Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region

Market research as a capacity planning tool in tourism:
A step by step guide for practitioners

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Overview

Content: Market research as a capacity planning tool in tourism: A step by step guide for practitioners

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Figures

Checklist

The following checklist summarises the main aspects that you should undertake in order to develop a market research project. You have to work through it as a whole and tick off completed tasks. Explanations for each of these aspects are provided in this guideline.

Step 1: Definition
- ☐ Specify your aim: Do you want to **observe competitors**? Reveal **market potential** in existing or future markets? Measure **effects of advertising**? Assess your **own position** in the market? Improve **your product**? Analyse your **image**? Measure **customer satisfaction**? Test a **new product** before launching it? (etc.)
- ☐ Are your aims easy to understand, specific, measurable and realistic?
- ☐ Develop your specific research question(s) concerning your research aim.
- ☐ What kind of information is necessary and how important is it?

Step 2: Design
- ☐ Determine your budget.
- ☐ Determine the deadline, i.e. when results have to be ready.
- ☐ Determine the later usage of the results.
- ☐ Do you want to do research on your own or leave it to another unit of your company or to an external specialised organisation/research agency?

- ☐ Is there already data concerning your topic? What kind of data is that?

Step 3: Data collection
- ☐ Check the possibility to use external sources.
- ☐ If so, check the quality of the external sources.
- ☐ Check the usable internal sources.
- ☐ Is the gathered information already sufficient or do you need further data for your specific question(s)? Which further data do you need?

If you have to conduct research **on your own**, the following questions and steps need to be determined:

- ☐ Do you want to explore in depth or understand a phenomenon, i.e. undertake research in an exploratory way? (if not see further below)

    If so:
    - ☐ Decide if you want to use an individual or group setting.
    - ☐ If you choose an individual setting:
        - ☐ Determine the participants of the study!
        - ☐ Determine the length of the interview!
        - ☐ Invite participants and make appointments!
        - ☐ Instruct the interviewers!
        - ☐ Develop a checklist / semi-structured questionnaire!
        - ☐ Consider the rules for question phrasing (see further below).
        - ☐ Leave a margin for response-orientation!
        - ☐ Record the interview on tape (after asking the participants for permission)!
        - ☐ Transcribe the interview for analysis!

- ☐ If you choose a group setting:
  - ☐ Recruit 6 to 10 individuals according to a pre-determined set of criteria!
  - ☐ The criteria should fit those which the actual users/guests show!
  - ☐ Search for an adequate location/institute/agency!
  - ☐ Invite participants!
  - ☐ Develop the checklist/questionnaire!
  - ☐ Cooperate with an experienced moderator for avoiding group effects (or train him).

- ☐ Do you want to measure figures, quantities or frequencies, i.e. undertake research in a descriptive context?

  If so:
  - ☐ Decide if you want to conduct a survey or an experiment.
  - ☐ If you decide to do a survey:
    - ☐ Decide if you want to use a panel or ad hoc-design.
    - ☐ Do you want to realise a full investigation or partial investigation (choosing a probability or non-probability sample)?
    - ☐ Do you want to run an oral or written survey (face-to-face, telephone, Internet-based)?
    - ☐ Construct the questionnaire and consider the limits of the chosen method (e.g. delivery method and size).

  - ☐ If you decide to do an experiment in order to analyse a causal contingency:
    - ☐ Do you want to conduct a lab or a field experiment?
    - ☐ Develop one or more hypotheses from a theoretical background which you want to test.
    - ☐ Determine independent, dependant and if necessary intervening variables and make them operational.

Step 4: Data analysis

- ☐ Qualitative data: Analyse the content of the gathered data
  - ☐ Develop a category scheme.
  - ☐ Develop rules for coding.
  - ☐ Pre-test them.
  - ☐ Train the coders.
  - ☐ Look for underlying patterns in reduced data.
  - ☐ Progress with advanced quantitative data analyses. The subsequent method depends on the used scaling niveau.

- ☐ Quantitative data: Consider descriptive or inference statistics depending on your specific research topic
  - ☐ Create tables and figures for main results for a better understanding
  - ☐ Available methods: Univariate methods, bivariate methods, multidimensional methods
- ☐ Determine the later usage of the results.

Step 5: Documentation

- ☐ Describe the used methods and subjects: What, when, who, how?
- ☐ Summarise the main results in a management summary.
- ☐ If necessary, create special reports for others (clients, press, etc.)

Introduction

Why market research for sustainable tourism?

Sustainable tourism and its components and products use resources in an environmentally responsible, socially fair and economically viable way, so that users can meet their current needs without compromising future generations from being able to use the same resources (Font and Carey 2005). Market research for sustainable tourism provides information on (potential) clients and competitors in this segment (Seitz and Meyer 1995) and the results therefore help to make tourism more sustainable.

Practical remarks

The present guideline is based on two previous papers which have also been produced within the agora project. The first of these papers represents an overview of the market research process and the second a comparative assessment of existing tools and methods for market research[1]. Due to spatial constraints, the present guideline occasionally has to refer to these earlier papers, these are then called 'Paper I' and 'Paper II' to simplify matters.

The present document builds upon these fundamentals and provides a guideline for practitioners to conduct market research. It is meant to assist tourism practioners through a step by step guide. All five steps of the market research process (see Fig. 1) are illustrated in the following.

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[1] Both documents are available on www.agora-tourism.net
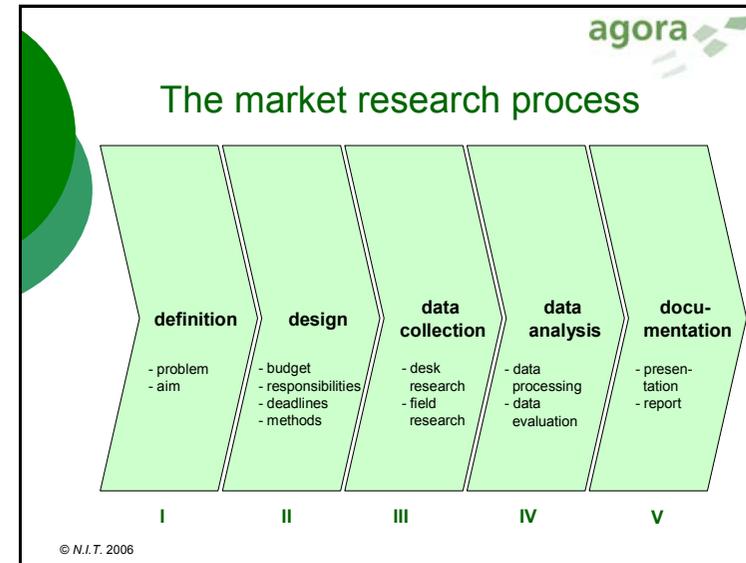
Source: Günther, Meinken and Zahl (2006a)

A step by step guide to market research

Step 1: Definition

The first step in market research is to identify the problem and to define the research topic or question. Consider which event gives impetus for the necessity of market research; this could be e.g. a reduction in sales volume or the launch of a new product. However, you also have to keep in mind that the present problem may simply be a set of symptoms and not the 'real' problem.

This analysis leads to a concrete market research aim. Next, the problem has to be substantiated in specific research questions concerning products, regions, target groups and time (e.g. the sales potential for a sustainable tourism product distributed via travel agencies in Estonia in the next five years). The following checklist cannot be complete, but gives you an idea about the relevant questions before starting your market research.

Task checklist: What do you want to find out?

► Specify your aim:

Do you want to **observe competitors**? Reveal **market potential** in existing or future markets? Measure **effects of advertising**? Assess your **own position** in the market? **Improve your product**? Analyse your **image**? Measure **customer satisfaction**? Test a **new product** before launching it? (etc.)

► Develop your specific research question(s) concerning your research aim, e.g.:

- **Observation of competitors**: What are the advantages of your competitors? What do the customers think about their offer?

- **Market potential**: Where is hidden market potential? How big is it? What do potential customers and real clients know about your product? What are potential barriers?

- **Effects of advertising**: Is the proposed message received by the target groups? What kind of message do the customers remember (recall or recognition)? Does the Internet presence fit the company?

- **Own position in the market**: What is your own position in relation to others? What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- **Product improvement**: What are the strengths and weaknesses of your product? What in relation to other competitors? What do your customers need?

- **Image**: What do customers know and think about your company or product? Which components are important from their point of view?

- **Customer satisfaction**: How satisfied are your customers in general? How about selected services (e.g. customer service)? What are the reasons for dissatisfaction or satisfaction?

- **Test a new product**: How big is the risk of launching a product?

► Is your aim realistic, easy to understand, specific and measurable? Do not try to sum up every open question in one single research project. Concentrate on the essentials!
► What kind of information is necessary and how important is it? Attention: Only few information – found through a thorough investigation – is often more useful than too much data!

Further reading/links:
► For more information about methods for a situation analysis resp. analysing your own market position, please refer to Günther, Meinken and Winkler (2006) 'Comparative assessment of existing tools and methods for developing sustainable tourism products' (section 'bench-marking').
► The ESOMAR Handbook of Market and Opinion Research which contains information about research concerning brands, advertising, new products and customer satisfaction.

Result of step 1: What?
► Clear definition of aims and 'translation' in a specific research question that directs all further market research.

Step 2: Design

Next, the researcher has to decide how to examine the compiled question(s) from step 1. Hence, decisions concerning budget, responsibilities, deadlines, methods and data sources are necessary, i.e. the overall design of the research to be undertaken.

Budget: Decisions about the adequate methods for answering the research question depend on the available budget. Reliable data is available by a combination of different methods and procedures, but because of limited budgets this is not always possible. If your budget is low, you should reduce the extent of your planned research in favour of a better quality.

Responsibilities: Who will get how much and what kind of information resulting from the market research project? What data usage is planned? Will the research be conducted by yourself, by another company unit or an external organisation? If you want to cooperate with external organisations, consider the ESOMAR Codes and Guidelines (see link below).

Deadlines: Are there any given deadlines which determine the time horizon? Some methods take longer than others.

Methods: Is a survey, an experiment or an observation the most suitable method? Is it possible to participate in running investigations for reasons of cost efficiency? Interesting questions which can be answered by a local investigation (by interviews or questionnaires over a period of time) are:

- ► How many tourists are there annually?
- ► How many are interested in a certain product?
- ► When do they come and how long do they stay?
- ► Where do they come from and how do they get there?
- ► Where do they stay and what do they do?
- ► How much money do they spend?
- ► Who are they (age, sex, size of groups, professions, interests, motivations)?
- ► What are their expectations?
- ► What do they like or dislike?
- ► Have they been there before or will they come again? (For further information about methods see step 3: field research.)

Data source: What kind of information does already exist? Is it useful for your specific question? What further information do you need?

Task checklist:
- ► Determine your budget.
- ► Determine the deadline, i.e. when the results have to be ready.
- ► Determine the later usage of the results.
- ► Do you want to do research on your own or leave it to another unit of your company or to an external specialised organisation?
- ► Is there already data concerning your topic? What kind of data is that?

Further reading/links:
- ► The ESOMAR Handbook of Market and Opinion Research
- ► Sekaran, U. (2003): Research Methods for Business. A Skill Building Approach. Fourth Edition. New York: Wiley.

- ► ESOMAR Codes and Guidelines, Guideline *How to commission research* (http://www.esomar.org/index.php/codes-guidelines.html, cited 15.02.2007)

Result of step 2: Who? How? When?
- ► Clear idea of what kind of information you need, until when you will get it and how you will get it.

Step 3: Data collection

A - Desk research: Gathering basic statistics

The next step is now to collect the actual data. You can collect them by external or internal sources.

First, basic statistics are needed. Different external sources concerning official statistics, media analyses, tourism and trade journals, publications of tourism and trade associations, surveys and data bases and archives are listed in **Paper I** in detail. In addition to this, even publications of competitors can provide useful knowledge. The Internet allows quick access to adequate sources of information. Therefore, it is a tool with high relevance for desk research.

However, it is important not to believe everything that is published or even to base your decisions on it. For checking the quality of a secondary source some hints are given in **Paper II**, chapter 3.1.

Just as important as the external sources are the internal ones. These can include:
► complaints
► letters from customers
► client database, customer files
► turnover statistics
► analysis of visitors' surfing behaviour on your homepage

Now it is time to check whether the gathered information is perhaps sufficient. If not, the next step needs to be undertaken – the definition of the suitable field research method.

Task checklist:
► Check the possibility of using external sources.
► If so, check the quality of the external sources.
► Check the usable internal sources.
► Is the gathered information already sufficient or do you need further data for your specific question(s)? Which further data do you need?

Further reading/links:
► Statistics in the Baltic Sea Region, e.g. for Estonia: Eesti Statistika, www.stat.ee; for Finland: Tilastokeskus, www.stat.fi; for Latvia: www. tvnet.lv; for Lithuania: Statistikos Departamentos prie Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybés, www.stat.gov.lt.
► The ESOMAR Handbook of Market and Opinion Research

Result of desk research:
► Knowledge of whether your question can be answered by external data.

B - Field research

Now you have to think about the right method for collecting your data. You can choose to undertake qualitative research where the emphasis is on exploring the underlying reasons why people behave and think as they do. But you can also choose to undertake quantitative research which uses standardised methods for aggregating the results and then considers the variations in different sub-groups of a sample.

Task checklist:
- ► Do you want to explore in depth, understand a phenomenon or undertake research in an exploratory way? Then continue below with the section on qualitative research.
- ► Do you want to measure figures, quantities or frequencies or undertake research in a descriptive context? Then continue with the section on quantitative research.

B1 – Observations
This method is appropriate if you want to explore and comprehend complex issues and is best suited for research requiring non self-report descriptive data (e.g. buying behaviour). Observational methods differ concerning openness or coveredness (the subject knows about observation or not), their degree of participation and standardisation. The researcher may collect the needed data in that capacity without becoming a part of the setting (nonparticipant observer). By merely observing activities, recording them systematically and tabulating them, the researcher is able to come up with some findings. Surveys with participant observers join the group or situation (e.g. as a mystery shopper). Both of these can be structured (predetermined set of categories) or unstructured (no predetermination, recording everything that is observed).

Task checklist:
- ► Conceptualise an observation frame (rather open than covered because of research codex) regarding the degree of participation and standardisation.
- ► What do you want to observe?
- ► Develop a registration form: Do you want to register in a visual, audible, or other technical way (e.g. eye movement)?

- ► To make data comparable determine criteria to be observed (e.g. observational scheme for a customer consultant selling sustainable products: waiting time until consultation, friendliness, correctness of clothing, offering of drinks/seat, quality of consulting, considering questions)

Further reading/links:
- ► The ESOMAR Handbook of Market and Opinion Research

B2 - Surveys

B2 A - Qualitative research
Collecting information can be undertaken by an individual or in a group setting. The most commonly used **individual setting** is the depth interview which takes about one hour (sometimes also up to two hours). Variations of the depth interview include e.g. mini-depth interviews[2], semi-structured interviews[3], tele-depth interviews[4], accompanied shopping[5], paired interviews[6]; all of them require the same steps in the checklist.

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[2] Lasts about thirty minutes and is less wide-ranging than a full depth interview.
[3] The interviewer follows a pre-determined list of questions and does not construct them on his own, the respondent replies in his own words.
[4] Like semi-structured interviews conducted by telephone in about twenty minutes.
[5] Interviewer accompanies the respondent on a shopping trip to observe his real behaviour.
[6] A depth interview conducted with two respondents.

You should use an individual setting for investigating less socially acceptable attitudes or non-congruence in attitudes/behaviour. Somebody may claim, for example, to be in favour of sustainable offers in his attitudinal statements, but in his behaviour he may never have used one. (For more information about the advantages and disadvantages of using an individual setting, see **Paper II** (chapter 3.4, p. 8)).

In a **group setting** group discussions are often conducted. A discussion is stimulated by a moderator in which the participants can 'rethink' their attitudes by phrasing them and spark off new ideas. Variations of group discussions are mini-group discussions[7], extended group discussions[8], reconvened group discussions[9] and brainstorming sessions[10].

Task checklist:

► Decide whether you want to use an individual or group setting.

► If you choose an individual setting:
 ► Determine the participants of the study!
 ► Determine the length of the interview!
 ► Develop a checklist / semi-structured questionnaire!
 ► Consider the rules for question phrasing (see below).

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[7] Small number of respondents (between four and six).
[8] Last up to four hours.
[9] Meet more than once to discuss (e.g. first meeting: spontaneous feedback, second meeting: focus on experiences in between the meetings).
[10] Collect ideas concerning solutions for a certain problem (e.g. how a sustainable product can be made more attractive to possible customers).

► Invite participants and make appointments!
► Instruct the interviewers!
► Record the interview on tape (after asking the participants for permission)!
► Transcribe the interview for analysis!

► If you choose a group setting:
 ► Recruit 6 to 10 individuals according to a pre-determined set of criteria!
 ► The criteria should fit those which the actual users/guests show!
 ► Develop the checklist/questionnaire!
 ► Search for an adequate location/institute!
 ► Invite participants!
 ► Use an experienced moderator for avoiding group effects (or train him).

B2 B - Quantitative research

Surveys: Panel or ad hoc?

As shown in Paper I ad hoc research takes place only once (cross-section) while panel members are interviewed more than once. A panel is indicated when you want to study causal coherences e.g. measuring advertising effects, stability/change of attitudes or product tests, while getting a cross section is the main reason for an ad hoc study.

Task checklist:
- ► Do you want to study changes over a period of time? Choose a panel! A panel can be either *static* (the same members serve on the panel) or *dynamic* (panel members change)[11]. Choose a static panel if you want to achieve high quality of change measurement. Choose a dynamic panel if representativeness is more important.
- ► Do you want to measure a cross-section only once at a certain point of time? Choose ad hoc research!

Surveys can be conducted face to face, by telephone or Internet. Standardised services (e.g. omnibus) or exclusive investigations are possible. Advantages and disadvantages of these methods are mentioned in Paper II, p. 9. But when do face to face, telephone or Internet fit best? Ambitious themes can only be investigated face to face, especially if you want to show the interviewee pictures, lists, texts or objects. Face to face interviews provide more concrete answers because of the possibility for further elaboration and difficult questions are answered more often. If you have many possible answers and only reading them would confuse participants, lists in a face to face situation or a self-completion form are necessary. Sensitive questions are rather answered honestly in written surveys and they are deeper and more detailed. In telephone interviews the number of possible answers to a question should not exceed four. Undertaking a research project via the Internet is only

useful when you do not need representative results or contact and sample the persons in another way first (e.g. contact and approval via phone, self-completion questionnaire via Internet). For further information see ESOMAR Codes and Guidelines, Guideline *Conducting Marketing and Opinion Research using the Internet* (http://esomar.org, cited 15.02.2007) or the Standards for Quality Assurance for Online Surveys by ADM (http://www.efamro.com/downloads/ADM%20Internet%20Guidelines%20(Eng).pdf, cited 15.02.2007).

Task checklist:
- ► Decide about the medium: Oral (face to face, telephone) or written (self-completion: paper pencil, online)?
- ► Develop a questionnaire or interview checklist (see steps below for rules on construction questions).
- ► Coordinate interview time with the needs and behaviour of the subjects.
- ► For face to face and telephone interviews:
  - Choose suitable interviewers (over 16 years old, good communications skills, smart and adequate appearance)
  - Train the interviewers to be familiar with additional instructions, questionnaire and sampling method (e.g. how to get the quota, random route)
  - Do spot checks.

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[11] Advantage of a *static* panel is the good and sensitive measurement of changes. Disadvantages are that panel members could be sensitised and for this reason results are distorted (the so called 'panel effect' or 're-interviewing effect') and a mortality of members occurs which means distortion of representativeness by drop-out. For a *dynamic* panel this is vice versa.

B3 - Experiments

Before using experimental designs it is essential to consider whether they are necessary at all and if so, at what level of sophistication.

Experiments can be conducted in a lab, field and as a quasi experiment. Lab experiments, for example, require at least two different groups of subjects: an experimental and a control group. It is possible to conduct a post-test (after a certain treatment), a pre-post-test design (before and after treatment) and ex post facto (no manipulation of independent variables).

Task checklist:

► Is tracing causal effects necessary? If not, do not undertake an experimental study design.
► Do you want to trace subjects' behaviour to the deliberate change of an independent variable (internal validity)? If so, engage in a lab experiment.
► Is external validity more important than internal validity, i.e. do you want to generalise the result to other persons, situations or times? If so, engage in a field experiment.
► Develop one or more hypotheses from a theoretical background.
► Determine independent and dependant variables (if necessary even intervening variables).
► Make them operational regarding ethical issues.
► Conduct it, process data and analyse them.

Result of step 3:

► A pretested questionnaire ready for field work.
► A clear definition of the characteristics of respondents and sampling method

Further reading/links:

► Paper I, Paper II
► The ESOMAR Handbook of Market and Opinion Research which contains information concerning quantitative research and questionnaire design.
► Sekaran, U. (2003): Research Methods for Business. A Skill Building Approach. Fourth Edition, New York: Wiley.

Samples: Probability or non-probability sampling

The correct sampling method depends on the aim of the survey, on the size and structure of the population to be explored. The following figure offers a decision scheme which sampling method fits best. However, there are many variations of sampling techniques which cannot all be presented here (e.g. cut-off, snowball sampling and others).

Fig. 2: Sampling

Fig. 2 flowchart content:

Is REPRESENTATIVENESS of sample critical for the study?

Yes → Choose one of the PROBABILITY sampling designs. → If purpose of study mainly is for:
- Generalizability. → Choose **simple random** sampling.
- Assessing differential parameters in subgroups of population. → Choose **systematic** sampling. / Choose **cluster** sampling if not enough $. → All subgroups have equal number of elements? Yes → Choose **proportionate stratified** random sampling. No → Choose **disproportionate stratified random** sampling.
- Collecting information in a localized area. → Choose **area** sampling.
- Gathering more information from a subset of the sample. → Choose **double** sampling.

No → Choose one of the NONPROBABILITY sampling designs. → If purpose of study mainly is:
- To obtain quick, even if unreliable information. → Choose **convenience** sampling.
- To obtain information relevant to and available only with certain groups.
  - Looking for information that only a few "experts" can provide? → Choose **judgment** sampling.
  - Need responses of special interest minority groups? → Choose **quota** sampling.

Source: Sekaran (2003), p. 281; for mentioned sampling methods see paper I, p. 12

Fig. 3: An example for sampling

Research aim: You want to research the importance of sustainable motives in the decision process for a certain travel product.

If you need representative data and know all elements in your population of interest, then **probability** designs such as e.g. *simple random sampling* are possible: in this sampling method each element is considered and has an equal chance of being chosen. Hence, if you know all buyers of a certain travel product, you can select your subjects by random numbers, random numerals or random letters. Random numbers technique means that you choose subjects by chance, e.g. the 1st, 3rd, 8th, 10th from your list and so on. With random numerals you select all subjects with a 'seven' in your numbered list, while the random letters technique means that you select e.g. all subjects beginning with an A in their first name.

You can also use *systematic sampling* where a mathematical key indicates the choice of a subject, e.g. every 5th person on the list would be chosen. *Cluster sampling* is a sampling technique used when 'natural groupings' are evident in the population. In our example the total population of buyers would be divided into several groups (or clusters), e.g. through accomodation in different hotels, and a sample of these groups is selected (e.g. hotel x and hotel z). Then the required information is collected from all elements in these clusters (all buyers staying in hotel x and z) or from a subsample within these clusters (e.g. every 3rd buyer in hotel x and z). However, if the sample is not typical for the overall population, this sampling method may cause the so called 'cluster effect'.

Fig. 3: An example for sampling (continued)

Stratified random sampling devides the population in relatively homogeneous subgroups before sampling (e.g. quick vs. elaborated buying decision for men and women). Then random or systematic sampling is applied within each stratum in proportion to the original number of elements or based on other criteria. An example for a proportional allocation in our example would be: The total number of 530 bookers (100%) is devided into 135 men with a quick buying decision (25%), 26 women with a quick buying decision (5%), 251 men with an elaborated buying decision (47%) and 118 women with an elaborated buying decision (22%). These percentages determine the distribution of interviewees for a planned sample of 40 interviews: 25% men with quick buying decision (10 subjects), 5% women with quick buying decision (2 subjects), 47% men with elaborated buying decision (19 subjects) and 22% women with elaborated buying decision (9 subjects). If you would draw an equal number of elements in each group, the method is disproportionate.

Therefore, the main difference between cluster sampling and stratified sampling is that in stratified sampling, a random sample is drawn from each strata, whereas in cluster sampling only the selected clusters are studied. The main objective of cluster sampling is to reduce costs by increasing sampling efficiency, whereas stratified sampling increases precision.

For research with no interest in representativeness, you can choose **non-probability** sampling. *Convenience sampling* could mean that you talk to the first five people entering a travel agency near to you, for example. In a *judgement sample* you could talk to 5 travel agency staff as 'experts'. When using *quota sampling* the population is first segmented into mutually exclusive sub-groups, just as in stratified sampling. The second step makes the technique a non-probability sampling method because the selection of the sample is non-random as you would talk to e.g. 5 people with sustainable motives and to 5 people without (this information can be received by using a preliminary contact questionnaire to filter possible subjects).

Questionnaire: Rules for construction
The different phases of constructing a questionnaire as well as rules for phrasing questions have been shown in **Paper I** (chapter 4.2.2, p. 13). The general rules – more substantiated – are the following ones:

1. **Preliminary decisions**: Is there any limitation as to which persons should be asked (e.g. the person over 14 years, English speakers)? Which characteristics should the participants have?
2. Decisions about **question content**: As a matter of principle you should only ask questions which you absolutely need to answer your basic research question! Does the question concern everybody? Does the question refer to a period of time the respondent is able to remember? Does the respondent need further information for answering?

3. Decisions concerning **question phrasing**: Easy to understand, short, simple, unequivocal, no foreign words, no double negation, no abbreviations, precise, not suggestive! Ask only for a single issue and not for two aspects in one question (e.g. 'Do you think tourism must be sustainable and will you use sustainable offers in the future?'). Do not use absolute terms like 'always' or 'never', but 'in general' or 'mostly'.
4. Decisions about **response format**: Open ended (no given items) or closed questions (from a simple 'yes/no' up to 10 and more items)[12]? Use open ended questions if you do not have an idea about the possible thoughts of the subject or if you want to get more insight knowledge (but it is more difficult and time-consuming to analyse them). Use closed questions with two or more items if you already know all possible answers[13]. If you want to use closed questions, a decision about the **scaling** of the answers is necessary (e.g. Likert scale, rank scale, constant sum procedure)[14]. If you

offer an uneven scale with a middle point, for example, people tend to place their judgement around it ('mid-tendency'). If you need a clear tendency for a positive or negative statement, you have to force the subjects by omitting a middle value and taking a scale with even numbers.
5. Decisions concerning the **question sequence:** Ask contact and introduction questions first, then questions concerning the topic, control questions and lastly questions concerning the person. Several attitude questions which could possibly influence each other should be separated by 'buffer questions'. Filter questions in a written questionnaire should only be used rarely.
6. Decisions about the **layout** of the questionnaire: Especially in written surveys, layout is very important. Arranging questions in tables or matrices optimises the impression of a good structured survey and makes it easier for the subject to follow the questionnaire.
7. **Pretest** and **revise**: The questionnaire should be tested in a so called 'pretest' which is given to a small amount of testers ('small' depends on the overall sample size[15]). The pretest shows how long it takes to fill in the questionnaire, which questions can be misunderstood or are difficult. The resulting hints for improvement should be included in the next version of the questionnaire.

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[12] The use of the response format also depends on the sample size. If you only have a small number of participants, open questions are often useful (despite possible difficulties when summing them up). If your sample is larger, closed questions are easier and faster to fill in and to analyze.

[13] Adding 'other' or 'don't know' is a good choice when you are not sure about this.

[14] These mentioned types of scales are the most commonly used ones in market research. It is important to know that there are four different types of scaling levels: **nominal** (measured values are either identical or not, e.g. sex), **ordinal** (measured values can ranked, e.g. 'How satisfied are you with…' – very – little – not at all), **interval** (distances between measured values are equal, e.g. temperature, calendar) and **ratio** (in addition to the equity of distances an absolute zero point exists as well, e.g. age, salary). Validity increases from nominal to ratio level.

The higher the scaling level, the more possibilities for data analysis are available. The examples in Fig. 4 are all on an ordinal level.

[15] Important: Pretest candidates should be a member of or similar to the later sample (e.g. users of a certain product).

Fig. 4: Examples of different response formats

Rating scale:
The person rates the degree of agreement on a given scale with one pole (unipolar) or two poles (bipolar). Attitude and opinions are measured this way.

► **Example for a unipolar rating scale:**

'Making a holiday in the Baltic Sea Region is expensive'

         1   2   3   4   5

I strongly agree   I strongly disagree

► **Example for a bipolar rating scale:**

'Making a holiday in the Baltic Sea Region is…'
very expensive   rather expensive   rather cheap   very cheap

Rank scale:
Each subject is compared to the others in pairs (e.g. the three destinations Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) or by ranking them in a hierarchy.

► **Example for a rank scale in pairs:**
'In each pair, please choose the one destination you prefer over the other as a destination for your next holiday.'
Latvia - Lithuania   Latvia – Estonia   Estonia - Lithuania

► **Example for a rank scale hierarchy:**
'Please rank the following destinations in a hierarchy (1. is that one that you prefer most as a destination for your next holiday)'

    1.   2.   3.

Constant sum procedure:
The respondent distributes a fixed amount of points (e.g. 100) between the alternatives.

► **Example for a constant sum procedure:**

'Please think about your next holiday and distribute 100 points between the following destinations.'

Latvia (e.g. 50 pts)   Lithuania (e.g. 25 pts)   Estonia (e.g. 25 pts)

Structuring the questionnaire

In order to structure your questionnaire, you should work through the following three parts (I to III):

Task checklist:
► Conceptualise your questionnaire regarding the points mentioned below.

I - Introduction and icebreaker questions:
    ► Explain the intention of the study
    ► Explain why the respondent was chosen to fill in/take part in the study
    ► Indicate the time effort for filling in the questionnaire
    ► Generate motivation and willingness to answer
    ► Give a hint to the anonymity of the study

Fig. 5: Example for an introduction section

Example (taken from a customer survey)

Dear Guest,

we would like to make your stay with us as comfortable as possible since hospitality is one of our most important aims. In order to be able to accommodate your wishes while being on holiday, we need your personal opinion. Therefore, we would like to ask you for your praise and criticism. Please spend 5 minutes and fill in our guest questionnaire.

As this is an anonymous survey, your statements cannot be traced back to you personally, therefore you can put your mind at rest and simply answer the questions. Please hand in the completed survey in the enclosed envelope to the reception of your hotel or to your landlord. Thank you very much! We wish you a pleasant stay with us.

II - Main part (questions about the research topic and for control purposes)

► Sequence the questions from general to specific
► Sequence the questions from simple to abstract
► Ask the necessary questions concerning your special interest or hypothesis
► Explain how to fill in complex or extraordinary question/answer types
► Avoid monotony and boredom
► Vary interesting and uninteresting themes
► Avoid long sequences of the same question type
► Avoid negative effects (like halo, order etc.) or use control questions (same content asked in a different way, e.g. negatively phrased)
► Open-ended questions at the end

III - Final part (sociodemographic questions)

Classification data, also known as personal information or (socio-) demographic questions are age, educational level, marital status etc. Whether one asks for this information in the beginning or in the end of the questionnaire is a matter of individual choice. For both positions there are advantages. However, questions seeking details of income or other highly sensitive information are best placed at the very end of the questionnaire. Some researcher justify such questions by explaining how this information might contribute to solve the problem - so respondents do not perceive them intrusive.

The questionnaire should end very courteous and thank for time and cooperation. Some researchers add a reminder to check that all items have been completed.

Goodness of measures

There are three main criteria to evaluate the quality of measuring instruments and measured data: so called *objectivity*, *reliability*, and *validity*. Objectivity is the condition for reliability which is then again the condition for validity.

Objectivity is given when different persons come to the same result in an independent way as opposed to subjective or emotional influence. There are different kinds of objectivity (in execution, during analysis and interpretation[16]). *Reliability* is given when you measure the same for a second time and get the same results (test re-test, internal consistency). *Validity* means that the instrument used indeed measures the intended concept (construct validity, content validity and criterion related validity).

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[16] For further reading concerning these goodness measures: see Fink (1995), Sekaran (2003) or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classical_test_theory, cited 15.02.2007; detailed concepts e.g. see Kuder & Richardson (1937), Cronbach (1951).

Fig. 6: How to improve your response rate

> In written surveys response rates often are very low (10 - 20%), sometimes even less. For this reason it is important to make as much effort as you can to raise your response rate.
>
> Considering the following aspects may help you:
> ► Announce the questionnaire in advance and ask for support
> ► Announce the survey in specialist publications if possible
> ► Use high-quality layout and design of letter and questionnaire
> ► If possible, distribute a prepaid return envelope with the questionnaire.
> ► Provide incentives or prizes to win
> ► Make a follow-up phone call, letter or mail

Questionnaires can be distributed through different ways:
► Per mail or fax,
► Through personal distribution/collection
► As a supplement for brochures/service documents/in the room
► Display at point of sales (this may require instruction of employees)

Step 4: Data analysis

How you can undertake your data analysis depends on your chosen scaling and data collection method as well as on the number of variables.

Qualitative data

Qualitative information results from group discussions, depth interviews and the like. They have to be analysed as previously described (see Paper I, p. 16), possibly computer-assisted.

Hermeneutics[17] and content analysis are methods often used. A content analysis requires the following steps:

► Develop relevant categories (**category scheme**). There are two ways to do so: **First**, construct possible categories theoretically (e.g. concerning the image of a region: accessibility, landscape, touristic offers, possible activities, description of habitants etc.). The disadvantage of this procedure is the danger of constructing a category system which might not fit to the ideas of the subject. Then classify words, sentences or paragraphs to appropriate categories and count them by computer or manually depending on the further processing (frequence analysis). Furthermore, you can collect knowledge about the assessment, i.e. whether it is positive or negative (valence analysis). **Second**, you can develop the categories on the basis of the given answers empirically. This procedure might ignore

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[17] Hermeneutics is the tenet of comprehending and interpreting textual elements.

(theoretical) fundamental aspects which are not represented in the mind of the subjects.

► Each feature/term may only be clustered to one category, overlapping between categories is not allowed.
► Develop **rules for coding** (how to encrypt the given answers in numbers) and collect the category scheme, rules for coding and the resulting data in a **code book**.
► Do a pre-test and revise the category scheme if necessary (for higher reliability[18]: interrater[19] and intrarater[20]).
► Train the coders.
► Distribute the material at random among the coders.
► Look for underlying patterns, abstract the findings.
► Develop and test hypotheses by visual inspection or further quantitative data analyses (e.g. frequencies, multidimensional scaling, variance analysis etc. depending on the chosen scaling niveau).

Quantitative data

If the survey was not executed online, the data has to be entered into an adequate software programme (e.g. SPSS, statistica, statcon, systat).

The first step in analysing quantitative data is to conduct **descriptive statistics**:
► Tables
► Graphs
► Statistical parameters: Most common are arithmetic mean, median, mode as well as simple frequencies. As

measures of dispersion variance and standard deviation are frequently used. In most cases these simple univariate methods fulfil the requirements of the researcher – but sometimes also bivariate methods need to be used (like cross tabulations and corresponding test values as chi-square or correlations[21]). Resulting information can be presented in form of a bar chart or histogram.

An <u>arithmetic mean</u> can be used for metric scaled data. It is often used to get a feeling for the data. All single values are added and devided by the number of counts. It is the average of the collected data. The <u>median</u> requires ordinal data and devides measured values in 50% above and 50% beneath (formula for uneven numbers: count of numbers +1 devided through 2). It is useful when outliers distort the mean. Also useful is the <u>mode</u> which can be used for all types of scales. It indicates the most frequent value. With <u>simple frequencies</u> you can analyse any kind of data. Measured values are counted for frequencies and calculating percentages.

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[18] See step 3
[19] Different coders get the same result.
[20] The same coder gets the same result by coding a second time.

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[21] Chi-square indicates the stochastical independence between two non-metric variables while a correlation measures the degree of linear relationship of at least two interval scaled variables. A positive relationship (caution: not causal statements are possible!) is e.g. 'The more tourists in a region the more traffic', a negative relationship 'the less sun cream the more umbrellas sold'.

Fig. 7: An example for statistical parameters

Five clients assess the quality of your service on a given scale from 1 (very good) to 6 (very bad). Four clients mark a '1', and one client marks a '6'. When calculating the arithmetic mean, a '2' is the result because of the outlier. However, this result does not correctly represent the actual service. Calculating the median and the mode offers a more appropriate assessment: in both cases the value is '1'.
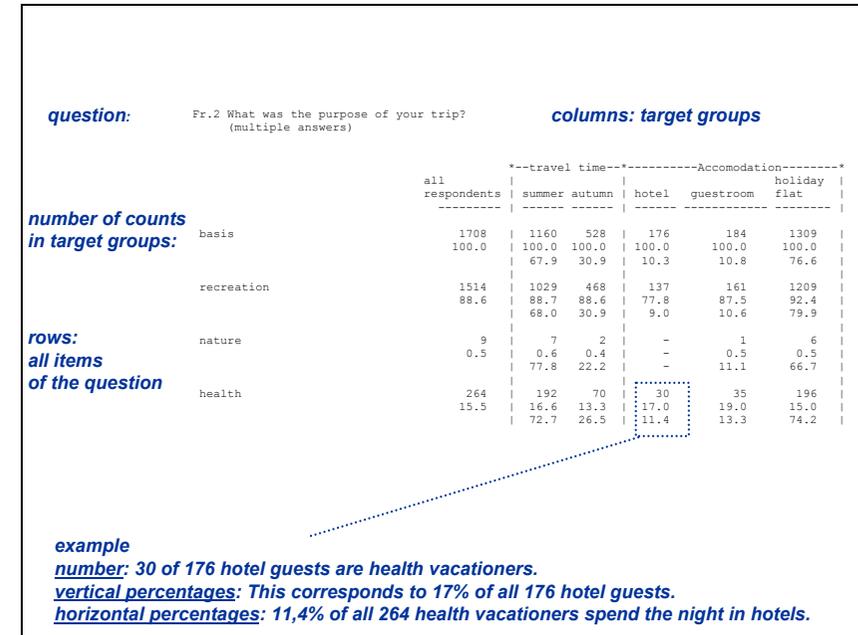
Simple frequencies of this example would show the following distribution:

Value for service	Frequency	Percent
1	4	80
6	1	20

As a measure of dispersion the <u>variance</u> can be used for metric data. It is the middle quadratic sum of the distance of each single value from the arithmetic mean. <u>Standard deviation</u> is the positive square root of the variance.

The following figure gives an example of cross-tabulated data. The statistical dependence or independence of data like this can be indicated with the above mentioned chi-square or correlation coefficients with their particular significance levels.

Fig. 8: Example for cross-tabulation


```
question:        Fr.2 What was the purpose of your trip?        columns: target groups
                     (multiple answers)

                                              *--travel time--*----------Accomodation--------*
                                  all         |                |                      holiday |
                               respondents | summer autumn | hotel  guestroom  flat |
                               ---------- | ------ ------ | ------ --------- ------ |
number of counts  basis            1708    | 1160    528   |  176      184     1309 |
in target groups:                  100.0   | 100.0  100.0  | 100.0    100.0    100.0 |
                                           | 67.9    30.9  | 10.3      10.8    76.6  |
                                           |               |                        |
                  recreation       1514    | 1029    468   |  137      161     1209 |
                                   88.6    | 88.7    88.6  | 77.8     87.5    92.4  |
                                           | 68.0    30.9  | 9.0      10.6    79.9  |
                                           |               |                        |
rows:             nature              9     |    7      2   |   -         1        6 |
all items                          0.5     | 0.6     0.4   |   -       0.5      0.5 |
of the question                            | 77.8    22.2  |   -      11.1     66.7 |
                                           |               | .........              |
                  health            264    |  192     70   | :  30 :    35      196 |
                                   15.5    | 16.6    13.3  | :17.0 :   19.0    15.0 |
                                           | 72.7    26.5  | :11.4 :   13.3    74.2 |
```

example
number: 30 of 176 hotel guests are health vacationers.
vertical percentages: This corresponds to 17% of all 176 hotel guests.
horizontal percentages: 11,4% of all 264 health vacationers spend the night in hotels.

To draw conclusions from observed metric data to underlying behaviour is possible with **inference statistics** (based on probabilistic theory): Different multivariate methods by which you can examine the concurrence and dependence structure of several variables are regression, variance analysis, discriminance analysis, factor analysis, cluster analysis and conjoint analysis, for example. All these methods use statistical tests about the validness of certain hypothesis and require certain (mathematical) conditions of the data (e.g. normal distribution of variates). If these conditions are not given, many nonparametric tests methods for alternative use exist.

Statistical analysis is usually undertaken with the help of the computer programmes mentioned before. Forms of presentation are e.g. scatter diagram, box plot, contingency tables.

Multivariate methods are appropriate for problems like:
► Psychological profiling of sustainable tourists
► Do sustainable tourists show deeper recreational effects than others?
► Does the destination of a vacation influence customer satisfaction?
► Data mining for detecting certain formerly unknown structures, e.g. expenses of sustainable clients depending on their social status
► Which characteristics divide people in those who use a sustainable offer and those who do not?

Further reading/links:
► Paper I, Paper II
► The ESOMAR Handbook of Market and Opinion Research
► The website   http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/ cited 15.02.2007 offers (eligibility "selecting statistics") possible fitting analyse methods especially for your research design.
► Krippendorff, Klaus (2004) *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology.* 2. Auflage, Sage, Thousand Oaks (CA).
► Fahrmeir, Ludwig et al. (2001) (Hrsg). *Multivariate Statistical Modelling Based on Generalized Linear Models*. 2nd edition, Springer: New York.

Step 5: Documentation

Presentation
The main purpose of graphs and tables is to communicate the underlying structure of data. For this reason the analysed data has to be re-structured, re-arranged and reduced.
Well-presented tables and graphs can summarise information which would be difficult to describe in words alone. On the other hand, poorly presented tables and graphs can be confusing or irrelevant.
In general, tables are better than graphs for giving structured numeric information, whereas graphs are better for indicating trends, making broad comparisons or showing relationships. Both should be self-explanatory; the reader should be able to understand them without detailed reference to the text. The title should be informative, and rows and columns of tables or axes of graphs should be clearly labelled. On the other hand, the text should always include key points. If not it should not be there. The sources have to be stated clearly. If necessary add notes to explain abbreviations and unusual terminology. And last but not least: state the sample size on which the values are based.

Some aspects to pay attention to: Tables
► Arrange the rows so that the values are in descending or ascending order for the most important column.
► If there is a series of tables with the same rows or columns, their order should usually be the same for each table.

Some aspects to pay attention to: Graphs
► Line graph: While there is no general rule, graphs with more than four or five lines tend to be confusing unless the lines are well separated. In a graph with more than

one line, different line styles, colours and/or plotting symbols should be used to distinguish the lines.

► Bar charts: They are generally not useful for large amounts of structured information. Since the horizontal axis represents a discrete categorisation, there is often no inherent order to the bars. In this case, the chart is clearer to read if the bars are sorted in order of height, e.g. the first bar represents the highest value, the next bar displays the second highest value and so on.

► A method to display more complex information on a bar chart is to 'stack' the bars.

► Avoid 3-D perspective in general.

► If possible, do the chart without using a legend.

You can use graphs for showing **a trend** (e.g. line graph/histogram depending on applied scale format), **highest/lowest values** (bar chart), comparing **proportions** (pie chart, bar charts, percentage component cumulated bar chart) or for the **distribution of values** (histogram/boxplots).

Report
A written report should fulfil the following requirements and include the following sections:
1. Introduction
2. Executive summary
3. Detailed results
4. Appendix

Task checklist:

► Start with the *introduction* and make sure the objectives of the survey, its background and method can be understood by people not involved in the research.

► The most important part of the report is the *executive summary*, which contains the summary of the main results. Keep it short and include only the most relevant results and decisive issues. Make sure your summary is objective, i.e. without any personal opinion. The summary must also include marketing implications, but they have to be separated from the pure facts, because they are already an interpretation of the results. The final basic component required in the executive summary is the recommendation for action, i.e. the strategic planning of further actions.

► Present *detailed results*. Insert meaningful tables, figures, textual elements (e.g. in power point). They have to be user-friendly, i.e. anybody must be able to understand them. Reduce the collected data. Present and explain it in a logical and organised way. Try to group everything concerning one particular subject in the same section of the written report and arrange the given information in chapters. Insert small graphics in the main body of the document and place additional data in the appendix. If possible use coloured graphic illustrations and try to avoid technical terms.

► The *appendix* is used for references. It should contain all the material used during the study, i.e. the questionnaires used, the structure of the sample, materials shown in the interviews and other necessary elements of the study like tabulations, printed websites, downloaded articles or even a storage device like a CD or DVD.

Further reading/links:

► The ESOMAR Handbook of Market and Opinion Research

Glossary of terms[22]

ANOVA: Analysis of Variance, which tests significant mean differences in variables among multiple groups.

Area Sampling: Cluster sampling within a specified area or region; a probability sampling design.

Causal Analysis: Detecting cause-and-effect relationships between two or among more variables.

Chi-Square Test: A test that indicates the statistical independence between two nominal variables.

Closed Questions: Questions with a delineated set of alternatives.

Cluster Sampling: A probability sampling design in which the sample comprises groups of elements with intragroup heterogeneity and intergroup homogeneity.

Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI): Interviews in which questions are prompted onto a PC monitor that is networked into the telephone system, to which respondents provide their answers.

Control Group: The group that is not exposed to any treatment in an experiment.

Controlled Variable: Any variable that could contaminate the cause-and-effect relationship, which effects can be controlled through the process either of matching or randomization.

Convenience Sampling: A nonprobability sampling design in which information or data are gathered from conveniently accessible members of the population.

Correlational Analysis: Analysis done to trace the mutual influence of variables on one another.

Cross-Sectional Study: A study for which data are gathered just once (a period of days, weeks, or months).

Descriptive Statistics: Statistics such as frequencies, mean, mode, median, variance and standard deviation.

Dichotomous Scale: This scale uses Yes/No response.

Disproportionate Stratified Random Sampling: A probability sampling design in which the number of sample subjects chosen from a special strata is not directly proportionate to the total number of elements in the population.

Dynamic Panel: Different composition of members in a panel who are asked over an extended period of time.

Editing Data: Looking at the original data and ensuring that they are complete and acceptable for data analysis.

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[22] Based on Sekaran, 2003

Experimental Design: A study design in which the researcher might create an artificial setting, control some variables, and manipulate the independent variable to establish cause-and effect relationships.

Experimental Group: The group exposed to a treatment in an experimental design.

Exploratory Study: Provides first knowledge where no or only few information is available on the subject under investigation.

Ex Post Facto Design: Grouping subjects after exposition to a stimulus and comparing them to those not exposed for analysing cause-and-effect relationships (in contrast to establishing cause-and-effect relationships by manipulating an independent variable in a lab or a field setting).

Face-to Face Interview: Information gathering when both the interviewer and interviewee meet in person.

Focus Group: A group consisting of 8 to 10 members, who discuss a given topic for about 2 hours under the head of a present moderator.

Field Study: A study conducted in the natural setting with a minimal amount of researcher interference with the flow of events in the situation.

Frequencies: The number of counts various subcategories of a phenomenon occur (basis for calculation of percentages).

Generalizability: The applicability of research findings in one setting to others.

Goodness of Measures: Reliability, validity and objectivity of measures.

Hypothesis: Testable statements about the logically developed relationship between two or more variables.

Independent Variable: A variable that influences the dependent or criterion variable and accounts for (or explains) its variance.

Inferential Statistics: Inference about a population from a random sample drawn from it.

Interval Scale: A multipoint scale that inidcates the differences, the order, and the equality of the magnitude of the differences in the responses.

Interviewing: A data collection method in which the interviewer asks for information verbally from the respondents.

Judgement Sampling: A nonprobability sampling design in which the sample subject is chosen on the basis of the individual's ability to provide the type of needed information.

Lab Experiment: An experimental design set up in an artificially contrived setting where controls and manipulations are introduced to establish cause-and-effect relationships among variables of interest.

Likert Scale: An interval scale that specifically uses the five anchors of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Disagree nor Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

Manipulation: How the researcher exposes the subjects to the independent variable to determine cause-and-effect relationships in experimental designs.

Mean: The average of a set of figures.

Measure of Central Tendency: Descriptive Statistics of data set such as the mean, median, or mode.

Measure of Dispersion: The variability in a set of observations, represented by range, variance, standard deviation.

Median: The central item in a group of observations.

Mode: The most frequently occurring number in a data set.

Mortality: The loss of subjects during the course of an experiment or panel.

Nonparametric Statistics: Statistics used to test hypotheses, when the population from which the sample is drawn cannot be assumed to be normally distributed.

Objectivity: Interpretation of the results on the basis of the results of data analysis, as opposed to subjective or emotional interpretations.

Observational Survey: Collection of data by observing people or events in their environment and recording the information.

Open-Ended-Questions: Questions that the respondent can answer in a free-flowing format.

Ordinal Scale: A scale that categorizes the qualitative differences and allows for the rank-ordering of these categories in a meaningful way.

Panel Studies: Studies conducted over a period of time to determine the effects of certain changes.

Population: The entire group of people, events, or things that the researcher desires to investigate.

Pretest: A test given to subjects to measure the dependent variable before exposing them to a treatment. Even the test of a questionnaire or interview checklist to improve their quality with only a small number of subjects.

Probability Sampling: The sampling design in which the elements of the population have some known chance or probability of being selected as sample subjects.

Qualitative Data: Not immediately quantifiable data unless they are coded and categorized in some way.

Questionnaire: A written set of questions to which the respondent records the answers, usually within rather closely delineated alternatives.

Quota Sampling: A nonprobabilistic sampling method in which a predetermined proportion of people from different subgroups is sampled.

Reliability: Attests to the consistency and stability of the measuring instrument.

Representativeness of the Sample: The extent to which the sample that is selected possesses the same characteristics as the population from which it is drawn.

Sample: A subset or subgroup of the population.

Sampling: The process of selecting subjects from the population so that the sample characteristics can be generalized to the population.

Social Desirability: The respondents' need to give socially acceptable responses even if they are not true.

Static Panel: A panel that consists of the same group of people serving as subjects over an extended period of time.

Stratified Random Sampling: A probability sampling design that first divides the population into meaningful, nonoverlapping subsets, and then randomly chooses the subjects from each subset.

(Semi-) Structured Interviews: Interviews conducted by the researcher with a predetermined list of questions to be asked of the interviewee.

Subject: A single member of the sample.

Systematic Sampling: A probability sampling design that involves every *n*th element in the population for the sample.

Telephone Interview: An information-gathering method by which the interviewer asks the interviewee using the telephone.

t-Test: A statistical test if there is a significant mean difference in a variable between two groups.

Unstructured Interviews: Interviews conducted with the primary purpose of identifying some important issues relevant to the problem situation, without prior preparation of a planned or predetermined sequence of questions.

Unstructured Observational Studies: Studies in which the researcher observes and makes notes of almost all activities and behaviour that occur in the situation without predetermining what particular variables will be of specific interest.

Validity: Evidence that the instrument, technique, or process used to measure a concept does indeed measure the intended concept.

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Agora framework

The agora toolbox is part of the work package 2 (WP 2) which aims to provide and implement evaluated methodologies and to give strategic recommendations on sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). Consequently, the purpose of the toolbox is to deliver the corresponding methodologies. Moreover, in accordance with the overall aim of agora to develop and promote sustainable tourism in the rural areas of the BSR, the toolbox naturally needs to provide tools that allow for and lead to sustainable tourism development.

Sustainability has to consider three dimensions

Sustainable tourism must simultaneously fulfil the requirements of the environmental, social and economic dimension of sustainability. Sustainable tourism planning therefore aims much broader and deeper than just environment-friendly tourism or the mitigation of negative effects. Sustainable also means economically successful, but in a long lasting balance with the social and ecological needs of the destination.

Still, despite the many definitions of sustainable tourism, the major problem remains to make these operational for practical planning and management. For addressing the ecological dimension of tourism, tools such as certification criteria or ecotourism marking criteria may be employed, for example. The social dimension of sustainability is, among others, connected with local employment as well as impacts on or support for local cultures and lifestyles. The economic dimension refers to e.g. stability of employment over seasons, contribution to local economy and regional gross domestic product, control or leakage from the regional economy etc.

Most tools presented in the agora toolbox are methodologies designed to facilitate and optimise tourism development in general as sustainable tourism development basically employs the same methodologies. Sustainability primarily comes into the picture as a guiding principle while using the tools. Therefore, the tool box documents also give advice, as far as possible, on how sustainability can be considered in the implementation process.

Selection process for selected tools

In order to select the most appropriate and required tools and methods for developing sustainable tourism in the BSR, a determination of requirements was undertaken through the Baltic 21 Tourism Task Force (TOUTF) Network. Based on this, a pre-selection of thirteen tools was proposed to interested parties for the agora pilot projects with the request to select the most essential tools according to their perspective. This resulted in the final selection of the six following tools:

Content of the agora toolbox

- ► **Tools for integrating sustainable tourism development with spatial planning at local and regional level:** Public participation, environmental assessments and conflict resolutions schemes are important tools to implement sustainable tourism in spatial planning processes. Selected tools will be described and their implementation will be demonstrated in a case study. A handbook will summarise the most important findings to assist developers of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region.

- ► **Sustainability Check for tourism projects:** In tourism, there are many so-called sustainable projects and many external funds which depend on this requirement, but no unique standard for assessing the sustainability of these projects. Therefore, the aim of the sustainability check is to develop a testing tool for the sustainability of tourism projects which can be used for assessment during proposal, implementation and post-implementation phase.

- ► **Market research as capacity planning tool in tourism:** Market research is an important area in tourism as information on the requirements of consumers and competitors' activities play a major part in any tourism development and marketing. This part of the toolbox provides an overview about different issues to consider when undertaking market research and which steps need to be undertaken in order to do so. Clearly, market research in itself is not sustainable, but the information gained from it helps to use economic, natural and social resources more effectively and therefore also in a more sustainable way.

- ► **Developing sustainable tourism products:** In order to successfully develop sustainable tourism in the BSR, one of the most basic prerequisites is to develop products that are in line with market requirements without threatening the social and natural resources of the destination. Due to the fact that many issues need to be considered in product development, this toolbox provides detailed advice on the necessary steps in the process and illustrates where sustainability can be integrated into tourism products.

- ► **Labelling sustainable tourism products:** Once a sustainable tourism product is created, the next task is to communicate the product as well as its sustainability to potential customers. Applying for a sustainable tourism label can be a means of doing so as this clearly conveys the sustainability aspect of the product. Furthermore, labels also act as quality promises to the consumers because most labels require the fulfilment of certain standards. Therefore, different label types and methodologies will be illustrated in this part of the toolbox.

► **Strategic cooperation in tourism:** This issue is increasingly gaining importance as tourism suppliers are required to cooperate with others in order to overcome challenges such as an increasing competition or changing consumer demands, for example. Furthermore, tourism with its fragmented nature and interdependent product parts simply necessitates the cooperation of tourism providers. Therefore, this part of the toolbox will deal with the topic in detail. Moreover, it will also illustrate how cooperation can contribute to sustainable tourism development through its integrative approach and through the more efficient use of resources when these are pooled together.

Apart from the first tool each of the topics will be worked on in three steps: First of all, a general overview of each topic is provided (see Günther, Meinken and Zahl, 2006). The second step consists of an evaluation of the tools and methods described in the overviews regarding their suitability for the agora project. As a last step, a guidebook will be prepared for each topic which will help to develop sustainable tourism in the BSR. The results of all steps will be made available on the agora website.

The present document represents the third step for the 'Market research as capacity planning tool in tourism' part of the agora toolbox.