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Iconic Destination: a Snapshot of Sustainable Tourism in Pisa

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries. According to the World Tourism Organization, Italy is the fifth most visited country in the world, with more than 47.7 million tourists a year (2013). At the same time, the increasing number of studies focused on sustainable tourism demonstrates a growing interest about the topic. In addition, practitioners' attitude is changing and the most important actors of the market are acting in a more sustainable way and developing reports on their eco-friendly performances.

Nowadays, the entire supply chain maybe environmentally sustainable. From the reservation to the post-holiday phase, it is possible to select the more eco-friendly suppliers. The main companies operating in the different stages of the process are demonstrating a concrete interest on sustainable development. This new challenge is generated through the information flow between local authorities, private firms and final customers. We propose to make a reflection based on the latter actors' attitude. Our research aims to investigate the level of sensitivity of tourists about environmental sustainability from two different perspectives: self-evaluation and real purchasing behavior.

We conducted a face-to-face survey among tourists in Pisa, in Piazza dei Miracoli, during May 2015. By using a structured questionnaire, we gathered primary data from a sample of 406 respondents. We selected respondents randomly. Pisa is the perfect location to obtain information from several typologies of tourists, with different levels of awareness of sustainable issues. Itis one of the most important tourist destination in Italy and it is an iconic destination recognized worldwide thanks to the attractiveness of the leading tower.

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The results of our study is a snapshot of the current level of awareness among tourists. The analysis of the questionnaires revealed tourist profiles, their eco-friendly behaviors, their concerns about sustainability planning their vacations and their habits during the stay. In the questionnaires, three main aspects of tourist services were considered: transport, accommodation, food and beverage. Our study offers a photography of the state of the art of tourists' awareness on sustainable issues. It represents a starting point for future investigations on strategic decisions in terms of general and local policies (destination & corporate level). The provided data can be useful to generate new inputs for academic research and to point out managerial implications at destination and corporate level. Moreover, our study generates food for thought with regard to several emerging topics.
Further research can investigate the discrepancy between self-evaluation and real behaviors among tourists, the perception of the grade of sustainability of the tourist services and the willingness to pay for more sustainable tourist services.

Keywords: Iconic Destination, Green Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, Travelers' behaviors

Introduction

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries. At the same time, the increasing number of studies focused on sustainable tourism demonstrates a growing interest about the topic. In addition, practitioners' attitude is changing and the most important actors of the market are acting in a more sustainable way and developing reports on their eco-friendly performances. Nowadays, the entire supply chain may be environmentally sustainable. From the reservation to the post-holiday phase, it is possible to select the more eco-friendly supplier. Tourists are currently able to be more sustainable during the organization of their holiday. However, the personal level of awareness is still variable. We propose a study focused on the identification of the variables that influence the visitors' attitude to define themselves as eco-friendly consumers. The research project highlighted data emerging through a face-to-face survey among tourists in Pisa. The information can be useful to generate new input for academic research and managerial implication at destination and corporate level. The described portrait represents a tool to be used as starting point for future investigations useful for strategic decisions on general and local policies (destination & corporate level).

1. Theoretical background

Tourism represents an economic activity having a great impact on economic growth and job creation. It is one of the world's fastest growing industries. The generated effects are not only contributing to the economy, they also influence climate change

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and make tourism itself vulnerable to risks induced by changing climate regime (Njoroge, 2014). One of the most relevant element of tourism industry is the destination and its features, including the environment. The protection and conservation of environmental resources (which include natural, cultural and historic resources) are prime considerations for the tourism industry, upon which it depends as primary inputs in the production of the tourist output (Lima et al. 2005). According to the Brundtland report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To protect and conserve the environmental resources in order to meet the future generations' needs, tourism industry developed several strategies to be more sustainable. This approach can be analysed from different points of view: private citizens (residents/tourists), firms, and public bodies. A new demand is oriented to more selective, environmentally and culturally oriented forms of tourisms. All these categories have in common an interest for the protection of the nature in order to promote more quality than quantity of services (Kilipirisa et al. 2012). A corporate perspective can generate specific business model or a re-modulation of the touristic offer. Certain issues for the tourism enterprise are raised regarding changes in the behaviour of the tourist that needs to be taken into consideration. The majority of big size tourism companies has nowadays a sustainable development division in charge to define the annual report about the activity of the year and its effect on the climate change process. Sometimes, this new approach is the result of pure marketing strategy. However, excluding the cases of green washing, it really contributes to promote and develop more sustainable forms of tourism. Certificate and label systems represent valid tools to show to the market their eco-friendly activity. Private and public organizations, including local governments, are in charge to develop this kind of tools. Furthermore, the role of the public body is also related to the promotion of a sustainable development of the area through specific developing plans in order to coordinate the various stakeholders located in the territory. All the cited elements contribute to the development of a sustainable tourism.

According to Blancas et al. (2015), sustainable tourism is a tourist activity which centres on resource management in such a way that all economic, social and aesthetic needs are met, while abiding by cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and the life-support system (UNWTO, 1993). Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (UNWTO, 1994).

We identify three different main actors involved in the sustainable tourism development: citizens, firms, public body. A fundamental role is played by the information flow between local authorities, private firms and final customers. We propose to make a reflection based on the latter actors' attitude. Our research aims to investigate the level of sensitivity of tourists about environmental sustainability. In

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doing that, we needed to localize a destination characterized by a high number of tourists. Territory with an iconic element is able to attract a large amount of visitors from different market's segments. In order to reach this target the destination has to be recognized by the consumers. It has to be branded and promoted. Holt (2003) recommends five steps for building an iconic brand. Woodside et al. (2005), update this framework to let it be more appropriate for building a destination into a brand icon. First, reach consensus of new visitors most receptive to becoming the protagonist in the myth that they assign to the destination. Second, collect stories of how visitors report their experiences in living the myth while visiting the destination. Third, build authentic brand attachments with core symbols evoked automatically by new visitors. Fourth, create myth-brand communities meetings where brand use/encounters occur. Fifth, update stories within the myth to keep the myth alive; bring the
myth to life in new ways (Woodside et al. 2005).
However, some destinations do not need to build an iconic brand as are worldwide recognized for their distinctive and historical characteristics. Pisa is the perfect example. According to the World Tourism Organization, Italy is the fifth most visited country in the world, with more than 47.7 million tourists a year (2013). Tower of Pisa is an icon of Italy and the perfect location to obtain information from several typologies of tourists, with different levels of awareness of sustainable issues. It is one of the most important tourist destination in Italy and it is an iconic destination recognized worldwide thanks to the attractiveness of the leaning tower. A large number of tourists daily visit the city. Our study offers a photography of the state of the art of tourists' awareness on sustainable issues. The research helps to describe if the features of eco-friendly tourism consumers are predominant or not.

2.Methodology

Our paper focuses on the results of the survey conducted among tourists in Pisa. One of the main purposes of the survey is to find out the awareness of tourists about sustainability and tourism.
We carried out an empirical research. We conducted a face-to-face survey among tourists in Pisa, in Piazza dei Miracoli, during May 2015. By using a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions, we gathered primary data from a sample of 406 respondents. We selected respondents randomly.
The questionnaire is divided into three parts to identify different types of research problems: eco-friendly behaviour, tourism and sustainability and tourist services. Finally, the questionnaire presents five questions to define respondent's profile.
Data were analysed using descriptive statistics to provide basic information about variables and to highlight potential relationships between variables. In this sense, we performed chi square tests to measure the association between variables. Moreover, we run a logistic regression model, considering that the dependent variable, chosen for the analysis, is categorical.

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Variable	Characteristic	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	46.80
	Female	**53.20**
Education	Compulsory education	9.85
	Diploma	33
	Degree	**57.15**
Age	18 – 25	25.62
	26 – 45	**44.83**
	46 - 65	29.06
	More than 65	0.49
Employment	**Professional/Manager**	**36.45**
	Office worker	24.14
	Worker	9.85
	Student	22.66
	Retired	0.99
	Unemployed	5.91
Natonality	**Europe**	**54.68**
	North America	15.27
	South America	1.48
	Africa	0
	Asia	13.3
	Australia/Oceania	0.99
	Italy	14.28

Table 1. Respondents' profile

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Findings

Firstly, we defined respondents' profiles through descriptive analysis. The composition of the sample and the main characteristics of tourists interviewed are presented in Table 1.

Our random sample presents quite similar proportion between men and women interviewed, with a slight predominance of female component (53.20%). About 57% have a university degree and 33% have a high school diploma. Defining our questionnaire, we outlined four age classes (18-25; 26-45; 46-65 and more than 65). About 45% of respondents are in the age group 26-45. The majority of respondents (44.83%) declared to be a professional or manager. There is also an important presence of office workers (24.14%) and students (22.66%). With regard to nationality, respondents are mainly from Europe (54.68%). Tourists from Italy are classified in another class of respondents: they represent 14.28% of our sample. Summing these two percentages, it clearly emerges that our sample is predominantly from Europe and Italy. Some areas of the world are underrepresented in our sample: there are no respondents from Africa and a very small number of respondents from Australia/Oceania and South America.

Secondly, the questionnaire investigates three main aspects of tourist services: transport, accommodation, food and beverage.

The most used means of transport to reach Pisa is the privately owned car (45.81%). About 20% reached Pisa by train, about 14% by bus, about 12% by airplane and 8% by car sharing.

With regard to accommodation, more than 50% of our sample declared to stay in a hotel and 25.12% chose

a bed & breakfast. There is a significant percentage of tourists (12.32%) that declared to stay in camping. About 7% of tourists were guests at home of friends or relatives. Among respondents, nobody declared to couch surf in Pisa.

Finally, it appears that fast food restaurant chains are not loved by tourists. In fact, about 77% of tourists interviewed have never eaten there during their stay in Pisa.

Thirdly, the survey examines eco-friendly behaviours among tourists. The majority of respondents (79.31%) declared to be an eco-friendly consumer. It is important to note that it is a self-evaluation made by respondents.

Regarding their buying habits, about 57% of respondents stated to buy often eco-friendly products; at the same time about 35% of them rarely buy this kind of products. A small number of respondents declared to buy always/never eco-friendly products.

Furthermore, respondents are more environmentally conscious when they are at home (75.86%) and only 24% of them declared to be more attentive towards sustainable issues while travelling.

Finally, the survey analyses the relationship between tourism and sustainability.

The analysis of the questionnaires revealed tourists' concerns about sustainability planning their vacations and their habits during the stay. The majority of respondents declared that they never (21.18%) or rarely (41.87%) consider eco-friendly choices

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planning holidays. Only 28.08% of tourists interviewed stated that they often consider eco-friendly choices and about 9% always take into consideration these aspects.
More than 60% of respondents declared that they did not get any suggestions from the host about eco-friendly behaviours to adopt during the stay in the accommodation, such as saving energy and water or reusing towels for more than one day or paying attention to request a change of linen only on alternate days.
With regard to certifications held by tourist accommodations, 24.63% of respondents declared that their accommodations have an environmental certification. At the same time, the majority (55.17%) have no idea about this specific aspect and the remaining 20.20% stated that the accommodation where they stay in have not certifications.
Another significant finding concerns the willingness to pay declared by tourists. About 63% of respondents are willing to pay more for a more sustainable vacation. It represents a very interesting starting point for further research.
We develop a general model, used for chi square tests and logistic regression. The model has a dependent variable Y and eight independent variables (x_1…x_8).
The dependent variable Y is 'being an eco-friendly consumer' and the independent variables are: x_1 purchase of eco-friendly products, x_2 gender, x_3 age, x_4 education, x_5 nationality, x_6 employment, x_7 attitude to be more environmentally conscious at home or travelling and x_8 willingness to pay more.
Firstly, we performed chi square statistic to measure the association between variables. We established the significance level at 95% (p=0.05). Our aim is to test the association between the dependent variable 'being an eco-friendly consumer' (Y) and eight independent variables (x_1…x_8).
Considering that:

H_0: there is no association between Y and x_n (x_1…x_8)

H_1: there is an association between Y and x_n (x_1…x_8)

Running chi square tests, it emerged that in five cases we obtained statistically significant results. Specifically, it emerged that 'being an eco-friendly consumer' has an association with x_1 purchase of eco-friendly products, x_2 gender, x_3 age, x_5 nationality and x_8 willingness to pay more. In these cases, we rejected the null hypothesis (Pr<p) that means there is association.
In the other three cases, we found that Pr>p and the results are not statistically significant.
Table 2 summarizes chi square results. All the tables are contained in Appendix 1.

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Table 2. Chi square test: statistical significance

Variable	P-value	Statistical significance
Purchase of eco-friendly products	Pr=0.000	Statistically significant result
Gender	Pr=0.000	Statistically significant result
Age	Pr=0.006	Statistically significant result
Education	Pr=0.574	Not statistically significant result
Nationality	Pr=0.012	Statistically significant result
Employment	Pr=0.063	Not statistically significant result
Attitude home/travelling	Pr=0.937	Not statistically significant result
Willingness to pay	Pr=0.000	Statistically significant result

Chi square statistic tests only two variables at one time and indicates if there is an association or not. It does not give further information. To overcome these limitations, we performed a regression.

Using the same model defined above, we run a logistic regression model. In our case, the dependent variable is dichotomous, so we decided to use the logit function.
The logit is the log of the odds:

$$logit(p) = \log(\frac{p}{1-p})$$

So, our logistic regression model looks like:

$$log\ \frac{\hat{p}_i}{1-\hat{p}_i} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_{i1} + \beta_2 x_{i2} + \ldots + \beta_p x_{ip}$$

We have multiple predictor variables in our logistic regression model. Applying such a model to our dataset:

$$logit = \log(\frac{p}{1-p}) = \beta_0 + (\beta_1 * purchase) + (\beta_2 * gender) + (\beta_3 * age) + (\beta_4 * education) + (\beta_5 * nationality) + (\beta_6 * employment) + (\beta_7 * attitude\ home/travelling) + (\beta_8 * willingnesstopay)$$

As shown in Table 3, we found that four variables are statistically significant running a logistic regression. With the exception of variable x_5 'nationality', we obtained the same results of chi square test.

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Variable	P-value	Statistical significance
Purchase of eco-friendly products	Pr=0.001	Statistically significant result
Gender	Pr=0.000	Statistically significant result
Age	Pr=0.007	Statistically significant result
Education	Pr=0.941	Not statistically significant result
Nationality	Pr=0.136	Not statistically significant result
Employment	Pr=0.880	Not statistically significant result
Attitude home/travelling	Pr=0.521	Not statistically significant result
Willingness to pay	Pr=0.000	Statistically significant result

Table 3. Logistic Regression: statistical significance

The following tables show results in terms of odds ratios and in terms of coefficients scales in log odds.

Figure 1. Logistic Regression: odd ratio (OR)

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Logistic regression                               Number of obs   =        406
                                                  LR chi2(8)      =      62.01
                                                  Prob > chi2     =     0.0000
Log likelihood = -175.97927                       Pseudo R2       =     0.1498
```

dummyecoconsumer	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
gender2	.3058092	.0856449	-4.23	0.000	.1766294	.5294659
age2	1.681779	.3267741	2.68	0.007	1.149154	2.461272
education2	1.015935	.2183458	0.07	0.941	.6666913	1.548129
nationality2	1.202235	.1485016	1.49	0.136	.9437308	1.531549
employment2	.9872941	.0836465	-0.15	0.880	.8362385	1.165636
ecofriendlyproduct	.4976133	.1080452	-3.21	0.001	.3251421	.7615716
conscious	1.228831	.394702	0.64	0.521	.6547648	2.306212
willingtopay	3.36263	.9185389	4.44	0.000	1.96863	5.74373
_cons	5.739729	7.364486	1.36	0.173	.4642355	70.96504

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Figure 2. Logistic Regression: coefficients (β)

Logistic regression — Number of obs = 406; LR chi2(8) = 62.01; Prob > chi2 = 0.0000; Log likelihood = -175.97927; Pseudo R2 = 0.1498

dummyecoconsumer	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
gender2	-1.184794	.28006	-4.23	0.000	-1.733702	-.6358864
age2	.5198521	.1943026	2.68	0.007	.139026	.9006783
education2	.0158094	.214921	0.07	0.941	-.4054281	.4370468
nationality2	.1841827	.1235212	1.49	0.136	-.0579143	.4262798
employment2	-.0127873	.084723	-0.15	0.880	-.1788414	.1532668
ecofriendlyproduct	-.6979321	.2171269	-3.21	0.001	-1.123493	-.2723711
conscious	.2060635	.3212012	0.64	0.521	-.4234792	.8356062
willingtopay	1.212723	.2731609	4.44	0.000	.6773377	1.748109
_cons	1.747412	1.283072	1.36	0.173	-.7673634	4.262187

Conclusions, Future Research and Limitations

Eco-friendly awareness has clearly increased during the last years. The research project put in evidence an interesting result referring to the attitude of the visitors. The potential bias, generated by face-to-face interviews that could let the interviewers feel under judge, is on the contrary a useful tool to have a measure about the eco-friendly awareness. People see sustainability as an important topic. Being not sustainable generates shame. It is not related to the nationality of the interviewers. Obviously, "green washing" cases regards organizations and firms as well as single citizen behaviour. However, the desire to appear eco-friendly consumer is a positive basis to promote and implement the attitude and the concrete actions. Local, national and international eco-friendly policies have to be developed starting from this statement.

The majority of respondents declared to be eco-friendly consumers and to buy often/rarely eco-friendly products. This is not a contradiction because sustainability is not related just to purchasing process. Sustainability involves other aspects such as recycling, making collection, saving energy and water and avoiding wastes.

The findings put in evidence that generally people feel to be more sustainable at home instead of while traveling. Visitors are still not very involved in looking for accommodation with environmental certifications and in following suggestions from the host regarding being more sustainable (i.e. saving energy). It may be interesting to study if it represents good habits or simply cost savings because at home people have to pay and in hotel or other accommodations expenses are included in the room rate. Further research can be focused on this aspect.

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The challenge for academics and practitioners is to generate a cultural change in order to follow the existent path to a real awareness about sustainable development. The process has a positive starting point. The concrete actions are still too poor.
The iconic destination guaranteed a heterogeneous sample. However, the research project considers a limited number of tourists and the study is just focused on Pisa. Further research should be developed in other iconic destinations in order to compare the results.
The research project has been developed basing on a complete, structured and simple questionnaire to get easily information from the sample. Furthermore, a more structured questionnaire can be developed in order to get more in-depth information on the analysed sample.
The grade of participation of the respondents could be checked directly on the field.

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Appendix 1. Chi square statistic

Figure A1.

Eco-friendly consumer	Purchase of eco-friendly products				
	Always	Never	Often	Rarely	Total
Not	2	10	18	54	84
	2.38	11.90	21.43	64.29	100.00
	11.11	62.50	7.83	38.03	20.69
Yes	16	6	212	88	322
	4.97	1.86	65.84	27.33	100.00
	88.89	37.50	92.17	61.97	79.31
Total	18	16	230	142	406
	4.43	3.94	56.65	34.98	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(3) = 67.2606 Pr = 0.000

Figure A2.

Eco-friendly consumer	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Not	28	56	84
	33.33	66.67	100.00
	12.96	29.47	20.69
Yes	188	134	322
	58.39	41.61	100.00
	87.04	70.53	79.31
Total	216	190	406
	53.20	46.80	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 16.7931 Pr = 0.000

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Figure A3.

Eco-friendly consumer	Age				
	18 - 25	26 - 45	46 - 65	More than	Total
Not	34	30	20	0	84
	40.48	35.71	23.81	0.00	100.00
	32.69	16.48	16.95	0.00	20.69
Yes	70	152	98	2	322
	21.74	47.20	30.43	0.62	100.00
	67.31	83.52	83.05	100.00	79.31
Total	104	182	118	2	406
	25.62	44.83	29.06	0.49	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(3) = 12.6208 Pr = 0.006

Figure A4.

Eco-friendly consumer	Education			
	Compuls..	Degree	Diploma	Total
Not	10	44	30	84
	11.90	52.38	35.71	100.00
	25.00	18.97	22.39	20.69
Yes	30	188	104	322
	9.32	58.39	32.30	100.00
	75.00	81.03	77.61	79.31
Total	40	232	134	406
	9.85	57.14	33.00	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(2) = 1.1087 Pr = 0.574

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Figure A5.

Eco-friendly consumer	Nationality						
	Asia	Austral..	Europe	Italia	North A..	South A..	Total
Not	12	0	50	18	4	0	84
	14.29	0.00	59.52	21.43	4.76	0.00	100.00
	22.22	0.00	22.52	31.03	6.45	0.00	20.69
Yes	42	4	172	40	58	6	322
	13.04	1.24	53.42	12.42	18.01	1.86	100.00
	77.78	100.00	77.48	68.97	93.55	100.00	79.31
Total	54	4	222	58	62	6	406
	13.30	0.99	54.68	14.29	15.27	1.48	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(5) = 14.5828 Pr = 0.012

Figure A6.

Eco-friendly consumer	Employment						
	Office ..	Profess..	Retired	Student	Unemplo..	Worker	Total
Not	24	20	0	26	4	10	84
	28.57	23.81	0.00	30.95	4.76	11.90	100.00
	24.49	13.51	0.00	28.26	16.67	25.00	20.69
Yes	74	128	4	66	20	30	322
	22.98	39.75	1.24	20.50	6.21	9.32	100.00
	75.51	86.49	100.00	71.74	83.33	75.00	79.31
Total	98	148	4	92	24	40	406
	24.14	36.45	0.99	22.66	5.91	9.85	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(5) = 10.4542 Pr = 0.063

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Figure A7.

Eco-friendly consumer	When are you more environmentally conscious? At home	Traveling	Total
Not	64	20	84
	76.19	23.81	100.00
	20.78	20.41	20.69
Yes	244	78	322
	75.78	24.22	100.00
	79.22	79.59	79.31
Total	308	98	406
	75.86	24.14	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 0.0062 Pr = 0.937

Figure A8.

Eco-friendly consumer	Are you willing to pay more for a more sustainable vacation? Not	Yes	Total
Not	48	36	84
	57.14	42.86	100.00
	32.00	14.06	20.69
Yes	102	220	322
	31.68	68.32	100.00
	68.00	85.94	79.31
Total	150	256	406
	36.95	63.05	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00

Pearson chi2(1) = 18.5458 Pr = 0.000

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