

ECOLABELLING THE WAY TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

**A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF SWEDISH CONSUMERS'
ATTITUDES TOWARD ECOLABELS IN THE TOURISM
INDUSTRY**

EBBA VICTORIN

TUVA LINDBERG SANDBERG

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Ecolabelling the Way to Sustainable Tourism – A quantitative study of Swedish consumers' attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry

Abstract:

The awareness of environmental problems caused by the tourism industry has increased in recent years. Therefore, sustainability has become an increasingly important policy issue in tourism where ecolabels are seen as a tool to guide behavior. The purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate Swedish consumers' attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry and what underlying factors that may influence this. Additionally, the thesis aims to explore the notion of sustainable tourism as well as comparing three attitude measures. The data was collected through an online self-completion questionnaire distributed in Swedish tourism Facebook groups. The results show that Swedish consumers believe that sustainable tourism primarily concern the environmental aspects such as reducing climate impact and social aspects such as decent working conditions. Significant influencing factors on attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry were found to be Knowledge, Trust and Individualism. Educating consumers about tourism ecolabels is suggested to create more favorable attitudes as well as increase trust by working with third-party certifications. Furthermore, cultural cognition needs to be considered when wanting to influence attitudes toward ecolabels in different countries and destinations.

Keywords:

Attitudes, beliefs, ecolabels, tourism industry

Authors:

Ebba Victorin (24500)

Tuva Lindberg Sandberg (24437)

Tutors:

Patric Andersson, Associate Professor, Department of Marketing and Strategy

Examiner:

Henrik Glimstedt, Associate Professor, Department of Marketing and Strategy

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Bachelor Program in Business & Economics

Stockholm School of Economics

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Definitions

Attitude: “a person’s general feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness toward some stimulus object” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

Belief: “the subjective probability of a relation between the object of the belief and some other object, value concept or attribute” (Ajzen, 2008).

Ecolabel: “an official symbol that shows that a product has been designed to do less harm to the environment than similar products” (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, n.d.).

Ecolabelling: “the use of labels in order to inform consumers that a product is determined by a third party to be environmentally more friendly relative to other products in the same category” (UNTCAD Secretariat, 1994).

Perception: “a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem” (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, n.d.).

Tourism: “movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes”(UN World Tourism Organization, n.d.).

Tourism industry: “represents the grouping of those establishments whose main activity is the same tourism characteristic activity” (OECD, 2020a).

Understanding: “mental process of comprehending” (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus, n.d.).

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1. Introduction

The awareness of environmental problems caused by the tourism industry¹ has risen in recent years. Thus, sustainability has become an increasingly important policy issue in tourism¹ (Puhakka & Siikamäki, 2012) where individuals want to make sustainable consumption choices (Horne, 2009). As the tourism industry generally have a large environmental impact (OECD, 2020a), the need for sustainable tools to reduce this impact is evident. The enhanced focus on environmental issues has increased the external pressure to act sustainably, setting the institutional norm and becoming a prerequisite for firms' legitimation (Balderjahn et al., 2013; Flammer, 2013). However, sustainability within tourism is a relatively new phenomenon where policy tools such as ecolabels¹ have gained increased attention (OECD, 2020a).

The general idea of labelling programs is to mediate complex environmental information to consumers in a simple way to affect consumer choice. Hence, not only are consumers important stakeholders, but they also become agents of societal change as they can affect the development of the sustainable actions of industries with their behaviors (Balderjahn et al., 2013). However, some argue that ecolabels alone do not provide sufficient information and that consumers lack awareness and knowledge about them (Sharma & Kushwaha, 2019; van Amstel et al., 2008). Therefore, it has become of interest to explore the perception¹ and understanding¹ of ecolabels in the tourism industry, and how these affect attitudes¹. The reason for this is to gain better knowledge about the consumer perspective of these policy tools.

1.1. Background

1.1.1. Background on Ecolabels

Ecolabelling¹ programs have, to a large extent, been developed in countries such as Sweden, United States and Germany (Sasidharan et al., 2002). Since the 1990s, the number of ecolabels has grown significantly (Delmas et al., 2013) where tourism ecolabels now amount to 51 (Ecolabel Index, n.d.). Given the many different labels and their meaning, the International Organization for Standardization (2019) have defined three types of environmental labels. This thesis will focus on Type I labels which are commonly known as ecolabels (International Organization for Standardization, 2019) since they are most prevalent in the tourism industry (OECD, 2020a). They can be described through the following characteristics (UNCTAD Secretariat, 1994):

¹ See definition list

- Third-party scheme that is optional to apply,
- During the products' lifecycle having less environmental impact than same category products,
- The selection of criteria and product categories are done by a board, consulted by interest groups and scientific principles,
- For every product category, the criteria and thresholds are public,
- Products meeting the criteria of the ecolabel can use the associated logo for a fixed period against a payment.

Several studies have shown that environmental awareness, knowledge and understanding of the existence of ecolabels is a prerequisite for the success of ecolabels (Daugbjerg et al., 2014; Grankvist et al., 2004; Hemmelskamp & Brockmann, 1997). Furthermore, studies have found that ecolabels are hard to understand (Delmas et al., 2013; D'Souza et al., 2004), which may have implications for the use of ecolabels in purchasing situations. However, consensus has not been reached regarding the effectiveness of ecolabels (Salzman, 1997). Sharma and Kushwaha (2019) found that ecolabels have a positive effect on purchase intention and Grolleau et al. (2016) found that ecolabels can increase the performance of ecolabelling by understanding how consumers behave. However, Balzarova (2020) concludes that the effects of ecolabelling are hard to see and measure, which might explain why some (e.g., Horne, 2009; Buckley, 2002) still argue that the effect is unknown.

1.1.2. Background on Tourism

Tourism is one of the world's most important economic sectors with six decades of consistent growth. On average, the tourism industries' contribution to the GDP of OECD countries amounts to 4.4% (OECD, 2020a). The term tourism industry "represents the grouping of those establishments whose main activity is the same tourism characteristic activity" (p.11; OECD, 2020a). Examples of tourism industries include, but are not limited to, the accommodation for visitors, food- and beverage activities, air passenger transport and cultural activities (OECD, 2020a). However, the authors will use the term tourism industry as an aggregate for all different tourism industries.

Although there has been consistent growth of the tourism sector over the past six decades, it is highly influenced by external events. This is something that became evident after the terrorist attacks on September 11th where international tourist arrivals declined by 11% in the last four months of 2001 (Liu, 2003). Furthermore, OECD (2020b) expected international tourism to decline by approximately 80% in 2020 due to Covid-19, however the actual effects remain to be seen.

A key issue for policymakers within the tourism industry concerns the sustainable development of tourism. The need for coordinated response regarding this issue across

countries is now recognized. However, the challenge remains to align the local tourism destinations with national policies, as an integrated approach is required by the business to reach sustainable outcomes (OECD, 2020a). OECD further argue that as brand trust influence purchasing behaviors, it is common to use third-party certification schemes. Due to the potential benefits of ecolabels, they are used to meet national sustainable development goals, mainstream sustainable practices and encourage sustainable choices (OECD, 2020a).

Sustainable tourism is according to the World Tourism Organization (n.d.) defined as:

“Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”

However, Cernat and Gourdon (2007) argue that this relatively new concept of sustainable tourism, and its definition, allows a variety of interpretations and approaches due to its flexibility. Therefore, it is of interest to examine the notion “sustainable tourism” and the different interpretations that exist.

1.2. Problem Formulation

Although tourism ecolabels have existed for many years (Reiser & Simmons, 2005) the number of ecolabels makes it difficult for consumers to have sufficient understanding of them all. The threshold of 1.8 billion international tourism arrivals in 2030 is predicted to be exceeded long before that (OECD, 2020a). Thus, the need for effective sustainable policies, such as ecolabels, in the tourism industry is pertinent (Buckley, 2002). This is further emphasized in the report of OECD (2020a) acknowledging that:

“changing demographics, improved connectivity, technological innovations, and increased recognition of the need for this growth to be more sustainable and inclusive are likely to dramatically transform the face of tourism by 2040, representing a range of opportunities and challenges for destinations” (p. 23).

Since ecolabels rely on persuasive communication it requires that consumers understand and trust the information communicated (Gössling & Buckley, 2016). As Gössling and Buckley (2016) points out, tourism ecolabels can be found in almost every sub-sector, but they suffer from a lack of persuasive- and effective communication. Thus, the objective of this thesis is to explore consumers’ attitudes toward tourism ecolabels and what elements that potentially are affecting this. This is to ultimately understand how to efficiently communicate ecolabel information to influence consumer tourism behavior, making today's and the future's tourism more sustainable.

1.3. Research Purpose and Research Question

The primary purpose of this thesis is to create a better understanding of consumers' attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry and which elements that influence this. The research question to be examined in this report is the following:

- *What factors affect Swedish consumers' attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry?*

The ulterior purpose of the thesis includes investigating three types of attitude measures to explore if there are any differences in explanatory value. Additionally, the thesis seeks to investigate the meaning of sustainable tourism to Swedish consumers.

1.4. Delimitations

Due to formal requirements and limited resources of a bachelor thesis, the study was delimited in the following fashion. The authors geographically restricted themselves to Sweden, for convenience reasons, even if tourism is a global phenomenon. The study was mainly distributed to Swedish traveling-and tourism groups on Facebook. The groups' members have varying interests, knowledge and involvement in tourism and traveling. Furthermore, the ecolabels intended to be studied are Type I labels as these are the most commonly used in tourism and known as 'ecolabels'. In addition, the study does not focus on specific tourism ecolabels, rather tourism ecolabels as an aggregate.

All data was handled confidentially according to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR; European Union, 2016). Hence, only necessary personal information was collected such as gender and age. Additionally, the respondents needed to give their consent to participate.

1.5. Expected Contribution

Tourism is an industry that is consistently growing, with billions of people traveling every year. As tourism plays such a vital role in social-, economic- and cultural terms for many countries as well as having an environmental impact, studying ecolabels in the tourism industry is highly relevant. A range of shared policies have been agreed upon by the OECD including "promoting and delivering a greater level of sustainability" (p. 26) and "designing and implementing policy tools, coordinating and regulating the sector" (p. 26; OECD, 2020a). Hence, the results of this study could be used to further understand how consumers think about tourism sustainability and policy tools (ecolabels) and contribute to well-grounded decision-making in the field.

The global scope of tourism means that many individuals can affect the development of sustainable tourism through their behaviors. Since it ultimately is the consumers that

determine how effective tourism ecolabels will be, in the sense that they consume ecolabelled activities or services, it is of importance to gain an understanding of their attitudes toward tourism ecolabels. The reason for this is to better promote sustainable choices, as the policies seek to do, in such a large-impact industry.

By investigating the elements influencing attitudes, the aim is to contribute to previous research by exploring potential background variables. This will provide insights for businesses and authorities to potentially direct their marketing and communication regarding ecolabels but also align the communication internationally as well as nationally. The mentioned contributions will hopefully increase the effect of ecolabels and in the long run, help reduce environmental impact and promote sustainable tourism.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

The authors of this thesis used library databases, mainly HHS Library and Scopus, as primary sources for literature search by using the following keywords: perception, understanding, attitude, ecolabel, environmental label, tourism, tourism industry and sustainable tourism. The results were plenty with many studies targeted at different specific ecolabels in various industries and sectors. However, the authors have not found a study targeting the attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.

2.1. Previous Research on Ecolabels in Tourism

Sustainability has become an increasingly important policy issue in tourism as the awareness of environmental problems caused by the tourism industry have increased (Puhakka & Siikamäki, 2012). Tourists generally hold positive attitudes toward the environment and do not wish to impact the environment negatively (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2014). Even if tourism ecolabels have existed for some time (Reiser & Simmons, 2005), few tourists actively search for tourism ecolabels, which implies that these ecolabels still are in their early stages (Buckley, 2002). During the recent years, more focus has been put on the social dimension of tourism that previously solely had focus on the sustainability dimension (Gössling, 2006). International ecolabels will be more useful (Buckley, 2002) where they allow penetration of local markets more quickly in countries where the labels already exist through creating strategic alliances (Font, 2002). Font (2002) suggests that this method creates stronger brands, which is crucial in gaining market share and economies of scale in green communication to the global tourist market. The author further argues that the international labels are the only ones that are likely to make a difference to the tourist and invoke a behavioral change.

Criticism of ecolabels concerns the expensiveness, time consumption and the focus on ecotourism or hotel providers as well as the fact that ecolabel organizers have limited marketing power (Font, 2002). Though the general environmental concern is significant in both industrialized and developing countries, the response of ecolabels in the tourism industry may vary (Buckley, 2002). Buckley further argues that this can be due to socioeconomic groups having different environmental priorities, the public concern of the environmental impact of tourism is much lower than other activities such as deforestation as well as environmental information on tourism products being harder to obtain than regular retail products. In the latter example, ecolabels function as a heuristic cue for those who does not have sufficient resources to do research (Buckley, 2002; Kahneman, 2003).

2.2. Attitude

2.2.1. Expectancy-Value Theory

One of the most widely accepted theories of attitude is the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT). This descriptive model explains the way in which different beliefs are combined to arrive at an evaluation (Ajzen, 2008). Ajzen (2008) defines beliefs as “the subjective probability of a relation between the object of the belief and some other object, value concept or attribute” (p. 131). In EVT, the cognitively accessible beliefs of individuals are considered to be determinants of attitude which is why pre-studies are necessary (see 3.3). Here, attitude refers to “a person’s general feeling of favorableness or unfavorableness toward some stimulus object” (p. 216; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) in this case tourism ecolabels.

No assumption of rationality is made, rather EVT suggests that the more strongly the beliefs are held, and the more positive beliefs are, the more favorable the attitude is (Ajzen, 2008). Hence, a person’s attitude (A) toward ecolabels is related to the strength of the beliefs (b) linking ecolabels to various attributes multiplied by the evaluation (e) of these attributes. This integration process is illustrated by the following equation (Ajzen, 2008; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975):

$$A = \sum_{i=1}^n b_i e_i \quad (1)$$

Individuals are found to form beliefs through inference processes. This implies that newly added information about an object, in this case ecolabels, will have implications for many other beliefs about the ecolabel. The formation of attitudes occur automatically and simultaneously as one acquire beliefs about an object, thus, a person’s attitude will change as variations in the belief system occurs (Ajzen, 2008; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

2.2.2. Alternative Measures of Attitude

There is, however, some discussion regarding if the inference process is based on a probabilistic or evaluative dimension. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) found that the process is primarily based on probabilistic relations among beliefs even if it is acknowledged that these two are frequently indistinguishable. Dissonance theory (e.g., Festinger, 1957) often measure beliefs by self-reports, directly asking about individuals’ attitudes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Bem (1965; referred to in Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) argue that beliefs and attitudes are functionally equivalent. Following the evidence above, attitudes is suggested to be measured through a probabilistic measure on beliefs only. However, Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum’s (1957; referred to in Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) Learning Theory suggests that attitude refers to evaluation of meaning response. It may be possible to obtain a direct measure of attitude by simply asking respondents to rate

an object between good-bad or dislike-like (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998). Thus, a second measure of attitude is identified based on an evaluative measure.

2.3. Consumer Perception and Understanding

Through four studies, Taufique et al. (2019) developed a scale the ECOLSCALE which measures consumer understanding and perception of ecolabels. In this thesis, the authors have chosen four of the areas covered in the ECOLSCALE to be explored. Several studies have acknowledged the connection between perception, understanding and attitudes. For example, Gunnarson et al. (2017) studied influencing factors on the perception of urban green spaces in Sweden and found that environmental-related attitudes and perceptions are linked. A study in China by Li et al. (2019) shed light on the connection between CSR perception and residents' attitude formation in the tourism industry. Furthermore, Shilpa et al. (2016) explored how the understanding and attitudes of food labels could be improved by educational interventions. Their findings suggest that individuals' understanding significantly correlated with attitudes toward labels.

2.3.1. Knowledge

Ecolabels are described as “an environmental communication tool that aims to promote ecologically conscious consumer behavior” (p. 43; Taufique et al., 2016). Following this statement, Thøgersen (2000) argue that ecolabels must be seen and understood by the consumer in order for the individual to trust and value the message of the ecolabel in their decision making. However, Testa et al. (2015) found that general environmental knowledge does not sufficiently determine ecologically conscious consumption behavior.

There has not been an extensive amount of previous research specifically targeting ecolabel knowledge of consumers (Taufique et al., 2016). However, what research have found regarding specific ecolabel knowledge is that Type I ecolabels often add value to consumers as these types of third-party claims promise that the claims are truthful (Taufique et al., 2017). A lot of previous research has been directed to the impact of general environmental knowledge on purchasing decisions where Taufique et al. (2017) argue that general environmental knowledge is positively related to attitudes. Therefore it is suggested that consumers must be educated with knowledge to make rightful decisions (Taufique et al., 2017; Testa et al., 2015).

Furthermore, distinctions can be made between perceived and actual knowledge, where perceived knowledge focuses on what the consumer think that they know, while actual knowledge looks at the accuracy of the consumer's knowledge (Taufique et al., 2019). Based on this distinction, it is reasonable to theorize that consumers who perceive

themselves to be more knowledgeable about the environment in general, also will have a positive attitude toward tourism ecolabels.

H1: Perceived knowledge about the environment will positively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.

2.3.2. Awareness and Involvement

As a predominant marketing construct, consumer awareness reflects the consumer's right to be aware of the product purchase. However, in the context of ecolabels, consumer awareness reflects the recognition of the existence of ecolabels (Taufique et al., 2014). One of the main problems with ecolabels is that consumers are unaware of their existence (Thøgersen et al., 2010). Consumer awareness is used to impact consumers' attitudes by creating beliefs toward a product. Thus, awareness does not only have a large impact on consumer behavior but also has an effect on perception and attitudes (Aaker, 1996; Foroudi, 2019). Hence, it is concluded that consumer awareness is a significant factor for the effectiveness of ecolabels as one must know a label to use it in their decision making (Taufique et al., 2014).

Research also shows that consumer awareness is enhanced by consumers' level of involvement (Taufique et al., 2019) which is defined as the extent to which an object is relevant to the consumers' values and needs (Taufique et al., 2014). Engel, Blackwell and Miniard's (1995; referred to in Taufique et al., 2014) model of consumer involvement propose that consumers have either high or low involvement. Individuals with greater involvement give more attention to relevant information but do, however, need relevant knowledge about the domain to be able to interpret the information (Celsi & Olson, 1988). Highly involved consumers gather more information (Bloch et al., 1986) which increases brand awareness (Lichtenstein et al., 1988) or in this case the awareness of the ecolabel. Involvement can thus be thought to influence consumer information processing which Thøgersen et al. (2010) echoes. Since ecolabels constitute a communication tool, consumers' involvement has an impact on their understanding of ecolabels (Taufique et al., 2014; Taufique et al., 2016) in the tourism industry as well as developing preference for them (Thøgersen et al., 2010).

H2: Awareness of and involvement in tourism ecolabels will positively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.

2.3.3. Trust

Studies show that trust in the ecolabels is seen as a prerequisite for sustainable consumption (Carrete et al., 2012; Daugbjerg et al., 2014). This is in line with

Thøgersen's (2000) study which argues that consumers only will consider environmental labels in their purchases if they trust them. The study also showed that consumers' attitudes toward ecolabels have a positive relationship with their trust, which consequently led to the degree of attention that was paid to the ecolabels.

Furthermore, Darnall et al. (2018) studied how Type I certifications relate to consumers' use of ecolabels by studying a large, random sample of more than 1200 consumers. The authors found that there is only a very small evident effect of Type I certifications on consumers when they have developed trust for the party producing the certification, as for an example a non-governmental organization or the government. This suggests that when consumers cannot trust the environmental information supplied, they tend to make an assessment based on the information received, but also use independent Type I certification sources to make an evaluation of the credibility of the environmental claim (Darnall et al., 2018; D'Souza et al., 2021). Therefore, one can theorize that a higher degree of trust will have a positive impact on consumers' attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry.

H3: Trust in tourism ecolabels will positively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.

2.3.4. Private Benefit

During evaluation of options, consumers might consider additional benefits associated with ecolabels, such as "tastiness" or "healthier", beyond environmental attributes. It is shown that perceived private benefits can trigger consumers' information processing (Taufique et al., 2014). Taufique et al. (2019) echoes this by arguing that using ecolabels in decision making is due to perceived personal benefits. de Boer (2003) have found that adding benefits beyond environmental and moral perspectives to ecolabelled goods result in consumers being willing to pay a price premium. Therefore, ecolabels reporting non-environmental benefits (e.g. economic savings or better health) may improve individuals perception of ecolabels (Taufique et al., 2014; Taufique et al., 2019).

H3: Tourism ecolabels reporting private benefits will positively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.

2.4. Consumer-Based Factors

Apart from the review above, a multitude of variables such as group membership and political affiliation could influence the perception (Ajzen et al., 2018), and therefore attitude, that individuals hold toward tourism ecolabels. In the following section, the

authors present consumer-based factors that could affect attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry.

2.4.1. Individualism-Communitarianism

de Mooji (2010) described a new paradigm in marketing concerning cultural segmentation. Nisbet (2009) found that different perceptions concerning environmental issues such as climate change is deeply intertwined with cultural beliefs and political values. The cultural cognition theory connects individuals' risk perceptions to their worldview and the constructs of cultural values founding these connections (Kahan et al., 2007). It further connects the implications of how these tendencies influence perceptions of risk and public policy (Kunkle & Monroe, 2019) as well as environmental issues (Kahan, 2008). The concept of cultural cognition contains a grid of hierarchy-egalitarianism and individualism-communitarianism (Kahan, 2008) with focus on the latter in this thesis. Individualism is associated with self-direction, independence and uniqueness whereas communitarianism is associated with belongingness, internalization of group interests and interdependence (Binder, 2019; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). This is closely connected to the notion of conservatives and liberals where studies have shown that they often have different beliefs about environmental issues (McCright & Dunlap, 2011).

Kahan (2008) found that as individuals become more individualistic in their values, they become less concerned with issues such as climate change and air pollution as opposed to communitarians that become increasingly concerned. Communitarians believe that the government is responsible for the overall welfare in society whereas individualists believe people should secure one's own welfare (Braman et al., 2005; Kahan, 2008). In this context, as ecolabels constitute a form of policy tool, it is reasonable to theorize that individualists will have a more negative attitude toward ecolabels than communitarians.

H4: Consumers scoring high on individualism will have a more negative attitude toward tourism ecolabels than those scoring low.

2.4.2. Skepticism

Skepticism is a cognitive response that may vary depending on what type of communication the consumer is trying to process (Mohr et al., 1998). Mohr et al. (1998) describes skeptics "as those who doubt what others are saying or doing but may be convinced by evidence or proof" (p. 33). Skepticism among consumers have increased in the same way that misleading environmental claims of firms have increased (Darnall et al., 2018). Due to increased appearance of the deceptive environmental claims, the use of Type I certifications has grown in importance to assure consumers about the products' environmental credibility (Darnall et al., 2018).

Testa et al. (2015) studied Italian consumers and whether their knowledge, awareness and information could trigger an environmentally friendly behavior. According to the study, the main reason for consumer skepticism toward environmental claims concerned the lack of credibility for the claim and the unclear message mediated. Furthermore, Peattie (2001 referred to in de Boer, 2003) concluded that consumer skepticism toward companies increased in the beginning of the 90s due to the lack of credibility for ‘green’ claims. Thus, it can be reasoned that skepticism negatively affects individuals’ attitude toward stimuli objects.

H5: Skepticism toward tourism ecolabels will negatively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.

2.5. Overview of Hypotheses

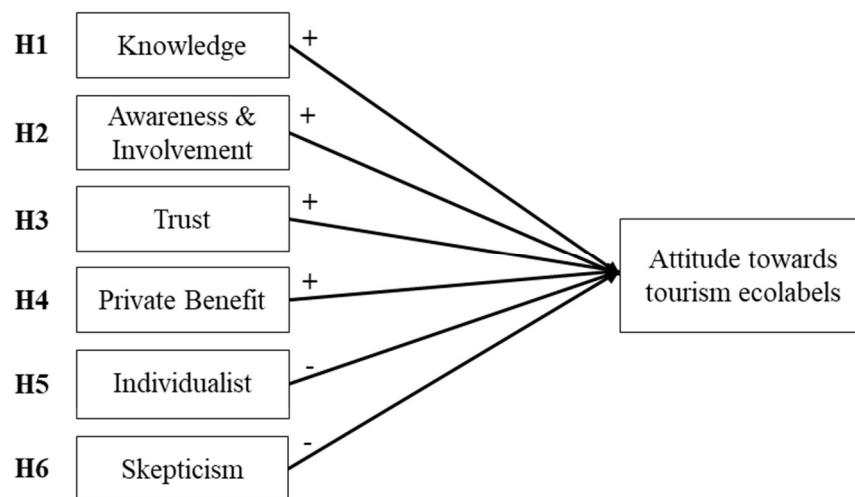


Figure 1. Visualization of independent variables and hypotheses direction of effect on dependent variable attitude toward tourism ecolabels

3. Method

3.1. Scientific Approach

The scientific approach of this thesis can be described through ontology and epistemology. Ontology can be defined as “the assumptions we make about what it means for something to exist” (p. 26; Bell et al., 2019). There are two ways to understand studied social phenomena: constructionism and objectivism, where the authors have adopted an objective perspective. This implies that social phenomena, and the meaning of them, have an existence independent of social actors. Thus, the authors will gain knowledge by directly or indirectly observe or measure aspects of the world (Bell et al., 2019). The rationale of the authors position lies in the interest to investigate the relative importance of different aspects on consumer attitudes.

Following the position of ontology, positivism is the epistemological position of this thesis. A positivistic approach implies the use of deduction to form hypotheses. Following this, data must be collected in an objective manner where the use of surveys are common (Bell et al., 2019). This results in the quantitative research strategy adopted by the authors of this thesis based on an online self-completion questionnaire. Additionally, an exploratory approach was integrated in the online survey by using an open-ended question about sustainable tourism.

However, there are limits of objectivity that the authors take into consideration. Bell et al. (2019) highlights historical and evidential factors to influence choice of research method. In the authors case, expectations from research institution and previous studies on the topic (e.g., Taufique et al., 2019) may have influenced the chosen method. Additionally, preconceptions may influence how and what the authors see, which is why the authors exercise reflexivity throughout the thesis.

One similar method to self-completion questionnaires is the one of structured interviews (Bell et al., 2019). Using this alternative method could increase response rates thus reduce the risk of bias. However, by conducting an analysis of incomplete answers of the survey, it is concluded that they do not differ significantly from full responses (see Appendix 1), thus reducing bias. Furthermore, using interviews would have allowed collection of additional data and probing. With regard to practicalities of students, the pros of an online self-completion questionnaire such as cheapness, quick and wide distribution are favorable (Bell et al., 2019). The chosen research method was deemed appropriate due to the above practicalities but also the convenience for both the authors and respondents with regard to time of completion and also the current Covid-19 situation.

3.2. Previous Work

This study is influenced by a previous study, namely Taufique et al. (2019), made on 278 participants which focused on perception and understanding of ecolabels. Taufique et al. (2019) suggests that their scale, “ECOLSCALE”, can be used to investigate perception and understanding of any ecolabel. Hence, selected items developed in their study are used to examine the perception of ecolabels in the tourism industry. Taufique et al. (2019) suggests that further research need to include consumer-based factors, such as skepticism. Hence, to deepen the knowledge about the research area and to bridge the research gap partly identified in their study, the authors of this thesis add on the following dimensions: individualism-communitarianism and skepticism.

3.3. Preparatory Studies

Preparatory studies were conducted in accordance with the application of the Expectancy-Value Theory (EVT; Ajzen, 2008). Ajzen (2008) argue that EVT requires a systematic approach to the identification of object attributes. The author suggests that focus groups or individual interviews can be used to identify the most frequently mentioned attributes. These attributes are then used in the subsequent research. Hence, by conducting seven individual interviews the authors of this thesis identified beliefs of tourism ecolabels to be examined in the main study (see Appendix 2). Additionally, a trial of the questionnaire was conducted in the form of a pilot-test using a convenience sample of 11 people (see Appendix 2).

3.3.1. Insights from Questionnaire Pilot-Test

The questionnaire pre-study respondents were asked to think out loud when responding to the survey, giving the authors of this thesis valuable insights of usability. The feedback received from the respondents mostly concerned the wording of questions implicating that there was room for higher usability. Also, there were some concerns regarding the first open question about sustainable tourism indicating a possible barrier for completion. It was, however, important that the respondents answered it before the rest of the questionnaire to not be influenced by its content. Therefore, the open question was kept in the first block. By incorporating the feedback received by the questionnaire pre-study, the authors constructed the final distributed questionnaire.

3.4. Main Study

3.4.1. Questionnaire

The conducted study was in the form of an online self-completion questionnaire.² The first part consisted of an introduction to the subject, the purpose of the thesis, estimated time of completion and information about the donation to WWF's work against climate change. Additionally, due to GDPR, respondents were informed about the handling the survey data. Thereafter, they had to give their consent to participate in the survey by ticking in the box "Yes, I have read the information above and agree to participate in this study", and by filling in their initials and the date of agreement. If ticking in the other box "No thanks, I do not agree to participate in this study" the respondent was sent to the last page of the survey to eliminate the risk that they fill in the form even if they do not agree to participate.

The survey consisted of six blocks with 16 questions in total, the questions focused on a specific variable that would be measured, and the authors mainly used balanced Likert-scales that ranged from 5-to 7-points for each variable. The reason for the different numbered Likert-scales depended on previously executed studies. Furthermore, all questions were asked in Swedish as the study was delimited to Swedish consumers.

The first block of the survey consisted of questions regarding respondents' perception of sustainable tourism and general tourism habits pre-Covid-19. The second block contained questions regarding perception and understanding of tourism ecolabels based on the ECOLSCALE. The third block focused on beliefs in accordance with EVT. Block four asked individualistic and collectivistic questions and as these questions could be seen as deviating for the area of study, the respondents were warned beforehand. The next block covered questions about skepticism toward tourism ecolabels. The last block consisted of demographic variables, such as gender and age, and a control question to determine if the respondent paid attention throughout the survey. Lastly, the respondent had the opportunity to evaluate the usability of the survey and leave optional comments regarding the questionnaire (see Appendix 3).

² Also referred to as "survey".

3.4.2. Survey Flow

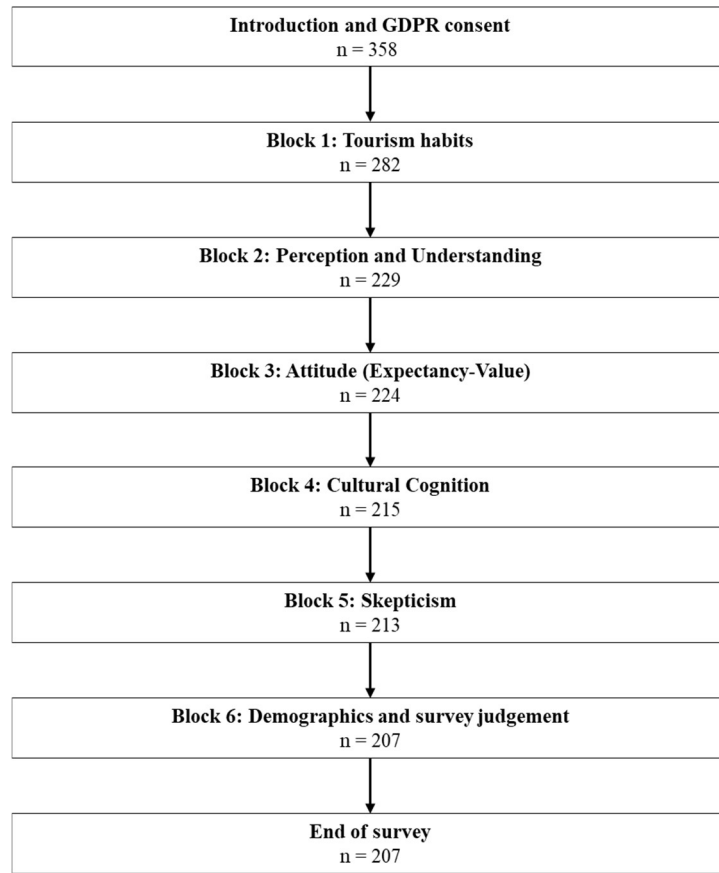


Figure 2: Visualization of survey flow and number of respondents per block

3.4.3. Dependent Variable

This thesis explores the dependent variable ‘attitude’ but will, however, use different measures on attitude following the thesis’ ulterior purpose. As the literature review reveals, three attitude measures are suggested. This thesis explores attitude based on EVT as Equation 1 illustrates. Attitude based on EVT is measured on a bipolar scale (see 3.4.4. under ‘belief’). Additionally, the second attitude measure will be based on a probabilistic dimension, referred to as belief strength, and the third attitude measure on an evaluative dimension, referred to as evaluation. Attitude based on the alternative measures uses the data for belief strength and belief evaluation in EVT but does however use Likert-scales ranging from 1 to 7.

3.4.4. Independent Variables

The scales used to measure the independent variables in this thesis is of mixed nature where the authors of this thesis aim to keep as close to the original studies as possible. However, some modifications to the scale are done.³

Consumer Perception and Understanding

For the following independent variables: *knowledge*⁴, *awareness and involvement*⁵, *trust* and *private benefit*, the scale used is based on the ECOLSCALE (Taufique et al., 2019; see 3.1). The original scale includes 27 items where the authors chose the relevant areas for this thesis. All independent variables are explored separately in the thesis, and all items were measured using a Likert-scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Beliefs

To explore the samples' beliefs, the authors adopted the method suggested by EVT (Ajzen, 2008; see 3.2). The measurement of beliefs was conducted in two stages. First, the strength of beliefs were measured using a Bipolar scale ranging from -3 (not likely at all) to 3 (highly likely). Second, the respondents were asked to evaluate the attributes using a Bipolar scale ranging from -3 (really bad) to 3 (really good).

Individualism-Communitarianism

To measure how individualistic the respondents were, a short version of the Cultural Cognition Scale (Kahan, 2008) was used. The short version included six items and are as reliable as the full-form scale (Kahan, 2008). The original scale used a Likert scale from 1 (disagree) to 6 (agree) to score the items. However, as the questions could be perceived as sensitive, the authors included a middle score of "unsure / do not know" thus using a 7-point Likert-scale.

³ The indexes of the variables were based statements with Cronbach's alphas over 0.7. If the reliability analysis showed a large negative effect of variables on the alpha coefficient, these were excluded. Note that the variable to be measured still could, even if some items were excluded. However, this could still have an effect on the results and thus differ from the original study.

⁴ The question "I do not know the meaning of the term 'organic'" was excluded from the index. The authors believe that the respondents did not notice the "do not" in the question, thus explaining the lower alpha if included.

⁵ The questions "I do not search for any logo or label on the product endorsing environmental concern when buying any product" and "I feel that I am not fully involved with tourism ecolabels" were excluded from the index. However, the first one was used as a dummy in the regression analyses. The authors believe that the respondents did not notice the "do not" in the question, thus explaining the lower alpha if included.

Skepticism

The authors of this thesis used Obermiller and Spangenberg's (1998) developed skepticism scale to measure skepticism toward tourism ecolabels. The items were measured using Likert-scales from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Demographic Variables

It is of interest to include demographic variables in the study as it is shown that certain demographic variables has an effect on consumer perception of ecolabels (Taufique et al., 2014). Hence, the demographic variables used were gender, age, educational level and occupation. These were selected to see the composition of the sample as well as explore if there are any interesting effects of including them in the analysis.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

3.5.1. Data Collection and Participants

The online self-completion questionnaire was distributed between the 19th of March and 20th of April 2021. In total, 207 valid responses were generated. It was distributed through Facebook groups (see Appendix 4) that the authors joined, and LinkedIn. The participants from the authors own channels thus constituted a convenience sample due to its accessibility (Bell et al., 2019). There are, however, different perspectives on participants from the Facebook groups. One perspective might argue that they also constitute a convenience sample due to the relative ease and availability of joining groups on Facebook. The other perspective might argue that they do not fall under the definition of convenience sample as the authors sought to go beyond their direct accessibility of respondents. Convenience sample is not generalizable due to the sample not being representative (Bell et al., 2019). Due to this and the limited resources of students to secure a representative sample, the authors will treat the complete dataset as a convenience sample.

3.5.2. Quality of Data

The total number of participants in the study were 358. These included everyone who started the survey, however, before the analysis of the results was reported, respondents who had not finished the survey (i.e., progress <100%) were excluded. One person did not agree to the GDPR terms and was therefore also excluded. In total these amounted to 151 respondents. In the drop-out analysis, response comparisons between the included and excluded groups were performed. The results indicate that the excluded group answered similarly to the included group thus reducing the risk of bias. See Appendix 1 for the comparing analysis. Control questions were asked to see if the respondents paid attention throughout the survey. The results indicated that they did. Thus, no respondents were excluded on those grounds.

3.5.3. Data Analysis

The questionnaire was executed using the online tool Qualtrics. The collected data was exported to IBM SPSS Statistics 27, where the authors conducted all analyses. Descriptive data of means and standard deviations were summarized initially as well as the respondents' tourism habits. Additionally, the open-ended questions were coded. Subsequently, reliability analyses were conducted for all indexed variables. The cutoff value for the alpha coefficient used was 0.7 (Bell et al., 2019; Peterson, 1994).

For all hypotheses, Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to see if there was any significant relationship between predictor variables and the predicted variable 'attitude'. Pearson's test for correlation was seen as appropriate due to the measures being based on interval scales as well as being the most used correlation measure (Casson & Farmer, 2014). Additionally, the authors assumed the relationship between independent variables and attitude to be linear. Linear relationship is also a prerequisite for conducting the subsequent linear regressions (Newbold et al., 2013).

Finally, linear regression analyses were conducted to measure the effects of independent variables such as demographics, tourism frequency and sustainable tourism categories.⁶ The same linear regression models were made for each attitude measure with the exception of changing the measure of the dependent variable (see Appendix 5). To determine the significance level for all statistical tests, an alpha level of maximum 0.05 was used (Bell et al., 2019).

3.6. Research Reliability and Validity

3.6.1. Reliability

A general definition of reliability is "the degree to which measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent results" (Paul Peter, 1979). In other words, whether the results of the study are repeatable or not. Cronbach's alpha is commonly used in research to measure this internal reliability to multi-item measures (Bell et al., 2019). Coefficient alpha is not subject to large fluctuations stemming from research design characteristics and can therefore be seen as rather robust (Peterson, 1994). The coefficient takes on a value between 0, no internal reliability, and 1, perfect internal reliability (Bell et al., 2019). Nunnally (1978; referred to in Peterson, 1994) recommend figures between 0.7 to 0.9 as a minimally acceptable reliability level for basic, preliminary and applied research. Thus, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 is seen as acceptable (Bell et al., 2019). The results for Cronbach's alpha for all indexed variables as well as

⁶ The content analysis in 4.2 resulted in respondent's belonging to one of five categories. The environmental group was used in the regression analysis to see if their perception of sustainable tourism could explain their attitude.

alpha for the scales of previous studies are found in Appendix 6. All variables but trust had an alpha above 0.7.⁷

3.6.2. Validity

Validity, or measurement validity, refers to whether the measure of a concept mirrors that concept or not (Bell et al., 2019). In order to make an analysis of the thesis validity, the authors use external validity and replicability.

External Validity

External validity refers to whether or not study results are generalizable beyond the studied context (Bell et al., 2019). One question that needs to be addressed regarding the external validity of this study is that the sample size was quite small, and that the sample was based on convenience. Furthermore, the study explores attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry, thus lowering generalizability to other industries. However, the method and framework used is relevant to anyone studying attitudes which might enhance the external validity.

Replicability

It is also necessary to discuss replicability as a measure of validity, since a level of it usually is present (Bell et al., 2019). As this study builds on previous research, the scales have also been re-used from previous studies. This implies that scales were modified for the purpose of this thesis which might impair validity. Furthermore, as this study was conducted in Sweden, it was necessary to adapt the scales used by extensive translations.⁸ However that does not in itself promise that the original scales' validity is maintained (Heggstad et al., 2019). In addition, the setting of the study differed from where the original studies were performed, hence, these circumstances must be considered for the validity of the study.

3.6.3. Survey Judgement

To get a better understanding of how respondents perceived the questionnaire as well as secure validity, the survey contained an evaluation. In the last part of the survey, the respondents were asked to evaluate the survey based on three questions on a 5-point Likert-scale. Approximately 80% found the questionnaire to be meaningful, 75% found

⁷ Trust had an alpha of 0.50 which is below the cutoff value of 0.7. Despite this, the analyses will include trust as a variable. However, the authors will be cautious regarding the interpretation of its meaning for the study.

⁸ The items were modified to the purpose of this thesis. This modification included the substitution of words in the original scale to words like “in the tourism industry”, “tourism ecolabels” etc. The scales were translated into Swedish through a rigorous translation process where the authors compared their translation to other translations of the scale if existed, as well as translating the scale from English to Swedish, and Swedish to English several times. This to see if they were consistent.

the questions in the survey to be clearly formulated and 75% found that the questions not tried to influence their answers in any direction.

Furthermore, each respondent had the opportunity to leave an optional comment on the survey. The replies indicated that some questions were difficult to answer and that some respondents thought their lack of knowledge made the survey unrelated. Some respondents also thought that reversed items were tough as it required attention.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The majority of the 207 respondents were female and 54.6% of the respondents were employed. In addition to this, almost half of the respondents had a college or university degree, while 42.5% of the respondents' highest completed education was upper secondary school.

Table 1: Overview of socio-demographic variables

Variable	N	n	% of total sample
	207		
Gender			
Female		129	62.0
Male		72	35.0
Non-binary		2	1.0
No answer		4	2.0
Age (years)			
18-25		81	39.1
26-35		28	13.5
36-45		28	13.5
46-55		24	11.6
56-65		34	16.4
> 65		12	5.8
Occupation			
Student		71	34.3
Employed		113	54.6
Other		23	11.1
Education			
Elementary school		10	4.8
Upper secondary school		88	42.5
College or university degree		99	47.8
Vocational education		7	3.4
Doctoral studies		2	1.0
Other		1	0.5

Note: The percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding errors.

4.1.1. Tourism Habits

Table 2 indicates that the majority of respondents travel as a tourist a couple of times a year with 47.3 % visiting countries within Europe but outside the Nordics. Most of the respondents stayed for a week. It was investigated what aspects were most important for

the respondents when traveling as a tourist, see Table 3. A large part of the respondents thought environmental friendliness was somewhat important. However, the two most important aspects were hotel location (28.5%) and dining experience (30%). If the respondents thought some aspects were missing, they had the opportunity to add aspects. The content analysis reveals that local transport, experiences based on the purpose of the trip as well as price also were influencing factors (see Appendix 7).

Table 2. Overview of tourism habits

Variable	N	n	% of total sample
	207		
Tourism frequency			
Every week		1	0.5
A couple of times a month		13	6.3
Once a month		16	7.7
A couple of times a year		159	76.8
Less than once a year		18	8.7
Destination most frequently visited			
Nearby town within Sweden		76	36.7
Outside Sweden but within the Nordics		8	3.9
Outside the Nordics but within Europe		98	47.3
North America		4	1.9
South America		-	-
Africa		1	0.5
Asia		14	6.8
Other		6	2.9
Length of stay at destination			
Less than a week		66	31.9
One week		88	42.5
Two weeks		38	18.4
Three to four weeks		11	5.3
More than a month		4	1.9

Note: The respondents were asked to think about their tourism habits pre-Covid-19. The percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding errors.

Table 3. Overview of distribution of important aspects when traveling as a tourist in %

Variable	Very unimportant	Rather unimportant	Somewhat unimportant	Neither	Somewhat important	Rather important	Very important
Living standard	1.4	5.8	3.9	5.3	20.8	44.0	18.8
Hotel location	1.9	1.9	1.4	4.8	15.0	46.4	28.5
Dining experience	0	1.4	2.4	7.2	18.4	40.6	30.0
National-and zoos	22.7	15.9	9.2	24.2	13.5	9.2	5.3
Sports events	45.4	14.0	9.2	14.5	9.7	3.9	3.4
Historical monuments	10.6	8.7	7.2	18.4	29.5	18.4	7.2
Shopping	13.5	15.5	12.1	19.3	22.2	15.0	2.4
Boat experiences	19.3	15.0	7.7	27.1	20.8	9.2	1.0
Environ-mental friendliness	2.4	5.3	5.3	18.8	28.0	24.2	15.9

Note: N = 207. The respondents were asked to think about their tourism habits pre-Covid-19. The percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding errors.

4.2. Consumer Perception of Sustainable Tourism

The respondents' answers to the question "*What is sustainable tourism to you?*" were coded into six categories (see Table 4). Altogether, three of the categories, namely, environment, social and economic, form distinct dimensions of sustainable tourism. The combined category consisted of answers including two or three dimensions. Figure 3 visualizes the distribution of answers.

Table 4. Coding scheme explanation

Code	Categories identified	Code description
1	Environment	environment, climate, carbon dioxide, fly less, climate compensate, pollution
2	Social	locals, working conditions, social welfare
3	Economic	smart traveling, not waste time, quality of experience
4	Combined	two or three dimensions above were mentioned
5	Do not know	those indicating that they do not know
6	Other	-

Note: The social dimension contains aspects concerning the local economic welfare due to the economic dimension only being connected to private economy.

The results in Table 5 show that most respondents perceive sustainable tourism to mainly concern environmental. Additionally, almost 20% thought that it concerned all three dimensions identified.

Table 5. Results of coding scheme

Dimension	n	%	Example quotation
Environment	108	52.2	<i>“That my traveling does not affect the environment and climate negatively”</i>
Social	9	4.3	<i>“That those working in tourism in the country a visit have decent working conditions”</i>
Economic	3	1.5	<i>“Choose locations carefully”</i> and <i>“not waste time”</i>
Combined	41	19.8	<i>“Consideration to ecologic, social and economic tourism”</i>
Do not know	15	7.2	<i>“Do not know”</i>
Other	31	15.0	-

Note: N = 207

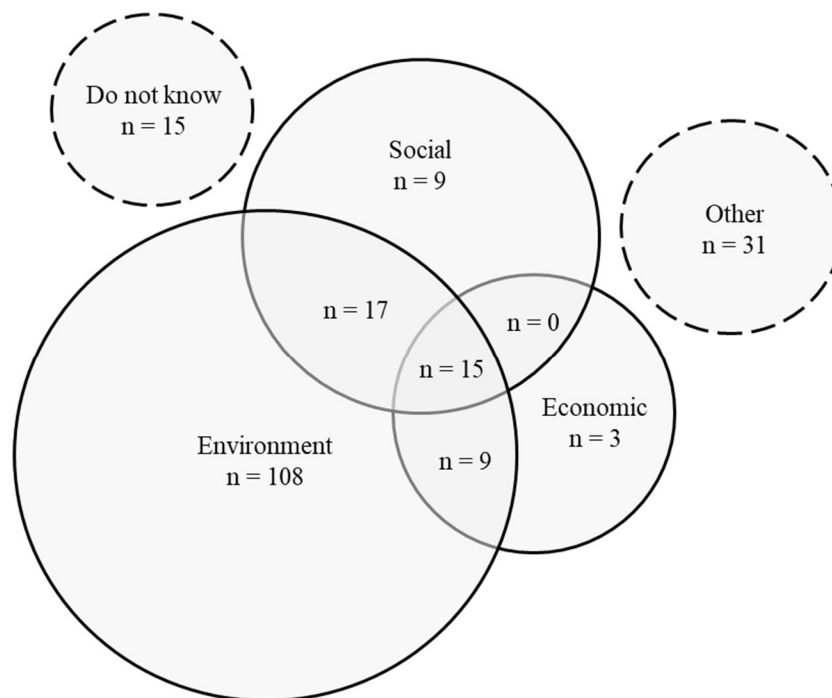


Figure 3. Categories of sustainable tourism identified in content analysis of open question, visualized by a Venn diagram

4.3. Results for Measures of Attitude

The following section presents the results for each attitude measure. For Belief Strength, the respondents think that the likelihood of tourism ecolabels misleading consumers are highly unlikely. Furthermore, respondents believe that it is highly likely that tourism ecolabels contribute to a better climate as well as giving them better

conscience in purchasing situations. If analyzing the mean of 5.58, respondents generally hold positive attitudes toward tourism ecolabel.

Table 6. Overview of Belief Strength for each belief item

Belief strength item	Expectancy-Value Theory		Probabilistic measure	
	M ^a	SD	M ^b	SD
Have the color green	1.42	1.38	5.42	1.38
Are more expensive than non-ecolabelled activities	1.16	1.32	5.16	1.32
Contributes to a better climate	1.76	1.26	5.76	1.26
Gives me better conscience	1.69	1.31	5.69	1.31
Affects my purchases positively	1.41	1.39	5.41	1.39
Affects my purchases negatively	-1.87	1.20	2.14	1.20
Reduces environmental degradation	1.32	1.40	5.32	1.40
Misleads consumers	-2.04	1.26	1.96	1.26
Belief strength index for attitude			5.58	.79

Note: N = 207. ^aScores could range from -3 (highly unlikely) and 3 (highly likely). ^bScores could range from 1 (highly unlikely) and 7 (highly likely).

Following the Evaluation measure of attitude, results indicate that the respondents believe attributes of tourism ecolabels are very good when considering their contribution to a better climate. When evaluating the attributes of misleading consumers and affecting purchases negatively, the respondents saw them as quite bad attributes. If analyzing the mean of 5.76, respondents generally hold positive attitudes toward tourism ecolabel.

Table 7. Overview of Evaluation for each belief item

Belief evaluation item	Expectancy-Value Theory		Evaluative measure	
	M ^a	SD	M ^b	SD
Have the color green	1.89	1.16	5.89	1.16
Are more expensive than non-ecolabelled activities	-0.41	1.59	3.59	1.59
Contributes to a better climate	2.49	.84	6.49	0.8
Gives me better conscience	1.97	1.09	5.97	1.09
Affects my purchases positively	2.04	1.10	5.04	1.10
Affects my purchases negatively	-1.86	1.34	2.14	1.34
Reduces environmental degradation	2.35	.96	6.35	.96
Misleads consumers	-1.88	1.38	2.12	1.38
Evaluation index for attitude			5.76	.71

Note: N = 207. ^aScores could range from -3 (very bad) and 3 (very good). ^bScores could range from 1 (very bad) and 7 (very good).

Following Table 8, it can be concluded that all but one belief item had a positive mean based on EVT. The standard deviations could be considered as low, as they amount to approximately half of the data units (i.e., nine). However, it indicates some variance around the mean with misleading consumers having the highest variance.

Table 8. Mean on attitude following Expectancy-Value for each belief item

Belief item	M ^a	SD
Have the color green	3.26	3.81
Are more expensive than non-ecolabelled activities	-0.17	3.28
Contributes to a better climate	4.72	3.76
Gives me better conscience	4.00	3.80
Affects my purchases positively	3.56	3.90
Affects my purchases negatively	4.27	3.90
Reduces environmental degradation	3.46	4.00
Misleads consumers	4.33	4.12
Attitude index Expectancy-Value	3.43	2.37

Note: N = 207. ^aMean score is based on the mean of Equation 1. Thus, scores could range from -9 and 9.

4.3.1. Hypotheses Testing

For every measure of attitude, bivariate Pearson correlations with two-tailed tests for significance were conducted to test the hypotheses.⁹ For attitudes based on Belief Strength, significant positive correlations were found for knowledge and trust, therefore empirically supporting H1 and H3.

Table 9. Means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation matrix with belief strength has a measure of dependent variable attitude

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Belief Strength (A)	1.58	.79	(.75)						
2. Knowledge	5.07	.75	.32**	(.75)					
3. A&I	2.43	1.07	.09	.08	(.79)				
4. Trust	4.22	.72	.32**	.21**	.25**	(.50)			
5. Private Benefit	3.48	1.36	.02	.06	.27**	.08	(.75)		
6. Individualism	3.46	1.04	-.09	-.05	.07	.09	.06	(.72)	
7. Skepticism	2.63	.59	-.10	.01	-.32**	-.47**	-.18**	-.09	(.86)

Note: A&I: Awareness & involvement. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Cronbach's alphas are shown in the diagonal in parentheses.

⁹ Note that the variable 'trust' had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.5.

For attitude based on Evaluation, significant correlations were found for trust and individualism. Having more trust will positively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels whereas being more individualistic will affect attitudes negatively. Thus, providing empirical support for H3 and H5.

Table 10. Means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation matrix with Evaluation as a measure of dependent variable attitude

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Evaluation (A)	1.76	.71	(.73)						
2. Knowledge	5.07	.75	.13	(.75)					
3. A&I	2.43	1.07	-.01	.08	(.79)				
4. Trust	4.20	.72	.29**	.21**	.25**	(.50)			
5. Private Benefit	3.48	1.36	-.17	.06	.27**	.08	(.75)		
6. Individualism	3.46	1.04	-.18**	-.05	.07	.09	.06	(.72)	
7. Skepticism	2.63	.59	-.09	.01	-.32**	-.47**	-.18**	-.09	(.86)

Note: A&I: Awareness & involvement. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Cronbach's alphas are shown in the diagonal in parentheses.

For attitude based on Expectancy-Value, significant correlations were found for knowledge and trust. This indicates that being more knowledgeable and/or having more trust positively affect attitudes toward tourism ecolabels. Thus, providing empirical support for H1 and H3.

Table 11. Means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation matrix with Expectancy-Value as a measure of the dependent variable attitude

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Attitude (A)	3.43	2.37	(.77)						
2. Knowledge	5.07	.75	.28**	(.75)					
3. A&I	2.43	1.07	.07	.08	(.79)				
4. Trust	4.22	.72	.34**	.21**	.25**	(.50)			
5. Private Benefit	3.48	1.36	-.02	.06	.27**	.08	(.75)		
6. Individualism	3.46	1.04	-.11	-.05	.07	.09	.06	(.72)	
7. Skepticism	2.63	.59	-.12	.01	-.32**	-.47**	-.18**	-.09	(.86)

Note: A&I: Awareness & involvement. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Cronbach's alphas are shown in the diagonal in parentheses.

Table 12 summarizes all hypotheses and whether these are empirically supported or not. Hypotheses that are empirically supported showed significant correlations for at least two attitude measures. Partially empirical support showed significant correlations for one of the three attitude measures.

Table 12. Summary of hypotheses

H1	Perceived knowledge about the environment will positively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.	Empirically supported
H2	Awareness of and involvement in tourism ecolabels will positively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.	Not empirically supported
H3	Trust in tourism ecolabels will positively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.	Empirically supported
H4	Tourism ecolabels reporting private benefits will positively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.	Not empirically supported
H5	Consumers scoring high on individualism will have a more negative attitude toward tourism ecolabels than those scoring low.	Partially empirically supported
H6	Skepticism toward tourism ecolabels will negatively correlate with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels.	Not empirically supported

4.4. Multiple Linear Regressions

Several multiple linear regressions were performed to predict attitudes toward tourism ecolabels. In total six models were analyzed, two for each measure of attitude (see Appendix 5). For one of the two models on each measure of attitude, dummy variables were created for gender, education, sustainable tourism category and if respondents actively search for tourism ecolabels when traveling. Gender was coded into either female or male, resulting in exclusion of six respondents¹⁰, making N=201. Education was coded into either high (university degree or higher) or low educational level. Sustainable tourism was coded into either an environmental category or all else (see 4.2 for all categories). If respondents answered “probably correct” to “absolutely correct” regarding if they search for ecolabels while booking a tourism activity, the respondents were categorized as actively searching for tourism ecolabels. Age was divided into six categories as shown in Table 1.

¹⁰ There were in total six respondents identifying themselves as other than female or male. To facilitate the multiple regression analysis, these respondents were excluded. As it concerned such a small proportion of the total sample (3%) the authors reasoned that this will not affect the previously reported or following results.

4.4.1. Multiple Linear Regression for Attitude Based on Belief Strength

The results for Model 1 show a significant regression equation ($F(6, 194) = 8.365, p < 0.001$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.181. The significant predictors of attitudes toward tourism ecolabels based on Belief Strength were knowledge and trust. The regression of Model 1 indicates that the more knowledgeable and more trusting the respondents were, the more favorable attitude.

The results for Model 2 shows a significant regression equation ($F(12, 188) = 4.802, p < 0.001$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.186. Significant results were found for knowledge and trust. The increase in adjusted R^2 indicate that the additional variables contributed to explaining attitude.

Table 13. Linear regression for attitude based on Belief Strength

Variables	Unstandardized		Adjusted R^2
	B-coefficient	Std. Error	
Model 1:			0.181
Knowledge	.27***	.07	
A&I	-.00	.05	
Trust	.37***	.08	
Private Benefit	-.01	.04	
Individualism	-.08	.05	
Skepticism	.10	.10	
Model 2:			0.186
Knowledge	.27***	.07	
A&I	-.02	.05	
Trust	.40***	.08	
Private Benefit	-.03	.04	
Individualism	-.09	.05	
Skepticism	.07	.11	
Age	.01	.00	
Tourism frequency	-.01	.08	
Dummy gender (female)	-.07	.11	
Dummy education (high)	-.20	.11	
Dummy sustainable tourism (Environmental)	-.05	.11	
Dummy search	.15	.11	

Note: Dependent variable attitude based on Belief Strength. *** $p < 0.001$

4.4.2. Multiple Linear Regression for Attitude Based on Evaluation

To satisfy the assumption of normal distribution in linear regression (Newbold et al., 2013), a reflected 10-logarithm was conducted on the evaluation variable. The results for Model 3 show a significant regression equation ($F(6, 194) = 4.964, p < 0.001$), with

an adjusted R^2 of 0.106. The results of Model 3 illustrate that trust and individualism both were significant predictors of attitude.

The results for Model 4 show a significant regression equation ($F(12, 188) = 2.929, p < 0.001$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.104. Comparing the results of Model 4 to Model 3, the lower adjusted R^2 indicates that the additional input variables were not adding explanatory value to the model. This model indicates that having more trust negatively affects attitude, as well as individualism resulting in a more favorable attitude.

Table 14. Linear regression for attitude based on Evaluation

Variables	Unstandardized		Adjusted R^2
	B-coefficient	Std. Error	
Model 3:			0.106
Knowledge	-.02	.01	
A&I	.00	.01	
Trust	-.06***	.02	
Private Benefit	.00	.01	
Individualism	.03**	.01	
Skepticism	-.02	.02	
Model 4:			0.104
Knowledge	-.02	.01	
A&I	.00	.01	
Trust	-.06***	.02	
Private Benefit	.00	.01	
Individualism	.02*	.01	
Skepticism	-.02	.02	
Age	-.00	.00	
Tourism frequency	.01	.01	
Dummy gender (female)	-.02	.02	
Dummy education (high)	.02	.02	
Dummy sustainable	-.01	.02	
tourism (Environmental)			
Dummy search	-.03	.02	

Note: Dependent variable attitude based on evaluation * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

4.4.3. Multiple Linear Regression for Attitude Based on Expectancy-Value

The results for Model 5 show a significant regression equation ($F(6, 194) = 8.200, p < 0.001$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.178. Knowledge and trust were significant for attitudes, indicating that being more knowledgeable and/or having more trust resulted in more favorable attitudes.

The results for Model 6 show a significant regression equation ($F(12, 188) = 5.234, p < 0.001$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.204. More knowledge, higher trust and active search for tourism ecolabels resulted in more favorable attitudes toward tourism ecolabels based

on Expectancy-Value. Additionally, being more individualistic negatively affected attitudes. Comparing Model 5 and Model 6, the additional input variables added explanatory value to the model as the adjusted R² increased.

Table 15. Linear regression for attitude based on Expectancy-Value Theory

Variables	Unstandardized		Adjusted R ²
	B-coefficient	Std. Error	
Model 5:			0.178
Knowledge	.68**	.21	
A&I	-.03	.15	
Trust	1.18***	.25	
Private Benefit	-.09	.12	
Individualism	-.28	.15	
Skepticism	.19	.31	
Model 6:			0.203
Knowledge	.66**	.21	
A&I	-.10	.16	
Trust	1.31***	.25	
Private Benefit	-.12	.12	
Individualism	-.32*	.15	
Skepticism	.06	.31	
Age	.02	.01	
Tourism frequency	-.11	.23	
Dummy gender (female)	-.11	.33	
Dummy education (high)	-.55	.33	
Dummy sustainable tourism (environmental)	-.28	.32	
Dummy search	.76*	.319	

Note: Dependent variable attitude based on Expectancy-Value. *p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

5. Discussion

The purpose of this thesis is to better understand consumers' attitudes toward tourism ecolabels, where this thesis sought to answer the following question:

- *What factors affect Swedish consumers' attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry?*

5.1. Conclusions and Implications

5.1.1. Descriptive

The majority of the respondents were female between the age of 18-25. Approximately half of the respondents were employed and had a college or university degree. However, the differences between gender were small and had no significant effect on tourism ecolabel attitudes. Moreover, the results show that the respondents travel as tourists a couple of times a year with the length of stay of a few days to two weeks. The most common destination was outside the Nordics but within Europe. The respondents valued living standard, hotel location and dining experience when traveling. Environmental friendliness was also valued as important. This indicates that communication about these aspects for European destinations should focus more on the sustainability of the destination, living standards, hotel location and dining.

5.1.2. Sustainable Tourism

Respondents were asked "*What is sustainable tourism to you?*" to get an understanding of what sustainable tourism means to consumers. Literature suggests that there are differences when it comes to the definition of sustainable tourism (Cernat & Gourdon, 2007). Following the definition of the World Tourism Organization (n.d.) which contains three dimensions (economic, social and environmental impacts), the results of this thesis deviate. Only a small number saw sustainable tourism to concern all aspects ($n = 15$) and some did not know. The results of this study further indicate that the environmental dimension of tourism is the one most thought of ($n = 108$). Thereafter, the social dimension was most common ($n = 9$) and lastly the economic dimension ($n = 3$). Additionally, the combination of social and environmental aspects was common ($n = 17$). However, the authors interpretation of the different dimensions might explain the deviation from World Tourism Organization's definition. Following this, the authors conclude that sustainable tourism mainly concerns the environmental impact of tourism as well as combining the environmental and social dimensions, which is in line with Gössling's (2006) findings. Communication concerning sustainable tourism is thus suggested to focus on environmental and social impact rather than including all three dimensions.

5.1.3. Knowledge

In line with literature, knowledge was found to significantly correlate positively with attitudes toward tourism ecolabels. Thus, as Testa et al. (2015) suggests, educating consumers might be favorable for attitudes. Furthermore, the results showed a high mean of 5, on a 6-point scale, with a standard deviation of 0.75. This indicates that the respondents generally showed confidence in their knowledge. The possible implications of this could be that individuals' perceived knowledge and actual knowledge are different from each other. This could lead to individuals making poor decisions based on what they think are facts. Furthermore, just because people perceive themselves as knowledgeable, does not mean that they will act upon their knowledge.

5.1.4. Awareness and Involvement

Divergent from literature, no significant correlations were found between any attitude measure and consumer awareness and involvement. One potential explanation for this may be the scale used. The ECOLSCALE (Taufique et al., 2019) analyzed consumer awareness and involvement as aggregates. They suggest that involvement enhances awareness which implies a connection between the two. Thus, the variables and their effect cannot be isolated in the analysis, nor can this relationship be tested. It is therefore not possible to determine the degree of awareness or involvement separately for the respondents of this study. Nevertheless, analyzing the mean of 2.43, the level of awareness and involvement was rather low if comparing it on the 7-point Likert-scale. The original study did not report the results of their final study which makes comparisons impossible. Additionally, the results show a significant positive correlation between awareness and involvement and trust. This implies that marketing activities targeted at raising the awareness and involvement of the receiver positively influence their trust.

5.1.5. Trust

As trust is seen as a prerequisite for sustainable consumption (Carrete et al., 2012; Daugbjerg et al., 2014), it was hypothesized that trust would positively correlate to consumers' attitudes toward ecolabels. It can be concluded that trust likely has a significant impact on people's attitudes toward ecolabels. But this study cannot explicitly tell if trust in fact has a positive impact on people's attitudes due to the low Cronbach's alpha. As the questions regarding consumer trust in this study was based on Taufique et al.'s (2019) study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77, reliability should be questioned. Taufique et al. (2019) argued that the scale and items measuring trust would be adaptable to different ecolabel schemes, which this thesis argues against. Reasons that could have caused this difference could have been that trust only was measured based on three items and the situational factors discussed in 5.3.

5.1.6. Private Benefit

It was hypothesized that ecolabels reporting private benefits would result in more favorable attitudes toward tourism ecolabels. For all three measures of attitude, non-significant correlations were found where Evaluation and Expectancy-Value showed negative correlations. This is not consistent with previous research (e.g., Taufique et al., 2014; Taufique et al., 2019), that suggests there should be a positive correlation. This might be explained by the different natures of ecolabels. In Taufique et al. (2014), the suggested private benefits concerned “tastiness” or “healthiness” indicating food ecolabels which might impose greater private benefit than tourism. The result for this variable may also be connected to the foci of answers to sustainable tourism, where the answers mostly concerned external aspects. For example, less pollution and good working conditions. Hence, the answers were of more altruistic nature indicating that they may not associate tourism with private benefits. Following this, one could theorize that private benefit would have a positive relation to individualism. However, weak correlations between private benefits and individualism were found.

5.1.7. Individualism

As suggested by literature, individualists dislike when governments interfere with daily life (Braman et al., 2005; Kahan, 2008). This is reflected in the results of this study as being more individualistic negatively affected attitudes toward tourism ecolabels. A significant negative correlation was found for attitude based on Evaluation. These results could be explained by the study of Kahan et al. (2007) who found that investigating cultural cognition could explain more of the attitudinal variance toward public policies than measuring attitudes on a political scale. Following this, the use of ecolabels should be considered based on cultural cognition as suggested by de Mooji (2010) where communitarian values are more favorable for positive attitudes. However, trying to appeal to individualists might be hard as their worldview differs from the altruistic nature of ecolabels.

5.1.8. Skepticism

It was hypothesized that skeptics would have more negative attitudes toward ecolabels than less skeptical people, thus a negative correlation between attitude and skepticism. Although the effect of skepticism on attitudes was non-significant and relatively small, skepticism has a negative effect on consumers attitudes toward ecolabels. Additionally, skepticism had a significant negative correlation with awareness and involvement implying that consumers who are unaware of tourism ecolabels are more skeptical toward them. The results also indicate that gaining more consumer trust lowers the level of skepticism significantly. This might have practical relevance as marketers could reduce the skepticism of individuals by primarily focusing on other variables such as consumer awareness and involvement, as well as their trust in ecolabels.

5.1.9. Attitude

When examining the regression analyses for attitudes toward tourism ecolabels, knowledge, trust and individualism showed significant contributions to attitude. Theory suggests that knowledge about ecolabels positively influence attitudes toward them (Taufique et al., 2016). In line with theory, the results show that the more knowledgeable individuals perceive themselves to be, the more favorable attitudes. This could give an implication that educating consumers about tourism ecolabels is a way to positively affect their attitudes, which also is suggested by literature (Taufique et al., 2017; Testa et al., 2015). However, the number of ecolabels may make this more difficult as consumers are not susceptible to too much information. This has practical implications for policymakers to align local and national instances where the focus should lie on providing educative information, broadening consumers' base for decision making.

Additionally, this study found that trust is a significant predictor of attitudes toward tourism ecolabels. However, these results are interpreted cautiously as the reliability of trust can be questioned. As theory suggests that consumers only will consider ecolabels if they trust them (Thøgersen, 2000), it is important to acknowledge its potential impact of trust on consumer attitude. Following the results of knowledge, as well as knowledge being a prerequisite for trust (Thøgersen, 2000), theory suggests that consumers make assessments based on the information received if trust in general environmental claims is not present. It is also argued that third-party claims (i.e., Type I labels) often are used as indicators of trust (Darnall et al., 2018). This could have interesting implications to business and policy formation. If only presenting environmental claims without ground or trust from consumers, there is a higher risk of fluctuations in attitudes. However, if educating customers about tourism ecolabels and simultaneously working with third-party certifications, attitude is suggested to be enhanced.

When models based on Expectancy-Value were tested, the expanded model gave additional explanation to attitude. Even if not significant, the results indicate that higher education may result in less favorable attitudes toward tourism ecolabels. The same was found for those who saw sustainable tourism as mainly concerning environmental factors. Furthermore, it was found that active search for tourism ecolabels significantly contributed to more favorable attitudes. Hence, practical conclusions might be that targeting actively searching consumers with information mainly concerning combined or social aspects of sustainable tourism is a way to positively affect their tourism ecolabel attitudes. However, theory suggests that few individuals search for tourism ecolabels (Buckley, 2002) which might imply that one must target awareness to gain a larger actively seeking consumer base.

As consistent with literature (Braman et al., 2005; Kahan, 2008), individualism was found to result in unfavorable attitudes toward tourism ecolabels if based on EVT.

Notably, the results in the study were inconclusive as individualism was found to significantly contribute to favorable attitudes if based on Evaluation. This might be explained by the different measures of attitude. Therefore, one might question Evaluation as it deviates from the other two measures considering their relatively high explanatory value. However, as next section discusses, it is difficult to conclude which measure of attitude that is more favorable.

As for our ulterior purpose of comparing attitude measures, there are different perspectives to consider. As contended by theory (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) there are multiple ways to measure attitude. It can be concluded that EVT had a higher explanatory value in the linear regressions, compared to Belief Strength and Evaluation. Although this study showed higher values for the variables with EVT than the separated measures, it cannot be concluded that EVT is a better measure of attitude. The reason behind this statement is that the higher values does not necessarily tell us that the answers are truer. Instead, this should be looked at from a theoretical perspective where this study showed that good/bad questions regarding attitudes did not quite capture the phenomena explored. This in comparison to the other two measures that showed larger explanatory value even if all showed significant correlations. However, no conclusions can be made certain regarding which measure to use. If the authors were to redo this study, they argue that EVT captured both alternative measures suggested in the literature review and might therefore capture the studied social phenomena to a larger extent.

5.2. Key Findings

The key findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

Swedish consumers believe that sustainable tourism primarily concern the environmental aspects such as reducing climate impact and social aspects such as decent working conditions. Significant influencing factors on attitudes toward ecolabels in the tourism industry were found to be Knowledge, Trust and Individualism. Educating consumers about tourism ecolabels is suggested to create more favorable attitudes as well as increase trust by working with third-party certifications. Furthermore, cultural cognition needs to be considered when wanting to influence attitude in different countries and destinations.

5.3. Limitations

The authors have limited this thesis to ecolabels in the tourism industry, and therefore cannot infer the relevance of specific tourism ecolabels. Following that the attitude measure is based on EVT and thus a preparatory study, one limitation is the number of participants in the preparatory study to get a more comprehensive belief collection.

Furthermore, the authors inferred the whole sample of the study as a convenience sample (see 3.5.1.). This might be avoided by distributing the survey to a larger extent in various groups not targeted at tourism. Also, by using other channels to distribute the questionnaire. This leads the authors to identifying another limitation concerning the online self-completion questionnaire. There is evidence that online surveys generate non-sampling errors such as low response rates and non-responses (Bell et al., 2019). This was encountered in this study as 3.4.2. illustrates. Additionally, open questions in an online survey may make respondents leave (Bell et al., 2019). This was evident in this study as many respondents left in the first block which presented an open-ended question. This was met by having progress bar which is thought to make respondents stay throughout the survey (Bell et al., 2019). However, some left when having completed 90% which indicates that the effect of the bar can be questioned. Despite this, the method was deemed appropriate due to the current Covid-19 situation as well as the limited resources of students.

The use of established scales was seen as a way to increase reliability and validity of the study. As the original study of the ECOLSCALE was conducted in Malaysia, the study was conducted in different cultural settings (de Mooji, 2010), which might explain the different results. Thus, it was appropriate to translate the scales to Swedish and adapt the scales to the research area. This could potentially impair the replicability, as well as the reliability of the study. Additionally, respondents answered close to the middle on the awareness and involvement items as well as some thought that their lack of knowledge made the survey unrelatable. This might have an impact on the answers but are, however, illustrating the lack of knowledge and awareness identified in literature. Additionally, the tourism industry is affected by external events such as Covid-19 as described in 1.1.2. Therefore, the authors tried to eliminate this effect on the study's results by asking the respondents to think about the situation before Covid-19 when answering the survey.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Drop-Out Analysis

Following the closing of the questionnaire, some respondents were excluded. The main reasons for exclusion were incomplete responses (i.e., finishing <100% of the survey) which amounted to 150 exclusions. One person answered “No thanks, I do not agree to participate in this study” when being informed about GDPR which also led to exclusion. In total, 151 responses were excluded.

To reduce the risk of bias, the authors conducted analyses of the incomplete responses as well to see if there were major deviations from the complete responses. The results show that the responses are in line with the complete ones. As most “incomplete respondents” answered first block of the survey these were compared with the “complete respondents”. For example, sustainable tourism defined by the “incomplete respondents” included: environmental friendliness, low climate footprint and promote local society.

Table 16 shows the frequencies of incomplete answers for tourism habits. The equivalent table for complete answers can be found under 4.4.1. The majority of respondents with incomplete answers travel a couple of times a year, just like complete answers (76.8% of all respondents). The destination most frequently visited for complete answers was outside the Nordic region but within Europe just as incomplete answers. Following this, destination within Sweden were most frequently visited for both respondent groups. Length of stay in the incomplete group amounted to one week for the majority. The same pattern is noticed in the complete group where 42.5% of the respondents stay for one week. Following this comparison, it can be concluded that the response of the incomplete group resembles the ones for the complete group studied in the thesis. Hence, the risk of bias is reduced.

Table 16. Overview of tourism habits for incomplete answers

Variable	N	n	% of total sample
	29		
Tourism frequency			
Every week		-	-
A couple of times a month		1	0.7
Once a month		4	2.7
A couple of times a year		24	15.3
Less than once a year		1	0.7
Destination most frequently visited			
Nearby town within Sweden		9	6.0
Outside Sweden but within the Nordic region		3	2.0
Outside the Nordic region but within Europe		14	9.3
North America		-	-
South America		-	-
Africa		1	0.7
Asia		1	0.7
Other		1	0.7
Length of stay at destination			
Less than a week		4	2.7
One week		16	10.7
Two weeks		5	3.3
Three to four weeks		3	2.0
More than a month		1	0.7

Note: The respondents were asked to think about their tourism habits before Covid-19. The percentages do not sum to 100% due to missing values as responses are incomplete.

Table 17 illustrates a set of statements provided in block one and the different means and standard deviations between the response groups. The largest mean and standard deviation difference observed is 1.43 and 0.54 respectively. Hence, it can be concluded that the results for the incomplete response group is similar to the one of complete answers.

Table 17. Mean and standard deviation comparison between excluded and included responses

Statement	M		SD	
	IR	CR	IR	CR
<i>“aware of the existence of tourism ecolabels”</i>	8	6.57	3.19	3.73
<i>“understand the meaning of tourism ecolabels”</i>	7.22	6.26	3.37	3.47
<i>“take consideration to tourism ecolabels”</i>	5.93	6.64	3.71	3.27

Note: IR = incomplete responses, CR = complete responses. $N_{\text{valid}}(\text{IR}) = 27$, $N_{\text{missing}}(\text{IR}) = 124$.

$N_{\text{valid}}(\text{CR}) = 207$

Appendix 2: Methodology of Preparatory Studies

Pre-study 1: Belief Identification

To identify the most frequently mentioned beliefs for tourism ecolabels, the authors conducted individual interviews where the following question was asked: “*What do you believe to be the characteristics of ecolabels in the tourism industry?*”. The respondents were asked to say everything that came to mind regardless of their own judgement of relevance. Conducting a content analysis, the nine most frequently mentioned beliefs were identified and used in the study.

Table 18. Participants in pre-study 1

Gender	Age	Date
Female	21	2021-03-01
Male	22	2021-03-02
Female	49	2021-03-02
Male	51	2021-03-02
Female	59	2021-03-03
Male	58	2021-03-03
Female	23	2021-03-03

Pre-study 2: Self-Completion Questionnaire Feedback-Sessions

To gain insights in usability of the online self-completion questionnaire, individual interviews were conducted. The interviewees were asked to think out loud when answering the questions. No instructions were given regarding time or things to focus on. The feedback received was incorporated into the final questionnaire.

Appendix 3: Judgement of Survey

Table 19. Judgement of survey, means and standard deviations

	N	M	Min	Max	SD
	207				
The survey was meaningful		4.03	1	5	0.800
The questions were clearly formulated		3.93	1	5	0.950
The survey tried to influence your answer in any direction		1.86	1	5	0.971

Note: Based on a 5-point Likert scale

Table 20. Judgement of survey, distribution of answers in percentage

Statement	No, absolutely not	No, basically not	Doubtful	Yes, basically	Yes, absolutely
The survey was meaningful	0.5%	3.4%	17.4%	50.2%	28.5%
The questions were clearly formulated	1.9%	6.8%	16.9%	45.4%	29%
The survey tried to influence your answers in any direction	45.9%	29.5%	17.9%	5.8%	1%

Note: N = 207

Appendix 4: Facebook-Group Distribution

The online self-completion questionnaire was distributed through various Swedish Facebook groups targeted at tourism and/or traveling.

Table 21. Name of Facebook groups, number of members and distribution dates

Group name	N members at distribution date 1		N members at distribution date 2	
Resa i Sverige	3672	2021-03-20	-	-
Vi som älskar att resa!	3125	2021-03-19	3135	2021-03-28
Fråga, tipsa & inspirera				
Att resa ensam	4891	2021-03-19	5086	2021-03-28
Vi som älskar resor	4548	2021-03-19	4570	2021-03-28
Vi som älskar att resa	5676	2021-03-20	-	-
Resa som vegan	13 258	2021-03-21	13256	2021-03-28

Appendix 5: Linear Regression Models

Model 1: Attitude [Belief Strength] towards tourism ecolabels = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Knowledge} + \beta_2 \text{Awareness \& Involvement} + \beta_3 \text{Trust} + \beta_4 \text{Private Benefit} + \beta_5 \text{Individualism} + \beta_6 \text{Skepticism} + e_i$

Model 2: Attitude [Belief Strength] towards tourism ecolabels = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Knowledge} + \beta_2 \text{Awareness \& Involvement} + \beta_3 \text{Trust} + \beta_4 \text{Private Benefit} + \beta_5 \text{Individualism} + \beta_6 \text{Skepticism} + \beta_7 \text{Age} + \beta_8 \text{Tourism Frequency} + \beta_9 \text{Gender} + \beta_{10} \text{Education} + \beta_{11} \text{Environmental Category} + \beta_{12} \text{Search} + e_i$

Model 3: Attitude [Evaluation] towards tourism ecolabels = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Knowledge} + \beta_2 \text{Awareness \& Involvement} + \beta_3 \text{Trust} + \beta_4 \text{Private Benefit} + \beta_5 \text{Individualism} + \beta_6 \text{Skepticism} + e_i$

Model 4: Attitude [Evaluation] towards tourism ecolabels = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Knowledge} + \beta_2 \text{Awareness \& Involvement} + \beta_3 \text{Trust} + \beta_4 \text{Private Benefit} +$

$$\beta_5 \text{Individualism} + \beta_6 \text{Skepticism} + \beta_7 \text{Age} + \beta_8 \text{TourismFrequency} + \beta_9 \text{Gender} + \beta_{10} \text{Education} + \beta_{11} \text{EnvironmentalCategory} + \beta_{12} \text{Search} + e_i$$

Model 5: Attitude [Expectancy value] towards tourism ecolabels = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Knowledge} + \beta_2 \text{Awareness \& Involvement} + \beta_3 \text{Trust} + \beta_4 \text{Private Benefit} + \beta_5 \text{Individualism} + \beta_6 \text{Skepticism} + e_i$

Model 6: Attitude [Expectancy value] towards tourism ecolabels = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Knowledge} + \beta_2 \text{Awareness \& Involvement} + \beta_3 \text{Trust} + \beta_4 \text{Private Benefit} + \beta_5 \text{Individualism} + \beta_6 \text{Skepticism} + \beta_7 \text{Age} + \beta_8 \text{TourismFrequency} + \beta_9 \text{Gender} + \beta_{10} \text{Education} + \beta_{11} \text{EnvironmentalCategory} + \beta_{12} \text{Search} + e_i$

Appendix 6: Cronbachs' Alpha

Table 22: Summary of Cronbach's alphas for indexed variables and for original studies

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	n	Number of items	Original study's Cronbach's alpha
Knowledge*	0.745	207	3	0.80
Awareness & Involvement*	0.786	207	3	0.82
Trust*	0.497	207	3	0.77
Private Benefit*	0.754	207	2	0.89
Individualism	0.720	207	6	> 0.70
Skepticism	0.859	207	9	0.85
Attitude (Expectancy-Value)**	0.770	207	8	
Attitude (Belief Strength)***	0.749	207	8	
Attitude (Evaluation)***	0.729	207	8	

Note: *6-point Likert-scales, **7-point Bipolar scale, ***7-point Likert-scale

Appendix 7: Important Aspects When Traveling as a Tourist

Table 23. Open-question analysis of important aspects when traveling as a tourist

Key word	n	% of total	Example
Local transportation	18	22.2	"possibility to use environmentally friendly modes of transportation"
Experiences based on purpose of trip	46	56.8	"close to the experiences which are the purpose of the trip, e.g., ski resort or close to the beach"
Benefitting the locals	13	16.1	"interactions with locals, so that my travel supports the local economy"
Price	4	4.9	

Note: If one aspect were missing (see Table 3) the respondents could add that variable in an open question. The respondents were asked to think about their tourism habits before Covid-19. The percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding errors.