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Master's Degree Program in  
**Data-Driven Marketing**

**Sustainability in Travel and Destination Marketing**

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Master Thesis

presented as partial requirement for obtaining a Master's Degree in Data-Driven Marketing

**NOVA Information Management School**  
**Instituto Superior de Estatística e Gestão de Informação**

Universidade Nova de Lisboa



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**SUSTAINABILITY IN TRAVEL AND DESTINATION MARKETING**

By

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Master Thesis presented as partial requirement for obtaining the Master's degree in Data-Driven Marketing, with a specialization in Marketing Research and CRM

**Supervised by**

Professor Pedro Simões Coelho

September, 2024

## **STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY**

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism, any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Rules of Conduct and Code of Honor from the NOVA Information Management School.

*Toyosi Muyis Salako*

*Lisbon, September 2024*

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## ABSTRACT

Sustainability has become a topic of debate in recent years, especially in the travel industry. The cruise industry is responsible for a large amount of pollution that has severe effects on the environment. With an increase in the world's awareness of the degradation of the environment, travelers are starting to look for travel options that meet their environmental values. An online survey was conducted, and the results analyzed to measure the participants knowledge of sustainability and if they engage in any sustainable practices. This survey was also used to measure factors that influence their decision when taking cruises.

The analyzed results show that price is a major determining factor when passengers are selecting which cruise to take. We see that sustainability rarely plays a major role during this decision-making process. We also see from the results that participants who regularly engage in sustainable practices are most likely to take lesser cruises and that very few travelers are willing to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise.

The sample size not being large and diverse enough are some of the limitations of this project. Other survey methods could be adopted for future research to provide even deeper in-depth analysis and broader perspectives in this study area. All in all, this study has added to the conversation surrounding sustainability, travel, and marketing through the lens of the cruise industry.

## KEYWORDS

Tourism; Destination Marketing; Sustainability; Cruises; Marketing; Travel; Sustainability Impact

### Sustainable Development Goals (SDG):



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Cruise tourism is the fastest growing segment within the global tourism industry, demonstrated by a constant increase in the number of passengers as well as the addition of ships being added to the fleets yearly. The travel and tourism industry are built on the concept of exploration and discovery of different cultures and environments to gain a deeper understanding and the perspectives of the locals by the travelers (Becken, 2002). However, as the industry flourishes, it appears to be at a decision-making crossroad. The cruise industry although providing great economic benefits is being saddled with the environmental cost of its activities due to the large amount of fuel it consumes, the tons of waste it produces which results in marine pollution and other impacts on the ecosystems of the destinations as well as impacting the economies of the port communities (Marine Conservation Society, 2018). Furthermore, as the industry recovers from the pandemic-induced downturn, there is an urgent need for sustainable revitalization strategies that are not only environmentally sound but also economically feasible whilst including all stakeholders (CLIA, 2022).

With an increase in the world's awareness of the degradation of the environment and the geometric increase in climate change importance on the world stage, some travelers are starting to look for travel options that meet their environmental values and this has led to crucial shift in favor of sustainability in the industry. This shift in the market trends and travelers' preferences in the travel and tourism sectors requires a change in the marketing of travel destinations, services as well as cruises (UNWTO, 2020). The move towards sustainability in destination marketing not only reflects ethical responsibility but also social and economic responsibility which will ensure a positive and prosperous impact on destinations and the host communities (Sustainable Travel International, 2020).

Despite the critical role of sustainability in the future of travel and tourism, only few comprehensive studies have been explicitly conducted to investigate the way destinations, and cruise destinations in particular, promote sustainable destination marketing efforts. Few previous studies have also examined the effectiveness of these marketing strategies in shifting consumer perceptions and behaviour and their contribution to sustainable development goals of those involved (Hoarau-Heemstra et al, 2023).

This aim of this work is to explore sustainable travel and destination marketing within the context of cruise tourism, assess the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating sustainability into marketing strategies for cruise destination as well as evaluating the effectiveness of sustainable marketing practices in influencing travelers' choices. To this regard, a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative analysis of consumer data and qualitative interview with industry stakeholders will be employed.

This research also seeks to offer insights into the dynamics of travel and destination marketing in relation to sustainability. Focusing on the cruise industry will make the study not only

improve the understanding about sustainable marketing practices but also provides practical recommendations. This work also intends to examine how companies can combine economic interests with eco-friendly obligations while demonstrating their green credentials towards a better future for both cruising sector and global tourism in general ensuring it remains a source of enjoyment for all generations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. TRAVEL AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Tourism can be defined as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that entails the movement of people to countries or places outside of their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure (UNWTO, 2023). Tourism is recognized globally as a significant contributor to employment and economic worth. In the previous year, tourism added

9.5 trillion U.S. dollars to the worldwide GDP, with an estimated increase to 15.5 trillion U.S. dollars in 2033 (Statista 2023). Several countries rely heavily on tourism to boost their GDP, this is because tourists are known to spend a lot whilst bringing foreign exchange. In 2022, tourists spent more than \$1 trillion globally (Forbes, 2023). Maldives, Antigua and Barbuda, Seychelles, Jamaica, and Belize happen to be the top 5 most reliant on tourism countries with tourism contributing a total of \$10.3 billion dollars to their combined GDP (Forbes, 2023).

The travel and tourism industry shapes economies all over the world by driving growth, creating jobs, and aiding cultural connection. The industry employs about 334 million people which is about 10.3% of the total worldwide working population whilst contributing 10.4% to the global GDP (WTTC, 2019). In 2022, the industry contributed about 7.6% to global GDP (WTTC, 2022). This underlines the major role that the industry plays in boosting money making all over the world. Aside from expenditures on travel and tourist services, the industry generates revenue by attracting investors to invest in tourist infrastructure such as hotels, airports, and attractions (UNWTO, 2020). This investment not only improves the tourism product, but also enhances access to facilities and services, thereby benefiting local communities.

The travel and tourism industry are greatly influenced by external factors such as economic conditions, political stability, health pandemics, and natural disasters. The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound effect on the industry, resulting in a substantial decrease in international travel and a significant loss of jobs and revenue. The pandemic underscored the necessity for the sector to possess resilience and adaptability, leading to a transition towards domestic tourism, improved health and safety protocols, and the integration of digital technologies for contactless services (WTTC, 2021).

In the future, the industry is predicted to keep changing with trends like customized travel experiences, environmentally friendly and ethical tourism practices, and the use of technology to improve the tourist experience (Poon, 1993; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). The future may also involve a shift to cooler destinations and a focus on domestic markets to reduce carbon emissions (Hindustan Times, 2023). In an era of growing global interconnectivity, the travel

and tourism sector will continue to play a crucial role in the worldwide economy, providing avenues for cultural exchange and fostering mutual understanding between different populations.

## **2.2 TRAVEL AND THE CRUISE INDUSTRY**

Cruises make up a very big part of the tourism industry, providing trips to vacationers in several spots all over the world from the Mediterranean to the Pacific Ocean. The cruise industry comprises all the companies that help make these vacations possible. These includes cruise

lines, the operators, as well as the ship builders. A Cruise Line refers to any company that operates cruise ships on either oceans or rivers and markets cruises to the public. Cruise lines differ from passenger lines in that passenger lines primarily focus on the transportation of passengers, while cruise lines offer a broader range of services and amenities. (Wikipedia, 2024). With its huge liners offering vacation voyages, the cruise industry has a major economic impact and helps to drive global tourism. Cruises combine travel, entertainment, and culture all in one, drawing a lot of varieties of passengers which in turn gives a boost to related businesses up and down the chain of the cruise industry and the travel industry at large (Barten, 2024).

Carnival Corporation and PLC owners of Carnival, Princess, Holland America, Seabourn, Cunard, AIDA, Costa, and P&O Cruises, having over 100 ships combined making it the largest in the world is one of the prominent players in the cruise industry. Royal Caribbean International, owners of Royal Caribbean, Celebrity, and Azamara brands are also big players in the industry. They own the world's largest passenger ship by tonnage, Symphony of the Seas. MSC, Disney and Norwegian are also known for their giant strides in the industry with Disney accounting for over 2% of the entire market in the industry, and Norwegian being known as the third-largest employer in the entire industry with over 30,000 employees (Barten, 2024).

The United States, with its long coastlines and access to many nearby ports in the tropical Caribbean Sea, is the world's leader in cruise revenue. In 2022, the U.S. cruise industry's revenue was roughly five times higher than that of Germany, the second leading market (Statista, 2023). The cruise industry has some similarities to the hotel industry in the sense that it offers varieties of accommodation onboard. You also have several people employed by the cruise industry in various positions including but not limited to crew members, waiters, performers and even managers specialized in running a cruise ship hotel (Barten, 2024). The industry caters to several categories of passengers including families, couples, solo travelers, adventure seekers as well as luxury travelers. In 2022, the cruise industry revenue worldwide amounted to nearly 19 billion U.S. dollars. (Statista, 2023).

In the future, the cruise industry is expected to look toward innovation and sustainability, with extra emphasis on health and safety measures, environmental stewardship, reducing overtourism, introduction of new technologies and designs to enhance passenger experience and reduce the ecological impacts. (Coulter, 2021; Barten, 2024).

## 2.3 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The tourism industry encounters obstacles such as environmental degradation, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the imperative for sustainable development methodologies. Tourism also significantly contributes to the depletion of natural resources, pollution, waste production issues, loss of biodiversity, and greenhouse gas emissions (Okafor, 2023). The notion of sustainable tourism has become increasingly important, highlighting the significance of resource management that meets economic, social, and aesthetic requirements while preserving cultural integrity, vital ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (Miller et al., 2018). These identified downsides to tourism brought about a requisition to transition from the current emphasis on solely economic benefits to sustainable tourism, which considers both present and future economic, social, and environmental effects, while meeting the requirements of visitors, industry, the environment, and host communities (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005).

Sustainable tourism is defined as the tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities (UNWTO, 2017). Sustainability has become a major priority in worldwide tourism, mostly in tourism and destination marketing. This reflects the growing recognition and necessity to achieve a harmonious alignment of economic, social, and environmental objectives (UNWTO, 2019). The Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) Initiative views sustainable tourism as an innovative approach in which the main aim is to promote poverty elimination through sustainable tourism development that can be carried out together with the preservation of culture and the natural environment (UNWTO, 2005).

Sustainable travel involves making a conscious effort to minimize the environmental and social impact of one's travel. The concept emphasizes the importance of promoting and overseeing destinations in a way that guarantees their preservation for future generations, while promoting a thoughtful and morally honest relationship between tourists, the natural environment, and local cultures. (Miller et al., 2010) and this approach aims to improve life for local communities, promote the long-term sustainability of tourist destinations, and mitigate the adverse environmental effects of tourism.

Sustainable tourism aims to balance more than just environmental issues, it also considers the people, culture, and social issues. The environmental part focuses on protecting nature, wildlife parks, making sure tourism activities don't use up excess water, land, and other natural resources. The social part aims to make sure local communities benefit from tourism and their cultural heritage and languages remain alive. Sustainable tourism matters because it makes travel better for everyone. It deals with overcrowding due to too many tourists, helps greatly with conservation, keeps, and protects nature. It provides employment opportunities for residents, promotes their culture whilst helping travelers to learn about and appreciate the cultures of others. (Hynes, 2023).

### 2.3.1 FRAMEWORKS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

When it comes to sustainable tourism, several frameworks are applied for definition and implementation purposes. Some of the commonly used frameworks in sustainable tourism are the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) and Venn Diagram of Sustainability.

Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, which was proposed by John Elkington in 1994, has now been adopted widely in discussions relating to sustainable tourism. This framework is considered as a policy support tool for public and private sector decision makers, which ensures that every decision is assessed in relation to all three dimensions: Environment, Society and Economy which is otherwise known as the Triple Bottom Line (Nigg & Eichelberger, 2021)

From the perspective of environment, TBL argues that tourism should ensure the protection of natural environments and ecosystems (Probst et al, 2010) and should ensure minimum pollution, conserve water, and manage waste (McCool et al, 2001). Conservation of the cultural authenticity and the customs of the local communities is the aim of the social aspect, and sustainable tourism should add to the economic welfare of the tourist destinations.

More insights into sustainable tourism can be given by referring to the Venn Diagram of Sustainability. The Venn Diagram was developed by John Venn in 1881. It is used in this context to represent the three different dimensions of sustainability and their connections. It indicates that the attainment of sustainability is possible when economic development is done

in such a way that the environment and its resources are well taken care of while simultaneously ensuring the well-being of the community and its individuals (Brusseau, 2019).

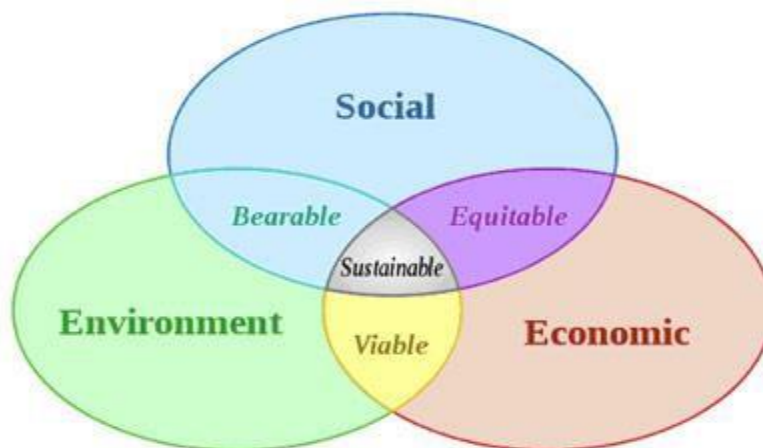


Fig 1. Venn Diagram of Sustainability.

(Available from: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sustainable\\_development.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sustainable_development.svg))

## 2.4 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND DESTINATION MARKETING

Destination marketing is defined as the marketing approach that involves the promotion of a specific location and its benefits (McLoughin, 2021). It informs consumers about the experiences and attractions they can anticipate when visiting a destination. It accurately portrays the ambiance, vitality, and fundamental nature of the location. It comprises of several marketing tactics, such as advertising, local and social media campaigns, and collaborations with travel agencies (Campbell, 2023). Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) are responsible for promoting their destination to tourists, travel planners, corporations, and other consumers who contribute to the revenue of the local economy. The cruise industry has for a very long time made use of direct mail for its marketing. Several cruise lines partner with travel agents/partner brands to build extensive mailing lists to create targeted campaigns, they also leverage on email marketing to create dialogue with current and prospective travelers (Response Media, 2024). According to a survey, over 65% of travelers book their cruise via travel agents with 85% of them looking to cruise again (CLIA, 2022). Several cruise lines have also started using pop culture to market themselves. This became more prevalent due to the fears that arose during the Covid-19 era. From Norwegian partnership with American Singer Kelly Clarkson, Shaquille O'Neal's collaboration with Carnival making him a (CFO) Chief Fun Officer, to Dream Cruises partnering with Sony Pictures Animations to bring the characters of Hotel Transylvania on board. Passengers were given the opportunity to immerse themselves in the world of these characters. (Hollywood Branded, 2020). Many cruise lines also make use of the Future Cruise Deposit (FCD) as a marketing approach, and this is specifically targeted to current travelers. This FCD is usually a reduced, fully refundable deposit and comes with additional benefits that varies from one cruise line to the other, making it a lot irresistible to the cruisers. According to (Huang, 2013), the psychology behind this is based on customer

satisfaction and this is influenced by product mechanisms, psychological mechanisms, and emotional mechanisms.

At the core of sustainable travel and destination marketing is the encouragement of responsible travel practices that actively contribute to the preservation of natural resources and the safeguarding of cultural heritage, whilst empowering the locals. This makes "Green Tourism" as itself sustainable. It is not enough for some parts of tourism to be green, e.g. accommodation or attractions, but all methods of transportation should also be sustainable. Sustainable tourism should also help cultural exchange. (Higham & Lück, 2007).

Marketing strategies in this area have evolved to raise awareness of the destination's prominent sustainability initiatives, appealing to an increasing number of eco-minded visitors. By prioritizing sustainability over excess fun, it allows the travelers to seek authentic experiences which are quite beneficial to the locals, which will in turn meaningfully enhance the local cultures, traditions, and environment (Font & McCabe, 2017).

Destinations can communicate their sustainability commitment and distinguish themselves in

a crowded market by using the power of storytelling, digital media, and strategic partnerships. This type of destination marketing also aids in the development of a solid reputation that is consistent with the principles of tourism (TIES, 2015).

Moreover, achieving sustainability in travel and destination marketing requires a constant commitment to improve and implement new ideas. Sustainable travel involves setting measurable goals such as reducing carbon emissions, minimizing waste, preserving biodiversity, and promoting economic growth in the communities. (Sustainable Travel International, 2020). Destinations can improve their attractiveness and competitiveness by implementing sustainable practices. This will attract travelers who prioritize ethical considerations and seek a more meaningful connection to the places they visit. (Goodwin, 2016).

The shift to sustainability in travel and destination marketing means a significant change in our perception and engagement with the world. It calls on industry stakeholders to adopt a more thoughtful approach to the promotion and management of travel experiences, which goes against the traditional paradigms of tourism development and marketing. (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). As we progress, integrating sustainability into all aspects of travel and tourism will safeguard the distinctive natural and cultural resources of each destination. Furthermore, it will guarantee that the advantages of travel are distributed, establishing the groundwork for a more sustainable and resilient future.

## **2.5 SUSTAINABILITY AND THE CRUISE INDUSTRY**

Sustainability in the cruise industry has been a recurrent research topic. (Font et al., 2016), (Jones et al., 2016) and (Ahn and Lee, 2021) all examined the relationship between sustainability reporting, stakeholder engagement, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the cruise industry. (Font et al., 2016) find that a materiality analysis is required to create shared values through cruise companies' CSR activities and that the operators directly linked to those companies were excluded during the creation of the sustainability agendas. (Jones et al., 2016) review what is known to be the sustainability report for the cruise industry, especially for practitioners, academics, and students from different backgrounds. These articles underscore the importance of stakeholder participation in the decision-making process, and it is evident how much it can affect the outcome of the sustainability project, leading the authors to request more inclusive procedures in managing such projects.

(Asero and Skonieczny, 2018) highlight the role played by non-governmental organizations in the implementation of sustainability in the cruise industry and the volume of information on sustainability disclosed by the tourism destination. They stress the point that industry action and the degree of transparency is crucial to achieving sustainability objectives. Other authors have also looked at environmental implications of cruise tourism focusing on air quality management (Guerra et al., 2019), and how stakeholders perceive cruise tourism in Artic

destinations (James et al., 2020). A case study of a global cruise company was done, analyzing their sustainable behaviors compared to what is communicated in their sustainability reports (Vaio et al., 2022). The study looks specifically at how these cruise companies comply with the United Nations Agenda 2030 Sustainable Developmental Objectives, providing some concrete actions that cruise companies put in place to help meet the sustainability goals.

Furthermore, proposed research by Spencer (2022) and Vaio et al. (2022) suggests that there is a need for further policy work and development within the cruise industry to mitigate some of its environmental impacts, optimize the economic benefits to the visited destinations, and preserve the existence of responsible cruise tourism. Some progress has been made in terms of the differentiation and integration of sustainable practices, such as waste management and visits to environmentally sensitive places. Nevertheless, (Romhild-Raviart et al., 2019) highlight negative-biased spillover effects by cruise tourism, such as unfair distribution of economic benefits and resulting negative environmental effects. However, it is evident that sustainable development within the cruise tourism industry cannot be directed solely by the cruise industry. Travelers themselves need to be more aware and should actively participate in helping to reduce these negative impacts. This is essential for the entire industry to better promote long-term sustainability practices.

This study agrees with reflections of sustainable development in cruise tourism, which demonstrate the importance of including stakeholders, meeting general sustainability objectives, reporting openly on sustainability, and supporting and implementing environmentally sustainable and responsible forms of tourism. Together these aims aim to overcome an unsurpassed environmental burden that will question the future of the tourism industry.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

Methodologically, a mixed-methods approach will be applied. Qualitative data will be collected from previous research and relevant case studies. Also, secondary data that examines the sustainability measures, the implementations of these measures, and how well sustainability is included in the marketing activities of some cruise lines will be collected primarily from their websites, industry reports, regulatory reports, and media articles. Quantitative data will be collected through distributed surveys taken by travelers.

#### **3.1 CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

Hypothesis 1: Travelers who regularly engage in sustainable practices are likely to take less frequent cruises due to the environmental impact of cruises.

Hypothesis 2: Travelers whose cruise choice is driven by price will not be willing to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise.

Hypothesis 3: Travelers who regularly engage in sustainable practices will be willing to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise.

Hypothesis 4: Travelers income level will affect their willingness to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH**

For the quantitative part of the research approach, Qualtrics software was used to carry out the survey electronically. Input was sought from professionals in the cruise industry including my place of employment as well as the travel industry at large, to ensure the relevance and applicability of the survey questions. Several test surveys were conducted to check the depth, flow and substance of the questions being presented. The survey was distributed through social media platforms including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn as well as email. The survey data collected was examined using relevant statistical tools.

To participate in the survey, respondents must be 18 years or older, must have gone on a cruise at least once, and be either the primary decision maker or involved in the decision-making process of the travel.

#### **3.3 PARTICIPANTS**

A total number of 143 responses were recorded. The data was cleaned with outliers, unfinished answers and invalid answers were removing resulting to a total of 106 valid answers. Demographically, the dataset is characterized as follows: The highest age group is the 35 – 44 brackets followed by the 25 – 34 brackets making up 34.9% and 31.1% respectively. 43.4% of the participants are female, with 53.8% being male and 3% identifying as Non-Binary/Third Gender. Many of the participants (71.7%) are full-time employees while (20.8%) are retired. In

terms of education, (54.7%) hold a bachelor’s degree and make up the majority while (34.0%) are master’s degree holders. Finally for the monthly income, the distribution is as follows: (22.6%) earn salary in the \$1000 - \$1999 range, (29.2%) earn salary in the \$2000 - \$2999 range, (28.3%) earn salary in the \$3000 - \$3999 range, range with \$4000 - \$4999 and \$5000 and above earners making (5.7%) and (14.2%) respectively. The breakdown can be found in the table below:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

		N	Valid Percentage
Age (N=106)	18 – 24	3	2.8
	25 – 34	33	31.1
	35 – 44	37	34.9
	45 – 54	15	14.2
	55 – 64	12	11.5
	65 and above	6	5.7
Gender (N=106)	Female	46	43.4
	Male	57	53.8
	Non-Binary	3	2.8
Employment Status (N=106)	Employed Full Time	76	71.7
	Retired	22	20.8
	Student	4	3.8
	Student/Employed	4	3.8

Education Level (N=106)	Associate Degree	6	5.7
	Bachelor's Degree	58	54.7
	Doctorate	3	2.8
	High School	3	2.8
	Master's Degree	36	34.0
Income (N=106)	\$1000 - \$1999	24	22.6
	\$2000 - \$2999	31	29.2
	\$3000 - \$3999	30	28.3
	\$4000 - \$4999	6	5.7
	\$5000 and above	15	14.2

### 3.4 MEASUREMENT

The survey design is such that it captures the relevant and necessary aspect of the participants' cruise travels. With focus on their sustainability awareness, knowledge of cruise lines, factors influencing their cruise choice as well as the sustainability measures taken on board.

- **General Cruise Knowledge:** These sets of questions were asked with the aim to understand participants' frequency of travel, reasons for taking a cruise, how the cruise was booked and how familiar they are with different cruise lines.
- **Familiarity with Sustainability:** Respondents were asked to note their knowledge of sustainability, their stance, their frequency of engagement if any and the motivation behind these engagements. Likert scale was used to capture these responses with a range of 1 to 7.
- **Consumer Behaviour:** The understanding of consumer behaviour towards cruises was a major point. Respondents disclosed the factors that drive their decision-making when it comes to cruise travels. Those who chose Price as a major factor, further analysis was done to see if they'll be willing to pay premium for a sustainable cruise.
- **Sustainability Practices on the Last Cruise:** These questions aim to understand the sustainability measures taken on the participants' last cruise. If the sustainability efforts were noticeable or not.

A combination of multiple-choice questions and Likert-scale questions were used in the survey. This is to collect both quantitative and qualitative data which in turn provides the avenue for a deeper analysis of travelers' behaviour, sustainability knowledge and behaviors that impact their cruise decisions.

## 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze the data, the variables were defined and analysis to be used were determined followed by several SPSS statistics.

The first hypothesis was analyzed ***H1: Travelers who regularly engage in sustainable practices are likely to take less frequent cruises due to the environmental impact of cruises.***

A crosstabulation was done, this has the frequency distribution of respondents who regularly engage in sustainable practices and measured it with their cruise frequency. The chi-square statistics were used to assess the association between the variables. The p-values Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) are lesser than 0.001 ( $p < .001$ ), indicating a statistically significant relationship between cruise frequency and regular engagement in sustainable practices. (Appendix B, Table 2.1 and 2.2)

Hypothesis two ***H2: Travelers whose cruise choice is driven by price will not be willing to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise.*** Here factors that affect the cruise decision of participants were measured against the possibility of them paying a premium for a sustainable cruise.

A crosstabulation was done to measure the frequency distribution of respondents that price plays a major decisive role in their cruises. Analysis showed that a large majority of participants that place price high on their decision-making list will only be willing to pay less than 10% for a sustainable cruise. Specifically, thirty-one respondents who are willing to pay less than 10% chose price as one the highest factor influencing their purchase. The p-values Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) are lesser than 0.001 ( $p < .001$ ), indicating a statistically significant relationship between price and willingness to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise. (Appendix B, Table 3.1 and 3.2)

Hypothesis three ***H3: Travelers who engage in sustainable practices will be willing to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise.***

A crosstabulation was done, this has the frequency distribution of respondents who regularly engage in sustainable practices and measured their willingness to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise. The chi-square statistics were used to test the association between the variables. Although a few respondents regularly engage in sustainable practices, the number of those willing to pay more than 10% upward as premium is not significant enough. The p-values Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) are greater than 0.001 ( $p > .001$ ), indicating no statistical significance between regular engagement in sustainable practices and willingness to pay a premium for sustainable cruise. (Appendix B, Table 4.1 and 4.2)

Hypothesis three ***H4: Travelers income level will affect their willingness to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise.***

A crosstabulation was done, this has the frequency distribution of respondents' income level, this was measured against their willingness to pay a premium for a sustainable cruise. The chi-square statistics were used to test the association between the variables. From the result we can see based on the levels of income that those at the lower end of the income band are not willing to pay more premium for a sustainable cruise. The p-values Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) are less than 0.001 ( $p < .001$ ), indicating that there's a statistical significance between travellers' income and willingness to pay a premium for sustainable cruise. (Appendix B, Table 5.1 and 5.2)

## **4.2 DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze the role of sustainability in travel and destination marketing. This was looked through the lens of the cruise industry. A survey was conducted with answers recorded from 143 respondents with only 106 of the answers being valid. This survey aim was to examine the sustainability behaviour, cruise knowledge as well as discovering the factors that influence the decision-making process when it comes to booking a cruise.

The survey result indicates that the respondents are aware about sustainability in general to one degree or the other and that some are also familiar with the sustainability practices of the cruise line, however this doesn't seem to influence the choice of cruise option that these respondents make. We can see based on the analysis with over 60% of respondents selecting price as the main factor driving their cruise options as compared to 13.2% selecting Cruise Line sustainability practices as a major factor. We also see that even though the respondents seem to be sustainability conscious, majority of them are not willing to pay high premium for a sustainable cruise. The cruise lines would need to do more work in making sustainability a core part of their selling point and marketing strategy to shift the narrative even though most of the cruise lines are heading towards more sustainable cruise, the travellers do not think about this when booking their cruise.

## 5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The thesis aims to understand in depth how cruise passengers view sustainability and if their sustainability beliefs and practices has any major impact on their choice of cruise.

A major limiting factor is the respondent size. It is not large nor diverse enough, because it was a niched sector. An even larger sample size would have given room for additional statistical analysis. There is a risk of bias since the survey was conducted online as evident in the number of incomplete answers and outliers. There's a probability that some participants may not be candid enough or gave surface level answers. Future research should put into consideration the adoption of other qualitative survey gathering methods that will provide immediate clarification if any as this will ensure in large part that participants are providing in-depth answers.

The findings currently reveal that majority of participants will rather book a cruise based on the price rather than the sustainability practices of the cruise lines. Further analysis can be done with regards to cruise lines advertising and how much sustainability is included in it. The current work has added to the conversation of sustainability in general and additional focus that is placed on the cruise industry can be expanded upon.

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## APPENDIX A (SURVEY QUESTIONS)

Dear Participant,

This survey is being conducted as an important part of my Master's Thesis for a Data-Driven Marketing (Marketing Research and Customer Relationship Management) degree, at Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Nova Information Management School).

This study aims to evaluate **the impact of sustainability in travel and destination marketing from the perspective of the Cruise Industry.**

This survey aims to understand how **travelers views of sustainability, cruise lines sustainability practices and inclusion of sustainability in cruise line marketing campaigns affect the traveler's choice.**

**This survey is intended for anyone who has ever taken a trip on a cruise ship. It will take about 5 minutes to complete and it is completely anonymous.** There are no wrong or right answers. Remember that your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. If you have further questions or clarifications, I can be reached via email : **20220072@novaims.unl.pt**

Thank you very much for taking time to participate in this survey.

### Informed Consent Form:

- By agreeing, I acknowledge that my participation is voluntary and I can choose to end the survey at any time.
- I am 18 years of age or older.
- I consent to the use of my anonymous response for the purposes of this research.

Yes, I consent

No, I do not consent

Skip to: End of Survey if No, I do not consent Is Selected

Have you ever taken a trip on a cruise ship?

Yes

No

Skip to: End of Survey if No Is Selected

How often do you go on a cruise?

Once in 10 years

Once in 5 years

Once in 3 years

Once a year

More than once in a year

What's your primary reason for going on a cruise vacation? (Select all that apply)

For leisure

For the destination(s)

For a special occasion (e.g. Birthday, Wedding Anniversary, Retirement Party, etc.)

For the onboard activities/amenities

For adventure

For relaxation

Others (please specify)

How do you typically book your cruise? (Select all that apply)

Directly through the cruise line website

Through a travel agency

Online booking platforms (e.g. Expedia, Kayak)

Discount travel website (Costco travel, Vacations.com)

I don't book myself, someone else books for me

Others (please specify)

Which of the following cruise lines are you familiar with? (Select all that apply)

Royal Caribbean International

Carnival Cruise Line

Norwegian Cruise Line

Celebrity Cruises

Princess Cruises

Holland America Line

MSC Cruises

Disney Cruise Line

Cunard Line

Azamara

Others (please specify)

The United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987, defined **Sustainability** as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The following set of questions aim to examine your perceptions of **Sustainability**.

On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

I am familiar with the concept of sustainability	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I believe sustainability is important	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I am very concerned about sustainability and environmental issues	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I regularly engage in sustainable practices	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I am constantly learning about sustainability and environmental issues	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I believe individual/collective actions can significantly impact the environment	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I believe it is important for business to embrace sustainability as much as they can	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I believe regulations are necessary to protect the environment	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I believe regulations are necessary to promote sustainability	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I believe current government policies are effective in promoting sustainability	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I am willing to adjust my lifestyle in order to be more sustainable	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I believe that sustainable economic practices can lead to long-term profitability for businesses	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>
I regularly support companies that have strong sustainability practices	☆☆☆☆☆☆	<input type="text"/>

Which of the following sustainable practices do you engage in? (Select all that apply)

Recycling

Reducing water wastage

Buying local or organic food products

Using public transportation

Avoiding food waste

Reducing energy consumption

Others (please specify)

What is (are) your major motivation for engaging in sustainable practices? (Select all that apply)

Personal values

Financial savings

Social influence (Friends, Family, Activists, Media)

Regulations (laws, policies and incentives)

Others (please specify)

Have you ever come across a cruise line's marketing campaign?

Yes

No

How did you hear about the cruise line(s) that you've traveled with? (Select all that apply)

Referral (Word of Mouth)

Travel Agencies

Social Media (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc)

Television/Radio

Cruise Line Website/Blogs

Newsletters (Email and Direct)

Travel and Lifestyle Magazines

Travel Expos and Shows

Travel Influencers/Bloggers

Are you aware of sustainability practices promoted by the cruise line(s)

Yes

No

Where do you typically get information about the sustainability practices of cruise lines?  
(Select all that apply)

Cruise line websites

Social media

Travel blogs/websites

Sustainability reports

Travel Agencies

Brochures and onboard materials

Others (please specify)

On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

I believe the cruise line effectively communicated their sustainability efforts in their marketing

I believe the cruise lines is committed to sustainability

I believe the cruise line portrayal of their sustainability efforts in their marketing campaign is accurate

I find the sustainability practices onboard effective

I find the sustainability practices onboard educational

I am happy with the sustainability efforts of the cruise line

On a scale from 1 (Least Influential) to 7 Star (Most Influential), please indicate the extent to which the following factors influence your choice when going on a cruise.

Price	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
Sustainability practices of the Cruise Line	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
Itinerary/Destination	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
Cruise Line Popularity/Reputation	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
Quality of Service	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
Technological Advancement	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
Sustainability practices of the Destinations	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
Accessibility and Convenience	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
Onboard Activities/Expeirince	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
Passenger Demography	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>

What was the total amount in **Dollars** paid for the last cruise you were on? (Answer in figures only!!!)

Based on the previous question, how many travelers was the amount for? (Answer in figures only!!!)

On a scale from 1 (Least Likely) to 7 Star (Most Likely) please indicate the extent to which you are likely to do the following statements.

I intend to use the same cruise line within the next 5 years.	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>
The sustainability practices of the cruise line will influence my next cruise trip	★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★	<input type="text"/>

If you are to pay a premium for a Cruise that demonstrably prioritize Sustainability, how much more (in percentage) will you be willing to pay?

Less than 10%
10% - 19%
20% - 29%
30% - 39%
40% - 49%
50% or more

How old are you?

18 - 24
25 - 34
35 - 44
45 - 54
55 - 64
65 and above

What's your gender identity?

Male
Female
Non-binary / Third Gender
Prefer not to say

What's your occupation?

Unemployed

Student

Student/Employed

Employed full time

Retired

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

High school graduate

Associate degree

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctorate

What's your monthly income level?

Less than \$1000

\$1000 - \$1999

\$2000 - \$2999

\$3000 - \$3999

\$4000 - \$4999

\$5000 and above

## APPENDIX B

Table 2.1: Cross Tab for Hypothesis 1  
Engage in Sust \* Cruise Freq Crosstabulation

Count		Cruise Freq					Total
		More than once in a year	Once a year	Once in 10 years	Once in 3 years	Once in 5 years	
Engage in Sust	1	6	0	3	0	0	9
	2	0	0	3	0	4	7
	3	0	0	3	3	0	6
	4	0	0	10	7	3	20
	5	3	0	4	0	15	22
	6	0	3	0	6	3	12
	7	0	16	0	10	4	30
Total		9	19	23	26	29	106

Table 2.2: Chi-Square Tests for Hypothesis 1

### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	135.560 <sup>a</sup>	24	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	138.732	24	<.001
N of Valid Cases	106		

a. 28 cells (80.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .51.

Table 3.1: Cross Tab for Hypothesis 2  
Price \* Premium for Sust Crosstabulation

Count		Premium for Sust						Total
		10% - 19%	20% - 29%	30% - 39%	40% - 49%	50% or more	Less than 10%	
Price	1	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
	5	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
	6	7	7	0	0	3	3	20
	7	16	17	4	0	3	31	71
Total		23	27	7	3	6	40	106

Table 3.2: Chi-Square Tests for Hypothesis 2

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	177.276 <sup>a</sup>	25	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	74.176	25	<.001
N of Valid Cases	106		

a. 31 cells (86.1%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .08.

Table 4.1: Cross Tab for Hypothesis 3

**Engage in Sust \* Premium for Sust Crosstabulation**

Count		Premium for Sust						Total
		10% - 19%	20% - 29%	30% - 39%	40% - 49%	50% or more	Less than 10%	
Engage in Sust	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
	4	1	1	1	0	0	3	6
	5	1	1	1	1	0	3	7
	6	1	2	0	0	1	0	4
	7	3	4	0	0	1	1	9
Total		7	8	2	1	2	13	33

Table 4.2: Chi-Square Tests for Hypothesis 3

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.539 <sup>a</sup>	30	.647
Likelihood Ratio	29.503	30	.491
N of Valid Cases	33		

a. 42 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

Table 5.1: Cross Tab for Hypothesis 4

**Income Level \* Premium for Sust Crosstabulation**

Count		Premium for Sust						Total
		10% - 19%	20% - 29%	30% - 39%	40% - 49%	50% or more	Less than 10%	
Income Level	\$1000 - \$1999	7	4	0	0	3	10	24
	\$2000 - \$2999	6	4	3	3	0	15	31
	\$3000 - \$3999	7	13	4	0	0	6	30
	\$4000 - \$4999	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
	\$5000 and above	3	6	0	0	3	3	15
Total		23	27	7	3	6	40	106

Table 5.2: Chi-Square Tests for Hypothesis 4

**Chi-Square Tests**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46.137 <sup>a</sup>	20	<.001
Likelihood Ratio	51.020	20	<.001
N of Valid Cases	106		

a. 20 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .17.

Table 6.0: Age Distribution

**Age**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18 - 24	3	2.8	2.8	2.8
	25 - 34	33	31.1	31.1	34.0
	35 - 44	37	34.9	34.9	68.9
	45 - 54	15	14.2	14.2	83.0
	55 - 64	12	11.3	11.3	94.3
	65 and above	6	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	

Table 7.0: Gender Distribution

**Gender**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	46	43.4	43.4	43.4
	Male	57	53.8	53.8	97.2
	Non-binary / Third Gender	3	2.8	2.8	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	

Table 8.0: Education Distribution

**Education**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Associate degree	6	5.7	5.7	5.7
	Bachelor's degree	58	54.7	54.7	60.4
	Doctorate	3	2.8	2.8	63.2
	High school graduate	3	2.8	2.8	66.0
	Master's degree	36	34.0	34.0	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	

Table 9.0: Employment Distribution

**Employment**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Employed full time	76	71.7	71.7	71.7
	Retired	22	20.8	20.8	92.5
	Student	4	3.8	3.8	96.2
	Student/Employed	4	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	

Table 10.0: Income Distribution

**Income Level**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	\$1000 - \$1999	24	22.6	22.6	22.6
	\$2000 - \$2999	31	29.2	29.2	51.9
	\$3000 - \$3999	30	28.3	28.3	80.2
	\$4000 - \$4999	6	5.7	5.7	85.8
	\$5000 and above	15	14.2	14.2	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	

## APPENDIX C (ETHICS COMMITTEE REPORT)



This is to certify that

Project No.: **DDMKT2024-9-273833**

Project Title: **Sustainability in Travel and Destination Marketing**

Principal Researcher: **Toyosi Muyis Salako**

according to the regulations of the Ethics Committee of NOVA IMS and MagIC Research Center this project was considered to meet the requirements of the NOVA IMS Internal Review Board, being considered **APPROVED** on 9/27/2024.

It is the Principal Researcher's responsibility to ensure that all researchers and stakeholders associated with this project are aware of the conditions of approval and which documents have been approved.

The Principal Researcher is required to notify the Ethics Committee, via amendment or progress report, of

- Any significant change to the project and the reason for that change;
- Any unforeseen events or unexpected developments that merit notification;
- The inability of the Principal Researcher to continue in that role or any other change in research personnel involved in the project.

Lisbon, 9/27/2024

NOVA IMS Ethics Committee  
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**NOVA Information Management School**  
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