

The interview to the different chosen interviewees was always different because of the conversations had different points discussed, but still there was a guide to follow throughout the interviews.

Before starting the interviews, there was always an introductory speech were it was explained to the interviewee that this study was made for a thesis research project and that the interview and all of the answers would maintain absolute confidentiality, which means that this will only be shared with research team members.

Then, in the interviews the topics mentioned above where the main basis for the conversation, and it always lingered trough this elements, and in some cases to guide the interviews and not lose track the following questions were used:

1   Which are the factors that are most important to choose a destination for a vacation?
2   When you go to a vacation, is looking for new and different experiences an important element of the decision?
3   In your opinion, what do you think ecotourism is?
4   Which elements are essential for a destination to be considered eco touristic in your opinion?
5   Do you know any eco touristic destinations, in France or any other place?
6   Are environmental issues a particular concern for you when travelling?

These questions facilitated in some cases the flow of the interviews, and were used to maintain an interview without pauses, to give the interviewer tools to keep good interviews throughout the process and for them to throw good information, was the reasons for these questions to be used in the development of the method.

2 Overview of results

2.1 Results

To see the results it's better to segregate the response in the different topics that permits a clearer visualization of the information that was collected from the replies of the different people in the interviews.

TOPIC	COLLECTED INFORMATION
Preference in type of tourism	When this topic was discussed neither of the interviewees defined a specific field of tourism. But still they defined the main factors in which they rely or generally check for a touristic place to be an attractive site for a holiday. Things came up like: there is notable culture difference with France to find new and different things; the place, and in this element the interviewees said that the landscape, the weather (cold or hot weather, the sun) and the level of pleasure that the place could offer.
Expectations of touristic destinations	The expectations were very general in 93.33% of the total of the interviews, mentioned that in their vacations and destinations they looked for new and different experiences and things that are not in the cities they live. Also in this topic discussion, the cultural aspect of the touristic destination came up again.
Factors to take in account before going on a	The costs was a factor that came up in all of

holiday	the discussions developed, some specified even more saying that transport, hotel, cost of life in the country, the price in general; other elements such as the people who would be the travel partners, the political stability of the country, recommendations of other people, the distance, the transportation method like an airplane and the time it takes to get to a place (if the transportation takes too long to get to the destination).
Own definition of ecotourism and Knowledge about eco touristic destinations	During the interviews, the own definition of tourism that was approximately said by the French interviewees in their discussions was the following definitions that were narrowed and synthesized in the following statements: eco-friendly tourism, doing activities respecting the environment, using ways of transports respecting the environment, tourism respecting nature and environmentally friendly, tourism respecting the environment, it is the type of tourism you do in natural places in a natural way (enjoying and taking care of nature). Also some opinions like the following were extracted directly from the study: "I think it's making tourism thinking about environmental concerns. Maybe it's more in nature, using more eco-friendly transport means and consuming more eco-friendly products, so a form of tourism that favors ecology".

	After talking what ecotourism is in their conception, is when another question was utilized to extract information on the subject of the knowledge of the inyterviewee on ecotouristic destinations and the following was used:"*Do you know any eco touristic destinations, in France or any other place?*" With this only 2 answers were positive, with places in Croatia and South America
Level of involvement with preserving the environment	After the interviews reached the ecotourism topic about the concept, the discussion followed this same line, and now it was to see how involved was the French to the environment, and all of the respondents except eleven cases claim to have no interest on preserving the environment when they travel, meaning this concern doesn't appear during their touristic activity. Four people of all of the interviews showed different answers, and quoting two of this answers, they said: "yes, always. Not only when traveling to eco touristic destinations" and "No it wasn't because I didn't hear about that before. Except that I always tick the CO_2 compensation option when taking the plane. But I'll think about it for the future".

2.2 Analysis of Results

The study brought many important points that bring a clearer picture of the French tourist, in terms of the preferences in the travels, the decisions and factors that influence the decisions and also the way they see and think about ecotourism as a touristic alternative, or even if they would consider it. Some tools such as direct and specific questions to draw some more information on different interviews and to make the discussions have much more fluency and naturalness, all this to evade the interviewee in some moments to guide a topic that is important to the study, and to get more depth in it.

Firstly, when the topic of the preferences of tourism it's very interesting to see that the respondents never mentioned a specific field of tourism, only the main elements of a touristic destination they would prefer. So this clearly permits to infer that the French tourists mainly think of the things they want to see in a place, not the destination in which the holiday would take place. This means that the preferences of this type of consumers are determined in specific details that they seek in holidays, and any destination that meets those needs is a good solution and destination.

During the interviews when they mentioned the place, now knowing that the fields of tourism wouldn't be specified, it was important to know the elements that met the preferences of the consumers, and as the responded the ideal characteristics of a destination contain elements such as a notable cultural difference with the French or with the city the live in, the place and level of pleasure.

Hence, these elements constitute a part of the consumer profile of the French. Firstly, the cultural affinity of the French tourist is important, since the destination that they wish to go has to have an important content of cultural background, so it's to be related and involved to this culture and learn about the historic events and sites to merge with the historic angle of a culture; this elements meet very well what the cultural tourism (field of tourism) covers in the market. Secondly, the place factor that reveals a lot the profile of the French consumer because the study brought elements like the weather are absolutely essential in a touristic destination, whether it's a cold place, or its sunny etc, and in general people prefer warm weather and possibly a place with

a lot of sun. The final response that this topic emanated was the level of pleasure can a place give the person, and the French seem to prefer a place in where it's possible to relax, change the daily routine, so they look for places who offer activates that help them change this situation. They seem to look vacations as a way to escape the usual habits of their lives and also to chill out.

Furthermore, when the expectations of the destinations the French have topic was started, the interviewees were confused in their answers because they somewhat related expectations with the preferences and what they seek for in a holiday. So the answers resembled some aspects of the preferences, like with the cultural aspect of the touristic sites which was the common repeated subject that was answered throughout the different interviews; this is important because the information gained by the first part of the discussion let the importance of culture be acknowledged, but with this it's certain that the cultural reflection of a place is very important for the French. Most of the interviews (73.33% of the respondents) repeated this as already mentioned, and to maintain a more dynamic conversation the interviewer had to use tools to try diversifying the answers, and that's when resorting to questions was important, and in this case the following was used: "*When you go to a vacation, is looking for new and different experiences an important element of the decision?*". This was useful to extract more information, and with this the responses pointed that a main expectation that people have is looking for new experiences, meaning that when travelling the factors of thrill, exhilaration, excitation of discovering something different, or only on being stimulated differently than what they are accustomed to on their day to day lives.

Moreover, to make a more concrete profile of the French tourists and their decisions, it was important that in the interview the study started to focus on the details that the French consider before they travel. And for many of them, these factors can get to be more important than the destination itself during the planning on the decision process. The important factors come in different aspects of a trip, and firstly the cost is an important influence on the holiday, and the costs are defined by elements such as the transport, hotel, cost of life in the country, the price in general; also the people who would be the travel partners, the political stability of the country, recommendations of other people, the distance, the transportation method like an airplane and the time it takes to get to a place (if the transportation takes too long to get to the destination). Applying these information to the decision making process, the first step which is the problem

recognition, is not a decisive step in the decision of the person, it's obviously the election of a destination; the second step which is the information search is very interesting in the decisions of the French, because it demonstrates that this is the most important moment in the process of the decision-making, in which the French tourists depend immensely; with more information they can gather of a destination is better, and the information they seek is in the many aspects of the holiday. Since the interviewees were in their entire number between the ages of 21 and 27 the cost was a main concern in the searching of information, so for this sample this is the main trend, and the elements in the costs were mainly the costs of the transportation, whether it's by train or plane and during the holiday; also the maintenance costs during the trip are important. In general the interpretation on the prices and cost in for the respondents is clearly because of the access to holidays is much lower because of the income range level of people of this age. Also, on the information stage, the process of the decision is influenced by what other people think, this means that before travelling the information given by others has a great influence over choosing the product; the political stability of the country is another element that is important, and it demonstrates that the safety issues are very important, and this item constitutes part of the information that is recollected by the tourist before the beginning of the holiday; the travel partners was another element, which depended on the person that was interviewed, because for some it was essential to whom they would go on their trip because they prefer to be accompanied, others said that it's not a problem with the people they travel, for them the importance is radiated in the vacation and destination itself, so it's an indifferent issue, that comes more on a personal level, so the representativeness of those fact is not relevant to the study. The last general element which was general between the interviewees was the distance of the destination, so this means how far it would be, and that just like the travel partners is an element which depends directly on what the person thinks so the relevance in it is very low and it doesn't determine any information on how this affects the decision on the French as a group, only on personal level. Concluding the phase of information search it is clear that even though French look into many elements in information of a destination, it is clear that the expectation level is high so the surprise factor is of high importance to them, so as the holiday decision-making theory explains states, that the information is searched shallowly because tourists like to discover things as they travel, the French do it the same way, just knowing that the place meets elements like weather and clearly the culture aspect it is an eligible destination; but even though

the level of information is low in some of the aspects, it's really high in the planning of the prices and costs. Under this same line of ideas in the this process of the decision, when the person studies his alternatives, the interviews gave two elements that influence importantly the decision which are also essential in the information seeking step, which are the prices, costs and the information that other people give of the place, and obviously the other elements influence the decision too. So it can be assumed that the information process and the evaluation of alternatives is a simultaneous task, at least it is for the French tourists as the study implies, and elements as the ones that were taken in the study influence this two steps of the process. Then the product choice is simply the product (in this case touristic destination) that met in a higher proportion the elements. Then the outcome of the experience is important in the French tourist because depending on his experience, and if his level of expectation was met in his holiday will he deliver information to the other tourists that will later think of that destination as an alternative for his trip. So the information process in the process of this decision-making is circular, it's present in every aspect of the course of the process.

In addition to the topics already analyzed of the interviews, after the discussion of the elements that determined the preferences of touristic destinations of the French, and also by establishing somewhat the elements that are determinant to their decision, it was important and interesting that the study demonstrated the level of acceptance of ecotourism in French tourists, and see what they thought it was, and also establish the general analysis of the elements of this type of tourism from the interviewees point of view. So during the interview and the discussion it was important the definitions that were established as the conversation progressed, so important elements that are common between the respondents can be identified to constitute a general image of what French recognize as ecotourism and what activities are engaged in it. So, overlooking these elements, the definitions and elements that defines ecotourism, are in general looked as a eco-friendly tourism with that activities that have a high preservation of the environment, looks out for the nature and the maintenance of it, also there was one interview that mentioned ecotourism as a type of tourism which is done in natural places in a natural way, meaning that the enjoyment is in taking care of the nature while engaging in diverse activities. So synthesizing all of this responses and thoughts it is more than appropriate to say that for French this tourism activity is directly related to the preservation of the environment as a whole. This is interesting because the elements given by the respondents constitute a part of the

numerous definitions and fields that constitute ecotourism, and when the eco-friendly concept raised it directly relates to the concept of *Green Tourism*, which specifies this principal, and the preservation of the nature is interesting since the relation of the two elements (eco-friendly, nature preservation) relate to the general definition that The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) gives, so the French approach is strongly linked to it. Another interesting point is that extreme sports such as rock climbing, or skiing weren't mentioned even though France has important touristic places that meet eco-friendly conditions and also are engaged in the nature such as Fontainebleau which is a popular place among the rock climbing sport worldwide, or Grenoble which is very popular to go skiing on the snow; this topic is important because the French people interviewed aren't aware of eco touristic destinations in their country, and most of the people interviewed don't know any eco touristic destinations at all , only for two cases which asserted that they knew in Croatia, and another that in South America there's probably these type of activities. So for the sample studied the ecotourism destinations are not of great importance, or are probably just comprehended in the general awareness of the idea of ecotourism, so they're only focused on the two the main important elements of the concept which are the preservation of the environment, and the engaging activities in nature. One definition which one of the interviewees probably accommodates the best for what the sample thought of this forma of tourism; *"I think it's making tourism thinking about environmental concerns. Maybe it's more in nature, using more eco-friendly transport means and consuming more eco-friendly products, so a form of tourism that favors ecology"*.

Finally, the discussion in the interview since the eco touristic topic led always to the point where ecotourism was related to a sustainable form of preservation of the environment, so the closing subject was always related to how involved are the people with the environment personally. The answers obviously are different, and for some talking about how they feel about the environment is a delicate subject and are involved in taking care of it, others are not, or in some cases people who talk about this feel pressure in the moment of responding, because of an ethic dilemma and it was important to see the behavior of the people in the moment of the responses. The answers in the interview as expected were positive and negative to the subject; the negative answers which claim to have no interest in the preservation of the environment when they're travelling have a high proportion in the sample (73.33%); the answers which stated to care about the environment where very interesting, since in one case one person said that his concern is

absolute when it comes to the preservation of the environment and not only when travelling to an eco touristic place, and other responses of the same approach say they do care but it isn't something they have present on a day to day basis. The interesting thing is that all of the respondents understand ecotourism as an eco-friendly activity that helps preserve the environment of the touristic activities it is involved in, but when the topic of preserving the environment came up, almost 75% gave a straight 'no' as an answer, which is curious since they do understand what ecotourism is, what preservation of the environment is looking for, but in the moment they travel it they either forget about it or just don't give it much importance, which then leaves uncertain a subject, and this is if French really would be interested in ecotourism as an alternative for their holiday, or if they actually understand the concept but don't relate any destinations to their conception of ecotourism.

Part 3 Conclusions

1 Conclusions

In conclusion, through the study it was possible to establish the type of factors that influence directly the French when choosing a touristic destination and the decision-making process was identified; in this the importance of the step of the information process throughout the process and how it changes roles. For the choices of destination the French make, it is clear that they prefer the unexpected on their travels, so when they get to a place everything is there to be discovered, also factors such as the opinion of people who have already gone to a place has an important weight in this procedure, as so are the weather, place and other variables.

As for Ecotourism, it is very interesting that the study demonstrates that letting French people define by themselves what this form of tourism is in their conception it is almost exactly the same of what it is understood globally, it manages the same understanding. But even though the study demonstrates this important issue, the downfall is that the preference for ecotourism is not clearly determined as a desired alternative of tourism for the French, for numerous reasons; for instance not establishing a clear distinction of destinations in their home country shows that at least for the moment this isn't in their best interest as a holiday; also the conscious for environmental issues is still not present in the French's view.

In the end, the eco touristic market in France is still not as developed as other countries, and the tourists from this country have yet to be attracted from this tourism segment, but still it is an important and interesting business that is yet to be exploited to its fullest.

2   Recommendations

Firstly, in every touristic activity it is important to understand how the people feel towards their preferences, so when this is recognized better strategies can be applied to have a better impact on customers, and it's also important to make a distinction between cultures and countries because

what they seek is different from one another, so the strategies are different depending on the market and the people in it.

For the French market, and Eco touristic implementation is an important that can be developed because of the possibility of places to visit in the French territory. But as the studies demonstrated the responsibility of the French with the environment is low, so a first step is to raise awareness about the environment, to make people more involved in the preservation of it, and with this showing that ecotourism is an important alternative which can be very positive to the environment.

The eco touristic market has had a tendency to grow over the past years, because some people are interested in eco-friendly activities, and countries in South America or New Zealand for example have developed this concept further, and the opportunity for other markets is there and France is one of the most important destinations worldwide and taking advantage of a new concept of holiday is very positive, but it's important to understand how this market behaves.

Annexes

Annex 1

Holiday decision-making: an adaptable and opportunistic ongoing process

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Consumers have traditionally been portrayed as rational and risk averse. As a consequence, consumer decision-making has been presented from a problem-solving or information processing perspective. These models start from the assumption that any consumer need or desire creates a problem within the individual. The consumer undertakes to solve that problem by deciding a course of action in order to satisfy this need or desire. Decision-making typically entails five steps: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, product choice (purchase), and decision outcomes (post-purchase evaluation). An alternative view has seen consumers' decision-making as a hierarchy of cognitive, affective and behavioural responses (i.e. the C-A-B sequence). Within the context of these two main approaches, existing models of holiday decision-making have seen it as: a rational process implying high involvement; high risk perception; extensive problem-solving and information search; and a sequential evolution of plans which starts from the generic decision to go on holiday. The objective of this case is to show how consumer decision-making – within the context of going on holiday may vary from these traditional tenets. We followed the holiday decision-making process of 27 Belgian households (singles, couples, families and groups of friends) over the course of a year. They were interviewed in-depth four times: three times before their summer holiday and once after it. Many interesting findings emerged which challenged traditional ways of understanding consumer decision-making. Holiday decision-making proved to be an ongoing process which was not necessarily characterized by fixed sequential stages, and which did not stop once a decision had been made. Firstly, the generic decision about whether or not to go on holiday was not always the starting point; and sometimes this generic decision was irrelevant (for instance, in the case of regular holidaymakers). For example, a young family had two possible holiday plans. They had already decided on transportation (car), accommodation (camping),activities (beach

and visits), and organization (by oneself). However, in April they still did not know whether or not they would go on holiday:

Anne (F, 41, family): 'Actually, it's not up to us to decide.

There are administrative factors that stand in the way at the moment, and it is clear that if we're looking for a job, and he [her husband] finds a job starting on June 15th, it's not entirely appropriate to ask for holidays for the entire month of August! It would be a bit stupid to refuse a job on the grounds that you cannot go away on vacation this year. It is the second year where we do not have control over anything!'

Secondly, there is seldom a linear (i.e. sequential and hierarchical) evolution of holiday plans. Situational factors, as well as levels of involvement, are responsible for many deviations and changes of mind. Daydreaming, nostalgia and anticipation are other important influences. Thirdly, final decisions and bookings are often made very late. There are a number of reasons for this, e.g. risk reduction, expectancy (situational variables), availability (opportunism), loyalty and personality. Finally, informants often expressed cognitive dissonance or post-decision regret, which they strove to reduce.

In the same way, information search is not always a well-defined stage in the holiday decision-making process. Information collection tends to be ongoing, and it does not stop when the holiday has been booked. Substantial amounts of information are gathered during and/or just after the holiday experience. Cognitive dissonance and prolonged involvement (hedonic consumption) are the major explanations for this.

Moreover, information search is much less intensive and purposive than is usually assumed. A majority of holidaymakers could be described as low information searchers; they do not prepare their trip in much detail nor for a long time beforehand, rather do they prefer serendipitous discoveries and the unexpected. When they were asked about whether or not they had already collected a lot of information about their forthcoming holiday in Tenerife in June, Vincent replied on behalf of a group of young friends: Vincent (M, 26, friend party): 'No, it's on the spot. That's better unplanned, to decide on the day: "we'll go and visit this, we'll go and visit that". It's... Planning everything in advance is a bit annoying.'

Interviewer: 'So you prefer the unexpected and to organize everything once you arrive?'

Vincent: 'Yes, it's better...to say already, to see the images and everything. When you arrive, you no longer see it in the same way. You pass it by and you do not even inquire about it because you have read about it, you are... It's better to go without having seen anything. You go, you discover and you're more amazed because you're discovering that...'Searching for holiday information tends to be memory-based (internal) rather than stimulus-based (external). Information is often collected accidentally and passively. Moreover, when information is collected it is not always used and/or sometimes it is put aside for later on.

Finally, information collection is a weak predictor of actual choice but rather indicates preferences. Of course, the extent of information collection depends on the holidaymaker's levels of involvement and risk aversion. Informants found it difficult to say when they started thinking about their current holiday project(s). 'Ever since our last holiday ended' was a typical answer. This is another indication that holiday decision-making is an ongoing circular process: as one holiday ends, then planning starts for the next one. The time during and just after a holiday is particularly fruitful for nurturing other projects. In fact, it appears that most holidaymakers are involved in a number of holiday plans all at the same time. These involve different time horizons, different types of decision-making units, different formulas, and different types of decision-making processes.

In general, holiday decision-making seems to be adaptable (Payne, Bettman and Johnson 1993) and opportunistic (Wilson & Wilson 1988). Incidental learning seems to play a bigger role than intentional learning. This is different from most existing models which assume the existence of a (bounded) rational, problem-solving holidaymaker. Holiday decision-making often takes account of contextual contingencies, and is triggered off incidentally through information collection or opportunities: Danièle (F, 44, family): 'Sometimes, we still want to go somewhere, and then the opportunity arises. Our parents tell us "oh, we are going to Spain, would you like to join us?" and we say "why not?" and off we go. The times when we have gone away with Intersoc as monitors, it was also because your brother-in-law said: "you really don't want to go? You know, I need leaders..." And that's how it was decided! Six months earlier we wouldn't have known we were going there.'

Adaptability and opportunism are even more obvious when looking at holidaymakers' decision strategies. Overall, these strategies are adapted according to the situation and, more particularly, to the type of decision-making unit in which they are involved. Heuristics tend to be constructed on the spot rather than being planned a priori. Moreover, a substantial number of informants did not use any well-defined strategies in making their holiday decisions. Needs and desires were connected with choice solutions just because they were evoked at the same time. Finally, holidaymakers preferred simple decision rules although these might not necessarily be accurate. In line with Bettman, Johnson and Payne's (1991) general properties of choice heuristics, it seems that holidaymakers' decision strategies are characterized by a limited amount of processing, selective processing (the amount of processing is not consistent across alternatives or attributes), qualitative rather than quantitative reasoning, attribute-based and non-compensatory rules (as contrasted with alternative-based and compensatory), and the lack of an overall evaluation for each alternative.

Findings further indicate that emotional factors are particularly powerful in shaping holiday choices. Sometimes, people make their holiday decisions according to momentary moods or emotions. The sudden and unforeseen nature of choices is highlighted: a person chooses according to a coup de tête (sudden impulse), coup de plaisir (sudden pleasure), or coup de cœur (falling in love). This suggests that the affective choice mode (Mittal 1988) is more relevant than the traditional information processing mode (Bettman 1979) as far as a highly experiential product such as holidays is concerned. In the same way, Holbrook's (1984) C-E-V (consciousness, emotion, value) model may be more appropriate to account for holiday decision-making rather than the classical C-A-B model. This hedonic and experiential view of consumer behaviour focuses on product usage, and on the hedonic and symbolic dimensions of the product. It is especially relevant for particular categories of products such as novels, plays, sporting events or travel.

However, some systematic themes can be detected in holiday decision-making. Holiday plans (destinations) move from being dreams (preferences or ideal level) to reality (expectation level) as time elapses. There is a growing commitment to choice. Sometimes, the preferred aspects of a holiday are replaced by second choices or alternative solutions. While holidaymakers tend to be optimistic and idealistic at the outset of their holiday plans, they become more realistic over

time. The objective intervention or subjective perception of contextual factors is the major reason for this shift.

Contextual facilitators (e.g. occupation or the family situation) are first considered while contextual inhibitors (e.g. time or money budget) are taken into account later. Another interpretation of the shift from dream to reality is in terms of the FCB grid. The 'feel-learn-do' and the 'feel-do-learn' sequences appear to be more salient than the traditional 'learn-feel-do' model in holiday decision-making. Moreover, holiday plans are instrumental (and dynamic) in achieving higher-order (and quite stable) goals. Major goals are satisfaction maximization (hedonism) and return on investment (utilitarianism).

Finally, information accumulates in a natural, non-purposive way from one source to the other without much searching effort. Information collection becomes more important in the very last days just before a booking is made and during the holiday experience.

Further, there is a shift from internal to external sources of information, and from general (destination) to more specific (practical) information.

In conclusion, holiday decision-making is not necessarily as rational and cognitive as it has often been assumed to be. It entails emotions, adaptability and opportunism to a large extent. There is not one process but a plurality of holiday decision-making processes.

QUESTIONS

1 Identify and discuss how holiday decision-making, as it was described in this case, is different from the traditional problem-solving approach to consumer decision-making.

2 Compare the information search process, as it was described here for holidays, with the search process that consumers might follow for another product category (e.g. a household appliance or a perfume).

3 What managerial implications (for tour operators or travel agents) would you draw from the findings that were presented in this case?

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