Blend in with nature

-a study about marketing communication of Indonesian ecotourism resorts

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ABSTRACT

Title: Blend in with nature - a study about marketing communication of Indonesian ecotourism resorts

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Purpose: The purpose with this study is to investigate and analyse how ecotourism is marketed to customers by two Indonesian small- and medium sized ecotourism resorts, focusing on marketing communication. Further, the aim is to clarify how these companies enhances their “eco brand”.

Method: This study was based on a qualitative research method with the purpose of creating a deeper understanding for our chosen topic. The study has undertaken an inductive approach with deductive features. The empirical data were collected through nine interviews with representatives and customers from the two studied companies. All of the interviews were conducted in Indonesia and done face-to face.

Findings: The results of this research shows that within marketing communication, digital media and word-of-mouth, have a greater importance for small and medium sized ecotourism resorts. It is also discovered that depending on how resorts operates ecotourism it will determinate how strong their “ecobrand” image.
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1 Introduction

The introduction chapter intends to create insight of the thesis’ chosen research area through a discussion of the tourism industry and its negative impacts, ecotourism, and brand and marketing communication. Finally, the research question and the thesis aim will be presented.

1.1 Background

UNWTO Highlights (2013) emphasises how an increased number of destinations have opened up and invested in tourism all around the world. This has turned tourism into a key force of socio-economic development through export revenues, job opportunities, enterprises, and infrastructure developments. Over the past half century, tourism has grown into one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Tourism owns six percent of the world’s export and one of eleven jobs are direct or indirect affected by tourism.

Today a great number of people are travelling, which Urry and Larsen (2011) explain to be because these days’ tourists have the ability, means, and freedom to travel. This is as well presented by UNWTO Highlights (2013), where statistics shows that the international tourist arrivals in 1995 was estimated to 528 million arrivals which continued to grow to over 1,080 million tourist arrivals worldwide in 2013. For the past few years, Asia and the Pacific had the strongest growth in their international arrivals with an increase of seven percent more international tourist arrivals in 2012. Eturbonews (2013) gives one example of this strong growth by presenting statistics, stating that Indonesia increased their international tourist arrivals with almost six percent in the first five months of 2013. This is despite global economic uncertainties.

According to Globalis (2014), Indonesia’s economy was strongly affected by the financial crisis in 1998. However, in recent years, the country’s GDP has grown and Indonesia has today the strongest economy in Southeast Asia, where tourism is one of the country’s largest industries. UNWTO (2013) emphases this by explaining that Indonesia during 2012 had over 8 million international arrivals. According to Landguiden (2011), Indonesia is a country with 18 000 islands and is located between the main land of Southeast Asia and Australia. The country has around 243 million
inhabitants where 90 percent of the population is Muslims. Which makes the country the world’s populous Muslim nation.

According to Cole (2012), Bali is Indonesia’s most important tourist destination and the island was promoted already during the Dutch colonial times to be something unique, which was one of the reasons why the island became one of the most exotic locations of the Pacific. However, Hall and Lew (2009) argue that a rapid development of tourism also can lead to negative impacts on economic, natural, and socio-cultural environments. For instance, the authors discuss that tourism partly has an effect on the climate change. This has led to more unpredictable weather forecasts and many destinations are influenced by this, as they are depending on seasonal weather. Other negative impacts on the natural environment are reduction of natural resources, such as water and loss of biodiversity include water, land and air pollution. One example of this is highlighted by The Guardian (2012), writing that Bali is facing many problems because of the island’s rapid development of tourism. Bali’s tourism has developed into mass tourism, which has led to numerous of negative consequences, where one of them is that guests at four-star hotels consume 300 litters of water every day.

Cole (2012) argues despite that one of the Millennium Development Goals is to achieve water access and availability, little research have been done to link tourism and the impact of the Indonesian residents’ lack of water supply. Further, the author highlights that international agencies and local Indonesian NGOs believe that if not water management become a priority, Bali will have a serious water crisis by 2025. The author also discuss the issue of water access from the tourists’ point of views. A survey based on 110 tourists in Bali showed that 70 percent wanted to make an effort to conserve water but requested information about how they could help. Thirty-six percent said they could contribute and pay an environmental tax on their bill for the water conservation in Bali. A following result showed extremely lack of knowledge by the participants where 90 percent of the survey participants believed that Bali had plenty of water. According to The Guardian (2012), another negative effect of the developed mass tourism in Indonesia, is the waste management and land lost. In Bali, only 50 percent of the 13,000 cubic meters of waste that is dumped every day on public tips is recycled. Cole (2012) argues 1,000 hectare of rice terrace are lost every year in Bali. One reason behind loss of rice terrace, the author explains, is unaffordable land taxes as
the taxes becomes higher if the land is located next to an luxury villa. That is because the taxes are set at the saleable value of the land.

1.2 Problem discussion

According to Pforr (2009), it took a long time before the negative impacts of tourism stopped being ignored and finally were recognized. It was not until the early 1980s until they were and by then people understood that something had to be done. Because of these discussions new concepts of tourism was formed, where sustainable tourism was one of them. Yamashita (2003) argues the answer to those discussed problems was a type of tourism that that operates in a way that will favour the people that live today without damaging the resources that futures generation will use. A development that will preserve and balance the society, ecosystem, and culture. In other words, sustainable tourism. However, Beaumont (2011) discusses that in order to market a destination sustainable to its customers the requirements are high. By this, the author argues that sustainable tourism should consists of three different criteria in order to be called sustainable tourism. These criteria handles environmental, economic, and social elements and needs to benefit the community and help to preserve the host country.

Beaumont (2011) continues and explain that when more and more people became interested in preserving the nature, a demand grew for vacations to be sustainable as well as environmentally friendly. Ecotourism, a form of sustainable tourism, was the answer for this demand, which became a popular option among tourists. However, the author discusses that ecotourism is different from other forms of sustainable tourism as it have a different focus, nature-based, ecologically sustainable and it provides learning experiences. TIES (2012) defines ecotourism to minimize impacts, providing direct financial benefits for conservation, provide financial and empowerment for local people, build environmental and cultural awareness, provide a positive experience for both the guests and the hosts, and the final one, to raise sympathy to host countries political, environmental and social climate.

Although, Wood (2002) argues that there are many definitions of ecotourism and there are no precise ways of how to operate it, which both makes it complicated and confusing. The author explains that when ecotourism occurred on the market it was only seen as an idea without any principals to follow. Because of this, numerous of
governments and companies promoted themselves as eco without any knowledge of what it stood for. Further, the author explains that later on components were developed in order to encourage ecotourism companies to follow same directions. These components involve that the ecotourism company should make the business beneficial for the local residents by engaging local participation, ownership and offering job opportunities. At the destination, conservation of the biodiversity should be done and the use of non-renewable resources should be as small as possible. Further, the author explains tourist visits should be handled in small groups by small-scale companies and be offered learning experiences. This is because ecotourism involves a responsible action from both the tourism industry and the tourist. Even though these components and directions are available for ecotourism companies to follow, the destination and situation of the company will decide how ecotourism is operated.

However, according to Smith (2006), the tourism industry is dominated by small and medium sized companies (SMEs), which is defined by European Commission as a company with less than 250 employees. This domination has led to challenges for the industry, such as lack of management skills, access to capital and how tourism companies is depending on the intermediaries’ help with marketing. In the tourism industry the percentage of small sized firms is lower than in other business sectors, while the medium sized firms have to some extent higher percentage than in others business sectors. Wood (2002) also states that ecotourism mostly is operated by SMEs where the author describes different kinds of accommodation in ecotourism i.e. ecoresorts, backpacker tents, luxury tent-camps or home stays.

Holloway (2004) argues that the establishment of tourism services, whether it has a sustainable approach or not, will not be enough to survive. Instead, marketing communication is needed. Grönroos (2008) explains that services, such as hotel nights, are complex to market by its nature. First, they are processes that consist of a sequence of activities, second, services are produced and consumed at the same time, and third, the customers are co-producers in the service production process. Furthermore, the author highlights how service quality is the company’s key to success and that quality is regarded as a precondition in terms of delivering services and gain competitive advantages. However, in order to create an outstanding total service quality, it is necessary to take into account customer’s expectations of quality in relation to their previous experience. This is because expectations are a crucial part of how customers
perceive quality. Chan and Baum (2007) agree by arguing that ecotourism is described as beneficial experiences gained by the customers, which are valued by them and expressed in their own words. Grönroos (2008) discusses that to understand how the overall perceived quality in customer relations helps to create value and how the value changes over time is called service management.

Kapferer (2012) explains that companies can manage the way they want customer to perceive and expect from them by building a brand identity. This involves sending out the message about the company’s vision, key believes and core values. Although, the way the company wants to be perceived and how the customers perceive the company is not same. Grönroos (2008) explains how customer identify a company is called a brand image and actually takes form from customers’ thoughts, expectations and experiences. A brand image can either be created, reinforced or weakened by marketing communication. Fill (2011) state that in order for companies to reach successful marketing communication three particular elements should be integrated into combinations. The first element is called tools and contains of the five main communication tools; advertising, sales promotions, public relation, direct marketing, personal selling, and sponsorship. Media is the second key element and contains the means of how the messages of the communication tools are conveyed. The last and third element of the communication mix is content. This is the part where the company’s brand or offering is mediated to the target markets. Holloway (2004) agrees that communications is an important part of companies’ marketing efforts, where it is particularly meaningful within the tourism industry. A tourism product cannot expect to be sold by itself, instead it is the communication between the offering and customer that makes it possible.

1.3 Problem definition

Since tourism is one of the most important industries in Indonesia, as it creates revenue and job opportunities for the inhabitants, the country depend on it. However, even though tourism leads to many positive effects for Indonesia it also creates negative impact for the country. It is clear that Indonesia needs ecotourism to manage the challenges that the tourism industry brings, that the tourist have a demand to travel in an ecological way, and, as well as it is an opportunity for Indonesia to generate profit. Therefore, it is important that the marketing communication between ecotourism
companies and the tourists is working and that their “ecobrand” is as strong as possible. Based in this discussion, the following research question and aim has been made:

*How can Indonesian small and medium sized ecotourism resorts develop their “eco brand” image and communicate it to their customers by marketing communications?*

### 1.4 Aim

The purpose with this study is to investigate and analyse how ecotourism can be marketed to customers by two Indonesian small- and medium sized ecotourism resorts focusing on marketing communication. Further, the aim is to clarify how these companies enhance their “eco brand”.

### 1.5 Delimitations and explanations

This research will not handle business-to-business customers, instead it will only concentrate on the consumer sector.

- Expat is a person who has moved to another country to work
- When we write about offline travel agencies, we mean physical travel agencies
- When we write about online travel agencies, we mean travel agencies that exist on the virtual market.

We have chosen to use different words to describe the receiver of the service and these words are customer, consumer, guest, and traveller. This has been done in order to get a more varied and fluent text. Furthermore, we will have a focus during the thesis on two ecotourism resorts: Pulau Macan and Bloo Lagoon Village. These resorts are both located in Indonesia and works with ecotourism. The expression “resort” will be used throughout the whole study when we refer to accommodation for customers in the tourism industry. The reason why is because the companies we have studied call themselves resorts.
2. Methodology

In the following chapter, the business administration methodology that has been used throughout the study will be presented. The chapter will also describe various research methodologies, research approach and interview methods.

2.1 Research approach

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), there are different ways to relate theory and empirical data to each other in a research and two methods are deduction and induction. The authors argue how an inductive approach is when theory is the result of the research. In this sense, the researcher will study a real case and then compare it to the theory. Yin (2013) explains that an inductive approach uses concepts to find theories about the subject through the collected data. Graziano and Raulin (2013) discuss this further and argue that a research with an inductive approach a large number of observational data builds theories and therefore there it creates a close relationship to empirical data. Ahrne and Svensson (2011) highlight how induction focusing on individual cases and data and through repeated observations of the information a conclusion will occur.

According to Ahrne and Svensson (2011), a deductive approach is based on logic and means that the researcher will use theories to solve the issue and bring out conclusions about individual cases. The authors continue to argue how the researcher in the beginning of the research will formulate one or more hypotheses, which will be tested with help of the empirical research through testing implications. If the implications are correct after the empirical research, the hypotheses will be strengthened and if they are not the hypotheses will be rejected. Another explanation of a deductive approach is, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), a researcher that bases the research on one or several theories, and that the empirical data will be analysed to confirm those theories. Graziano and Raulin (2013) discuss this as well and argue that the deductions are hypotheses that the researcher will test empirically by doing a research. Further, Yin (2011) argues, a deductive approach can be safer because the researcher have relevant concepts to use already from the beginning. However the author continues, the researcher risks not seeing new insights on the way.

In our research, we have used an inductive approach with deductive features. First, we have applied this approach since we first wanted to gain knowledge and understanding about the
thesis chosen subject, which was done through researching of theories. Our aim was never to go out and test these theories on reality rather we wanted to interpret how the reality looked like. When we went out and conducted our research, the thesis was guided by the empirical data we found. As our research is about a real issue, we have used theories to comprehend it.

2.2 Qualitative method

Bryman and Bell (2011) argue, within research there are two methods, which are called quantitative and qualitative methods. One clear distinction of the two research methods is that quantitative research use measurements in terms of numbers and qualitative methods do not. Further, the authors discuss that quantitative research can be understood as a research method that highlights quantification in the collection and analysis of data. According to Eliasson (2013), quantitative research is based on the view where knowledge is best achieved by broad measurements and makes generalizations based on small groups to a large group. Bell (2010) discusses that one attempt to separate the methods is to describe them as the two research methods, each with their strengths and weaknesses, where the selection of method reflects how the data for the research are collected. However, the author claims that quantitative research emphasize quantification and involves measuring and analysing phenomena where the results aims to explain connections with the reality in a structured and systematic way.

In addition to quantitative research that is concerned with numbers, Bryman and Bell (2011) argues, qualitative research methods emphasizes the importance of words. Eliasson (2013) also argues how words are highlighted within qualitative methods. Bryman and Bell (2011) discuss this further and explain that the qualitative method aims to understand why something particular happens and the reason behind it. According to Yin (2011), qualitative research methods are characterized by reflecting the opinions of people and perspectives to the study, covering the context and circumstances of people living in, and providing insights into current concepts that may explain human social behaviour, and at last, aims to use many resources instead of one single type of evidence. Phillimore and Goodson (2004) discuss this further and argue that qualitative research with its different methods, such is in-depth interviews, and observations, can contribute to develop a broad perspective on the context.

Since we wanted to create a greater understanding of how marketing communication was applied by two Indonesian ecotourism resorts and how their image was reinforced, we chose a qualitative research method. The method was chosen in order for us to investigate the problem by help from the interviewed respondents’ opinions and perspectives on marketing and
ecotourism. Further, we also used a qualitative method, as we wanted to conduct observations, interviews and use many resources. That would make it possible to get a broad view on the research’s context in order to answer our broad research question.

2.3 Case study

According to Silverman (2011), a case study is research done during a determined period of time that is surrounded by a physical and socio-cultural context. The research is performed using various methods and data sources such as interviews, documents, participant observation, and audio-visual materials. Yin (2009) argues that when a researcher has a research question that is designed with a “why” or “how”, a case study is ideal for the research. Further, the author explains that a case study should be applied as a research method if the researcher wants to investigate a real life phenomenon and gain understanding for it in depth. Bell (2010) also discuss this and explains that if researchers use a case study it gives an opportunity to apply one example from reality to study aspects of a bigger problem. Merriam (2011) agrees by arguing how a case study can be applied to get a greater knowledge of the field. Yin (2011) highlights as well how a case study is carried out in environments in real life where people act in their real roles. Further, the author explains that researchers can study people i.e. at home, at their work place or public places. Since the case study, according to Merriam (2011), will result in giving a full description of the subject that was chosen, the researcher should use several empirical sources while doing a case study.

We chose to do a case study since we wanted to investigate and analyse a particular type of industry and companies in depth. Our study also has a research question, which intends to investigate “how” a certain phenomenon appears. When we selected the companies, we had certain criteria, which were that they needed to be located in Indonesia, operate ecotourism, and offer tourists accommodation. We found two companies that matched the criteria online, in which we contacted and asked if they would like to participate in our research. As we wanted to get deeper understanding for the companies, we only focused on two. During the visits at the two companies, we also conducted observation. These observations involved looking and observing the companies’ sites’ environments with our own eyes. The reason why was because we wanted to form our own opinion on how the companies operated and how these sites looked like. To our help, we had a camera that captured these moments that also helped to remind us after the visits at the companies.
2.4 Data Collection

Bryman and Bell (2011) argues that when using a qualitative research it allows the researcher to interpret the collective data as it focus on words instead of numbers. Further, Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad (2010) explain that collected data functions as the raw material when doing an analysis. If the researcher has no functional data to analyse no exact conclusions can be drawn for the study. The final quality of the findings for the study depends on the relevance, reliability, and adequacy of the data that is collected during the research process. Bryman and Bell (2005) describe that there are two main differences of the collected data and these two are called primary data and secondary data.

2.4.1 Primary data

Bryman and Bell (2005) explain that primary data is the material that the researcher collects by her- or himself and consists of brand new data. Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad (2010) argues as well that primary data is collected direct from the main source where the source is completely new and previously not collected. Bryman and Bell (2011) gives example of primary data in the form of participant observation, interviews, and focus groups. In this research, the primary data collection was collected from qualitative and semi-structured interviews.

According to Merriam (2009), all types of qualitative research use in some extent interviews to collect data and the interview’s main purpose is to obtain a particular kind of information. Patton (2002) discusses this as well by arguing that the researcher wants to find out another person’s thoughts and opinions. Bryman and Bell (2005) explains that interviews are viewed as an attractive form of collecting data as it provide with flexibility. Bell (2010) agrees with this, and discuss that some of the advantages with interviews are the adaptability, opportunity to following questions and that the answers can be developed and deepens. Justesen och Mik-Meyer (2011) state that there are three different approaches for interviews; unstructured, semi-structured and structured. Merriam (2009) clarifies that a semi-structured interview is an approach that consists of a mix of a unstructured and structured interviews. This means for instance that the interview questions are more flexible expressed or that the interview is a combination of more and less structured questions. Bryman and Bell (2011) agree and discuss that the semi-structured interview has a more specific base of questions to be asked in a particular order. Justesen och Mik-Meyer (2011) defines a semi-structured interview as when the interviewer using an interview-guide where themes and an amount of key issues are
defined in advance. However, in the interview situation the guide will have room for deviations if the respondent would like to take up unexpected topics.

Our interviews had a semi-structured approach, as we knew what kind of information we were looking for and wanted to leave space for our respondents’ own comments and opinions. As the approach allowed us to ask following questions to our respondents, we had the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding for the thesis topic.

Merriam (2009) argues for inexperienced interviewers, an interview-guide can be used. Bryman and Bell (2011) discuss that an interview-guide is beneficial to use during interviews as the guide consists of notes to remember different themes related to the research question. Merriam (2009) agree with this and state that having fewer broader questions enables the interviewer to listen to what the participants want to share. Further, the author states that interviews fulfil two functions, where the first function is to transform the research’s goal into specific measurable terms. Secondly, it is a way to motivate the interviewee to share their reflections and knowledge about the current researched issue.

We have based our interview-guide on our theoretical framework using the thesis’ three different theoretical themes as main headings. This made it possible for us to stick to the topic and to answer our aim of the research. We used an interview-guide as it eased us during the interview process and for our questions to remain within the framework of the study.

Bryman and Bell (2005) discuss the advantages of having an interview in person. One of them is that the interviewer can see the respondent’s reactions when questions are asked, which makes it possible for the interviewer to react. For instance, if the respondent react uncertain, the interviewer has the opportunity to repeat questions or reformulate them. Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad (2010) argue as well that with personal interviews the interviewer can observe the respondent’s environment. Bryman and Bell (2005) also argue that when the researchers meet the respondents in person the researchers have the opportunity to take pictures. The authors explain that pictures has become important within research.

In our research, all of the interviews were recorded, conducted in person, as well as they were held in English. This was in order for us to make sure all participants understood all questions. We could also take advantage of the opportunity to ask following questions if it was necessary. Then with personal interviews, we could experience the sites and have the interview in an environment where the respondents felt comfortable. We believe it were easier
for the respondents to open up and give us in-depth answers. Personal interviews also made it possible for us to capture pictures at the companies’ sites. The choice of respondents was based on their expertise and which company they represented.

We have chosen the following respondents from Pulau Macan

- Roderick Des Tombe, the founder and managing partner, American but grew up in Indonesia.
- Ismail Adinegoro, coordinator of business development, Indonesian.
- Yoice Dwi Purwanthy, hostess, reservation manager, and personal assistant of the founder, Indonesian.
- Guest 1, American.
- Guest 2, Indonesian.

We have chosen the following respondents from Bloo Lagoon Village

- Toni Gwillian, one of the founders, British.
- Marita Vidal, the other founder, Argentine.
- Gede Jabung, general manager, Indonesian.
- Guest 3, Swiss

2.4.2 Secondary data

Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad (2010) discuss that secondary data consists of information, which has been collected before by organizations, agencies, and researcher. The authors continue to say that since secondary data already is written, researchers can use it, without the trouble of collecting it. However, others also forms it, which then can limit the research value. According to Graziano and Raulin (2013), secondary data gives an assessment of the whole area that is researched. Although, the data is not as detailed as it would be if it came from the original source. Bryman and Bell (2011) argue how a researcher can get great benefits by comparing and draw parallels between primary and secondary data.

For this study, we have used secondary data throughout the first chapter and the theoretical chapter. We also used in the theoretical and empirical analysis chapter, where used the resorts homepages and social media as we searched for information about the companies’ images. We argue that it was more trustworthy to use information direct from the companies’ homepages since we could see the actual message they send out. The secondary data that has
been used consisted of scientific articles, literature, and Internet sources, which were critical examined and selected, based on what we believed were interesting for the thesis.

2.5 The knowledge process

The research subject was based on our interest in ecotourism and marketing which have emerged from years of studies and travelling. As we both have experience in travelling in Indonesia and know about the country’s environmental problems, Indonesia became a natural choice of research country.

Our first step was to choose a research approach where we decided to use an inductive approach with deductive features. The reason for the chosen approach was that we wanted to gain deeper knowledge about the subjects, ecotourism, and marketing, before we started our research. Then after that, we let the empirical data guide the research. Further, we selected a qualitative method considering our purpose with the research was to get close to the issue, as it would give us the opportunity to meet and observe the people and places dealing with it. It would also lead to a chance to listen to the people’s attitudes, opinions and perspectives, which would develop a greater understanding of our research subjects. This was also the reason why we chose to use case study as a method. After this, we created three themes connected to our subject that was used consistently throughout the study.

The next step for us was to select two companies for our case study where the criteria was that the companies needed to position themselves as ecoresorts, where we found two ecoresorts located in different geographical areas in Indonesia.

Then we travelled to Indonesia and we visit the first company, Pulau Macan, and had five interviews. One interview was with the owner, two interviews was with employees, and two interviews was done with customers. After collecting the empirical data from the first resort, we went to our second company, Bloo Lagoon Village. There we conducted four interviews where two of them was with the owners, one of them was with an employee, and one interview was done with a customer. All the interviews was recorded, which made it easier for us to concentrate and ask follow-up questions during the interviews. It also made it easier as we could go back and listen to the answers again when it was time to write the empirical analysis. When we conducted the interviews, we both were active by asking questions and brought one computer with us so we could see our questions. Since all of the interviews was conducted at the resorts, we tried to find a nice and quiet area so we would not be disturbed.
by other guests or employees. Every interview was around one hour and if we were not done, we asked for a break since we felt that it was important for everyone to stay focus.

During both visits, we were experiencing the sites by looking around. We took plenty of photos, so it would be easier for us to remember what we had seen and experienced while we were there. At the resorts, we also got a tour of the sites and during these tours, the staff explained the company’s concept. This resulted in that we got a deeper understanding of the actual ecological features they perform.

2.6 Trustworthiness and authenticity

Bell (2010) discusses the importance of critically review the information that have been collected and decide whether it is reliable, valid or not. Further, the author explains that trustworthiness is a measurement on the extent to which an approach gives the same results on different occasions over the other similar circumstances. However, Bryman and Bell (2011) argues that it is not correct to use the term reliability in qualitative researches since a researcher never can get the same result twice. Instead, they want to use the terms trustworthiness and authenticity.

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), trustworthiness consists of four criteria where each criteria have a complement criterion in qualitative research. The first one is credibility, which is similar to internal validity, and the importance of this is how the social reality is a unique quality in the trustworthiness criteria. If the social reality can be seen in different ways, the possibility or credibility will determine if the subject is acceptable to others. In other words, when the results of the study is established it will be decided whether the research was done according to good practise or not. Credibility also involves within a qualitative research to let members of the social world decided if the researcher has understood the social world in a correct way or not.

The second criteria, according to Bryman and Bell (2011), is called transferability and is related to external validity. It is common that a qualitative research involves a rigorous study of a small group of people sharing specific characteristics. Results in a qualitative research often focus on depth rather than breadth, and depend on the contextual distinctiveness and the importance of the aspect of the social world. The third criteria Bryman and Bell (2011) states is dependability, which is a similar to reliability. Further, the authors highlights that to determine the advantage of the research, in terms of the trustworthiness criteria, the researcher
should follow an auditing approach. This means that the researcher should keep all records from the research process such as notes, interview transcripts, data analysis decisions, selection of research applicants and problem formulation. In order to see how far proper procedures is and have been followed during the process will peers work as auditors to analyse if the researcher have done the research in a correct way. It would also include an evaluation of to what extent the theoretical conclusions can be justified. In qualitative researches, auditing is not a very popular method. The final criteria are conformability, which relates to objectivity. This criterion emphasizes how it is impossible to be totally objective when doing qualitative researches and it has to be shown that the researcher acted in good faith. In addition, it should be clear that the researcher not openly have been affected by personal values and theoretical preferences in the research.

Bryman and Bell (2011) discusses that there are criteria for authenticity as well. These criteria illustrate a broader set of issues relating to the broader political impact of research. The first criteria is fairness, which highlights if the research is in a fair way representing different point of views between people in the social setting. The second criteria is educative authenticity that includes how the research helps people to value the viewpoint on other people in the social setting. The third criteria catalytic authenticity emphasises if the research has acted as a force for people to involve in action to change their situation. The final criteria is tactical authenticity, which evaluates if the research has empowered people to take steps that is essential for involvement in action.

We argue, since we have used a qualitative research method it was of importance that we assured that the trustworthiness and authenticity was high. We did this by recording all of our interviews so we could go back and analyse them as well as having evidence if there would be any uncertainties. At the companies’ sites, we also took pictures so we could give an even and fair representation of them. We are aware of how easy it can be to be affected of the respondents that we interviewed, since we conducted in-depth interviews and stayed at these resorts for a couple of days. However, we tried to stay objective because we knew that it could affect our result for the thesis.

2.7 Method criticism

Phillimore and Goodson (2004) discuss that consequences of doing research in countries with different cultures involves that the researchers have a lack of understanding of the local perspective and need to handle issues such as knowledge, trust and power-relations. During
our research in Indonesia, we were aware of the cultural and language differences. However, as we both have experiences of the country’s culture and that one of us have lived in Indonesia for several years and speaks Indonesian fluently, we argue that the trustworthiness and authenticity have not been affected. Although, we did struggle with language barriers during some interviews, as they were held in English. We handled this by repeating the questions that not were understood or reformulating the questions or translating them to Indonesian. Furthermore, one reason to why we recorded all interviews was that then we would have the opportunity to listen to the interviews again to make sure we understood the respondents’ answers correctly.

Silverman (2005) argues that all researchers are coloured by their own experiences and because of that we always encoding of reality which shapes and subjectivity and objectivity. Since we did a qualitative research, where in-depth interviews consisted of the empirical data, it meant that the respondents were subjective when answering our questions during the interviews. We as researchers also encodes reality in the sense that we have previous knowledge that influenced our research. This can been seen as a weakness, however we argue that we would not had the same depth in the thesis if we had chosen another method.
3. Theoretical framework

In the following chapter, we will present our framework and the theories that form the basis for answering the thesis’s purpose. The chapter consist of three themes, where the first one will describe different principles of ecotourism. Further, service marketing will be discussed, which will lead to the third theme, that will look into marketing communication. At last, the chapter will finish with, according to us, highlights of the most relevant theories.

3.1 Ecotourism

This theme will discuss principles of ecotourism in order to clarify how guidance can help ecotourism companies to work with sustainability in different ways.

Mowforth and Munt (2009) argue that different sustainable tourism principles exists for tourism companies to follow. These principals, according to Mcgahey (2012), have the purpose to protect the nature, preserve the cultural, educate tourists, and increase the local economy. Wood (2002) argues that one reason to the principles importance is that if ecotourism is not planned and manages in the right way, it can be harmful for the biological diversity at a destination. Further, the author discusses that there are a number of existing international principals, where one of them imply to minimize the negative impacts on the culture and nature so the destination not will be damaged. The reason for this is, according to Mowforth and Munt (2009), that tourism have an impact on the culture of host countries and that maintaining it is one of the most important elements in sustainable tourism. Ecotourists, according to Mcgahey (2012), feels responsible for the environment, culture and value the resources that the destinations have to offer. They also search for authenticity and therefore are more willing to interact with local people. Furthermore, Mowforth and Munt (2009) discuss the ecological negative impacts and that some of the principles can guide the destinations to minimise and avoid negative environmental impacts that the tourists brings to a destination. One way to achieve that is through calculating the carrying capacity, which is used to see how much of tourist development a destination can handle before the environment will be negotiated or ruined.

Another principle for ecotourism, according to Wood (2002), consist of the importance of doing business responsible by including local authorities and people who will consider the local inhabitants’ needs and jobs. The author explains that within ecotourism there are many different kinds of stakeholders involved, such as government, local communities, non-
governmental organisations, and different businesses. Moreover, Mcgahey (2012) clarify that ecotourism companies usually do business with the local community, such as local authorities, facility executives, and external people that are experts in ecotourism. Although, in some cases locally owned ecotourism companies can function alone without help from external companies. Mowforth and Munt (2009) argue as well that the degree of interaction is still not decided as there is a debate about how included the local residents should be and which control they should get among destination communities. However, Wood (2002) arguing that it is not only about including all stakeholders, it is also about doing that at the same time as certain ecotourism guidelines, certifications and rules are followed. For instance, UNEP (2013) highlights UNWTO’s (2002) sustainable tourism principles where one of them imply that ecotourism should provide alternative employments and income opportunities for the local residents. Further, UNWTO (2002) suggests that in general, but not exclusively, service provider at the destinations tend to be small and locally owned companies.

A similar principle, according to Wood (2002), is to make sure that tourism developments do not go beyond the social and environmental limits for what kind of changes that is acceptable. The author explains this further and discuss that local residents should be informed before any developments are done in their area and about what the developments could lead to. This is in order for them to have the chance to agree on the terms. Mowforth and Munt (2009) agree and argue many parties believes in the importance of including the local inhabitants in the decision making process. Mcgahey (2012) also believes it is important for ecotourism companies to work with the local government to set standards for ecotourism and to make sure the principals will be followed. The author claims that if an ecotourism company ignore the principals it can affect the whole destination. It will affect customers in a way that they will not understand the concept of ecotourism and it will affect the local society as such that they will feel unsure with the supply of jobs and income. The author also highlights that it is the local communities that have the most to lose if the ecotourism is not working. Although, they also have the most to win from it.

Wood (2002) presents another principle that suggests that ecotourism should provide education for the guests in order for them to understand the importance of sustainability and conservation. Mowforth and Munt (2009) agrees with the educational principle and state that the biggest difference between traditional tourism and sustainable tourism is the educational impact. UNEP (2013) also discuss educational matters by referring to UNWTOs principles, pointing at the benefits of increasing knowledge about conservation of natural and cultural
assets, both amongst tourists and locals. Further, Mowforth and Munt (2009) discuss that the goal with providing education is for tourists to get an understanding for the human, natural, and environmental aspect, even if it is not always included in the tourism activity.

A following principle of ecotourism involves, according to Wood (2002), the need for infrastructure to be developed in agreement with the environment in order to conserve the wildlife and local plants, minimize usage of fossil fuels, and fit within the cultural and natural environment. The author describes ecolodge as an example of accommodation that is built in relation with nature, and to be defined as an ecolodge certain criteria needs to be followed. First, the author explains, the ecolodge is conserving the natural and cultural surrounding environment, especially during construction work where minimal impact is made on the natural environment. Then, the accommodation fit into its physical and cultural setting by careful attention to forms, colour, and landscape and use localized architecture. In terms of water the author continues, the ecolodge reduce water consumption and use alternative and sustainable methods for water acquisition. Solid waste and sewage are carefully handled and disposed, as it will meet its energy needs by passive design. Then for greater sustainability, combine these with the accommodation’s modern counterparts. Further, the author explain, efforts are made to work together with the local community and educational programs are established to educate both its staff and the visitors about the surrounded natural and cultural environments. Finally, an ecolodge is by research programs, contributing to sustainable local development.

Wood (2002) describes a following principle to include that the economic benefits of the ecotourism development should strive to be maximized for the host country, communities, local business, and the residents living in and nearby protected and natural areas. Mowforth and Munt (2009) argue the economic sustainability has the same importance as any other element of the tourism development process. For the economy to be sustainable, it has to gain enough from the activities to cover the costs. It should also be used to minimise the effect that the tourist attendance on a destination creates and it needs to generate income that will cover the inconvenience tourism brings to the local society. Mcgahey (2012) highlight as well that if ecotourism is shown to be ineffective and just providing false hope about economic development, it could damage the natural assets. The author also explains it will expose the local residents for more damage in the future and it can harm the social equality for the local residents when new concepts are blended with their culture.
3.2 Service marketing

*Within the following theme, we will discuss how services and marketing comes together by including theories about the service offering, the customer, brand and positioning, and service quality.*

### 3.2.1 The service offering

Grönroos (2008) describes that a service package can be divided into three categories; the main, complementary and the value-enhancing services. For instance, the main service of a hotel is the actual accommodation, whereas the hotel’s reception, housekeeping, restaurant, and concierge are providing the hotel’s complementary services. However, the author explains, in order to use the main service, complementary services are needed. The purpose with value-enhancing services is to add value or to distinguish it and from the competitors’ services. For instance, Nysveen and Lexhagen (2001) discuss that to attract customers to the virtual marketplace, tourism companies and their websites will have to offer reservation facilities and value-added services. The reason for this is to gain competitive advantages and to reduce what customers perceive as risks. Wood (2002) exemplifies by explaining how ecotourists have the benefits to experience environments and gain knowledge from local guides that in many cases would not be possible to do by themselves. However, Grönroos (2008) highlights that it is important to separate the enabling and the value-enhancing services.

Further, Grönroos (2008) discusses how a service concept decides the company’s intentions as well as the possibility to create a service package. A service package consists of all services that are necessary to satisfy the targeted customers’ needs and wants. It defines what the customers actually will get, in other words, what result the technical quality will be. Although the author claims, a well-established basic service package is no guarantee that customers will experience services as good or even acceptable. Therefore, it is important to make sure that both the production of the service and the delivery process is of high quality, as it is just as important as the defined service package. Further, Holloway (2004) explains that tourism companies can choose to deal directly with their customers, by intermediaries or using both ways. An intermediary is a business that works in between the company and the company’s customers, such as a travel agency. One consequence of not have direct contact with the end-customers is, according to the author, that it is difficult to understand the customers and identify market changes. For instance, Weaver (2001) states that it is crucial for ecotourism
companies to have intermediaries that share the same code of ethics about ecotourism as them.

Clow and Baack (2014) argue how the growth of Internet have sent the power to the consumers. Consumers can find information online about services as well as companies can encourage consumers to purchase i.e. trips and accommodation online. Álvarez, Martín, Casielles (2007) confirms this by discussing how the virtual world allows different members of the tourism product’s distribution channel to get direct contact with the end-customer. Additionally, Grönroos (2008) discusses how the marketing of services online is constantly increasing and nowadays a big virtual marketplace has emerged next to the traditional physical one. The service offerings online are more focused on information rather than emotions. The author continues to explain different factors that will determines the service availability and examples of these factors are the employees’ skills, opening hours, placement of offices, the information technique, which makes it possible for the customers to reach the service provider, and the number of customers who participate in the service process at the same time. These factors, according to the author, will decide whether the customer finds it easy or difficult to use or buy the service. If companies do not succeed with these factors it can ruin the service offering and the perceived quality can be seriously damaged. Therefore, the author states, Internet sites, and customer service functions are of greater importance today. For instance, Holloway (2004) points out that reservation system are vital within the tourism industry where online booking systems is a fast growing source of revenue. According to Álvarez, Martín, Casielles (2007), using Internet as a distribution channel provide cost reductions and the opportunity to let the customers carry out the whole transaction by themselves.

3.2.2 The Customer

According to Grönroos (2008), customers produce and consume services at the same time, which makes it vital for companies to understand to what a great degree their customer are involved within the service production process. The involvement can be about providing information, visit websites, and filling in forms. For instance, the author explains that self-services expects a high involvement from customers that makes them very active co-producers. Depending on the extent to which customers are willing to get involved, customers will improve or impair the services. Moreover, Swarbrooke (2002) discuss this and explains that both staff and customers are a part of the service product itself. Customers are direct
exposed to staff’s strengths and weaknesses, which will influence the perceived value of the service and reflect their own attitudes and experiences. Furthermore, Grönroos (2008) argues that customer involvement also is to a great degree about customer knowledge and skills to co-produce the service by i.e. purchase, questions, or feedback with other companies and customers. This leads to, according to the author, that the customers’ influences affects the final value of the service and that the service output consequently depends on how knowledgeable customers are. Therefore, customers are co-producers of services and co-creators of value. Mowforth and Munt (2009) agrees and discuss that even the smallest influences from the tourists will have a huge impact on the local community as tourists bring their own habits and lifestyles. Wood (2002) claims as well that as ecotourism is small scale, which means the number of tourists visiting ecodestination comes in smaller groups that result in tourists having less of an impact on the host community.

However, Ojasalo (2003) states that companies never should rely on that customers will contribute to services as they all differ in motivations, need to participate, knowledge, and experiences. Normann (2000) continues this discussion and highlights that companies should be aware of that customers’ involvement have an emotional effect, i.e. frustration or happiness, in which the feelings affect other customers. Therefore, it is important for companies to see their customers more as ambassadors. Ojasalo (2003) agrees with this and discusses that customers can affect each other either positively or negatively. If customers have great knowledge, they have the ability to share this with other customers that could increase the service’s value. However, customers can also share their negative experience or wrong information about the service, which could lead to that the trust between the company and the customer decreases. For that reason, Grönroos (2008) argues, it is important for companies to know their customers’ needs and wants, as they must guide them during the service production process, which also will ensure the customers contributing positively to the process.

According to Gummesson (2008), it is impossible to satisfy all customers’ needs and wants and therefore companies must divide the market into segments. Goldsmith (2012) states a market segmentation to be when a distinct group of consumers are identified with similar characteristic. Grönroos (2008) discusses this as well and claims that all customers should be treated as individuals. However, the author highlights it is difficult to satisfy all different needs and wants using the same strategy. Therefore, it is necessary to divide customers into different homogeneous segments based on their characteristics. Thereafter companies choose
which segments that they want to focus on, also called target customers. Wood (2002) discusses it is difficult to measure how many travellers that actually are motivated by ecotourism, where one reason is that ecotourism is defined by its criteria to conserve the nature and contribute to the residents’ wellbeing. Another explanation is because ecotourism often is researched together with nature-based tourism, which has resulted in wrong statistics.

Holloway (2004) argues there are different strategies for segmentation, in which one method involves dividing the market based on geographic variables. This means that consumers are segmented by which geographical areas they live in, such as global areas, regions, districts, or cities. Wood (2002) claims for instance that northern Europeans have shown interest in sustainable tourism. Another way to divide the market, according to Holloway (2004), is through demographic variables, which means that consumers is divided by characteristics like gender, family-size, age, income, and occupation. With this kind of segmentation, it is important for marketers to know changing trends of consumers. According to Clow and Baack (2014), one trend today is to handle stress by treating yourself with experiences. Further, the authors discuss that income plays an important part of segmentation, which Holloway (2004) agrees with by arguing that consumers are prepared to pay a higher price of the convenience of travelling with a smaller amount of tourists, local departure and the additional benefit offered.

Clow and Baack (2014) discuss that psychographic segmentation is another a method of market segmentation that in-depth explains why consumers’ purchase particular products or services. Swarbrooke (2002) explains that this strategy come from two main sources; lifestyle and personality, in which consumers’ personality is related to their attitudes and opinions, and their lifestyles on what kind of self-image they have and how they want others to see them. Holloway (2004) describes another segmentation strategy called behavioural segmentation, which aims to divide consumers based on their actions. Clow and Baack (2014) clarifies benefit segmentation as a strategy where the focus are at the product’s advantages rather than the characteristics of the consumers’ themselves. For instance, Zografos and Allcroft (2007) discuss that the benefits of ecotourists’ holiday are shown to have a bigger influence than the demographic variables. Lastly, Clow and Baack (2014) argue there is a segmentation strategy based on consumers’ usage or purchases, in which consumers are divided into groups based on how much or the amount of times the customer are purchasing the product.
3.2.3 Brand and positioning

Kapferer (2012) states that brands means a lot more than a name and that many companies have forgotten the central purpose of their brands and instead focused on their marketing activities. The author discusses whether brands can answer what would the market lack off if the brand did not exist. A brand’s purpose and vision are something more than generate profit, rather it should consists of satisfying their customers’ needs and wants. The author claims that brands should start with creating their vision and purpose and then add a style which consists of a personality that is communicated by its’ distinctive characteristics. These characteristics involve tangible features and how and what communication the brand does. The vision, communication, action, and tangible features of the product then creates the brand image. Even though, if a company has planned in advance how the brand should be perceived, customers will have experience it differently. The issue is that consumers base their opinions and attitudes on what they believe is real and tangible.

Furthermore, Kapferer (2012) argues a brand is not only the name of a service or a product. Instead, it is how the company’s vision leads to the establishment of services and products under one name. The core values of a brand, the key beliefs and the vision together creates the brand identity. Sääksjärvi and Samiee (2011) explains how there are two central sources to why a consumer prefer a certain brand and these are brand identity and brand image. The brand identity describes as an exclusive set of brand association that companies want to develop or preserve. The brand image is how consumers distinguish and recognize a brand. The authors continue to argue how both brand identity and brand image consists of a number of subcomponents. Brand identity consists of a brand’s purpose, offerings, awareness, and differentiation. Brand image subcomponents are brand character, consumers’ thoughts towards brands, brand credibility, and how consumers feel about a brand. Brand identity is how companies want consumers to perceive them and brand image is how consumers perceive companies.

Moreover, Kapferer (2012) argues how the brand image focusing on how different groups on the market perceive a service, a brand, a product, or a company. Image is about how these groups are able to decode all the messages and communication surrounding the brand. According to Grönroos (2008), brand image is the image people have in their minds about a brand or service. In addition, the author argues that the brand identity is described as the image marketers want to give to the brand. If the concept of brand identity and brand image is
held separated, it gives an illusion that a brand can be created and still exists without customers’ involvement. According to these views, consumers creates an image about a brand that is already developed. However, consumers get information all the time about a brand consciously and unconsciously, and this is how the image will be created in their minds. For instance, Subbiah and Kannan (2011) state how hotels that applies a green technology will be members of The Green Hotel Association, and this gives them a green certification that will help them to approve and strengthen their image.

Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) state that if brands makes promises to its customers it has to be done in a significant and concrete way so the customers will be able to associate with the brand. The promises should give the consumer a fair picture of the brand and they should not promise more than they can fulfil. Because then customers will get the wrong picture of the brand and have a negative association with it. Anker et.al (2012) argues how a brand can make promises to its customers in three different ways. The first one is called functional promises, in which the company promise the customers that their brand will offer functional benefits. This means that the brand promises customers something that practical can be implemented. The second method is symbolic promises and here companies promise that they can use the brand as a way to express their personal identity. The final method is experiential promises, where the companies promise that customers can play a particular type of social role when using their brand.

According to Clow and Baack (2014), positioning is customers’ perception of the company and its products comparing to competitors. A company can use many different positioning variables such as quality of products, the price, image, and methods of distribution. Kapferer (2012) describes how brands are positioning themselves in order to stand out against their competition. When positioning a brand all the specific characteristics will be highlighted and that will make the brand different from its competitors and more attractive on the market. The author argues that positioning services are vital for every company, as today’s customers have many choices to choose between, and when they buy products, they base their decisions by comparing different services and products. The author describes positioning as a two-stage process where the first step is to point out what competitive advantages the brand should be related and compared with. The second stage involves how the brand differentiates comparing to other services, brands, or products. For instance, Weaver (2001) discusses that it takes more for a company to position themselves as ecologically responsible as it does not necessary mean the company will protect the area.
3.2.4 Service quality

According to Grönroos (2008), services are complex in the way that they are produced and consumed at the same time and the customer is active through the whole process. If companies want to be able to affect the process they have to create an understanding for what customers need, what their requests are and what they value. Holloway (2004) agrees with this and explains that pricing is complex in marketing tourism products due to that price of products is connected with customer’s perception of value. For instance, Cheaung and Jim (2013) discuss that ecotourists expects quality of information, guide, and ecological importance of the ecodestination.

The model Total experienced quality by Grönroos (2008) explains that the total experienced service quality is determined after what kind of expectations customers have in relation to pervious experienced quality, where these two should match each other. Customers determines their experiences in the service encounter with the service provider, which either can be called “the moment of truth” or buyer and seller interactions. There the service quality consists of two dimensions, where one is technical and the other one is functional. The basis for those are what customers gets and how customers receives it. The technical dimension is determined after what customer gets in the interaction with the service provider and what they have experienced when the interaction is done. The functional dimension consists of how customers are affected by how the service is perceived. The company’s image can be seen as a filter between the technical and the functional dimensions and the total experienced quality. Customers’ expectations of service quality can come from marketing communication, word-of-mouth and a company’s image. Weaver (2001) exemplifies this by arguing that ecotourists’ have high expectations of ecotourism and it is related to its high prices. Cheung and Jim (2013) argue as well that both nature tourists and general tourists are willing to pay higher prices for ecotourism products as they both benefit the environment and their tourism experience. Further, Weaver (2001) discuss that ecotourists are prepared to pay for high quality experiences. For that reason prices for an ecotourism products are depending on the perceived value and therefore ecotourism often provide experience-enhancing attributes such as the accommodations’ quality and guiding services.

Holloway (2004) claims that in order to use price as a tool it is necessary to understand how customers interpret product prices. However, it is difficult as each customer has their own opinion on what value is and understand product prices differently. Masiero and Nicolau
(2009) confirm this by arguing that pricing is not an easy task in the tourism industry as there are many complicating factors to consider. Weaver (2001) as well argue that many operators in the tourism sector lack of knowledge in terms of pricing and do not charge what the product is really worth. Ye, Li & Wang (2012) give suggestions regarding this issue and state that managers should value their customers’ online reviews as customers’ evaluations of perceived value and quality have a strong connection to price. Further, Weaver (2001) discuss that ecotourism is all about selling experiences with good customer service. The most successful ecotourism companies are those that satisfy their customers’ by offering the customers experiences that they would not have been able to provide by themselves. However, the author argues, operating ecotourism is expensive, which means that ecotourism products in general have high prices and therefore has ecotourism the image of providing exclusive experiences. The fixed cost per client is also higher with ecotourism, which leads to higher prices. The author claims this is because ecotourism needs to deal with the principles requiring small scaled group sizes, having natural instability and seasonality issues.

Holloway (2004) discusses three types of pricing strategies. The first strategy is premium pricing, which aims to reflect either the product’s unique status or the image of quality by setting the price above market price. The product can be new, the brand’s reputation might be strong, or it may have attributes that distinguished the product from its competitors. The second strategy is value for money pricing, which is used when companies charge a medium price for products and highlights that products representing outstanding value for money. The third strategy for pricing is ‘cheap value’ pricing and has the objective to weaken the competition and the price works as a trigger to immediate purchase. In addition to Holloway, Weaver (2001) argues pricing got two sides. First price consists of an accounting concept, which means that the company needs to charge enough to cover the costs and provide with a reasonable profit. Secondly, price is a significant marketing tool as the charged price also reflect the value of the product. The true worth of a product is when the price is set based on the added value made by the operator, which often is related to access to the product, quality and personalized service offered. Usually, the author explains, the more unique the product is the higher price can be charged.
3.3 Marketing communication

_In this theme, theories about planned and unplanned marketing communication will be presented, where the focus will be on the digital media and word-of-mouth communication._

3.3.1 Unplanned communication – word-of-mouth

Fill (2011) explains that consumer-to-consumer conversations with services and brands take place all the time. Different customers trade information with each other even though companies have not asked them to do so. However, the author highlights that today word-of-mouth is an integrated part of many companies’ marketing communication strategies and that they use it consciously to make consumers talk in a positive way about their services. Keller and Fay (2012) state that word-of-mouth have a high credibility and that a high amount of customers are willing to do a purchase products after a word-of-mouth recommendation. Therefore, according to the authors, word-of-mouth is a force to count on because it directly drives sales. Clow and Baack (2014) agree by stating, word-of-mouth is the fastest growing alternative marketing tool. Morrison (2010) discusses the tourism industry and explains since services are intangible customers need to experience them to know how they work. Therefore, unexperienced customers tend to rely on other customers’ experiences.

Clow and Back (2014) explain one way for companies to work with word-of-mouth is to sponsor customers with their services and in return, the customer will spread the word to their followers, friends, and others. Another way is to ask customers to be brand ambassadors. This is when loyal customers already like a service and is asked to spread positive information about the brand in exchange of advantages and rewards from the company. When they are recruited, they will tell their friends, family, co-workers, and reference groups about how good the brand is. Morrison (2010) discusses that positive word-of-mouth is vital in order for tourism companies to become successful. In order to achieve this, the author suggests, that one method is always to provide with a consistent quality of service and connected facilities. Fill (2011) also discusses that companies can use different methods of word-of-mouth to attract customers. The first one is voluntary word-of-mouth, which is the most common form, as it will not be influenced by external impacts since it is just conversations between customers. The second one is prompted word-of-mouth, which is when companies spread the word about their services to customers so they can continue to spread it to friends and family. Social media is an example of this type of word-of-mouth communication, which consist of virtual communities and networks in which people creating, sharing and exchanging ideas,
and information. The last one is managed word-of-mouth and this happens when companies on purpose reach out to other companies and networks so they can recommend their services or products.

3.3.2 The planned marketing communication mix - Content

Fill (2011) explains planned marketing communication to be a type of communication that is controlled by the companies. The marketing communication mix is a set of components, which consists of content, media and tools. These components are three different strategies that integrated and together become one marketing communication strategy. Content is what message companies want to communicate to their target audience and according to the author, messages are seen to be either emotional or informational. Informational appeal is when the message using facts, scenario from the consumer’s ordinary life and demonstrations. The other option is emotional appeal, where the messages can be designed using fear, music, and surrealism. Weaver (2001) discusses this as well and argues information about ecodestinations and its facilities should be provided at the website. However, Morrison (2010) argues that using emotional appeal in marketing communication is more effective. Hovardas and Stamou (2006) discuss this as well by arguing messages about ecotourism should not only describe biodiversity and conservation measurements that have been applied in protected areas. Instead, the information should have more of an emotional appeal and concentrate on the interaction between nature environment and local communities, highlighting the fact that human’s involvement to any kind of environmental is very important.

Morrison (2010) defines the source of the content’ message to the person or company that convey the information to customers. The author explains that there are two main sources, where the first one is commercial sources. This source is designed by companies and can consist of different promotion tools. The other source is social sources, which consist of messages conducted by consumers and is spread by word-of-mouth. According to Kelman (1961) referred in Fill (2011), the source of the message has three specific characteristics. The first one is how credible the message is perceived. The second characteristics involves on what degree the message is perceived as attractive and on which level of motivation could the message recipients develop a similar association or position. The third characteristic is about what degree of power the source has. To establish credibility, Fill (2011) argues, one approach is to promote key attributes of the service and then signal credibility by the use of comments of satisfied customers.
Swarbrooke (2002 argues in sustainable tourism marketing companies should be honest about their products in literature and broachers and making tourists aware how they can help out from their own behaviour making tourism products greener. Wood (2002) argues using ecotourism as a positioning variable will be perceived as attractive. However, some tourism companies promote themselves as “eco” even though they do not actually use the ecotourism principals in practice. An effect of this, according to the author, is that ecotourism loses some of its credibility, which will affect companies operating ecotourism correctly. Marketing the concept of ecotourism is a problem around the world and in order to solve it some publications, conferences and workshops have been held on an international level to educate governments and companies about ecotourism and its principals.

3.3.3 The planned marketing communication mix - Media

According to Fill (2011), media is in which way companies decide to send out the message to their targeted customers. The author continues and argues there is an increasing variety of media today, in which they can choose between using traditional- or digital media, where digital media is the most powerful one and grows the most. The author highlights that many companies today actually take recourses from traditional media, such as magazines and brochures, and using digital media instead. However, the author also discusses that companies usually mix different communication tools from both traditional and digital media, depending on their target market. Morrison (2010) defines media as the communication channels that sources, i.e. companies, select to send their messages to receivers, i.e. customers. Further, the author discusses that today companies, especially in the travel industry, there is a focus on interactive digital online media.

Lai and Shafer (2005) discuss that internet is the number one marketing tool and that ecotourists most often find their pre-holiday information online. Further, the authors discuss that because of the huge amount of information available online, it has helped distant ecotourism destinations to be more reachable on the market. In other words, according to the authors, Internet as a marketing tool has helped ecotourism destinations expose themselves to ecotourists around the world. Labbé (2011) confirms this by arguing that not until lately small and medium sized hotels have been able to benefit from the internet to the fullest. Now these companies can benefit regarding sales and visibility online and in the same time have the chance to lower their marketing costs. Fill (2011) explains that one reason to this is that traditional media is more expensive as it usually has a limited place and time where it is
broadcasted. In addition, the author argues, digital media is unlimited, which make the costs much lower and fixed, while the relative costs change depending on how many visitors the website has. Donohoe and Needham (2011) also discuss the limitations of media choice due to its costs. The authors argue that tourism companies are no longer limited to a one-way communication with their customers through traditional advertisements and brochures, and this has broadened the whole tourism industry.

Grönroos (2008) argues Internet is important in interactive service marketing, as it becomes a part of the service process, where the author sees Internet as an instrument for interactive processes. Further, the author discusses that Internet enables creations of service processes that demand less resources from service providers as well as it increases experienced quality. Fill (2011) discusses as well that Internets allows customers to interact with each other in a way that is not possible with traditional media. Internet let customers to be in charge of the interaction with other customers instead of the advertisers, like in traditional media. However, in some cases of Internet marketing, the author argues, companies’ control can be high because they can change the content of the information fast and they can manage the placement of promotion, which would take longer time with traditional media. Hvass and Munar (2012) explain that Internet gives tourism companies opportunities to use many different marketing tools, where social media is the latest one. It allows companies to direct interact with customers through a variety of platforms, monitor their customers, and get feedback from them. The authors define this to be the latest development, an interactive Internet based of the users’ help.

Fill (2011) states that today a growing number of messages is created and communicated by everyday people. This means that not only do people communicate with companies, but they also share it with families and friends in social networks online. Labbé (2011) argues social media includes websites such as Facebook, Twitter and Tripadvisor, and are becoming a key source of information for the customers and is a huge part of the decision making process. According to Thakran and Verma (2013), Tripadvisor change how companies in the tourism industry communicate with their customer. It is no longer a one-way communication instead, it is an open and interactive communication. Labbé (2011) suggests that small and medium sized hotels in low-income countries also should use social media, even though their targeted customers is based on the national market. The author means that it is important for them to get to know their international customers as well to expend and gain market share. The author highlights how important it is for these smaller hotels with limited resources to be active on
sites such as Tripadvisor, even if they don’t have their own website. This is because they can communicate and ask guests to rate their hotel, as well as they will exist online. The author continues and discusses that all social media sites is without charge in which companies can save a lot of money using them as marketing tools. Keller (2013) confirms this by discussing that social media offers enormous opportunities for marketers to connect with consumers that was not possible before. Now they can gain the benefit of establish a public voice and presence online, as well as it complements and reinforce other communication activities. However, Grönroos (2008) highlights two vital aspects within interactive service marketing. One is that companies need to respond to their customers’ interactive communication straight away, or the customers will lose their interest for the company. The other aspect is that the interactive messages should not only come from customers’ initiatives.

3.3.4 The planned marketing communication mix – Tools

Fill (2011) explains that tools within the marketing communication mix is how the companies choose to communicate with their customers. Clow and Baack (2014) explain that one tool is advertising and some of the common advertising goals are to build brand awareness, providing information and changing customers’ attitudes. However, the goals are not separate from each other instead, they work together in different ways. Holloway (2004) suggests different types of advertising, where publication in magazines or newspapers is one of them. Other suggestions by the author are outdoor advertising and e-advertising. E-advertising is growing, the author claims, especially in search engines and websites. However, according to Williams and Spencer (2010), advertising in the tourism sector will create an interest among tourists. However, it will not affect nor increase the number of tourists’ arrivals. Keller and Fay (2012) also discuss advertising and argue how the costs of advertising continue to increase and advertisers demand an improved return on their investments. Although, according to Hem, Iversen & Gronhaug (2010), advertising is not a good option within nature-based tourism. Instead, marketers need to use targeted marketing campaigns to encourage their customers to visit as they differ in needs and wants.

Fill (2011) argues that public relations (PR) is another tool within the marketing communication mix, which involves presenting events with the purpose of shaping opinions and attitudes held by the company’s stakeholders. The author describes that the methods of PR are press releases, interviews, press conferences, and publicity and events. In addition to advertising, the author argues, PR do not require a purchase to get airtime or space in media
vehicles, i.e. magazines, which leads to a major saving on the marketing communication budget. Furthermore, the author discusses how PR stands out from the other communication tools as it generate trust, build confidence, and reduces perceived risk among the company’s stakeholders. Publicity and events can be done through different three types of events, product events that focus on increasing sales, corporate events that usually provide entertainments and focus on awareness, goodwill and interest, and last community events that aim to contribute to the local community such as sponsoring to local community centers. Loda, Norman & Backman (2007) also discuss the importance of message credibility for the tourism industry. Since tourism products by nature is intangible and consist of a high level of risk regarding destination selections, message credibility is critical. However, even though the credibility is high, Fill (2011) argues, the level of control is very low. For instance, management of a company can carefully plan a message but as soon as it reaches the opinion former, i.e. an editor of a magazine, all control is lost. Clow and Baack (2014) argue that bad publicity can be worse than no publicity at all. Many companies spend a lot of time with just dealing with negative comments while trying to create develop positive messages at the same time. In order to deal with bad publicity, internet interventions is one option that deals with negative online word-of-mouth.

Another marketing communication tool, according to Holloway (2004), is direct marketing (DM), which is a form of interactive marketing with a two-way communication between the company and its customers. It enables immediate and direct responses to promotion. Fyall and Garrod (2005) describe direct marketing as when a company promotes and deal directly with the customers. The reason why direct marketing has grown, according to the authors, is that its capacity to target customers precisely, to create personalizes communication and its ability to persuade behavioural response. Clow and Baack (2014) claim, when companies use direct marketing they have an internal list that separate active members from inactive members. New customers will receive different type of direct mail than messages aimed to encourage a repeat purchase for existing customers. Further, the authors suggests internet as a form of direct marketing. Customer can respond to advertisements directly placed on websites and response advertisements can be market on search engines and in e-mails. The authors claim emails is both cost-effective and it helps to build relationships between the company and the customers. In addition, Fyall and Garrod (2005) argue DM can be driven by database technology. Clow and Back (2014) agree and explain that database marketing involves collecting and using customer data to be able to enhance interactions with customers and
develop customer loyalty. The authors explain that successful database marketing create relationships with customers and that the data consists of information about current customer, former customer, and prospects.

Fyll and Garrod (2005) describe personal selling as another marketing communication tool. It is a verbal communication between at least one buyer and a salesperson. Usually it is used in business-to-business settings and even though relationships are easier to build, it can be very costly. Clow and Baack (2014) also argue personal selling to be expensive and therefore generating quality becomes crucial. Morrison (2010) discusses advantages and disadvantages with personal selling, where some of the advantages are the ability to close sales and get customers’ attention, a two-way communication, and presentations can be tailored to individual needs. However, the disadvantages are high costs and the inability to reach many customers due to geographical limitations.

A following communication tool, according to Fyall and Garrod (2005), is sales promotion, which is used during a short time to stimulate some kind of behavioural action among target customers. Clow and Baack (2014) explain one type of sales promotion to be consumer promotion in which the main goal is to encourage customers to take the last step and purchase the product. Christou (2011) argues marketers in the hospitality sector should focus more on online sales promotion, as customer seems to like online promotions because it will make them feel as smart shoppers. Morrison (2010) define one technique of sales promotion as coupons, which is the most popular one in the travel industry. In addition, Fill (2011) highlights two different value-elements with sales promotion. One way is to increase value of the product by offering changes to it, such as lowering the price, add quality, or add quantity. The sales promotions could then consist of discount-pricing, refunds, guarantees or quantity increases. The other element is to add value to the product by offering something more than the original product. It could be added premium such as gifts, information, or loyalty programs. One example of a sales promotion is by Travel and Tourism (2009) where all hotel guests staying four nights got one night without charge.

Morrison (2010) describes other sales promotion techniques where one of them is recognition programs, such as frequent-flyer and frequent-guest awards. Using this, companies offer their customers awards for achieving or providing a particular level of sales. Another technique, according to the author, is continuity programs, in which companies require consumers to make several purchases. The objective can either be to get customers to stimulate more
purchases that are frequent or build long-term loyalty for a brand. However, Keller (2013) claims there are a number of disadvantages with sales promotion, where some of them are decreased brand loyalty, increased brand switching, decreased quality perceptions, and increased price sensitivity.

3.4 The importance of the theoretical framework

In the following part, we will discuss useful and applicable theories based on the theoretical framework, in order for us to complete this research and answer its purpose.

From the ecotourism theme in the theoretical framework, we have found that it is important within the tourism industry to work with sustainable principles. However, we discovered that there are many different kinds of principles for ecotourism companies to follow, instead of united principles for all companies to follow. What we did found was that all theories agreed on how important it is to follow those sustainable guidelines in order to not damage, harm, or affect the destination and its residents in a negative way. We have also made aware of all negative consequences of what will happen if these principles will not be followed in a right way or at all.

Furthermore, we choose to apply the ecotourism principles on our research and within those principles, we discovered what we would like to call, “key-topics”. These “key-topics” summarize each principle with a topic that we will apply on our research and look into how our case companies are working with minimizing the negative impacts on the destination. The ones we found are nature, culture, infrastructure, stakeholders, inhabitants, and the staff within the area, education, changes, and economic benefits. For instance, the topic “nature”, we found it was possible to study how ecotourism companies works with their destination’s nature, such as carrying capacity, or the topic “economic benefits”, we can look into what kind of benefits the companies’ employees have. Some of the topics we discovered to have fewer theories than others had, such as culture. It was difficult to find theories that precisely or clearly gave guidance to ecotourism companies. Those topics gave us more of a challenge to apply on the research, whereas others like the topics “infrastructure” and “nature”, which gave us as researcher clearer directions.

In the second theme, service marketing, and part one, service offering, we will apply theories of the three categories that together becomes a total service package, what the service consists of, and how it is delivered. This will be useful for us to apply on the research, especially that
it come to our attention that what the service is and how it is delivered, is of great importance. Further, we will apply theories about whether the ecotourism companies works direct or indirect with its customers. However, we will also look into the theories about consequences of working indirect with customers, such as if intermediaries sharing the same codes of ethics as the company or not. We also paid attention to the theories suggesting that Internet is of a great importance in marketing today and that most service companies want to market their services online. The theories highlight the opportunities of getting direct contact with the end-consumer, reduce marketing costs, and increase revenue. These theories will be helpful for the thesis and possible to apply to our case companies. Finally, we saw one further important aspect, which is that ecoresorts should make their service products available for their customers, including the online and offline availabilities.

From part two of the theme service marketing, customer, we will use theories about how customers are involved and in what degree the involvements are. The theories discussed that customers are co-producers of services and that they have a huge impact on local communities at tourist destinations. However, not all theories in the theoretical framework agreed on that tourists have a huge impact. We will not go deep into whether the customers of our case companies have an impact on the destination. Instead, we will apply theories of the involvement and its degree, as well as we will use the market segmentation theories to study whom the customers are. Furthermore, many theories of the part three, brand and positioning, in the theme service marketing, will be of great importance for our research. Theories about a brand’s identity and image, as well how those two differ from each other will be an interesting aspect. However, theories about brand image might be difficult to apply since it depend on the customers’ experiences and attitudes. Therefore, we will focus on what kind of promises and how the case companies are described through their positing, in order to compare that with their brand identity. As Weaver (2001) argues, it takes more for a company to position themselves as ecologically responsible since it does not mean that the company protecting the area.

The last part of the theme service marketing, service quality, highlighted the complexity in pricing in ecotourism and all theories agreed on that ecotourism products have higher prices. However, we will not focus on the reason behind higher prices. Instead, we will apply theories of the importance of understanding value, about what customers expect from the company and its services and about what their experiences are. These theories in the theoretical framework were arguing how important it is to know about the customers’
expectations and learn as well as take advantage of their experiences. For that reason, we chose those theories. We will also apply the aspect of how word-of-mouth has an impact on the totally service quality.

In the third theme, marketing communication, and first part, unplanned communication with a focus at word-of-mouth, it was highlighted how important and what high credibility this kind of communication has. Theories also discussed different strategies that we will apply in the research. This is in order to see how important word-of-mouth is and how it is possible to work with it. We do believe the theories about how to work with negative word-of-mouth will have an interesting aspect. Further, the second part, the planned marketing communication mix with the focus on content, the most useful theories for us are about what kind of appeal does the content has and what kind of source is sending the message, and what importance that have. The third part in this theme, the planned communication mix with a focus on media, pointed out the high importance of digital media. Small and medium sized companies and ecotourism destinations have become more reachable for customers because of Internet. Because of that and with the reason that theories argue traditional media is expensive, we will focus on applying theories about how our case companies work with digital media, and especially social media. The last part, the planned communication mix with a focus at communication tools, we will apply theories that are suitable for small and medium sized companies. Since some tools are argued by the theories to be too expensive, we will not apply those. Therefore, we found the applicable tools to be advertising, public relations, direct marketing, and sales promotions.
4. Theoretical and empirical analysis

*In the following chapter, we will present the theory together with the collected empirical data. Further, we will analyse if our empirical data is consistent with the theories.*

4.1 Presentation of the ecotourism companies

**Pulau Macan-Tiger island village and eco resort**

Pulau Macan (PM) is located in the Thousand island area, two hours away from Jakarta with speedboat. A small-scale ecoresort has adapted the concept of an ecovillage. The resort provide their guest with ten different overnight huts, a Main Hut, The Club House, The Equipment Hut and Store, and a deserted island located next to island. Pulau Macan (PM) has a total of eighteen employees and the general manager and founder is Roderick Des Tombe, who rents the island full time from an Indonesian family.

**Bloo Lagoon Village**

Bloo Lagoon Villages (BLV) is located on east Bali in a town called Padang Bai. The founders and owners are Toni Gwillian and Marita Vidal and they have forty employees. Their concept is an ecovillage and the resort consists of twenty-five villas, spa, a restaurant, bar, boutique and one pool. The owners lease the land and the villas that they built was sold to different owners around the world. These villas are then rented out to customers, where 80 percent of the profit goes to the owners of the villas and 20 percent to BLV, which finance the maintenance of the resort.

*(The information is gathered from our conducted interviews with Pulau Macan and Bloo Lagoon)*

We have chosen the following respondents from Pulau Macan and Bloo Lagoon Village,

Pulau Macan:

- Roderick Des Tombe, the founder and managing partner
- Ismail Adinegoro, coordinator of business development
- Yoice Dwi Purwanthy (Oche), personal assistant, host and reservation manager
- Guest 1 and Guest 2

We have chosen the following respondents from Bloo Lagoon Village:

- Toni Gwillian, one of the founders
- Marita Vidal, the other founder
• Gede Jabung, general manager
• Guest 3

4.2 Ecotourism and its principles

According to Wood (2002) and UNWTO (2002, referred in UNEP (2013), there are a number of principles for companies to follow when operating ecotourism. Based on those principles we will present how Pulau Macan (PM) and Bloo Lagoon Village (BLV) operates ecotourism.

In the table below, we will present how Pulau Macan and Bloo Lagoon Village works with ecotourism based on our key topics that we discussed in chapter 3.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key topics</th>
<th>Pulau Macan</th>
<th>Bloo Lagoon Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Use solar panel system, informational signs of minimizing the use of water and energy, only provide with cold-showers, candles and drinking water in water cans, plant corals, growing, i.e. Aloe Vera, eggplants and mangroves, no usage of air-conditioner, LED lights, composting, recycling, a compost toilet, a maximum of 40 people can visit the island at once, 10 percent of the profit goes to sustainable development</td>
<td>Provides free drinking water in water cans, collects rain water to watering the BLV area (roofs, showers and sinks) in artificial lakes with plants that clean the water, one pool with minimal chemicals, few air-conditioners, LED lights, only serve organic food in the restaurant, have their own farm where they grow their own vegetables and fruits, they compost, recycle and do not cut down trees or other vegetation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Staff gets time-off from work for religious reasons, cook traditional food, makes sure that the staff and the guests interact and communicate with each other</td>
<td>Staff gets time-off from work for religious reasons, encourage staff to remain their Balinese significance, designed the villas according to Balinese culture, provide an art gallery for local artists, served traditional food, named the villas in Indonesian language, offer traditional food courses and traditional dance shows and have several Balinese’ temples at the sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Made of driftwood, open huts to let the breeze flow (no air-Conditioner needed)</td>
<td>Used the topography instead of cutting down trees, traditional construction work and techniques in addition to machines, grass-roof, open villas to let the breeze flow (minimize air-conditioner usage) decorate facades with stones from the sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>Follow rules regarding operation of company and environmental impact assessments from government</td>
<td>Follow rules from government on how to operate the company, regarding salaries and construction work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff and the inhabitants</td>
<td>Staff have health benefits, holidays, PM sponsored sewing machines to other islands and have higher uneducated employees</td>
<td>Staff have health benefits, 80 percent of the staff is from Padang bai village, donations to Padang bai, cooperate with ecodiving company, help out to clean beaches, hires uneducated employees and uses local labour from Padang bai for construction work</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Offers student-packages, presentation of ecoconcept by host, information signs and boards spread out at the island</td>
<td>Offer high school students internships, educate the staff, book about ecoconcept and BLV at each villa,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Limited to changes as it is a protected area and PM have made changes according to that</td>
<td>Asked opinions from Padang bai and got acceptance before building BLV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic benefits</td>
<td>Employment, higher salaries, some staff-members have become shareholders and profit remains in Indonesia</td>
<td>Employment in Padang bai, as well as at BLV, donations to Padang bai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visible above, both companies working more or less with the ecotourism principles, which we presented with our key-topics. However, they both are working in different ways. We will not connect all the companies’ ecotourism efforts with the theory. Instead, we will highlight some examples. This is a clear connection with Wood’s (2002) theory of how the ecotourism principles exist so destinations will not be damaged by minimizing negative impacts on natural and cultural factors. For instance, this is possible to connect with how BLV only use one pool with minimal usage of chemicals. However, it is also possible to link the theory with that PM do not use air condition at all. Furthermore, we can also connect this theory with how both companies are working with cultural factors. For example, PM is encouraging their staff to interact with the guests and BLV is offering traditional food courses and wants their staff to keep their Balinese significates. PM is also having a limited number of visitors at the same time, which can be linked to Mowforth and Munt’s (2009) theory about carrying capacity.

The following key-topic, infrastructure, comes from Wood’s (2002) theory that the infrastructure within ecotourism should be in agreement with the environment. We can see a connection with both companies as PM is using driftwood when building their huts and BLV used the topography when building the ecotourism resort. Then, regarding that both PM and BLV is following the regulations based on the local authorities, we can see a clear connection with Wood’s (2002) theory on doing business responsible. This theory also indicate that many stakeholders should be involved, such as local communities and people who consider the local inhabitants’ jobs. We can link this with that PM is giving their staff health benefits and that
BLV cooperate with local ecodiving company. BLV’s staff is also 80 percent from the local village, which both can be connected with this theory and with UNWTO’s (2002) theory that sustainable development should give local residents income opportunities.

The key-topic, education, is based on Wood’s (2002) theory about that ecotourism should provide education for the guests in order for them to learn about ecotourism. This is a clear connection for us when PM using informational signs at the island to encourage the guests to learn how to be more environmental friendly, as well as when BLV provide all villas with a book about their ecotourism concept. Furthermore, we found a clear connection on how both companies working with changes. Wood (2002) suggests that tourism developments should not go beyond the social and environmental limitis for what kind of changes that is acceptable. Two of the connections are that BLV asked Padanbai’s residents before building the ecoresort and PM is placed in a protected area, in which they follow the area’s regulations of changes. Lastly, the final key-topic, economic benefits, indicates according to Wood (2002), that the economic benefits of the ecotourism development should be maximized for the country and the local communities, including the residents. PM is providing their staff with higher salaries than average and some to become shareholders of the company, and BLV is donating to Padang bai and the majority of the staff is hired from the local area. This is according to us, a clear connection with the theory.

4.3 Service Marketing

In this part, we will discuss and connect theories about service marketing with the empirical data we gathered from our research companies and our conducted observations.

4.3.1 Service offering

According to Grönroos (2008), a service package can be divided into three categories; main-, complimentary- and value-enhancing services. Complementary services are needed in order to use the main service and value-enhancing services’ purpose is to add value, or to distinguish the competitors’ services. During our stay at the ecoresorts, we noticed how it is possible to connect this theory with them. Both PM and BLV offer accommodations, which could be seen as their main service. Their receptions, housekeeping and restaurants on the other hand can be connected as complementary services. Furthermore, Purwanthy describes that Pulau Macan (PM) cooperates with a boat company that makes it possible for their guests to visit the island. Adinegoro explains that the boat company has monopoly on transportation within
in the Thousand islands area. This could be connected to a complementary service since it enables the guests to travel to the island. It also allows the company to function, as PM is located within a distant preserved area that tourists cannot visit by themselves. Therefore this cooperation is crucial for them. We also see a connection with the transport and Wood’s (2002) theory that ecotourists have the need to travel to inaccessible places that in many cases would not be possible to do by themselves.

Purwathy discusses how everything at PM is included in the price, such as all meals, equipment for snorkeling and snorkeling tours, and it is available for guests to use whenever they want. Jabung describes how BLV provide guests with a handbag with BLV’s logo on, as a small gift at arrival that the guests can use when they go to the village. He also explains how they provide the guests with a voucher for tasting their fresh pressed juice and a ten minutes massage in the spa for free. From our own reflections we got offered water when we used the pick-up service of BLV. Guests can also use the pick-up service when they want to be picked up from the airports or other hotels, or when they want to explore the village and the beach within the area. Both resorts also provide Wi-Fi. We can see a clear connection with these services and Grönroos’s theory about value-enhancing services. These services will contribute to a higher value for the guests and the resorts can in the same time offer them something unexpected.

Weaver (2001) emphasis how it is crucial for ecotourism companies to have intermediaries that share the same code of ethics in terms of ecotourism. This theory can be linked with when both Jabung and Des Tombe argue how their resorts want to cooperate with companies who share the same values as them. However, Adinegoro at PM highlights the difficulty of finding companies with the same values since many ecotourism companies in Indonesia just practice ecotourism as a showcase. Further, he discusses a diving company that PM has cooperation with. The company sees diving as a purpose of life and not a way to make profits, which makes it a kind of company they want to work with. Jabung have a similar story where he explains how BLV also have cooperation with an ecodiving company whose purpose is to preserve the underwater life and ecosystem in order for future generations to enjoy diving as well.

According to Holloway (2004), tourism companies can choose to deal directly with their customers, by intermediaries or using both ways. One consequence of not having direct contact with the end-customers is that it is harder for the company to understand their
customers and identify market changes. Purwathy describes how PM has cooperation with approximately ten travel agencies for the moment. They have contacts about bookings through phone and email. Des Tombe continues to say how normally resorts give the travel agencies 15-20 percent, but PM only gives ten percent. This means, according to Des Tombe, that travel agencies are not always exited to promote PM. Des Tombe also mentions that PM will have an online reservation system on the homepage in the nearest future. Adinegoro states how PM have a unique position comparing to other islands in the region since 80 percent of the bookings comes straight from their homepage. 20 percent of the bookings come from travel agencies, which is the opposite from the other islands that are using travel agencies to a greater extend. Adinegoro believes that PM dealing with the end customers directly depends on how the homepage is organized. Further, he explains how PM’s website is satisfying the customers’ need of information. Another aspect, according to Adinegoro, is that PM is the only island in the region that is an ecoresort.

Jabung discusses how BLV have cooperation with travel agencies both online and offline. Online it is booking.com and agoda.com. According to Vidal, booking.com is the best online portal since customers do not pay commission and the webpage is easy for customers to navigate on. She continues to stress that reservations also comes from the local offline travel agencies and that they have cooperation with local diving companies from the area. Jabung describes that many bookings comes directly from their own webpage’s reservation system, which together with booking.com and agoda.com are the channels that generate the most bookings for BLV. Other customer bookings comes through emails and phone calls. We can see a connection with how both PM and BLV are working with their customers and Holloway’s (2004) theory. PM is working more directly with the end-consumers, which could be since they do not promote PM at any online booking portals. Instead, customers can book through email directly with them or with local offline travel agencies. This can in one way, according to the theory, make them understand customers’ needs. In addition, BLV use online portals or BLV’s own homepage to attract and get to know customers.

Grönroos (2008) discuss how it is important for a company today to have a virtual marketplace. Service availability is of importance and different factors, such as employee skills, opening hours and information techniques, makes it possible for consumers to reach the service provider. This will then decide if the customers find it easy or hard to buy or use the service. Holloway (2004) stresses how reservation systems are vital and online booking systems are the fastest growing source of revenue. We see a connection with these and the
guests’ experiences at both resorts. Guest 1 describes her conversation with PM about the reservation, which was through email, to be fast and that the communication was good. She explains how they emailed back and forth about dates and which hut she wanted to stay in. Transferring the money was no problem and her overall experience of the whole booking process was smooth. From our own experience of having email conversations with Bloo Lagoon Village about our reservations and questions for the thesis, they always answer the same day as the email was sent.

However, a part that is highlighted in the theory but both resorts have a strong focus on is their availability at the ecoresort. According to Purwathy, PM has opening hours from 10am to 5pm but if guests call before or after these hours she always answer the phone if she is available. She describes how PM has an office on the island and one office in Jakarta, where the staff working with reservations is located. From our own experiences from the island we noticed how the staff stayed over for a couple of nights, which makes them available for the guests at all time. Jabung explains how the reception at BLV is open from 7am to 10pm and reservation is open from 7am to 6pm. They also have security available 24/7 and for emergencies they provide a phone number to the senior general manager, available on the homepage. Jabung says how guests can call the senior general manager if they i.e. need pick-up from the airport in the middle of the night and he will arrange transport for them.

4.3.2 Customer
Grönroos (2008) states that a service is produced and consumed at the same time, which makes it vital for companies to understand to what degree the customer is involved in the service production process. The involvement can be about providing information, visit websites and filling in forms. We can see a clear connection from the theory to Purwathy who clarifies that customers need to send a booking request through email or call, if they want to make a reservation at Pulau Macan (PM). Then, PM will reply and the communication process of the reservation starts. The customers also search for information on the website and read about PM. Jabung agrees and describes how Bloo Lagoon Village (BLV) booking process looks different depending on where the customers do the reservation, if it is done directly through them or if they use an online portal.

Furthermore, Des Tombe discussion is supported by Grönroos (2008)’ theory when he discusses that PM gives every guest a form to fill out before they leave the island. This form include questions, such as how the experience on the island was, how the staff performed and
what they can do better for the future. Further, he explains that the information given from the forms will be saved in PM’s database and be used to improve the resort. Also Jabung discusses how BLV provide their guests with forms when they check out, consisting of questions about nationality, how the guest find out of Bloo Lagoon Village (BLV), customers’ interests, how the experience was, how the staff acted and if they have any suggestions for the future. Continuously, he says that this information also is saved in their database and is used for improvements.

Ojasalo (2003) stresses that companies never should rely on that customers will contribute to the service, as all customers have different motivations, need to participate, knowledge, and experiences. Normann (2000) also highlights how emotions, such as happiness or frustration, affect customers and their motivations to be involved in the service production and delivery. Their emotions can also affect other customers and their willingness to participate. From these theories, we can see a clear connection with when Vidal describes how the idea behind BLV is a small community where guests interact with each other instead of being isolated. This is why the pool area, according to Vidal, is located in the centre of the resort next to the open kitchen and the breakfast area. Vidal continues to say how people can meet there and talk to each other. Other resorts, on the other hand provides with private pools, where the consequences are that people never meet and interact. She continues and says that guests at BLV also get the opportunity to meet and have conversations with the staff that is trained to do their job without losing their spontaneous Balinese characteristics. During our stay at BLV, we also noticed how the resort was built as a village where the pool area felt like the village square. During breakfast, guests were sitting at long tables and it felt natural to sit down and join them. We saw how guests were interacting and exchanged conversation with each other. The staff were also very familiar and friendly.

It is also possible to connect the theories with Purwathy that describes how her job as a host at PM includes interacting with guests and make them feel like home at the island, where an important part of their concept is to make guests meet other guests and socialize. She continues to say that during evenings the staff play card games with the guests so they will have a good time. Guest 1 confirms this by saying that one of her favourite part of visiting the resort was to meet new people, including other guests and the staff who was friendly. When we visited the island, we immediately got the feeling of home and the staff was friendly and took good care of the guests. When it was time for dinner every one gathered at the main hut.
to have dinner at a long table together, including the staff, which invited to conversations between guests.

Furthermore, Gummesson (2008) states that companies should divide the market into segments in order to satisfy their customers’ needs and wants. Holloway (2004) agrees and argues how the market segmentation can be based on geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioural variables. We see a connection from the theories about market segmentation based on geographic, demographic, and psychographic variables, to when Vidal states that the majority of the customers at BLV have a higher income and come from Europe, where most of the guests come from France and Germany. Jabung agrees and describes how BLV also have guests from other markets such as Australia, China, Japan, and some guests from Indonesia. He thinks that BLV has a high number of tourists from Europe because Europeans have a higher understanding for the environment and ecological aspects, as well as because they love nature. Furthermore, Vidal explains that the one bedroom villas is rented out more frequently than the two bedroom villas, which is according to her an indication that they promote themselves more to couples. Even though, she believes that the resort is perfect for families and this usually changes during high season. She also stresses how they like to have workshops at BLV, which means that the guests will stay for a longer period and this June they will have a Yoga workshop for one month. According to Bloo Lagoon (2014a), BLV is offering activities, such as traditional Indonesian cooking classes, ecodiving and spa-treatments.

The theories are as well possible to link as with BLV to what Des Tombe discusses. He argues that PM’ targeted customers lives and work in Jakarta. When PM started, it was around 80 percent expats and the rest were Indonesian. He continues to say how that has changed, and now more and more Indonesians visit the resort, which he thinks is great. Nowadays PM have around 60 percent Indonesians and 40 present expats. He explains how the expats are mostly from Europe, where France and Germany are the most common countries. Other countries are Australia, America, Japan, and China. Purwathy describes how PM have quite expensive prices, which indicate that their guests have a higher income. Des Tombe agrees, however, PM sometimes have groups of students visiting that receive student discount. He highlights that the guests visiting the resort are mostly couples and families, but they also have single travellers. According to Pulau Macan (2014a), they offer activities such as snorkelling, diving, island hopping, badminton, Frisbees, and toys for children.
4.3.3 Brand and positioning

Kapferer (2012) discusses that brands are more than a name. Instead, the brand is an identity that consists of the brand’s values, key beliefs, and vision. However, one issue is that customers view brands according to what they see in terms of tangible things. Sääksjärvi and Samiee (2011) defines brand identity as how companies want consumers to perceive them and it consists of a brand’s purpose, offerings, awareness, and differentiation.

These theories are possible to connect with Pulau Macan (PM). According to Pulau Macan (2014b), PM share a vision of a “paradise” resort village. A resort that is simple and dedicated to serve guests, in which the service reflects a healthy lifestyle that is in harmony with nature. Focus is on natural health and to minimize negative impact on the island’s ecosystem, as well as to improve and conserve the natural environment. PM is also sharing the concept of community and village that is a place for current and future leaders to learn, a place that PM calls Paradise amongst Tropical waters. Therefore, they see PM being a model for island-based eco resort villages in Indonesia and beyond. Des Tombe also highlights how PM believe paradise is a beautiful place that is sustainable, where people are happy and looking after each other, a place like home.

According to Gwillian, Bloo Lagoon Village (BLV) is based on the traditional Balinese philosophy, Tri Hita Karana. The philosophy, we believe is in agreement with Kapferer (2012)’ and Sääksjärvi and Samiee (2011)’ theories about brand identity. Gwillian explains, by following the philosophy it means that BLV ensure with the gods, the humans, and the planet, for each development or changes. Further, he discusses that BLV is more of a model of how to do things on the planet with each other and the resources. Therefore, he continues, to minimize the use of resources of the planet it is good to share things, thus, which becomes community that is the concept of village. BLV, Gwillian argues, trying to do an international model of a village, which also is ecological, so people can come together and share their experiences from different countries. They do not want to be a profit-making place. Rather it is a place of living and helping each other. Further, Gwillian states, it is a matter of an enrichment, whereas instead of taking things away from the environment, BLV allows plants and animals to come.

However, Sääksjärvi and Samiee (2011) discuss that how consumers perceive companies are not the same as the brand identity. Instead, it is a brand image, which consists of consumers’ thoughts towards brands, brand credibility, and how consumers feel about a brand. Grönroos
(2008) also discusses brand identity and brand image, and states that those two concepts do not work separately. Des Tombe discusses this from his point of view, where PM’s customers visit the island because it is a great place to go for vacation. Continuously, he argues, most of PM’s customers will not recommend PM because of its ecological features. Instead, they will recommend it because it is a great and beautiful place for vacation or a perfect place to escape Jakarta, and it happens to be ecological friendly. The reason why, he explains, is that Jakarta is a very hectic city that most people need a break from occasionally. In the beginning, he argues, PM got a lot of attention as they were making a lot of fast progress towards ecotourism and doing something different, which have helped PM to gain a good and well-known reputation.

Gwillian also discusses the customers’ view of BLV. He believes that the customers visiting BLV because it is ecological friendly, as well as it has a paradise atmosphere, which he describes as ecoparadise. Vidal states that there are no need to educate BLV’s guests, as they know how to be environmentally friendly for a long time. Gwillian agrees and argues that most of them are already environment conscious at home. He continues and discusses that the customers also coming because they agree with BLV’s philosophy and the fact that BLV actually stands for something. Usually other hotels send out messages like “sun or pool” and are very standard. However, BLV had this philosophy from the start and it is different.

From our experience of the visit at Pulau Macan (PM), we experienced that the boat ride was anything but relaxing. Also according to Booking (2014a), there are no information that Blue Lagoon Village (BLV) is having a concept that involves living close together with nature. This we can see a strong connection with Weaver (2001)’s theory, that it takes more for a company to position themselves as ecologically responsible, since it does not mean that the company protecting the area.

Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) argues when brands makes promises to its customers it has to be done in a significant and concrete way in order for the customers to associate with the brand. The promises should give the consumer a fair picture and they should not promise more than they can fulfil. Anker et.al (2012) suggests that brands’ promises can have three different appeals; functional promises that practical can be implemented, symbolic promises, which is a promise that connects with customers’ personal identity, and experiential promises, where customers can play a social role when using their brand. When we asked what message the
resorts wanted to send out and how they thought the customers perceived them, Des Tombe answered PM’s message to be:

“Come and get away, come and relax, switch off, you do not need to worry about anything” (Des Tombe, 27/3-2014).

Vidal’s answer to our question of what BLV wants to communicate to its customers is that there is a way of living naturally and if customers come to BLV, they can experience it. Some people, she continues, have forgotten how it is to wake up with birds singing. She hopes that customers remind themselves when they arrive home that it is a good way of life and start thinking of improving their day-to-day life, in terms of cooperate with nature and how to live with less material things. Gwillian states that BLV’s slogan is “Bloo is the new green” and mention key words such as healthy, home and relaxing.

“There is a way of living naturally and if customers comes to Bloo Lagoon Village they can experience it” (Vidal, 5/5-2014)

Both PM and BLV’s promises are possible to connect Anker et al. (2012) theory of symbolic promises. However, if we had not been there, we would probably argue that the promise might be difficult to fulfil, since Zeithaml and Bitner (2000) discuss that brands’ promises should not promise more than they can fulfil.

Kapferer (2012) argues that brands position themselves in order to stand out against their competition. The brand should use its specific characteristics, which is what makes the brand different from the competitors and more attractive to the market. However, Des Tombe and Adinegoro disagree with the theory and argue that they do not see competition like ordinary hotels might do. They share the view of the more ecotourism companies the greater importance would ecotourism get. Instead of clarifying competitors, they discuss how they wish there would be more companies focusing on ecotourism. Vidal and Gwillian, who share this view, cannot identify any competitors. Instead, they embrace other ecotourism companies so all of them together can help each other and spread the message of ecotourism.

4.3.4 Service Quality

The model Total experienced quality by Grönroos (2008) describes how the total experienced service quality is determined after what kind of expectations customers have in relations to pervious experienced quality, where these two should match. Jabung explains how Bloo
Lagoon Village (BLV) works with three different components so the guests will experience high quality service when visiting them. The first aspect is a warm welcome when the guests arrive. He argues how this allows the guests to see what kind of value BLV has and what kind of service they offer their guests. The second aspect that they work very carefully with is to ask the guests what they need and help them when they have a request during their stay. That information will also be written and saved in their hotel-logic system, so if the guest returns they can make sure that their wishes will be taken care of. The third aspect is their farewell to the guests. BLV believe it is important to say a proper good bye and thank the guests for staying at their resort. They also want to encourage them to come back in the future as well as asking them to spread the word about BLV to their friends. Jabung continues to say that when the guests arrive, one from the staff will show them around and explain about their eco concept. They also provide an informational book in every villa that will enhance the explanation of their eco concept. We can connect this with how BLV is working with the customer service experience.

Vidal describes how BLV’s image is to live naturally and how people can experience that when visiting BLV. She tells how she wants the ecological aspect to be a natural part of people’s life and how it should be present all the time. People living in cities forget how it is to wake up with birds singing but at BLV, they can experience that. Her goal for customers is that after their visit at BLV they start to incorporate nature more in their everyday life. From our experience during our stay at BLV, we got that feeling. We felt close to the nature and we noticed how BLV have built the resort and the openness of the villas enhanced this feeling and the way they have retained all the trees and flowers made the site so beautiful. We see a strong connection with Grönroos’ (2008) theory on how a company’s image and the experience of it needs to complete each other. However, we found an example of how the positive experience can change when we investigated BLV on Booking.com (2014b). There were no information about BLV’s eco concept and ecological aspect nor living close to nature, which could end up disappointing them when they arrive at BLV and their experienced service quality could result in very low. We found the following comment on booking.com

“Rooms completely opened (not full walls and no AC) should be announced properly on internet before booking, just for people to decide.” Booking, 20/5-2014c

We can also link Grönroos’s (2008) theory to how PM is working with the customer experience. Purwanthy describes how her job as a host at Pulau Macan (PM) also includes
giving a short presentation when the guests arrive at the resort and island. During the presentation, the guests will receive information about how PM work with eco on the island, why the accommodations are built like they are, make guests feel comfortable living close to the nature, and as well basic information about the guests’ stay. Des Tombe highlights how they focus on the service quality for their guests by talking to each guest individually to ask about their goals with their vacation in order to provide high quality of service. Guest 1 expresses her expectation about PM

“I tried not to have any expectations before I really did, probably because I tried to focus on the boat ride since I don’t like boats. However, I really feel how it is everything I thought it would be.” (Guest 1 25/3-2014)

Des Tombe tells how PM’s image is to be the best getaway from Jakarta, where people can relax and enjoy themselves. When we visited PM, we noticed how this image was consistent with our experience. The music played in the background were harmonic, they offered books to read, they had hammocks and plenty of places to relax on. However, one aspect that could destroy the customer experience is the boat ride to the island. Des Tombe highlights how he is aware of that the boat trip always gets the lowest score in the feedback form from guests. Guest 1 confirms this by saying that the boat trip to the island was very bumpy and not well organized.

Masiero and Nicolau (2009) argue that pricing is not an easy task in the tourism industry as there are many complicating factors to consider. Weaver (2001) discusses how it is expensive to operate ecotourism, which means that ecotourism products in general have higher price and the image of providing exclusive activities. Three types of pricing strategies, according to Holloway (2004), are premium-pricing, value-for-money pricing and cheap-value pricing.

When Pulau Macan (PM) decided their prices, they considered many factors, according to Des Tombe. For instance, PM analysed the other islands in the area to see what kind of packages they offered to customers. He continues by saying that PM charges their customers by person and night, where the first night is more expensive than the others. Since they offer packages including everything, the pricing was a bit more complex. Purwanthy describes how PM have fixed rates and how ecotourism is more expensive to operate, which explains why they have the highest rates of all islands in the area. This match with the theories as Des Tombe mention it is complex and Purwanthy agreed that ecotourism is more expensive to operate. We can see a consistence with the theories and Jabung’s discussion about pricing of
BLV. Jabung describes how BLV is different comparing to other resorts in the Padang Bai area. He says how they have higher prices than other accommodations in the village. However, how this is a factor of the eco concept as well as the beautiful location and that nowadays people start to see ecoresorts as a good place to stay. It is also more expensive to have ecotourism in some aspects according to Jabung. He believes that the quality, the product, the service, and the brand awareness they offer customers affect their prices for a villa. They charge customer per villa and during high season, the prices will increase with ten percent.

4.4 Marketing communication

*This section will highlight theories of marketing communication in which we will link with the empirical data we collected from our research companies and our conducted observations.*

4.4.1 Unplanned word-of-mouth communication

Clow and Baack (2014) state that word-of-mouth is today very influential and the fastest growing alternative marketing tool. In addition, Morrison (2010) highlights the importance of word-of-mouth within the travel industry due to that services are intangible and needs to be experienced in order to understand their value. According to Des Tombe, 90 percent of Pulau Macan’s (PM) guests visiting the island because of word-of-mouth. In order to reach that high number, Des Tombe takes us back from the very beginning of PM. He explains that at first PM’s management invited as many friends as they could by calling, sending emails and handing our simple brochures, in order for them to spread PM’s word. PM also made sure to take many photos of the guests so they could share them to others. Delicious food was served, nice music was played, they sent newsletters every month to friends and their friends, they went to network events, and at last introduce PM to schools and companies.

We believe this is consistent with Fill’s (2011) theory about managed word-of-mouth, which is when companies on purpose reach out to others in order for them to recommend their services. This theory is also consistent with Bloo Lagoon Village. Vidal discusses Bloo Lagoon Village (BLV)’s concept with the investors and explains how all these 25 owners of the villas comes from different parts of the world. They will tell their friends and families about BLV and in that way, it will work as word-of-mouth.

Further, Des Tombe stresses that word-of-mouth is the “real marketing” as it consists of the guests’ experiences and is one reason to why PM seldom pays for advertisements. Gwillian
and Vidal also believe word-of-mouth to be very important nowadays. Gwillian discusses his view of word-of-mouth and says that with good reputation and higher occupancy more people will know about BLV and visit their site. This will then mean that more people will share their knowledge about BLV’s philosophy and ecotourism, which will then contribute to a big difference in the village of Padangbai. Jabung describes that ten percent of BLV’s guests visit the resort because of word-of-mouth. It could be confirmed with that all the interviews from the three guests visiting PM and BLV, resulted in that two of them visit because of word-of-mouth.

“Pulau Macan have almost never paid for advertisements” Des Tombe (26/3-2014)

Des Tombe discusses word-of-mouth further and state that because of PM’s good reputation, travel magazines and websites have written articles about them. Some of them PM know about and some of them they do not. Three examples of websites that PM are aware of are Travelandleisure.com, BBC.com and travel.cnn.com. According to Travel CNN (2011), PM contributes to creating awareness, which is a key principle within ecotourism.

Susan Octari Yauwhan, a university student from Jakarta says, “I know how to save water now, and [when I returned home] I found that I save electricity more too”, Travel CNN (12/12-2011)

Vidal as well tells us that BLV is marketed in Lonely Planet. However, they have never met the people that actually came to BLV and reviewed the site as they are like mystery shoppers. These two examples from PM and BLV, we see a strong connection with Fill’s (2011) theory of the voluntary word-of-mouth strategy. Another example is Purwanthy discussion about that PM also provide with an ambassador programme for their guests. She explains this programme to offer guests who stayed at PM at least eight nights to become ambassador. Des Tombe highlights that one benefit of being an ambassador is getting access to the coral hut during weekends. This can be linked together with Clow and Baack’s (2014) theory about when loyal customers are asked to be ambassadors brand ambassadors in exchange of advantages and rewards from the company. Keller and Fay (2012) state that word-of-mouth has a high credibility, which makes it more important to handle if it is a negative form of word-of-mouth. We believe it is possible to connect this theory with how both ecoresort are handling customer complains.
Des Tombe argue if Pulau Macan (PM) have a customer complaining, depending on how they handling that customer, they will either make an enemy of that customer, who will spread bad words about them, or PM will convert that client to one of PM’s best supporters. One example of a situation like this, he continues, was when a customer lost his bag on the way out to the island. The problem was actually with the boat company. However, even though Des Tombe was on vacation in Costa Rica and could not deal with the problem directly, he made sure PM went beyond to find the bag. In the end, the guest was so grateful for all the effort PM had done and for the immediate two-way communication between them that the guest visited PM again. BLV is also aware of the great importance to deal with customers’ complains and Jabung discuss how vital it is to try to solve a guest’s problem immediately. Gwillian agree with Jabung and argue that a big part of his job is to talk to guests and ask for feedback. Further, Jabung highlights that customer information documented in their database have the purpose of improving their service quality in order to provide quality above their customers’ expectations.

4.4.2 The planned marketing communication mix – Content

We discussed Fill’s (2011) theory of the marketing communication mix in the theoretical chapter, where the component content was about companies’ message sent out to customers. The author claims messages either can come from a commercial or social source, as well as having information or emotional appeals. The informational includes using facts, scenario from the consumer’s ordinary life and demonstrations, which mostly is used within digital media. According to facebook (2014a), BLV is sharing informational messages about sales offering and what they and the customer is doing, which actual is scenarios from the resort and customers’ ordinary life. One post is an article from Jakarta Post describing BLV’s art gallery venue for young artists. Most information consists of photos with a small written explanation. We can also see similarities with the theory from the messages that BLV sends out from their website. According to Boo Lagoon (2014a), there are information about; what BLV is and their philosophy, events, location, facilities, rates and packages, the boutique, the spa, the restaurant menu, customer reviews, activities, publications related to ecotourism and contact information. Then there is a photo gallery with the possibility to look at BLV from a 360-degree angle and videos from different events.

Pulau Macan (PM) shares as well different kinds of messages to their customers. According to facebook (2014b), PM is posting information about what PM is doing, usually together with their guests, such as an educational event for coral restoration or an event about first aid.
Other messages are pictures with a small written explanation of guests having fun together with the staff or pictures about their ecological projects. For instance, a “before and after” picture showing how much the coral reef has grown. Pulau Macan (2014c) shows information as well about; PM’s vision and information about the company, the island and region, the customer experience, how to get to the island and location, rates and packages, island facilities, food and beverage, activities, eco features, village community and possibilities of having corporate events and education trips. Des Tombe says as well, there is a video on PM’s website that captures the essence of what PM is offering.

These messages from both PM and BLV can be linked to Fill’s (2011) theory about having an informational appeal by using facts in the sent out messages. However, it is also possible to connect it with Fill’s (2011) theory about sharing information about scenarios of customers’ ordinary life as many photos was about customers living their ordinary life at the resorts. There is a connection as well with Hovardas and Stamou (2006) theory about that ecotourism messages should concentrate in the interaction between nature environment and local communities. This is consistent as both resorts share messages when they and the guests are spending time together, such as PM sharing photos of an educational event of corals restorations with guests. The discussion above is also consistent with Fill’s (2011) theory about digital media more often uses informational appeal within the messages Fill (2011) discusses social sources, such as ones conducted by customers, which we could find for both resorts. According to Bloo Lagoon (2014a), BLV is sharing information from customer reviews and having Tripadvisor’s logo together with a text informing that customers rated BLV excellent 117 times. Facebook (2014c) shows as well BLV’s ratings and comments, where some posts have comments from customers. BLV also share comments from guests about their spa experiences at BLV. When it comes to Pulau Macan (PM), according to facebook (2014d), the resort has messages from customers in which they ask for rates or giving feedback. These comments from both resorts can be linked to Kelman’s (1961) referred in Fill (2011) theory about that messages get high credibility by comments from customers. Another aspect, according to the author, is how reliable the source was. Jabung confirms this theory by stating that word-of-mouth is an effective marketing tool and when a friend gives a good recommendation, it becomes very powerful.

Wood (2002) argues that many ecotourism companies promote themselves as ecological when they actually are not and that it will affect the credibility. We see a connection with the theory
and both resorts’ ecofeatures. Des Tombe argues that one of the hut of PM has a non-functional air conditioner (AC) and Jabung argues BLV also provide all villas with hot water and some villas with AC. However, Jabung state that the reason why is because customers are demanding it. To solve this issue, BLV provide only a few villas with AC for those guests who really need it. However, he continues, since all villas are designed to bring in a lot of ventilation AC is actually not needed and 90 percent of BLV’s guest read the information about the AC at their website.

Weaver (2001) argues that ecotourism destinations should provide information about the sites and what facilities that are available. Like mention before, PM and BLV is providing information at their websites what kind of facilities that are available. In terms of information about what kind of ecological activities that the resorts are doing both resorts, according to their websites Bloo Lagoon (2014b) and pulaumacan (2014d), informing guests about their sustainable tourism features. One example is when BLV writes about how they conserve water on their website. “To conserve water we channel rain and water from showers and sinks to an artificial lake and ponds which are planted with aquatic plants and fish giving us semi cleaned water for irrigation and toilet flushing” (Bloo Lagoon, 2014b).

We also reflected during our stay at PM that there are signs encouraging guests to act more responsible, both for saving water and energy. For saving energy, the sign suggested to turn off the fan, lights, or any electrical appliances when not in use, and to light candles for a change to enjoy the candle light. Vidal explains that she would like BLV to use informational signs to show their customers how BLV work with sustainability regarding ecotourism. She refers to examples like showing customers that BLV has an organic farm and what the pond’s purpose is.

4.4.3 The planned marketing communication mix - Media
According to Fill (2011), companies can use both traditional and digital media. Morrison (2010) argued that within the travel industry there is a bigger focus on digital online media. Lai and Shafer (2005) discuss that ecotourists usually find their pre-holiday information online. Jabung discusses that BLV market themselves online at several online travel agencies, their own website and through social media. In terms of traditional media, they market themselves in different magazines, by brochures and a few billboards. Des Tombe explains that PM do not have brochures but the rest of the marketing consist of digital media, in which
they refer to social media and their website. However, Des Tombe explains how PM works with bargains with media where they invite journalist and TV-shows to visit the island in exchange of publicity. Jabung discusses that BLV do bargains as well for different magazines and websites in the exchange of publicity.

The reason for the resorts’ bargains with media could be consistent with Donohoe and Needham’s (2011) theory about that traditional media is limited for companies due to its high costs. Vidal confirms this by discussing that BLV do not believe in traditional media as it cost a fortune and that advertisements in magazines needs to be repeated many times in order to be effective. Gwilliam agrees and explains that BLV have a limited budget as the resort only gain 20 percent of the profit whereas 80 percent goes to investors. Here we can see a similarity to Fill’s (2011) theory of traditional media being expensive as it often has a limited place and time where it is broadcasted. Des Tombe argues PM use social media as it is both inexpensive and very effective. Adinegoro discusses that due to the fact that PM have a high occupancy it would be illogical to use aggressive marketing using traditional media as their website satisfy their customers’ need of information.

According to Grönroos (2008), Internet is an instrument for interactive processes. This is confirmed by Fill (2011) who states Internet allows customers to interact with each other and be in charge of the interaction in a way that is not possible with traditional media. Hvass and Munar (2012) agree and discuss that social media enable companies to direct interact with customers. Labbé (2011) highlights the advantage for SMEs with social media, as it is free of charge. According to Des Tombe, PM have a facebook page, twitter and an Instagram account. Vidal argues that BLV is using facebook and Instagram as marketing tools. According to facebook (2014e) and facebook (2014f), we can also see how the two resorts’ customers are interactive by liking posted information or by commenting giving opinions or asking for rates. The messages though, is not only sent out by customers but by the resorts as well. This makes it consistent with Grönroos’s (2008) theory, which arguing that companies needs as well to conduct and sent messages in interactive marketing.

Labbe (2011) states that Tripadvisor is becoming a key source of information for customers and plays an important part for their decision making process. Thakran and Verma (2013) argues as well Tripadvisor to be important within the travel industry. Labbé (2011) take the discussion about Tripadvisor further and highlights that small resorts with limited resources should be active on Tripadvisor. This is because of the communication, rating, and brand
awareness opportunities with customers. Gwillian states that one of BLV’s most important marketing tools is TripAdvisor. Jabung explains that after each guests’ visit at Bloo Lagoon Village (BLV) he emails them and asks to rate BLV at TripAdvisor. He continues and states that BLV received a certificate of excellent ratings during 2013 from TripAdvisor. According to TripAdvisor (2014a), 220 customers have reviewed BLV, 217 photos have been uploaded by travellers, and they have an average of almost 80 percent satisfied customers. A majority of the travellers’ comments highlight BLV’s view or recommend it because of their ecological concept. One guest describes BLV like this:

“My stay at Bloo Lagoon was magical. The staff is unique and excellent. Having dinner under the stars with the great company of Marita and Tony is unforgettable. The view and the energy the place has is priceless” (Tripadvisor, 18/4-2014a).

PM also exist on TripAdvisor, Des Tombe argues, however, they do not request customers to rate them. It is one of PM’s main priorities to change, he says, as it is an incredibly important. According to TripAdvisor (2014b), 40 travellers have reviewed PM, 56 photos of PM, and 19 travellers have rated PM as excellent. One guest reviewed PM like this:

“As you take the speedboat from Jakarta to Pulau Macan, cutting through the filthy water, it's hard to imagine that there's a hidden paradise -- with white sandy beaches, crystal clear waters, and thriving coral -- anywhere remotely near the city. But as you go along, and leave Jakarta in the distance, the litter bobbing in the sea starts to subside and the water starts to clear up and, before you know it, you're in paradise.” (Tripadvisor, 11/3-2014b).

However, Grönroos (2008) highlights that within interactive marketing companies needs to respond to their customers’ interactive communication messages immediately or the customers will lose their interest for the companies. Gwillian states that he always tries to answers customers’ comments on TripAdvisor straight away. According to TripAdvisor (2014a), BLV has responded to all reviews since first of January 2014 until middle of May 2014. Des Tombe argues PM do not respond to all reviews. However, they respond to as many as they can in terms of time. According to TripAdvisor (2014b), PM only respond to negative comments. However, both BLV and PM, respond with long explaining answers to most of the bad reviews in order to deal with unsatisfied customers.
4.4.4 The planned marketing communication mix – Tools

Advertising
Fill (2011) states how advertising engage customers by creating awareness, building brand values, changing attitudes or influencing behaviour. Different types of advertisements, according to Holloway (2004), are publications such as magazines and newspapers of which magazines are the better option. Other suggestions are outdoor advertising and E-advertising of which E-advertising is growing, especially in websites and search engines. Keller and Fay (2012) highlight the high costs of advertising. Vidal discuss that Bloo Lagoon Village (BLV) has several advertisements spread out in different magazines such as The Expat magazine in Kuala Lumpur, Hellobali in Bali and Ubud community magazine. However, she says that BLV do not believe in traditional marketing, such as advertisements, due to its costs and low impact on customers. Jabung is also unsure of the results of advertisements. Des Tombe explains that Pulau Macan (PM) is not using any advertising.

Public relations
Fill (2011) discuss public relation (PR) to involve events of the purpose of shaping opinions and attitudes held by the company’s stakeholders. Different methods within PR can include interviews, events, and publicity where publicity and events involves three different methods that are; product events that focus on sales, corporate events that focus on entertainments and awareness, and community events that focus on contribute to the local community.
Vidal discuss that the magazine Jakarta Post wrote about BLV when a Javanese artist had an exhibition at BLV’s gallery. According to facebook (2014g) Jakarta Post named the article “Bloo Lagoon Village present “two sides”. One part presents BLV like this, “The vision of the resort owner, English architect Tony Gwillian, is not only to provide a much needed exhibition venue to support Bali’s growing contemporary art scene with regular exhibitions and activities, yet also to become a location for hosting international artist-in-residency programs.”(facebook, 20/5-2014h).

This we can connect with Fill (2011) theory of the corporate events as a method for PR, as BLV provides with entertainments. Another consistent example of the theory is when Adinegoro highlights that the TV-Show named Long Weekend visited Pulau Macan (PM) where PM received publicity on TV in exchange of Long Weekend shooting at the island for three days.
Fill (2011) also state that PR generate trust among customers, which is consistent with both resorts’ publicity examples. However, it is also possible to connect it with Fill’s (2011) theory about PR having a lack of controlling the messages.

**Direct marketing**
Holloway (2004) discusses that direct marketing (DM) is a form of two-way interactive marketing between companies and their customers. According to Clow and Baack (2014) customers today value individualised marketing efforts and one way of DM is to have an internal list that separate active members from inactive members. This means that new customers and existing customers will receive different types of messages. Two examples to this is when Purwanthy explains that PM is connecting with their customers when they have stayed with PM for four or at least eight nights and say that they now have become EVO customers or ambassadors. This means that they will get benefits such as discounts as well as ambassadors also get accessibility to the coral hut. Jabung discuss that after customers have went home after their stay at BLV he will email them and offer them 10 percent discount for their next visit at BLV.

Jabung discuss that BLV have a database where they save all customer information. It is possible to connect BLV’s database with Fyall and Garrod’s (2005) and Clow and Baack’s (2014) theories about database as a way to get to know customers, develop customer loyalty, and enhance interactions with customers. The information can involve current and former customers, such as history of purchases, customer preferences, and results of surveys. According to Jabung, BLV is saving all kinds of information about their customers. The information consists of customer preferences, which villas they have stayed in and if there were any complains. The reason behind the database, Jabung explains, is that BLV can get to know their customers and provide service quality beyond their customers’ expectations.

**Sales promotion**
According to Fyall and Garrod (2005), sales promotion is meant to stimulate a behavioural action among target customers. Fill (2011) states one method of sales promotion is by increasing value of the product by offering changes to it, such as lowering the price, add quality, or add quantity. The sales promotions could then consist of discount-pricing, refunds, guarantees or quantity increases. Another method is to add value to the product by offering something more than the original product. It could be added premium such as gifts, information, or loyalty programs In addition, Morrison (2010) suggests a method of sales
promotion, recognition programs, in which companies give their customers awards for achieving or providing a particular level of sales. Another technique is continuity programs where companies require consumers to make several purchase. The objective can be either to customer to stimulate more purchases that are frequent or build long-term loyalty for a brand. Jabung explains that BLV use sales promotion in terms of discounts for early bookings and repeating guests. According to Bloo Lagoon (2014a), BLV do have other sales promotions. There they present a low season package for two persons that will get two nights including with one dinner. Other promotions are a family gateway package where the customers get two nights and an educational cooking course and a feeling romantic package that includes three nights for two persons, massages and a three-course dinner.

According to Purwanthy, PM offers fixed prices all year around. However, Des Tombe argues, if PM is not fully booked on a weekend they offer a discount. Further, he continues to say that PM has another kind of promotion, which are the EVO and ambassador programmes. Both EVO and ambassador gets discounts. Ambassadors are also getting the advantage of having access to book the coral hut besides the discount. facebook.com (2014i) shows that PM also offers a valentine package for couples for one night during 14-15 February 2014.

Based on the resorts’ different sales promotions it is a clear connection with Fill’s (2011) theory. The resorts make changes to the product and add quality by adding other features. PM’s EVO and ambassador programme gives customers discounts based on the number of nights at PM, in which we can identify a similarity with Morrison’s (2010) theory of recognition and continuity programs.
5. Conclusion

The last part of the thesis is here and it will start with answering the thesis’s aim. This will take form as a discussion where we will discuss and analyse our findings. Thereafter, we will answer the research question, which will follow with the final part where we highlight our future recommendation and implementation.

5.1 Answering the aim

The purpose with this study was to analyse and investigate how ecotourism can be marketed to customers by Indonesian small- and medium sized ecotourism resorts focusing on marketing communication. Further, the aim was also to clarify how these companies enhance their “eco brand”.

We discovered that there are many different ways to market a resort through marketing communication. Some methods was revealed more suitable for small- and medium sized ecoresorts and others were not. Based on the research, we argue that Public Relation (PR), Direct Marketing (DM) and Sales Promotion (SP), are methods that meet small- and medium sized ecoresorts’ characteristics. For instance, we found examples of PR from both ecoresorts that we investigated, where they managed to get free publicity by either arranging an exhibition of art or invite the media in exchange of free publicity. According to us, this tool can be an effective tool, as the ecoresort do not pay for the marketing and small- and medium sized resort is found to be financial limited. However, we discovered that this tool could be difficult to control, which could be risky for a small ecoresort that depends on its existing customers. On the other hand, DM is a two-way interactive tool that is easier to control and more effective as a marketing communication tool, since it is customized after targeted customers. In order to work with DM, a database system can be useful. One resort worked with a database system. We argue database systems to be of great importance as it enables the possibility to get to know the customers and provide service quality beyond their expectations. Furthermore, we discovered that both resorts use Sales Promotion (SP), where they add value to their products. One company focused on loyalty programs and offered an all-inclusive concept, and the other resort on adding extra gifts to the original product, such as vouchers. According to us, both ways are important as they stimulate behavioural action among their customers.
This brings us back to knowing the customers’ needs and wants. The studied showed, by having direct contact with the customers it is easier to understand them and identify market changes. For instance, 80 percent of the reservations at Pulau Macan comes direct from their website. Further, Bloo Lagoon Village’s (BLV) is, besides their website, also available indirect for reservation at online portals such as booking.com. From our point of view, an online reservation system is a successful method within marketing communication. Even though it is not a direct communication with customers, the study revealed that online reservation is the fastest growing source of revenue. However, in terms of understanding customers, we believe that Pulau Macan has an advantage that a high amount of their bookings comes direct from their website. The communication will then be a two-way communication, where both parts can get to know each other’ needs and wants. Yet, in terms of visibility, we claim it can be difficult for customers to find them. The studied showed that companies should never rely on customers’ contribution to services, as they all differ in motivations, need to participate, knowledge, and experiences. We agree and the company is taking a risk by relying on the customers to find them instead of the opposite. On the other hand, we do realize that this depends on where the customers virtually are online. Pulau Macan highlighted how their guests changed from a majority of expats to Indonesian customers. One of the reasons, according to us, could be that Indonesian customers are most likely available on Indonesian websites, which makes it easier to find Pulau Macan’s website.

Furthermore, we argue service availability and involvement are two important element within marketing communication. Both resorts we investigated focused a lot on their service availability at the site, during their guests’ vacations. According to us, all service availabilities are significant because by always being available for the customers, the resort will never miss an opportunity to make their customers satisfied. They will also not miss an opportunity to get to know their customers or to improve their provided service. In addition, we argue it is central to understand that the involvement of customers’ contribution is in relation to the experienced service quality. Both resorts expected a high involvement from their guests. Since Pulau Macan only is available for reservations through their website by email, it requires high involvement. From our point of view, this could mean a risk that customers find it difficult to make a reservation. Furthermore, both resorts are based on the idea of bringing people together. For instance, Pulau Macan encourage their guests to eat dinner and play games together during their vacations. From our perspective, it is a great way of exchanging
knowledge, but it also important to acknowledge the risk that the service quality will be affected, since the guests have an impact on one another.

Another opportunity for bringing people together is through digital media. We claim that internet is an instrument for interactive processes, which allows customers to interact with each other and be in charge of the interaction. We argue social media to be a very effective marketing tool that is free of charge and enable resorts to have a direct two-way interaction with their customers. Both ecoresort used different social media, such as facebook, Instagram, and twitter. We state, by using social media the service availability becomes higher as the guest whenever can communicate with the service provider. Social media, according to us, also brings a greater opportunity to get to know the customers, as the conversations are regularly and at a place where the customers are reachable. Closely related to social media is Tripadvisor, a site where visitors can give comments, feedback and rank tourism products. According to us, Tripadvisor is customers’ key source of information within the tourism industry, and it is of great importance when tourists make decisions. The study showed that ecotourists find their pre-holiday information online. Based on this, we recommend ecotourism resorts to take advantage of the customer reviews at Tripadvisor, as customers’ reviews and rankings have high credibility. One of the respondent from Bloo Lagoon Village claimed that Tripadvisor was the resort’s most important marketing tool.

Another expression for the communication at Tripadvisor is word-of-mouth, which we argue to be todays’ most important and effective marketing communication tool. Based on the research, our conclusion is that word-of-mouth is the marketing tool that grows the fastest and is very influential. One responded from Pulau Macan argued that 90 percent of their guests visit their resort because of word-of-mouth. Our conclusion is that small-and medium sized ecotourism resorts should work with word-of-mouth more consciously. One way is to offer incredible service and premium products to loyal customers in order for them to spread the word about the ecoresort. Both resort had examples of when magazines or travel advisors wrote about them because of their good reputation. We argue the more managed an ecoresort work with word-of-mouth, the greater chance for volunteer word-of-mouth to happen, which is the greatest kind, according to us.

Further, we discovered that one reason why word-of-mouth is so successful and effective within marketing communication is that those messages have high credibility. Bloo Lagoon Village saves all customer data in their database to provide good service quality and prevent
complains for future visits. Because of the messages’ high credibility it is, according to us, significant to manage guests’ feedback in order to prevent negative word-of-mouth and encourage the positive kind. In addition, since the positive messages have high credibility we also encourage to make those reviews visible for new and existing customers to read, such as at the reviews at Tripadvisor. Furthermore, another way to encourage word-of-mouth, according to us, is to share messages online with an informational appeal, such as scenarios from customers’ ordinary life at the resort. This, we argue, will make customers find it easier to relate to messages, which will increase the interactive communication among the visitors. Additionally, we argue that it also is a great opportunity for sharing how the resort operates ecotourism. For instance, one of the ecoresort we studied shared photos of the guests planting corals in the area of the ecoresort. In that way, customers can get a glimpse of what kind of ecoresort it is.

In terms of knowing a company, we argue that it is important to have a brand identity. Pulau Macan has the brand identity of a paradise resort village that is simple and dedicated to serve guests. Focus is on natural health and to minimize negative impact on the island’s ecosystem, as well as to improve and conserve the natural environment. In addition, Bloo Lagoon Village has a brand identity of a Balinese philosophy, which means that for all developments, the gods, the planet, and the human needs to approve before any changes are made. Further, the resort is a community where the guests share things and learn from each other. It is a matter of an enrichment, whereas instead of taking things away from the environment, the resort allows plants and animals to come. According to us, having a brand identity is necessary for customers in order for them to relate to the resort and become loyal towards the company. However, it is not enough. We claim t is also important to work with the brand image, which is how consumers perceive companies.

We argue it is important that all communicated messages of an ecoresort are as close as the brand identity as possible. In other words, we state that the brand identity should be as consistent with the brand image as possible. For example, when an ecoresort working with intermediaries it is central, according to us, that they also share the same codes of ethics of ecotourism, in order to make the ecobrand identity reliable among customers. Another perspective is that Pulau Macan customers visit them because it is a great place for vacation and escape from the hectic capital city, and not necessary because it is an ecotourism resort. On the other hand, Bloo Lagoon Village’s customers visiting the resort because it is ecological friendly and as it has paradise atmosphere. Even though, we agree that both resorts
becomes unique because of their ecotourism concept, we are still concerned that Pulau Macan’s guests do not visit the resort because of ecotourism. We argue that if the guests are not visiting the resort because it is an ecoresort, it means that the brand identity and the brand image are not consistent. This, we argue, could result in disappointed guests and a bad reputation. Therefore, we state that ecoresorts should not only inform their guests about their ecotourism concept, but also include this within their segmentation strategy. According to us, an ecoresort’s brand image will match the brand identity if the targeted customers actually are attracted to ecotourism vacations.

Furthermore, we discovered that when an ecoresort communicating messages to its customer, the messages consists of promises. We claim that these promises should be possible to fulfil and have the purpose of giving guests an honest picture of the ecoresort. We argue that ecoresort is suitable to make symbolic promises, since then, the customer can relate to their own personal identity. From our perspective, Bloo Lagoon Village’s symbolic promise is a way of living naturally, which can be quite difficult to fulfil as naturally can be interpreted differently depending on the person. We claim, Bloo Lagoon Village manage to fulfil this promise as the resort is surrounded by trees, flowers, animals, and is built in a natural way. However, according to us, if a guest would have the opposite opinion, it would affect the total experienced service quality, which is service expectations in relation to experienced quality.

Both ecoresorts work hard with their customers experienced service. Bloo Lagoon Village has a three-way service system and their database where they save all customer data, and an informational book about their ecoconcept. Pulau Macan gives their guests a short presentation of their ecoconcept and ecoprojects. However, we argue that it is vital to succeed with both customer service experiences and their service expectations. From our point of view, both resorts needs to work harder with customers’ expectations. They need to work on their brand image and ensure that the communication gives a clear message about their ecoconcept, in order to prevent misunderstood and unsatisfied customers. In fact, based on our opinions, ecotourism should be taken as an advantage. According to us, ecotourism is a part of a value-enhanced service as it delivers services that usually is difficult for the customers to experience by themselves. From that perspective, we argue that ecoresorts should use its ecocharacteristics even more, which is what makes the brand different from the competitors and more unique. However, we find it interesting that both ecoresorts that we studied did not have any competitors according to them. Their view was that the more ecotourism companies the greater importance would ecotourism get.
Based on our research, we discovered that both ecoresort are following the ecotourism principles in different ways. We were actually surprised by how many ways there are operating ecotourism. For instance, usage of solar panels, organic farm, local staff, offering education for their staff, remain and maintain the local culture, and build their resort in a sustainable way. Finally, our conclusions are that small- and medium sized ecoresorts should communicate all their ecotourism efforts to their targeted customers, in order to enhance their ecobrand. We see ecotourism as a method of differentiation and a way to encourage a sustainable way of travelling. Customers expected service quality of the ecoresorts would also match with the experienced service quality that is provided today. This will then lead to an increased word-of-mouth of customers that will decrease the resorts’ marketing costs. Further, we argue the brand image and brand identity would become more consistent, which will bring more loyal and satisfied customers. According to us, by sharing information on how the ecoresort is working with ecotourism, customers will also understand why ecotourism resorts are more expensive to operate and have a higher price than other regular resorts. At last, it will also give ecotourism a stronger position on the market and an increased number of tourism developers that takes a greater responsibility of developing tourism, which would lead to more tourists travelling in a sustainable way.

5.2 Answering the research question

The following answer of the research question will be according to our state of mind based on the conducted research. The research question is:

*How can Indonesian small and medium sized ecotourism resorts develop their “eco brand” image and communicate it to their customers by marketing communications?*

Answer: In order for ecotourism resorts to develop their ecobrand image, it is important to start with creating a brand identity. This identity shall then include the resort’s ecoconcept and be communicated to targeted customers. The opinions that the customers build will be the resort’s brand image and the goal is that those two should match. However, to get customers to view the resort in the way that the resort wants is not an easy task. Therefore, it is important to communicate clear and understandable messages about how the ecoresort operates ecotourism, both through marketing communication before the guests departure, and when the vacation actually take place at the resort. Before customers take off, they have expectations based on the resort’s image on how their vacations, including the resort, will be. When the
customers are at the site, their expectations will be compared with their experiences, which will result in a total experienced service quality. In order for customers to experience a high total service quality, it is important that they are well informed and attracted by the resort’s ecoconcept. It is also vital that the resort fulfil what they are promising their guests by letting them experience how the resort is operating ecotourism and let potential new guests to see it. The promise is recommended to be of a symbolic kind, as customers easier can related to it.

However, to communicate messages to customers about ecotourism is not an easy task. First, the resort needs to know whom their customers are in order to know how their customers will interpret the resort’s messages. Small- and medium sized ecoresorts should start with selecting what customers they want by divide the market into segments. Then, the resort can start getting to know their customers through interactive digital conversations, using social media and database systems, and through feedback at travel websites, recommended Tripadvisor. It is also effective to communicate directly with the customers, either online or in person during their vacations. Although, in terms of visibility it is proven that it is important to communicate message where the customers are available, and not expect the customers to find the resort. Instead, it is significant for an ecoresort to make themselves as available as possible, and not expect too much contribution by the customers.

Furthermore, even though the resort know their customers, the research showed that the effectiveness of the communicated messages depends on the source. The researched revealed that the voice of the customers are the source with highest credibility. Therefore, ecoresorts should enable and encourage customers have an interactive communication with each other and with the ecoresort, by social media. Further, the conversations is recommended to make visible for other potential customers so more visitors will experience it. The next step for the ecoresort is to choose between different marketing communication tools, in order to stimulate purchases and increase their ecobrand awareness. The ones that are suitable for small- and medium sized ecotourism resorts are; public relation, sales promotion and direct marketing. However, it was discovered that when an ecoresort had an ecobrand identity, the service provided was great, and when the communicated messages about their ecoconcept was clear, the customers themselves did most of the marketing. By word-of-mouth, the number of customers will increase, and paid marketing is not necessary. Instead, the focus is on having an interactive communication with the existing customers and new potential customers, where they act as ambassadors and their words become powerful marketing.
At last – choose your Marketing tools – but be aware the more customers talk about you in a positive way the more effective will your marketing be so make sure customers sees reviews and comments. Then take advantage of digital media and get to know your customers.

5.3 Recommendations and implementation

Last of all, we would like to present some recommendations for how managers and general practitioners can apply our study’s results on their own companies. It is highlighted in the business economy that small- and medium sized companies are financially limited. Therefore, it is important to find ways for them to communicate with their customers that are within their budget. By using our results, it will be possible to improve the communication with customers using methods that are suitable for these kinds of companies. It will as well increase the knowledge about how all elements in the marketing communication works in order to easier develop the communication in the future. Further, small-and medium sized companies will get create an understanding of how digital media and unplanned marketing communication is of a great importance today. Further, the research’s result will be able to apply on small-and medium sized companies within the hospitality industry and service marketing sector.

Additionally, the results of this research have led to other subjects that would be interesting to research about. It have come to our attention that it is difficult to distinguish motivation factors in ecotourism, as it is closely related to nature-based tourism. This mean that ecotourism companies lack of knowledge about their customers, which is vital in order to perform an effective marketing communication. Therefore, we suggest this subject for further research.
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