

Tourism Marketing Management and Competitiveness *A Case Study in Öland & Gotland*



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ABSTRACT

The drastic growth in the tourism industry is continuously raising questions for destinations regarding competitiveness in today's global market share. For small island destinations, destination management in the terms of marketing is a crucial factor that defines the competitiveness and success of smaller islands in order to remain competitive and economically benefit in the fast growing tourism industry. The purpose of this study was to uncover specific marketing strategies that needed to be incorporated within small island tourism destinations. To fill in the knowledge gap within the marketing of small island tourism, a case study was conducted by examining the challenges and opportunities in two small islands, Öland and Gotland, located in Sweden. The findings of the case study revealed the significance of *cultural tourism* and its role in the marketing of the destinations. The *cultural attributes* include the importance of *heritage* and *nature*; by providing unique travel attributes that step out of the typical 3S (sea, sun, sand). The findings were looked upon from local residents, businesses, and local tourism organizations which both concluded that cultural attributes are important factors to consider to solve the *seasonality* challenges with a clear *market segmentation* in order to continually remain competitive.

Keywords

Small island destinations, competitiveness, cultural tourism, relationship marketing, seasonality, market segmentation

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1. Introduction

The global economy has been significantly impacted by tourism over the past three decades, and most nations, either developed or developing—now have more opportunity than ever to take part in this socio economic phenomenon as both hosts and guests (Neto, 2003). *Tourism* is now the leading service sector for many small islands, therefore is a key sector in most small island developing states, contributing to gross domestic product (GDP), government revenue and employment among other factors that boost small island destinations (SIDs) economy (Craigwell, 2007). Hence, rapid tourism development initiatives have been taken on by different destinations in an effort to benefit economically from one of the largest industries in the world, thus as a result it has increased competition for a share of the tourism market (Naisbitt, 1994). For small island destinations with attractive resources considered appealing to potential tourists; *tourism development* has long been seen as a factor driving economic prosperity (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008; Shareef & McAleer, 2005). Thus significant changes in *destination management* and *marketing* have been prompted by the intense growth in tourism. “*Competitiveness* has been associated in the tourism literature as a crucial factor for the success of tourist destinations” (Croes 2010: 2). One of the biggest challenges for destinations in this fast-growing industry is remaining competitive in the tourism market; especially for small island destinations that have to focus more on managing and planning on how to become or remain competitive within the tourism world (Craigwell, 2007).

1.1 Background

Small islands face geographical restrictions that prevent them from gaining a fair share of the expanding global tourism market (D. Reid & J. Reid, 2010), though despite such restrictions, SIDs have various attractive attributes that also makes them stand out in the tourism industry. Small island destinations present three key characteristics: “small size, with implications for pressure on resources and limited economic diversity; remoteness and isolation, leading to challenges for trading but also to a unique biodiversity and cultural richness; and a maritime environment, leading to strong tourism assets” (UNWTO, n.d). SIDs have characteristics that differentiate them from other economies. “From a tourism perspective, SIDs particularly are more notable for their unique characteristics such as remoteness, scenery and sense of place (their competitive advantage) than for their limitations and barriers” (Hampton & Jeyacheya 2013: 1). SIDs have been popular holiday

destinations for several decades offering the '3S' for those seeking the typical sun, sea and sand exotic location. The '3S' exotic holiday became popular in the early 1960s, and later on the exotic theme started to diversify according to interest, offering holiday packages such as sports, adventure and culture in the 1980s. Small size populations provide unique opportunities to the tourists that gets the tourist to understand and see the totality of a locale (Baldacchino, 2012).

Traditional perspectives on SIDS have focused on documenting only the challenges and vulnerabilities for SIDS; specifically in three sections: "high reliance on foreign resource flows, peripherality and high vulnerabilities to exogenous events" (Cameron & Roberts, 2010: 2). Historically, small islands have always been highly reliant on foreign help whether it's for technical cooperation or capital financing of projects and in the tourism industry, such dependance led to a state of foreign ownership in the tourism infrastructure (Freitag, 1994; Brohman, 1996). The traditional conceptualization has only been a discussion of SIDS and all its negative aspects, while new perspectives highlight the strengths of "small states and the way in which these strengths have and can be used to position SIDS more competitively" (Cameron & Roberts, 2010: 4). There are so many strengths that highlight smaller islands including an improved social, cultural, environmental, and intellectual resources that are presented locally in various SIDS (Cameron & Roberts, 2010). The intangible and tangible heritage, the landscape, sea, river, and biodiversity are all factors that possess a rich cultural , social and natural heritage for SIDS. The rise of the "new tourist," as defined by Poon (1993), who seeks an experience beyond the standard sun, sea, and sand (3S) offers should find island nations to be particularly attractive. Recent years have seen several SIDS make a strong effort to value their cultural expressions, therefore the discussion concerning SID strengths are essential and required preconditions for the growth of a competitive and sustainable tourism business and should be discussed in relation to island development (United Nations, n.d.).

1.1.1 Destination Marketing

Development strategies for small nation states are further complicated by significant and challenging data gaps (Butler, 1993). The lack of attention and poor development strategies for SIDs calls for the significance of proper marketing strategies for these smaller destinations. As explained beforehand, the tourism industry is experiencing a rapid change, and in order to remain competitive within this time of change, all tourism stakeholders must clearly understand the direction the change is taking on. Thus, understanding the direction of rapid changes in such a fast growing industry also means considering the implications for the management of the business or destination (Michael et al., 2019). Ritchie and Crouch (2003), further elaborate on how small island destinations should be managed and marketed by arguing to remain competitive within today's fast growing tourism industry, destinations need to increase tourism expenditure, provide satisfactory and memorable experiences; thus increasing visitors. This is where destination marketing comes in; Wahab et al. (1976:24), as cited in Cameron & Roberts (2010: 15), outlined the scope of destination marketing as the management process where different tourism organizations “identify selected tourist, actual and potential, communicate with them to ascertain and influence their wishes, needs, motivations, likes and dislikes, on local, regional, national and international levels and to formulate and adapt their tourist products accordingly in view of achieving optimal tourist satisfaction thereby fulfilling their objectives”. A destination is usually defined as ‘specific places’ or the center of facilities and services created to cater to the tourists' needs (Cooper et al., 2008). In terms of operations, destination marketing takes on a strategic process that constructs competitive advantages using a mix of marketing techniques with a mix of both resources and opportunities a destination has to offer. Marketing firms must make sure that the little resources they have for marketing are supported with recent, reliable research. Profiling the consumer, whose needs are constantly changing but who ultimately wants to get the best value for their money, is even more crucial. Another tactic in destination marketing that falls under SIDs is market diversification (Cameron & Roberts, 2010). In a general context target markets, distribution channels, and communication initiatives must all be well identified. “The understanding of destination image is important for any destination marketing plan” (Fletcher et al., 2018: 579). This comes with understanding the destination as a whole market in order to plan out a strategic marketing plan for a destination.

1.1.2 Competitiveness

SIDs are exposed to vulnerability and are affected by several factors that decrease their competitiveness. Factors such as accessibility, technology, scarce and fragile resources, and infrastructure among others all play a significant role in decreasing competitiveness in smaller nations. (Craigwell, 2007). SIDs offer extraordinary natural and cultural resources that tourists are constantly looking for, thus already putting strong competitive advantages for SIDs. There is acknowledgement that small island destinations have various strengths that can be utilized to gain competitiveness (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008; Turnball, 2003). Craigwell (2007) argues that despite the size of the European market, the majority of SIDs have not been able to fully take leverage of the market. Various reasons for this include factors such as price sensitivity, the high number of tourism players, and the costs of airfare and accommodation. In fact The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index shows only two SIDs that come in top 50 countries for the overall destination competitiveness; Barbados (no. 30) and Mauritius (no. 40), (World Economic Forum, 2009). The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index is founded on how competitive a destination is in a variety of categories, such as safety and security, health and hygiene, air transport infrastructure, ICT infrastructure, cultural resources, and pricing competitiveness. Similar research on SIDs competitiveness revealed that while it is marginally higher than the global average, SIDs are generally less competitive than more developed nations. Small island states were found to be uncompetitive in the hotel industry, in terms of social and technological advancement, and in the aviation industry (Craigwell, 2007). The small population size, the remoteness from international markets, threat of climate change, high transportation costs, with the rise of the perspicacious and price-conscious traveler, among others, are factors that could potentially threaten the SIDs market share in the global economy, for this reason we get into the concept of competitiveness covering various aspects for SIDs. Hassan (2000) and Craigwell (2007:9), Worrell and Smith (2006) have defined competitiveness “as the ability of a destination to maintain its market position relative to its competitors”. Additionally to competitiveness, the conceptual model of destination competitiveness covers the primary factors influencing potential travelers' decisions between different destinations are the prime key assets and attractions. The physiography, culture, history, mix of activities, special events, entertainment, and infrastructure are identified as the main pull factors at the destination. They emphasize that the core resources

and attractors are the main incentives or pull factors for inbound tourism (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Additionally, destinations are managed within a larger framework of competitiveness and 'stewardship', which correspond to the application of management resources to both expand and enhance the destination as well as preserve and protect its fundamental resources (Fletcher et al., 2018). "Increasing competitiveness requires the efforts of destination marketing organizations"(Cameron & Roberts, 2010: 8). These general principles and values create marketing strategies to enhance the destinations' tourism product thus contributing to the marketing success of destinations.

1.2 Problem discussion

Destination competitiveness theories have been researched since the 1990's aiming to diagnose competitive aspects in different geographical locations and theoretical frameworks (Crouch, 2011). According to Azzopardi and Nash (2015), small island destinations are often excluded from the competitiveness debate due to the small amount of research. Scholars have developed new models for tourism destination competitiveness, (Croes, 2010; Crouch, 2011) however the majority of these models are designed for larger destinations.

Marketing strategies are essential for destination competitiveness (Crouch, 2011). Destination marketing can help increase competitiveness in European destinations with methods such as brand image. "Brand image has been recognised as a key factor for consumers in selecting a destination" (Perunjodi, 2012: 56). SIDs are heavily dependent on tourism as one of the main sources of income. The brand image for these types of destinations can drastically affect them economically. With more destinations strongly focusing on the outside perspective, thus neglecting their local residents, it creates difficulties to differentiate one island from another (Perunjodi, 2012). Factors such as physiographic and meteorological attributes are beneficial for the brand image and other marketing strategies for small island destinations. These factors influence the decision making of tourists alongside the awareness and image of a destination (Crouch, 2011). Furthermore, Loureiro and Sarmento Ferreira (2014) categorizes these factors as comparative competitiveness; competitive competitiveness is referred to the extent and the ability of a destination to effectively utilize the resources they have. "The supporting factors and resources allow the country to establish a successful tourism industry" (p. 219). Scholars have taken the concept of

competitiveness thoroughly and analyzed the many options of how to implement it to different frameworks (Crouch, 2011). In the case of SIDs, one of the most important characteristics of destination competitiveness is to identify the comparative resources at their disposal and how to develop a marketing strategy to attract tourists in an efficient manner.

The knowledge gap within small island destinations refers to the small amount of research covering the main aspects of the tourism destination. The papers and articles done by researchers cover many aspects of destination marketing, destination competitiveness and tourism in the context of 'normal' destinations, disregarding small destinations, thus creating the problem at hand. However, research covering the topic of small islands has been done (Chacko, 1998; Crouch and Ritchie 1999; Buhalis, 2000).

Acknowledging the fact that there exists a knowledge gap within the field of small island tourism marketing and small island destinations competitiveness is a statement mentioned by various researchers including: Azzopardi and Nash (2015), Canavan (2012), Croes (2013), Vogt et al. (2016), Hampton and Jeyacheya (2013). The assumption that there is a research gap in the context of small island destinations has been a topic of discussion since the 90's with Buttler (1993) addressing in his book on developmental processes in small island destinations. The lack of representation from the local residents in surveys and similar study methods creates misconceptions around what the perceptions towards tourism are for the local residents and businesses.

1.3

Purpose

The purpose of researching small island destinations is to fill in the gaps that are being created from the traditional approaches given by researchers into similar studies. The lack of representation from the local residents in surveys and similar study methods creates misconceptions around what the perceptions towards tourism are for the local residents and businesses. The main purpose of the study is to explore the phenomena of small island tourism and analyze what marketing strategies work best for small island destinations in order to remain competitive in the tourism market.

The goal of this study is to fill in the knowledge gap missing in terms of competitiveness and destination marketing. For this purpose, the following questions will be the main research objectives:

- What marketing tourism strategies are needed to increase competitiveness for SIDs?

1.4

Limitations

For this research study, it is important to acknowledge the fact that there are some restrictions, or limitations that will need to be addressed. Even though there are limitations for the gathering of data, this will hopefully not decrease the validity of the study. The limitations for the research study are on sight limitations, and monetary limitations. Due to these limitations, our case study was changed from four destinations to two in order to give the case study more credibility and reliability. On sight limitations refers to the impediment of being at the actual destination for the quantitative data that is necessary for the study. The island destinations that will be further studied have the on-sight limitation in the sense that it is out of range due to not being able to travel to the desired places. Monetary limitations are the second limitations for the studies due to not having the necessary funds to reach the desired islands. This limitation is not as important as the previous one but is important to be addressed due to them being connected. It is not feasible to travel to these islands due to not having any funds, but at the same time, even with funds there are other variables such as accommodation and schedule conflicts as well.

2. Methodology

The following chapter will describe the research approach taken within the phenomena study. The methodology chapter contains a thorough explanation of the selected research strategy alongside the selected research design used for answering the questions of the study conducted. The main purpose of the study is to explore the phenomena of small island tourism and analyze what marketing strategies work best for small island destinations in order to remain competitive in the tourism market. The type of data gathering will be presented, along with the conducted case studies for this research will also be explained.

2.1 Purpose of study

The subject of small island tourism and the marketing behind it is a complex phenomenon that lacks knowledge within the tourism literature reviews (Buttler, 1993; Azzopardi and Nash, 2015), for this main reason, the authors chose to induce the topic which becomes open-ended making it an exploratory topic (Smith, 2017:33). The primary purpose of the study, trying to emphasize on the gaps of literature in order to achieve important results creating the open-ended conclusions, thus enabling the findings for further research in the field.

The research design chosen for this study will carry out an exploratory approach to help us answer the main question. The research question also takes a focus on the concept of marketing strategies and competitiveness for small island destinations. The question for this study can therefore be best answered by taking on an idiographic approach, thus the logic of the work will be the use of inductive reasoning. The research of this study emerged as more research was discovered and started to unfold therefore making the conclusion an aspect to be determined in the future.

In this particular study the main research strategy will focus on the collection of primary data due to using case studies of two SIDs to answer the research question. Therefore, the main strategy that was used for this study was a quantitative method to gather statistics regarding competitiveness. The quantitative data was gathered through the conduction of surveys in the form of both questionnaires and interviews of local residents, local businesses and the addition of tourism organizations (tourism information centers, tourism organizations).

Furthermore, to get an in-depth understanding of various marketing strategies of SIDs as well as defining and constructing a level of competitiveness for them, we used secondary data from existing knowledge on small island tourism marketing to support the quantitative data gathered. Secondary data has been gathered from various tourism marketing sources: books, journals, and websites. The use of both quantitative and qualitative data helps in strengthening the knowledge scope of the study therefore providing a strong analysis of the results and finally raising a discussion for further research.

2.2 Research approach

The type of logic in the work that will be used in this study will take on an inductive reasoning. Induction as Smith refers to is “the collection of specific pieces of information or the observation of specific events, from which general conclusions are derived” (2017:33). To induce means searching for a pattern from an observation and then carrying out a development of explanations of empirical generalizations to identify a preliminary relationship as research progresses. When using induction, the scope of the research findings is unknown therefore no hypotheses have been formulated. Additionally, Smith explains how induction “tends to be open-ended in that it is exploratory, with the conclusions emerging only as the research unfolds (2017:33). The reason for choosing an inductive approach is best explained from the “bottom-up” approach where the process starts with observations to describe a picture of the phenomenon which then builds a pattern and ends with forming theory (Research Methodology, n.d.).

2.3 **Research design**

As mentioned earlier the research design used for the following study will be conducted through an exploratory approach. An exploratory design is “used to identify questions and appropriate methods, or to test a research design prior to conducting a fuller study” (Smith, 2017: 203). Using an exploratory design is best when conducting a research problem that has few earlier studies to refer to thus needing to research the topic in order to predict outcomes or open new discussions for future studies. Additional support to exploratory research is further explained by research expert writer Geroge Teegan (2022), claiming that “exploratory research is a methodology approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied in depth”.

The paradigm investigated within this research exists in a preliminary stage of investigation. Small island destinations need precise marketing techniques to remain competitive in the rapid growing tourism industry. Recent research has shown that tracking competitiveness for SIDs from traditional factors is not accurate nor efficient (Croes, 2010). The lack of marketing attention for SIDs is a new issue therefore the data collection process is challenging; for this reason, the focus is on gaining insights on destination marketing and competitiveness to investigate the problem (Azzopardi and Nash, 2015), and an exploratory approach offers a flexible and open-ended nature

to the scope of our research. The goal from the study is to narrow down such challenging phenomena and to contribute to the body of study thus serving as a guide for future research.

2.3.1 Case study

In a research context case study is considered to be more of a research strategy than a distinct method. The main strategy for the study will be all the primary data collection that has been gathered through a case study on the following small island destinations, Öland and Gotland. Smith best explains case studies as “are a tool to produce ‘deep’ insights into some phenomenon, including conclusions based on the context of the topic being studied, and involve the use of multiple methods and data sources” (Smith, 2017: 200). Case studies have become a popular tool in recent years for tourism research strategy and with the selected SIDs it will help reach an in-depth understanding of specific destination marketing techniques. This will help demonstrate opportunities and challenges that SIDs face and therefore direct new explanations of how small island destinations can remain competitive. The importance of the case study will contribute to both the gathering of quantitative data alongside with qualitative data to further strengthen the results of the discourse.

2.3.2 Quantitative research

“Perhaps the most common way of classifying research paradigms is by labeling them as either quantitative or qualitative” (Smith, 2017: 38). The main research strategy chosen for the study was conducted through the gathering of quantitative data or in other terms ‘empiricism’ or empirical data. Empirical data is explained by Smith as “the systematic observation and recording of data that are then studied to form conclusions,.. these conclusions can be descriptions of some pattern, the development of explanations about the forces creating that pattern” (2017: 39).

Quantitative methods focus on objective measurements and the statistical or numerical analysis of data. This type of data can be collected through a variety of methods such as polls, questionnaires, and surveys done on various groups of people in order to explain a particular phenomenon. Inductive reasoning falls into the logic of quantitative data research, as with quantitative methods one starts collecting data then analyzing it to reach some conclusions. Surveys are the most commonly used empirical method, and the type of data collection that will be used for the

phenomena of this study (Smith, 2017). Quantitative research in marketing is very useful because it is systematic and contains detailed information of the issue with a well targeted demographic. Surveys through questionnaires can improve decision making based on real life data and the numerical, mathematical or statistical data can help form better strategies and marketing plans (Quantitative Market Research, 2022).

2.3.3 Qualitative research

The second research strategy that was used for the study was qualitative data to support the primary data that has been collected. A qualitative approach or in other terms secondary data takes more of a subject method compared to quantitative. An example of how qualitative data can be gathered is through an in-depth personal interview where a conversation is held between the researcher and a subject. Interviews have been the main reliable qualitative method that was used throughout the study where we posed significant questions to local businesses that helped us get expert insights on the marketing of small destinations thus exploring the topic in-depth and gaining meaningful insights. For this study, eight interviews in the form of structured and semi-structured were conducted, four in each destination. Secondary data has been collected also through tourism literature journals, books and websites to determine specific frequency traits or characteristics which further developed a concrete level of theory to support the paradigm.

Qualitative research is very important for market research because “for a market researcher, collecting qualitative data helps in answering questions like, who their customers are, what issues or problems they are facing, and where do they need to focus their attention, so problems or issues are resolved” (Qualitative Data Analysis, 2022). The ability to gain open-ended questions through the interviews that will be conducted throughout the case study, will allow for spontaneous and follow up questions which allows for a natural flow of conversation. Interviewing local businesses also have the ability to help us understand their perception for marketing a destination and their level of expertise can help us connect and contribute to existing tourism literature research.

2.4 Area of study

The areas chosen for the case studies were selected according to certain parameters for the purpose of analyzing similar places. The parameters involve the number of residents in the areas ($n \leq$

100.000), where n represents the population of the chosen islands, special qualities in the areas such as sun, sand, sea, (3S), as well as the cultural heritage provided by these areas. These parameters were chosen with the purpose of analyzing the competitiveness of the areas and to understand their marketing efforts to be a competitive destination.

Gotland and Öland were the two chosen islands due to their commonalities in terms of tourism products such as cultural heritage, weather conditions, and seasonality referring to the aspects and attributes the high and low season offer. Even though the 3S are still relevant for these destinations, Croes and Semrad (2013), claim that cultural tourism offers have helped destinations broaden their appeal for new targeted markets and makes the 3S less relevant as a main tourism attraction.

2.5

Instruments

Instruments utilized in a research paper refers to the tools that are used for data gathering. These instruments are divided in two sections, available information and investigator-gathered data (Fagarasanu & Kumar, 2002). For the purpose of this paper, information-gathered data in terms of surveys in the form of questionnaires and interviews will be conducted in the islands of Gotland and Öland.

“The quality of obtained data is strongly affected by four different instrument properties: feasibility, nature of the tool, level of measurement, and the most important, psychometric or analytical properties” (Fagarasanu & Kumar, 2002: 356). When it comes to the gathering of data, the mentioned four properties are important in order to increase the validity and reliability of the study. The first property, feasibility, refers to the accessibility to gather the desired data. Within feasibility, it is necessary to take into consideration different variables that can affect the measurement of data. The dropout rate or response- and non-response rate may create erroneous results and compromise the case study (Strickland, 1996; Fagarasanu & Kumar, 2002).

The nature of data desired to be analyzed within both islands will be in the form of a subjective measurement. This is due to the purpose of the study, which is related to the individuals' own thoughts, hence making it more personal. The data to be collected from the case studies are defined as variables in order to properly measure them. These variables depend on whether the data gathered comes in the form of qualitative or quantitative. For the case of both destinations, the

variables will be classified as ordinal and ratio in order to measure the competitiveness and get results to the question at hand (Fagarasanu & Kumar, 2002).

2.5.1 *Validity* *and* *reliability*

Psychometric, or analytical properties is an important form of data gathering. The values collected from these properties are represented in the form of validity and reliability where the two concepts are important for the quality of the data gathered. Reliability covers the risk of error that comes with the measurement techniques. The greater the error, the less reliable the result will be. That being said, the smaller the error, the greater the confidence in the results (Psychometric properties, n.d; Polit and Beck, 1991).

Validity is referred to the property of the instrument in which the instrument gathers what it is intended to gather and doesn't deviate from it. To measure the validity of an instrument, it is needed to take a theoretical framework and create a connection between the instrument and the result. If the outcome of the research proves the connections between the instruments and the findings, the validity intensifies. On the other hand, if this is not proven, it can imply that the validity of the instruments are erroneous, or the findings are wrong. (Psychometric properties, n.d).

2.5.2 *Samples*

In terms of data gathering, it is needed to first identify the sample types that are intended for the study. The types of samples utilized for the data collection were in the form of convenience sample and non-probability quota sample. According to Smith (2017), convenience sample refers to choosing people to take part in interviews or surveys due to the fact that they are available and there is access to them. In the case of both islands, connections to locals are the access needed to create the wanted convenience sample. Quota sampling refers to employing quotas, or requirements, for participating in the conducted survey. Smith (2017) further elaborates quota sampling to non-proportional samples, claiming that it is up for the authors to decide the amount of people needed for the surveys.

The conducted survey gathered data from the two locations, Gotland and Öland, with a requirement that the respondents were living in the chosen area. The chosen number of respondents were 40 participants in each island. This amount was chosen due to the time limitation and reliability of the answers.

Structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 3 local businesses in each destination alongside the tourism organization in respective locations. The semi-structured interviews were conducted through the platform Zoom, while the structured ones were done through e-mail.

3. Case study

3.1 Introduction to Gotland

Located in the Baltic Sea, the Swedish island Gotland is a well-known tourist destination, visited by nearly 2 million tourists on an annual basis (Griggio & Oxenswärdh, 2019). Gotland is the largest island in Sweden with the land area being 3,140 km² (covering 0.8 percent of the area of Sweden) including the following islands: Fårö, Gotska Sandön, Furillen, and Stora and Lilla Karlsö (Holm, 2017). The population ranges a little over 60 000 inhabitants who live on the island all year round, and roughly 26 000 of those inhabitants are in Visby; however this is “a number that changes dramatically during the summer as Gotland is one of Sweden’s most popular summer destinations” (Region Gotland, 2021).

Visby is the main town in Gotland located on the east coast that plays a historically significant role, being a Viking-era wonder and officially became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1995 as it was one of the most important trading towns during the medieval period as well as the best preserved trading town in northern Europe (Region Gotland, 2021). Additionally, it became the main center of the Hanseatic League in the Baltic between the 12th and 14th century. “The Hanseatic League (also known as *Hansa*, *Hanse*, 1356-1862 CE) was a federation of north German towns and cities to facilitate trade and protect mutual interests” (Mark, 2019) and “Gotlandic merchants utilized it as a strategic point in trade within the Baltic Sea” (UNESCO, n.d.). The Hanseatic League shaped the economy, trade and politics in northern Europe for more than 400 years. Visby’s historic greatness also comes from significant architectural buildings such the 'ringmuren' (The Visby City Wall) alongside the numerous built church ruins, burial grounds from the Viking era, and narrow alleys that all contribute to its historic townscape features (Region Gotland, 2021).

Though being known for its rich heritage, Gotland is best described as where history meets unique natural scenery. “Gotland is a paradise island with characterful wilderness and a coastline punctuated with sandy beaches and sculptural sea stacks” (Visit Sweden, 2022). Gotland has over 100 nature reserves from ivy forests, sandy beaches and barren sea stack fields. They are known for their ‘raukar’ as they call in Swedish in other words sea stacks which are a common sight for the island. Sea stacks are , “limestone monoliths created by natural erosion during the last Ice Age”(Visit Sweden, 2022).

3.2 Introduction to Öland

Öland is an island located in the Baltic Sea just off Sweden's southeast coast, also making it the second largest island in the region . There is an approximate 6 km wide strait that connects Öland and the mainland Kalmar; this road connection is called Ölandsbron (The Öland Bridge), which runs exactly between Färjestaden on Öland to Kalmar the mainland. The population consists of about 26 000 people; some large areas are Mörbylånga, Färjestaden, Borgholm and Löttorp (Allt på Öland, n.d.).

Ölands landscape, history and climate makes it an outstanding destination for tourists to visit. In contrast to the rest of Sweden, Öland proudly stands out for several reasons than its famous 6-kilometer-long bridge. People find it to be a perfect vacation spot due to its unique nature and pleasant environment. Not only regular people but even members of the royal family have made Öland their summer spot for over 100 years. Ölands is a paradise for a wide range of attractions that brings in a variety of visitors. Öland has a total of 75 nature reserves, a vast fauna of wildlife species and particularly the hundreds of birds that has become an attraction of bird sightseeing. The island's set environment contains a variety of activities bringing in windsurfers, kite surfers, hikers, cyclists among others. And of course one of the most important aspects is its history and cultural origins of ancient ruins, rune stones and rauk fields bringing an even bigger richness to the beautiful island. A fun fact is that “there are signs that people have inhabited Öland since 6000 B.C.” (Visit Sweden, 2021).

From the north to the south of the island, each area has its own special features. “Northern Öland is mostly an open landscape where the western high cliff coast attracts interest, the so-called Stone

Coast” (Allt på Öland, n.d.). In the far north you will find a variety of attractions from endless sandy beaches, rocky shores, lakes, forests and open plains; which attracts many visitors each year (Öland.se, n.d). Heading south of the island you will find the heart of “an exquisitely beautiful landscape and unique cultural district stretching from Karlevi in the west to Gårdby in the east and all the way south” (Södra Öland, n.d.). The agricultural landscape is filled with villages, stone walls and barren limestone terraces which has led this area being inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage Site in 2000 (Södra Öland, n.d.). Öland is also known for Sweden’s tallest lighthouse ‘Långe Jan’ dating back to 1785, making it an addition to one of Öland’s most popular attractions. In the same area, you will also find the Ottenby Nature Reserve and the Ottenby Bird Observatory “a paradise for birdwatchers since opening in 1946 and home to some 140 species”(Visit Sweden, n.d.).

4. Findings

In this chapter, the empirical findings from the quantitative data are presented. It will be based on the questionnaire done on the residents and the interviews conducted with various tourism businesses. The questionnaire done in each destination gathered up to 40 locals answering the questions and the interviews were conducted with four different businesses in each island. The following results are divided into three themes: 1. the perception of tourism; 2. competitive advantage 3. seasonality. The following chapter will explain the three themes in detail with thorough findings, supported by literature review and finally reflected on.

Theme 1: The perception of tourism

Tourism is perceived among scholars as an important benefit for destinations (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). The perception local residents have towards tourism in their hosting communities varies on conditions including economic factors, work opportunities and survival in terms of businesses. These factors are visible for both destinations, Gotland and Öland.

“Tourism is an incredibly important source of income on the island”

“Many companies live on tourism and many others bring in a lot of extra money due to tourism”

Economical factors can be linked to economic dependency towards tourism for SIDs which, according to scholars, helps local residents create a positive look towards tourism if they are dependent and benefit economically from tourism (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008; Nunkoo, 2009). Gotland and Öland, being purely influenced by tourism, can be argued that they depend on tourism. McGehee and Andereck (2004) claim that there is much research done in regard to the perception of tourism. Their findings show that the perception from the locals towards tourism depends on their situation, oftentimes linked with whether they benefit economically from tourism. McGehee and Andereck (2004) claim that ‘‘the majority of studies have shown residents who are dependent on the tourism industry or perceive a greater level of economic gain tend to have a more positive perception of tourism’s economic impact than other residents’’ (133). However, their findings also note that the locals in tourism dependent communities tend to perceive tourism more negatively than less dependent communities.

Linked to economic benefits, working opportunities have a big impact on SIDs. ‘‘The job creating capacity of tourism in particular, is one of its most significant and positive features’’ (Shakeela, 2011:331). Croes (2006) claims that tourism offers a variety of opportunities to create growth, working opportunities and reduction of poverty. Both Gotland and Öland can be argued to be ‘wealthy’ destinations due to Sweden being high in the list of the wealthiest countries in the world (Trading economics, n.d), tourism has shown a visible growth for both destinations. Ölands tourism organization views tourism alongside seasonality as opportunities to create more working opportunities. They claim:

‘‘We want to make the high season last longer so businesses can employ one more person in their team’’.

The local perception regarding working opportunities is viewed positively. In both islands, locals made claims such as:

‘‘Tourism provides many opportunities for work’’

‘‘Tourism is needed for year-round businesses to survive’’

‘‘The island lives all year on tourism’’

The claims from the locals indicate a positive view towards tourism due to the benefits they get. As with many islands, they all have unique features that they take as competitive advantages, which will be further analyzed later on in this paper, as for Öland, they have a bridge which connects the island to the mainland. Locals mentioned this issue claiming that this gives Öland an edge on Gotland, which in terms of economic benefits through trading accessibility it can be argued. Work opportunities further enhance the possibilities for the island due to the connection between the island and the rest of Sweden as well as importation and exportation of goods. Visiting Gotland takes time. The travel options are either an airplane flight or a ferry ride from the nearest port, Oskarshamn. Due to Gotland being more remote and somewhat isolated, the aspect of survival grows within the destinations.

‘‘We wouldn’t be able to cope without tourism’’

The survival aspect of SIDs is deeply rooted with tourism seasonality due to the high season bringing the most amount of revenue each year. For businesses' survival, without tourism they would collapse due to the isolation and the fact that trading is difficult. In the case of Gotland, business survival, specifically small business and start-ups, are dependent on the vast number of travelers during the summer times. Big brands and organizations in the island view the survival aspect as challenges to overcome.

The tourism perception from the local perspective indicates that it has become an aspect in their day to day life. Residents in both Gotland and Öland see tourism as opportunities for economic benefit or cultural benefit. However, if these destinations would be against tourism development, it would be difficult for the municipalities to further enhance their tourism products. Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2010) claim in their research that the hosts of a destination are their primary stakeholder, indicating that the level of power lies within the residents thus becoming a crucial aspect for tourism development. Furthermore, Nunkoo and Ramkissoon explain that the amount of power that resides within the locals depends on their engagement towards tourism and whether it affects them directly or indirectly. From the claims given by the locals, the majority of them take a positive stance towards tourism to a degree that they take advantage of the situation, creating new business opportunities such as the local businesses we interviewed that will be covered later on in the paper.

Theme 2: Competitiveness & Market segmentation

The following section covers the main findings and concepts of the case study; it has been divided into three main categories covering: 1. the findings of tourist interaction with the emphasis on relationship marketing (locals); 2. the findings on competitive advantages with the emphasis on travel characteristics and travel attributes which highlights the competitiveness of cultural tourism in history and nature (locals and businesses); 3. the demographic findings with the emphasis on market segmentation (locals and businesses).

Category 1: The interaction with tourists from locals and businesses

A clear perspective on tourism strategy is essential and beneficial when thinking about the growth of tourism destinations in a market that is competitive. Understanding and focusing on a variety of critical aspects and their interactions is a crucial component of effective tourism marketing strategies (Brebbia & Pineda, 2010). Locals are the segment of a destination's internal public that are most frequently affected negatively by tourism development (Vodeb, 2012). “Nowadays, retaining tourists by developing relationships with them, as well as creating loyalty, are requisite to achieving competitive advantages” (Brebbia & Pineda, 2010: 47) . Countless studies (e.g. Gursoy, Jurovski, Uysal, 2002) reveal that local community support is a crucial requirement for long term tourism development of destinations.

Level of interaction

The results of the level of interaction of local residents with tourists:

Gotland	Öland
<p>1 lowest</p> <p>→ 1: 9.7% (3 in total)</p> <p>→ 2: 9.7% (3 in total)</p> <p>→ 3: 25.8% (8 in total)</p> <p>→ 4: 38.7% (12 in total)</p> <p>→ 5: 16.1% (5 in total)</p>	<p>1 lowest</p> <p>→ 1: 13,3% (4 in total)</p> <p>→ 2: 13,8% (4 in total)</p> <p>→ 3: 31% (9 in total)</p> <p>→ 4: 31% (9 in total)</p> <p>→ 5: 10,3% (3 in total)</p>

5 highest	5 highest
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Table 1. Level of interaction between locals and tourists

To have a start-up understanding whether the interaction among local residents and tourists played any role as a competitive advantage for SIDs, an evaluation was conducted to measure the level of interaction between them. From the data we can see that there is a clear sign that the locals do communicate with tourists for both Öland and Gotland. According to the data, 62% of the residents from Öland that participated in the question regarding communication level with tourists claim that they regularly interact with them and for Gotland it was 64,5%. To further analyze and see how important residential interaction with tourists is, a follow up question was asked to determine whether the interaction actually plays a role in the tourist returning back to the destination. The answers given by the locals showed five different outcomes of returns which are shown in Table 2.

Gotland	Öland
→ They never come back: 2.5%	→ They never come back: 5,4%
→ They rarely come back : 2.5%	→ They rarely come back : 0%
→ They sometimes come back: 37.5 %	→ They sometimes come back: 37.8 %
→ They come back once or twice: 20%	→ They come back once or twice: 13,8%
→ They come back multiples times : 37.5 %	→ They come back multiples times : 42,2 %

Table 2. Returning guests based on the level of interaction between locals and tourists

Communication between the residents and the travelers is clearly visible with the responses gathered from the data. The results show both a neutral and positive return claim for both islands. More than half of the residents for both islands claimed that tourists come back either once or twice or they claimed that they return multiple times. It can be portrayed as an act of connection between the two claims and with the shown data of returning travelers that come back can it be understood as Öland and Gotlands being a desired destination for its guests. Additionally, 78.9% of the local residents of Gotland claimed that communication with tourists is important and does have an effect in the tourists potentially coming back and 87% of locals in Öland had claimed the same perspective.

Relationship marketing and Loyalty

Literature relating to marketing and community involvement were reviewed and revealed the concepts of relationship marketing, as well as communities involvement (Brebbia & Pineda, 2010). “Relationship marketing describes a strategy for achieving a certain, obvious and sustainable competitive advantage” (Roberts, Varki & Brodie: 169). The aim of relationship marketing particularly in the tourism context is to create long-term relationships by increasing customer satisfaction which then increases both customer loyalty and customer retention (CRM Today, n.d.). “Loyalty is a primary goal of relationship marketing and sometimes is equated with the relationship marketing concept itself” (Boonajseevee, 2005:13).

Haywood (1988) believes that community assets such as heritage and landscape , public goods (e.g. parks, institutions, infrastructures, museums) and hospitality (government promotions and welcoming smiles) are provided by the community of a destination, making it the backbone of the tourism industry . Taking this into consideration, this paper considers community involvement from to significant aspects:

1. Involvement in planning
2. Creating a pleasant remembrance

There are several benefits from including community involvement in tourism planning which have been highlighted by many scholars (Gunn, 1988; LeBoeuf 1987; Simmons, 1994). “Perhaps, community involvement can be seen as important due to the local knowledge that exists within communities which can be of major importance in tourism development” (Sebele, 2010:137) . A study done by Nyaupane et al., indicated three reasons to why locals of a host community should be a part of tourism planning:

1. members of a host community have a better historical understanding of the region and its adaptation to change,
2. they are the ones who are mostly affected by tourism,
3. and are considered to be an integral part of the tourism product (Scheyvens , 1999).

Brebbia & Pineda (2010) claim that “accordingly, community participation as a key component should be strongly considered within tourism strategies (p. 50).

In terms of creating a pleasant memory for tourists, the participation of the local community is significant in ensuring an unforgettable experience while at the same time allowing the community to also benefit from tourist visitations (Sebele, 2010). Therefore making the host community's behavior towards guests important, if it is a positive friendly interaction, no doubt the host plays a role in creating a remembrance for tourists where they will recall their journey well. The results of such positive interactions result in the tourist recommending the destination to others or even returning back themselves (Fabricius, Carter & Stanford, 2007). Brebbia & Pineda (2010) points out that “[...] there is none more important than the way travelers are considered and treated by inhabitants in tourist destination” (p. 50).

Category 2: Competitive advantage

The importance of Culture for SIDS

An important segment in the survey was the competitive aspect and whether or not the residents of Öland and Gotland perceive some sort of competitiveness between its surroundings. Apart from the residents, competitiveness was also examined from the business perspective, as businesses are the ones who provide products and services to visitors, thus their marketing efforts are important to analyze the success of a destination. Roberts and Cameron (2010) claim that “small island developing states possess a rich cultural and natural heritage” (p. 20) and from the findings, the emergence of nature and heritage were the two main cultural features that highlighted the importance of certain attractions that made the islands stand out. The attractions represent the travel attributes of the small islands thus representing the destination's image which covers different factors in an individual's mental representation such as knowledge, feelings and their overall perception of a particular destination (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991). Ragavan defines travel attributes as “a set of attributes that describe a place as a travel destination” (2014: 404). Travel attributes relate to the tourists satisfaction as Kozak & Rimmington (2000) highlight the significance of tourist satisfaction in connection to successful destination marketing, affecting various factors such as the choice of destination, the consumption of goods and services and the decision to return. Due to the findings from our case study the identification of the cultural/heritage attributes has brought light to the destination's influence on tourists' satisfaction (Huh, Uysal, & Mcleary, 2006).

Cultural Findings

“The magic, the heritage, nature, beaches, the Baltic Sea, culture” - Local residents

Among the most frequent answers, two aspects were highlighted by the local residents bringing significance and pride within the cultural aspects that the islands have to offer. Sigala and Leslie (2005) define ‘cultural tourism and heritage’ as “the segment of the tourism industry that places special emphasis on heritage and cultural attractions” (p. 5). These attractions include various segments in the tourism industry such as: museums, archaeological sites, theater, and musical performances among others (Sigala and Leslie, 2005). The findings for Gotland, as well as for Öland, are linked to the cultural aspects previously mentioned, with three main factors: the importance of heritage, nature, and additionally in this part very proud residents are shown. A reference has been made by some residents which show signs of patriotism are that:

“Gotland är Östersjöns hawaii” which means *“Gotland is the Hawaii of the Baltic Sea”* and *“There is no other island like Gotland”*.

The repetition of different attractions were mentioned such as:

“We are unique: Ringmur (the City Wall) , Visby, raukar (beach pillar), beaches, there are lots that others don't have, plants that aren't found anywhere else”.

Among various other participants who clearly showed that there is so much to see in Gotland, from North to South, with different beautiful landscapes, medieval architecture, and the various accessible beaches. The unique nature, the flora and the fauna are also mentioned in that Öland has vegetation, landscapes and animals that are only present on this island. One local pointed out that:

“Öland is a national pearl, it can't be compared to nature and its surroundings”.

One strong claim that explained the importance of cultural tourism from one local resident was:

“[...] There is something here for everyone all year round. Today it is well organized and

a good stream of tourism flows”.

Richards explains how cultural and heritage tourism is developing rapidly, and it is viewed as a way to promote local culture and promote the geographical and seasonal spread of tourism in many areas (1995). Though from such responses, it is interesting to see the significance and impact that cultural tourism has on the seasonality of these small islands. It opens up a connection between the natural and historical travel attributes of both islands to the potential of seasonality spread throughout the year. This finding has sparked a start to the importance of seasonality and its role in SIDs which is explained thoroughly in theme two.

When it comes to Öland, not surprisingly, 89% of the total respondents agreed that the island has unique features and truly stands out from the rest. Among the unique characteristics that the respondents pointed out, they mentioned the *‘cozy feeling’* of living on an island that makes it special due to everything being close together and more available.

Ornithology is the study of birds’ species. This is a unique attribute in Öland due to the island having a special ecosystem where special birds can be found during different seasons of the year. Within the responses, one local wrote:

“On the southside of Öland you can find Världsarvet, hiking leads, birds and many artists. [...]”

Världsarvet are hectares of land in the south of the island that has been used as harvest grounds since the stone age. Infrastructure is also mentioned by locals with one resident stating:

“The theater Röda Lyktan at Gammalsbygården gives amazing shows [...]”

While some others mention the old castles Eketorps castle and Borgholm castle, both of them from the bronze age. In terms of culture and arts, the harvest festival, an autumn festival conducted every year in Öland, gathers craftsmen and painters for a weekend to celebrate what the island has to offer.

“The harvest festival is one of the big cultural happenings in the island. But there are many others that deal with different kinds of creativeness such as painters or musicians”.

Competitiveness looked upon businesses

The previous section determined the various cultural travel attributes that both Öland and Gotland have to offer; in this section we get into the business findings of their efforts in building these attractions through their products and services and thus analyzing the tourist satisfaction from there and how it contributes to the competitiveness of a destination's image.

Following businesses interviewed:

Gotland	Öland
<p>Strandakar is a hotel located in the countryside that carries the themes of tranquility and harmony. The interview was conducted with their CEO who also founded the company five years ago.</p>	<p>Mellby Ör inn is a small bed and breakfast (B&B) located on the southeast coast of Öland. With nature all around the hotel it creates an ambient for relaxation and to relieve stress from the normal day to day environment.</p>
<p>Your Gotland Tours is a private tour agency that offers exclusive and tailored guides. The interview was conducted with the founder/CEO who is a lifestyle entrepreneur, academic and anthropologist who conducts research in tourism and heritage in Gotland.</p>	<p>Edith & Julia is a newly renovated B&B located between Borgholm and Färjestaden on the west side of Öland. A small place to relax, but also enjoy many activities such as concerts, theater, and other events throughout the year.</p>
<p>Gotland Excursion is a company that provides cruise ship excursions for passengers and other vessel visitors. The interview was conducted with one of the founders of the business.</p>	<p>Alvaret is a renovated hotel that previously functioned as a retirement home. Deeply rooted in the history of Öland, this business tries to captivate the essence that the island has to give.</p>
<p>Turistbyråån på Gotland– Tourist Information Centre is the organization that takes care of different tourism aspects of the island. The interview was conducted with one employee within the department of sustainable growth in the Gotland region.</p>	<p>Ölands Turism Organisation is the organization that watches over the tourism aspect of the island. Arranging an interview with the chief of tourism of the organization was helpful to understand the challenges the island has as a destination.</p>

Table 3. Interviewed businesses and organizations in Gotland and Öland.

Perhaps the most important part of an image for destination marketers is how it affects travelers' decisions, (Leiser, 2001). Numerous studies within consumer behavior indicate that the customers consider the attributes to decide on destinations (Holloway, 1986; Shih, 1986; Van Raaij, 1986). The basic consumer behavior theory indicates that consumers base their product choice decisions centered on the images they form from different brands (MacInnis and Price, 1987). There are a lot of competing destinations out there, and travelers have the choice at the end of the day to decide where they want to go, thus eliminating some options that could be due to money or timing constraints (Leiper, 2001). All the products and services offered by these different tourism companies highlight the richness of landscapes and heritage that contributes to the destination's image of the islands. Though being different companies, the products and services are offered in different ways through exclusivity. In this section we get into the branding incorporated in some tourism businesses while investigating how it contributes to the image of the islands. "Consequently, the images held by individuals in the marketplace are crucial to a destination's marketing success"(Leiper, 2001: 49-66). To assess consumer behavior one has to look at the destination attributes that are being offered.

The importance of nature was highlighted by several businesses including: Strandakar Hotel, the tourist information center in Gotland, and Mellby Ör inn. Mellby Ör inn has a perfect location that helps create the image of nature and relaxation due to them being close to nature in the southeast side of Öland where there are hectares of emptiness to turn off the switch from the city perspective and to enjoy the environment. The co-founder of Mellby indicates that:

'All of (the business) is pretty much down to earth I would say, right. The pub, our guests, the whole, that would be the theme that it's close to nature, close to the heart''.

Strandakar Hotel also implements the idea of leaving the typical stressful city and experiencing the calming countryside as the CEO explained. Strandakar offers such a brand for people looking for a luxurious vacation through the uniqueness of the surrounding rich nature. The CEO further elaborates by claiming that:

"Nature is the most unique because culture can be seen anywhere while nature is not something that all hotels offer.

The Tourist Information Center whole brand is called the Green Tourist information and is seen as the brand for Gotland as a whole, claiming that:

“the sustainability work in Gotland is ongoing within the entire industry”

While Edith & Julia have a different view on their brand image for their B&B in which they provide a different environment based on each room they have. They also promote the island by selling organic products from the island such as honey or different kinds of oils.

Both islands have a rich history, with travel attributes setting back during the iron, bronze and viking age that really attracts tourists to visit such attractions. The rich heritage has been mentioned by some business interviews though were best explained with the founder from Your Gotland Tours. She starts off by explaining the type of service her business offers by claiming:

“My tours are tailored, so you come to me and you tell me what you want to see”

It is clear to say that Your Gotland Tours is operated on exclusivity based on the needs and wants of the client, from there, the CEO creates tours based solely on her clients interests and time. She specifically emphasized that what really makes tourists attracted to Gotland was the rich history in Gotland, especially the viking history. She further elaborates that a lot of people read about Gotland from articles and from there they want to see the place they read about. An incident that happened in the previous year that was very new was how she had two sets of guests that asked her to organize tours to visit the places where their ancestors came from. This goes back to their great great grandparents being from Gotland and wanting to see where they lived the churches they got married in amongst others. One important claim made by her was:

“History is important in Gotland, especially the Viking history despite it not being very visible in Gotland compared to other places; though when people read about it they still want to see the place they read about”.

It is widely acknowledged that travel motivations play a significant role in influencing tourist behavior and tourism marketing (Dann 1977). Crompton (1979), mentions the push and pull

concept assuming that the push is based on the tourists own needs and they are then pulled by the destination itself. The push and pull factors are important to consider within the work of this paper and from the findings the island's attributes play a significant role in the marketing of Öland and Gotland, thus the push and pull concepts will be further explained within the framework of the paper.

Other businesses that were interviewed also specialize in creating a historical brand image for the island, especially Gotland Excursions who also offer guided tours in Visby and in the countryside with sightseeing local history. Their business specialize in working with guests from different cultures and in different languages, and try to accommodate different needs and expectations within the framework of a tour thus also offering a service based on exclusivity.

Nevertheless, being proud of the cultural heritage of a destination is clearly shown within islands. According to the interview conducted with the Öland tourism organization, this island has a lot to offer.

‘We have the Borgholm Castle which is a really big place that is really popular. We also have the Harvest festival which is also really big. I think that it is over 200 000 people only for that period’.

During the interview, one important aspect regarding the culture of the island is how ‘lively’ the destination is. Events happening all year round makes the guests appreciate the cultural heritage Öland has to deliver. The natural landscapes together with infrastructure from early periods are attractive destinations for different travelers given the fact that Öland is an island in Sweden filled with history from the Viking era.

‘The Borgholm Castle is really popular for travelers. We also have Eketorps castle that is located in the southside of the island that together with ‘Stora Alvaret’ are designated as a World heritage site by UNESCO’.

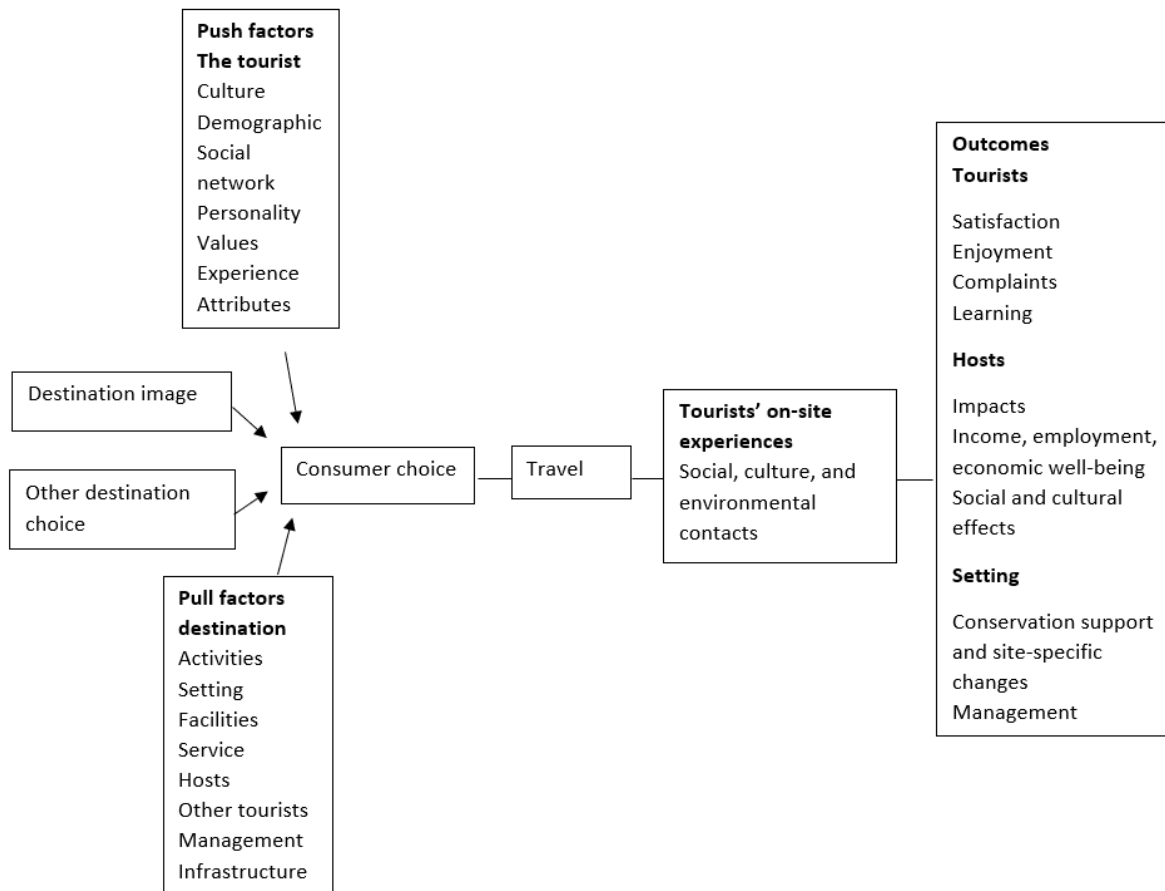
In this paper we take on the definition of destination success as “a complex issue that involves a range of interrelated factors, which include the consumer, the destination’s tourism sector, the host population, the public sector and the distribution system” (Cameron & Roberts, 2010: 24) . We

examine long-term success of a destination relying on three main factors determined by Cameron and Roberts (2010):

1. “A realistic understanding of the ‘pull’ factor that the destination is able to offer to potential visitors”(Cameron & Roberts: 24). The pull factor is what the destination itself has to offer that being said it constitutes the resources that the destination offers. Aspects include tourism specific experiences such as attractions, culture, the environment, the ability to rest and relax, among others which supports the tourism sector (Uysal & Jurowski, 1994). “In some cases, the type of resources available will determine the type of visitor who may be interested in visiting a destination”(Cameron & Roberts: 24). This is an important factor to consider within this paper and will be further discussed in the next category. Gotlands and Ölands main pull factors are highlighted in the findings are its ability to offer visitors the opportunity to experience friendliness of residents, relax, step out of the stressful city life, cultural activities, historical attractions and a favorable climate during the summer.
2. “A realistic assessment of the ‘push’ factors that motivate an individual to undertake travel to a destination”(Cameron & Roberts: 24). Uysal & Jurowski (1994) consider push factors as internal aspects that include the desire for rest and relaxation, escape, learning, and social interaction”. Push factors offer a valuable measurement indicator of the kinds of activities, attractions, and—more importantly—infrastructure that must be implemented to attract specific tourism segments in a destination. Several researchers have argued that push and pull factors need to work simultaneously to create tourism markets (Jang & Cai, 2002; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Yuan & McDonald, 1990).
3. “The ability to respond to consumers’ push factors will be determined by the destination’s ability to harness its pull factors to create tourism experiences”(Cameron & Roberts: 24). Products are created by combining pull factors into experiences and goods, creating tourist-friendly destinations, communicating the destinations’ attractions to consumers through marketing, and then facilitating the transformation of interest into a purchase through

distribution. Branding, promotion, advertising, and distribution networks are vital aspects of the marketing process (Cameron & Roberts, 2010).

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for understanding tourist behavior. Source: Modified version of Pearce (1995).



Customer experience

When it comes to loyal customers and the overall customer experience, from the results one can say that there is a deeper connection made between customers and businesses. The products and services offered, the image of the islands as well as the exclusivity results in loyal customers. All

businesses confirmed that the majority of their customers are returning guests. The CEO Strandakar claimed that:

“I have had guests who have stayed here about 15 times in five years, and they come about three or four times every year”.

The people who come during the winter season; more than 50% are returning guests. Additionally to that, they have customers fill in a feedback form, where they try to analyze if there is anything that they are missing and see whether their customers are happy with the services, food etc.

For Your Gotland Tours the CEO explained that instead of spending a lot of money in marketing, she has been collecting five stars reviews and those, as she claims, seems to be working. She further elaborates on the deep relationships that she has built with clients that have spent 2-3 days together, from eating to even visiting her home which is over 100 years old; giving extra meaning in the exclusivity in her service and the cultural image. The deep connection created with guests and the tailored services represent an important image to the island, thus making the destination image a critical role in the tourists satisfaction, (Chi & Qu, 2008).

Brebbia & Pineda claim that the “intention to revisit a destination is considered an essential marketing goal, particularly in a competitive market, because it is assumed that repeat visitation has significant benefits” (2010: 49). Research shows that several tourism destinations depend on repeat visitors to a high degree (Darnell & Johnson, 2001). Reichheld makes points from various studies that have confirmed how a 5% increase in customer retention can make a profit of 25-85% across numerous industries (1996). Additionally, LeBoeuf argues that retaining an existing and old customer is cheaper than attracting new customers, and as a matter of fact attracting new customers costs three to five times more than maintaining the old one (LeBoeuf, 1987). In a competitive market, capturing new customers' attention from competitors is costly because a high position of service improvement is needed (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993).

The net promoter score (NPS) is a measurement tool used to analyze different destination aspects such as the customer experience. The Öland tourism organization mentioned that the Swedish

Network of Destination Management Organization, (SNDMO) offers annual reports where the customer experience and customer satisfaction is measured. The numbers indicate that Öland has the highest nps across Sweden, thus making the destination number one regarding customer experience. The chief at the Öland tourism organization mentioned that:

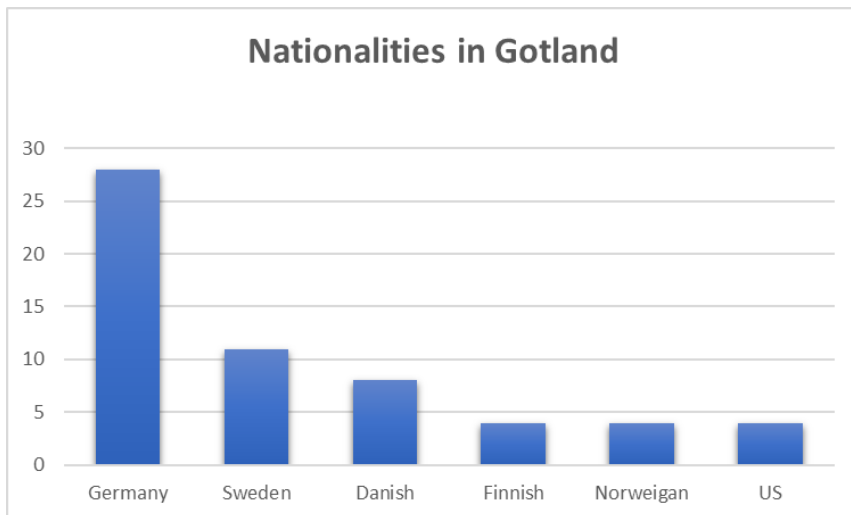
“Öland has for five years now been number one in customer experience with a score of 59 this year [2022]”

The mentioning of travel attributes is significant to market segmentation and overall marketing application, and this is one step forward to understanding the next category where we get into the market segmentation. Ragavan et al., supports this by claiming that “performance of a destination can be measured through the perception of destination travel attributes to tourists in order to facilitate market segmentation and promotion” (2014: 304).

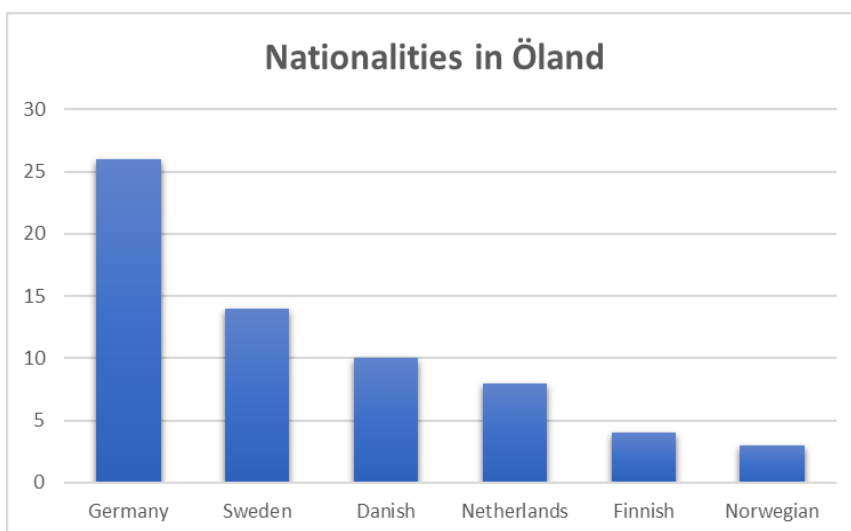
Category 3: Demographic

Local findings

The travel attributes mentioned in the previous category play a critical role in this section of the demographic due to travel attributes being perceived differently by tourists from different countries carrying different cultures. “The tourists are heterogeneous in their perception of travel attributes” (Ragavan et al., 2014 : 405). To elaborate on Ragavan's claim, the findings showed an interesting demographic aspect for both Gotland and Öland, that being the most common nationality of tourists to visit both islands were Germans; affirmed by both the locals and businesses. It is quite interesting to see that Germans were the most common nationalities to visit the islands, it opens up a clear demographic making it easier to know exactly who to target. In terms of age and family situation, the majority of the guests seem to be more on the elderly spectrum or families who visit both islands. Given the fact that Gotland and Öland offer many family friendly activities and attractions, the numbers clearly indicate that these have targeted their customers correctly.



Graph 1. Bar chart of tourism nationalities visiting Gotland



Graph 2. Bar chart of tourism nationalities visiting Öland.

Businesses findings

Identification of consumer groups, also known as market segmentation, is important for a destination. It allows the targeting of specific segments and that allows for better enhancement of a destination's image that essentially becomes a favorable place for visitors to base their travel

decisions on. Market segmentation has been a useful technique for marketing strategies in and has long been recognized by several authors (Kastenholtz, Davis, & Paul, 1999; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens, 1998). From all the businesses interviewed, there was an interesting continuation of the demographic findings represented in the former section; that being families and elderly couples who also represented the upper middle class are the regular visitors, although the guests depends on the season they arrive and the reason for the travel. In the following section we see the common demographic businesses receive and how they target customers is also explained according to their products and services offered. Mykletun et al., (2000) have highlighted that marketing segmentation involves “dividing the market into distinct and homogenous groups in terms of geographic, socio- demographic, psychographic and/or behavioral characteristics”(494). Once the market segmentation is defined the following process is determining each segment’s attractiveness; thus taking the targeted segment(s) and appropriately positioning with the correct marketing mix variables (Kotler et al., 1998).

In the interview with Ölands tourism organization together with Gotlands tourism organization, it was said that the islands are indeed appealing to families and the elderly due to the activities it has to offer such as the harvest festival for Öland or Medieval week being the forefront of important events in the islands .

The most common guests claimed by the CEO in Strandkar are the DINKS which are the double income no kids, she further on claims:

“They are usually around 60 or a little bit who are willing to put in money, especially around the winter season and during the summer it is more diversified , guests are usually from everywhere who pass by and drop in”.

Your Gotland Tours founder claimed similarly:

“The age is between 50-70 years and are usually couples that are middle upper class, with a good education level and are financially secure making them part of the upper middle class”.

Mellby Ör inn stated that:

“In the summer we get all types of tourists but most frequent are the families with children”.

The ethnic backgrounds shown in the graphs varied though the most common were the Germans, though at times varied between businesses with additional common backgrounds depending on the season; and what seems to be clear is that during the summer season it is way more diversified than usual.

Strandakar CEO mentioned mostly Swiss and German visitors; and further said that this past year they have seen guests from Mexico, Japan, China and countries all over Europe. During the winter time 90% of the guests are from Gotland or are from Stockholm who have some sort of connection to Gotland. However, during the summer season she claimed that

“We even had more foreigners come to the hotel than Swedish people”.

Meanwhile for Your Gotland tours, the founder got into specifics by claiming:

“I made a conscious choice in the beginning that I did not want to tour with big groups”.

She further explained that this decision was because she wanted the tours she offered to be exclusive. The clients which she calls her guests are usually from outside of Europe; making the majority from the US. In the past five years there has been an emergence of articles in the New York Times talking about Gotland and from there Gotland became famous in the US which explains why many Americans come to Gotland.

Additionally she claimed that

“Marketing is heritage; it is a selective process, you can not describe everything”.

The articles have spoken about different parts of Gotland from Visby to Fårö, and such places raised interest as people were reading about them (Williams, 2015; Smallwood, 2016). It has influenced Americans to go see what they have been reading in real life. Research suggests that “Americans’ interest in traveling to cultural/heritage destinations has been increasing and this trend is expected to continue” (Huh, Uysal, & Mcleary, 2006: 82). The demographic here that has

been explained by the founder of Your Gotland Tours does affirm on her statement of marketing being heritage thus, being a selective process. To further investigate this, Kerstetter, Confer, and Graefe (2001) have explored if different types of heritage tourists exist and if they do, would they differentiate on socio-demographic characteristics. “They found that tourists with an interest in visiting heritage or cultural sites (i.e., “heritage tourists”) tend to stay longer, spend more per trip, are more highly educated, and have a higher average annual income than the general tourists have” (Huh, Uysal, McCleary, 2006: 85). This connects to the certain demographic mentioned above where some businesses mentioned an elderly population who tend to have more time on their hands with money to spend and lastly are more likely to have a higher education.

Mellby Ör Inn spoke about their demographics as the ‘nature people’ being a very common group among tourists due to Öland being the ‘bird Mecca’ of Sweden. Mellby said in their interview that the ‘bird watchers’ can be from the US, Germany or Netherlands, same as the tourists that visit them. It is interesting to point out that these ‘bird watchers’ are usually elderly people, usually in their 60’s. The brand image of Mellby is interesting due to the fact that even though the main business they have is their B&B, they also have a small, but always packed pub as well as a yoga studio for people interested in that field. This shows the versatility Mellby has in regards to their image due to they offer different products for different types of customers. Mellby Ör inn, being located near nature and harvest lands utilizes this as a way to promote themselves to ‘nature lovers’ and creates this image of relaxation and calmness.

For Gotland Excursion they also emphasize the importance of nature and ancient remains, claiming that:

“landscape and geographical location become part of the experience depending on where the guests come from, what they are looking for/appreciate”.

According to Hwang, Kim and Hyun (2013), socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, nationality, and marital status have a major role in moderating consumer behavior. “As marketing segmentation is one of the most critical parts of any marketing strategy, the authors believe that a customer segmentation by motivations via an activity-based approach will increase the destination's marketing impact” (Boksberger & Bartenwerffer: 12). The idea here from all the

businesses interviewed is to focus on the motivations that attract tourists in order to target the right audience that will fit into the destination's attraction that heavily relies on nature and history. We believed it was crucial to incorporate demographic and travel behavior characteristics of cultural/heritage visitors in our study based on the conclusions of the cited studies. The demographic characteristics included age, family dynamic (e.g. families, singles, DINKS), ethnic background, total household income, and educational level. Thus the most important travel behavior characteristics included travel companion which leads to the timing and length of stay, and lastly the background knowledge about the destination.

Theme 3. Seasonality

The topic of seasonality covers many aspects in different discourses. Agriculture, meteorology, biology, or tourism are some of the topics which seasonality plays an important role (Battey, 2000). Battey (2000) mentions that "Seasonality is, therefore, an interesting topic because it covers a variety of ways of viewing the world" (1169). In terms of tourism, seasonality is, according to scholars, one of the main challenges for tourism growth and development (Lee et al. 2008; Baum 1999; R. Butler 1993). This challenge threatens the viability of businesses as well as the economic gain for the destination itself (Koenig-Lewis & Bischoff, 2005). R. Butler (1993) had defined in his previous work seasonality as "a temporal imbalance in the phenomena of tourism and may be expressed in terms of dimensions of such elements as number of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on highways and admission to attractions" (p. 5). Furthermore, seasonality creates both opportunities for destinations in terms of revenue gain, but it comes with many challenges due to the sheer number of visitors during a short period of time (Kastenholz & Lopes de Almeida, 2008). Seasonality has been categorized into two factors as to why this phenomena occurs, natural or institutional causes. These two causes are seen as the main concepts within seasonality in terms of the patterns created in destinations and do not refer to occasional irregularities that may occur such as natural disaster or global pandemics. Natural causes refer to the natural phenomena in which the 3S fall into place. Weather implications also fall into this category such as rainfall or snowfall. Natural causes create a demand from travelers to visit certain destinations where the natural environment fits into their needs (Lee et al. 2008). Institutional causes, according to Lee et. al. (2008) follows three factors: holidays and leisure time, travel habits and motivations, and the hosting and timing of events. This means that institutional causes are linked to the availability and

the desire of the traveler more than the demand of the destination. The high season in both Gotland and Öland has been confirmed by the interviewed businesses that it spans in the months between May through September. Throughout these months the two islands are working non-stop with the vast amounts of travelers visiting the destinations. The real challenge begins once the high season ends, and the high spikes of travelers decrease. The CEO at Your Gotland Tours sums up the challenge best with the claim that:

“Gotland has a problem, the high season is very short, and if we want to be generous, we can say it is between May-September”.

At the same time in Öland, Mellby Ör Inn claimed that:

“The high season is of course important, but equally important is the low season that spreads from September to April”

Similar to Mellby, Strandakar in Gotland also has solutions for the low seasonality which refers to the inclusion of domestic tourism by attracting the Swedish travelers to stay and spend their weekend as a way to escape everyday life. This solution can be implemented for both destinations in terms of ‘changing the demographic’ of their audience in the form of travelers’ vacations schedule such as appealing to British and Scandinavian audiences in the early period of the season, and the Germans in the later period.

Your Gotland Tours is one of the businesses that do not get affected by seasonality due to other business endeavors, but this is not the reality for many other businesses.

“Seasonality is good for me because I only work during the summer, but it is a hinder for the rest of the tourist industry here, for me the rest of the year I work as an anthropologist and I do research, so seasonality does not affect me though it does affect the rest of the island”

Even though the high season is important for destinations that are dependent on tourism, it can be argued that the low season is equally as important, as previously mentioned by Mellby Ör Inn. Kastenholz and Lopes de Almeida (2008) claim that the low season does not necessarily harm the businesses or the destinations. Furthermore, Hartmann (1986) suggests that the low season is an important time for recovery of the destination from the massive flow of travelers.

As previously mentioned, natural and institutional causes are the two main aspects of seasonality. Chung (2009) further develops these concepts and adds other three casualties, social pressure, mega sporting events, and the inertia of travelers. Speaking with Ölands tourism organization they claimed that:

“[...] Especially in 2022 we had a lot of concerts, and some really big events and that are the things that drive a lot of people. We had the celebration of the princess Victoria, and we also had a big Harley Davidson event this year, which draws a lot of people as well”.

This leads to one of the concepts that Chung (2009) implemented to the aspects of seasonality, the inertia of traveling which refers to traveling to certain locations even though they do not have to. The events that are mentioned from the Öland tourism organization can then be classified within the aspect of inertia of traveling. Seasonality has both positive and negative effects on the destination (R. Butler, 1998). In the perspective of the local residents, Baum (1999) and R. Butler (1994) argues that seasonality influences all kinds of tourism aspects such as employment, economic, marketing, and management. “The negative effects of seasonality, therefore, can be divided into three categories: employment, investment, and environment” (Chung, 2009: 87). Findings gathered from listening to the locals in both Gotland and Öland suggest that the tourism seasonality has helped create work opportunities, creates a ‘lively’ feeling to the island, and that it helps gather income for both the community and the businesses. On the other hand, some other locals suggest that without these spikes in the summer, it would be much harder to go on with everyday life since the islands wouldn’t cope without tourism. Furthermore, one local mentioned:

“Way too many people at once arrive at the island”

While another local also mentions that:

“Sadly, there are a lot of people that need education on how to behave towards nature and read upon what to do and not to do”

Over-tourism is one of the main negative aspects of seasonality tourism (Dodds & Butler, 2019). Claims from the locals suggest that this concept is a reality in the destinations. Milano et al. (2019) suggest that “[...] The excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents suffer the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourism peaks, which have enforced

changes to their lifestyle, access to amenities and general well-being” (p. 354). While over-tourism gathered more attention from the Spanish tourism centers in Barcelona and Palma de Mallorca, in Gotland and Öland it has ‘helped’ make certain challenges more visible and can be tackled to create a better destination (Milano et al., 2019). The Öland tourism organization mentioned that a big challenge they have noticed is the collective traffic.

“ [...] a lot of the eastern part of Öland, and the north and southern parts have not good bus traffic or places to go with the buses, so that is a challenge for people that do not necessarily have a car”.

Tourism seasonality creates opportunities as well as challenges for both businesses and locals within destinations. While there are no specific solutions to the problems at hand, there are ways to cope with high peaks during the year. One important remedy to seasonality is to expand the season as much as possible as well as to the right demographic (Chung, 2008).

“ [...] Nowadays we are looking to increase tourism outside the high season, we are marketing outside the high season to make this high spikes last longer”.

While Your Gotland Tours emphasizes that:

“Marketing for the Germans is important for the low season”.

Strandakar as well mentions the importance of seasonality and the demographic by claiming that:

“ [...] and the German market is where we want to put in all the effort next year, because Germans travel outside the high season. The German and Swiss market are more interested in traveling outside the summer season; the Swedes are very limited to 6 weeks in the summer”.

Gotland Excursion support this even more specifying that:

“Visitors from the older groups are less guided to public holiday periods or school holidays. Today, "the elderly" are a partially affluent group”.

Gotland, as well as Öland, are trying to find tourism options that are not necessarily linked with seasonality. Outdoor camping or hiking are opportunities that these destinations are showing more

interest in attracting new guests all year round thus making the low spikes not affect the destinations as much as it has in the past decades.

Seasonal tourism takes the destinations by storm in all the possible aspects the islands have to offer. Cultural tourism and ecotourism are some aspects that flourish in both high and low seasons. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Cuccia and Rizzo (2011), they point out that in terms of market share and market presence, cultural tourism comes in second to sun, sand and sea tourism. Both of these tourism aspects are visible in both Gotland and Öland with the difference that cultural tourism appears all year round and the 3S type of tourism only is available during the summer. Furthermore, with both islands full of historical sites, museums, and general culture such as music, festivals and craftsmen, are some qualities that Hughes (1996) calls ‘popular culture’. This concept fits the qualities that represent both islands and due to the fact that cultural tourism is an increasing segment in tourism demand, it can tackle the negative aspects that seasonality offers. Zhang et al. (2022) further enhance this statement through their research by analyzing whether cultural tourism can weaken the effects of seasonal tourism. Their results indicate that in fact cultural tourism can tackle the nature of seasonality, although institutional causes such as travel desires from the travelers are still an important factor.

There is a clear consensus that SIDs are drastically affected by seasonality. Throughout all eight interviews there was one main theme they all shared, make the high season last longer. This indicates both the importance of seasonality and the negative effect that follows once the season ends. One beneficial aspect that islands have are the natural causes that attract tourists to their coastal attractions and the 3S, however cultural heritage tourism does not get affected by these factors due to the type of products it offers. ‘[...] Cultural heritage tourism can help to identify the distinct culture of each island. In fact, since culture is unique and distinctive, cultural resources of one island differ from those of other islands; therefore, cultural aspects give an island destination its particular identity that helps tourists [...]’ (Giudici et al. 2013: 104). Both Gotland and Öland are islands with a rich amount of culture that are appealing for tourists. ‘As travel trends are changing, and visitors are more interested in exploring the places they visit, cultural, heritage and religious tourism has the potential to develop if it can provide high quality, authentic and personalized experiences’ (Garanti, 2022: 454). Seasonality can be further enhanced with new tourism opportunities such as cultural heritage which, according to Cuccia and Rizzo (2011) are

gaining more interest among tourists. This will not make the topic of seasonality change, however, it will make the spikes be less painful for the local businesses.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to answer the main research question:

What marketing tourism strategies are needed to increase competitiveness for SIDs?

This research question touches the phenomenon of small island destinations as well as the concepts of marketing and competitiveness within these destinations. In order to answer the research question, a case study was conducted in the islands of Gotland and Öland, both located in the southeast coast of Sweden. These two islands were chosen due to both of them meeting the criteria previously mentioned in the methodology chapter of what size is needed to qualify for the title of being a small island destination.

The purpose of this study was to firstly, answer the research question previously mentioned, but secondly, to fill in a knowledge gap that was created due to scholars taking traditional approaches to their studies, not acknowledging the differences between big tourism destinations and small island destinations. The knowledge gap created a purpose of researching into the concepts of tourism market strategies and competitiveness which were further developed and answered in the findings chapter of the paper.

The world of tourism is an ever changing cycle that creates new impactful advantages or challenges to destinations. The importance of this industry is believed to be of utmost importance given the fact that mostly the whole world, in some form of aspect, gets affected by the outcomes that tourism has on communities, cities and countries. In the case of small island destinations, throughout the paper, the importance of tourism was thoroughly emphasized from beginning to end. This is due to the fact that SIDs have scarce resources and need to rely on tourism as one of their important sources of income to further develop the destination. The unique and exotic environment that revolves around SIDs creates the perfect destination for travelers depending on their needs. With the 3S being at the forefront of demand created by tourists, followed by cultural tourism, small island destinations take these two tourism choices and offer a plethora of products

such as beaches, resorts, museums, or hiking sites to name a few. As previously mentioned, this research paper analyzed the Swedish islands of Gotland and Öland with the intention of understanding their marketing strategies and competitiveness towards other destinations. For this, the perspective of both local residents and local businesses were taken into consideration in order to understand how the hosts of a destination perceive tourism as well as how they manage to live with it.

An important factor for tourism development in destinations is whether the locals view the industry positive or negative. Given the fact that the local residents are the primary stakeholders of the tourism industry, if their views towards tourism are negative, then the difficulty level for future development as a tourism destination will increase. From the research done in Gotland and Öland, the perception of tourism from the locals shows positive results, as well as the interaction level towards travelers at the destination. This indicates that the destinations are open to tourists and the interaction between them and the locals creates bonds that make them want to come back. Furthermore, the relation between the locals and the tourists is linked to relationship marketing which indicates strategies to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Relationship marketing, together with the concept of loyalty creates recurring tourists in the destinations which is a clear advantage for the travelers to experience what the communities has to offer, thus creating a link not only to the locals, but to the destination itself.

As previously stated, the locals are the main stakeholders of a destination. This also includes local businesses since they provide products that tourists can purchase in order to experience what the communities have to offer. Travel attributes consist of special characteristics that describe a place as a travel destination. In the case of Gotland and Öland, these attributes are mainly linked to cultural heritage and nature. Travel attributes can be argued to be connected to the brand image of the businesses. For the purpose of this research study, eight interviews were conducted in both islands to get a better view of what these companies offer. Six of the interviews were conducted with local businesses and the remaining two were conducted with the tourism organizations of Gotland and Öland respectively. The brand image of a business is an important part of the decision making of its customers. Looking at all six businesses, they all share similar brand image in that they either take the cultural heritage or nature attribute as part of their views and values. In the case of the two tourism organizations, their view is primarily on the cultural heritage the

destinations offer to the tourists, with nature sharing the same amount of importance in order to preserve the landscapes, flora, and fauna of the islands.

Customer experience, together with repeating visitors are two concepts that are clearly portrayed by the interviewed businesses. High returning percentages indicates that the customers satisfaction is achieved by the businesses, thus creating a demand for the product they consume. Tourism behavior is a complex concept that is not easy to explain. It includes pull and push factors as qualities consumers take into consideration when they choose the destination they want to travel. These factors are essential to create a positive customer experience, thus creating loyal customers. Furthermore, customer experience, together with customer satisfaction are two components that are the result given from what the businesses provide the guests due to their brand image.

It was previously stated that travel attributes are factors the customers consider in the process of selecting destinations. Gotland and Öland provide culture tourism, eco-tourism and seasonality tourism as travel attributes. Cultural tourism refers to the cultural aspects the destinations provide as attractions with examples such as museums, music festivals, and cultural events like the medieval week in Gotland or the harvest festival in Öland, and infrastructure such as the ring wall in Gotland or the castle ruins in Öland. Eco-tourism relates to nature and the scenery in terms of landscape the islands have as well as the flora and fauna of the destination. Seasonality tourism is commonly referred to with the 3s, sun, sea and sand. These three attributes make up the majority of the tourist demand from the customers in both destinations. The importance of these types of tourism are relevant when it comes to the market segmentation and demographic of the travelers that decide to visit the destinations. Throughout this research paper, the perception of tourism, marketing and competitiveness have been looked at from the two angles of local residents and businesses. In terms of demographic, it is important to differentiate the impacts from both perspectives. In terms of the local residents, the vast majority mentioned Germans among the most common ethnicities they see as tourists. This is helpful for businesses to know and understand in order to appeal to the right audience. Although different ethnicities from Europe, Asia were mentioned, from the answers given by both locals and businesses, the German communities are passionate about cultural heritage and cultural tourism, one of the attributes that shapes both Gotland and Öland. Furthermore, an important ethnicity that was emphasized by two businesses was the Americans, specifically US citizens. Much like the German community, the US

community shares the same importance towards cultural heritage, but also they show interest in eco-tourism in the shape of ornithology alongside the flora in the shape of the landscapes and scenery.

The consumer behaviors in the destinations vary on factors such as nationality, age, or gender. These factors are important for market segmentation in terms of business perspective. The demographic varied from business to business due to the differences in brand image they portray. Notwithstanding, common characteristics within tourists were family groups, elderly couples, and DINKS (double income, no kids). Interestingly to point out is the fact that the demographic from all the businesses showed that their guests often have an educational level and are economically from the upper middle class.

The findings of this research paper pointed out two main aspects of tourism, cultural heritage and seasonality. While cultural heritage tourism takes on variables from the destination that are unique for their communities, seasonality is a more complex aspect of tourism. Within the findings, it was stated that seasonality can be divided into natural and institutional variables where natural causes refer to weather and environmental qualities while institutional causes refer to the desires and motivation from the traveler rather than what the destination has to offer. Both two factors of seasonality can be linked to Gotland and Öland. Seasonality creates an opportunity for the islands to show what they have to offer in certain periods of the year. Furthermore, seasonality can also be divided into two main variables, high- and low season. Within these two groups, the factor of nature causes 'decides' when the high season starts. A simple example is in Öland the high season comes during the summertime, but in the alps, the high season starts in the winter. The high- and low season of a destination depends on the demand from the consumers and whether conditions that the destination has at their disposal.

The topic of seasonality is deeply rooted in Gotland and Öland, both in positive and negative aspects. From a local perspective, the high season means vast amounts of travelers, economical benefits in terms of working opportunities, and a sense of more 'lively' streets and cities. As far as business goes, the main outcome of seasonality is the economical influence and dependence of the high- and low seasons. The high and low spikes that occur during the seasons affect the businesses' revenue income. One important commonality among all eight interviewed businesses

was the fact that they all work on making the high season last longer to weaken the strength of the spikes. One of the methods the businesses utilize to debilitate the seasonality aspect of the destination is to enhance the importance of the other two travel attributes, cultural heritage tourism and ecotourism. This is due to the resources the islands have at their disposal. To ‘weaken’ the importance of the 3S’ and emphasize on the cultural and natural attractions creates a demand from the travelers to visit the islands in the ‘off-season’ since the latter two travel attributes persist throughout the year and are not dependent on seasonality.

The intentions for researching these two destinations, and understanding the importance of tourism for small island destinations were to give further insights on the gaps of knowledge created unintentionally by researchers due to the magnitude and versatility of both the industry and its destinations. Furthermore, this research can be helpful to understand the role seasonality and cultural heritage tourism impacts depending on the market segmentation and targeted audience in each destination respectively. It was intended to conclude the research in an open-ended way in order to further elaborate and develop the investigation on small island destinations.

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Appendix A: Gotland

Gotland Local Residents Survey

Importance of tourism in Gotland

1. General economic purpose statements: 15 statements

- *Income for the Island - 4R*
- *Tourism is an incredibly important source of income on the island - 1R*
- *Economy to the island - 4R*
- *Gives Gotland an economic surplus - 1R*
- *Brings in more money - 2R*
- *It is good for the economy and that you get a less racist influence with diversity - 1R*
- *All companies, people, yes everyone gets income - 1R*
- *We are many that live on it - 1R*

2. Business purposes/survival : 11 statements

- *Contributes to businesses being able to live year-round on the island - 1R*
- *It is the one that keeps the island's businesses afloat for the rest of the year - 1R*
- *Makes entrepreneurs on the island survive - 1R*
- *Tourism is important otherwise companies would not survive - 1R*
- *Many companies live on tourism and many others bring in a lot of extra money due to tourism - 1R*

- *Provides income for shops and other traders - 1R*
- *Tourism is needed for year-round business to survive- 1R*
- *We wouldn't be able to cope without tourism - 1R*
- *The island lives all year on tourism. The shops can maintain a high standard all year round - 1R*
- *Thanks to tourism there are restaurants and a wider range of food - 1R*
- *More restaurants and cafes, more culture- 1R*

3. Employment opportunities: 6 statements

- *Provides job opportunities in any case during the summer- 1R*
- *Provides jobs and decent service- 1R*
- *Provides jobs for people (Job opportunities) - 2R*
- *Tourism provides many opportunities for work and income on the island - 1R*
- *Jobs for young people - 1R*

4. Positive and negative answers 7 statements

- *It affects just about everything. Tourism is an incredibly important source of income on the island, but the infrastructure is not keeping up with the increased pressure that it is now. - 1R*
- *On the positive side: brings in income and provides jobs for people and on the negative: summer open shops (not sure what is meant by this but I am guessing the shops that are only open during the summer), running out of water? , and destruction of nature. - 1R*
- *Tourism provides many opportunities for work and income on the island. Contributes to ensuring that permanent residents also get a share of developed infrastructure. Great exchange between mainlanders and islanders. But also certain negative consequences such as wear and tear on nature and cultural areas, increased waste management and water consumption. - 1R*
- *Unfortunately, tourism is a double-edged sword. They are needed for year-round business to survive. BUT they drive up housing prices so young people can't afford to buy a house or can stay. See what it's like in southern Gotland or eg Sandhamn in the Stockholm archipelago. Tourists drive away residents! So it contributes to the depletion of the social safety net. So in the long run, tourism is at a disadvantage. It should be regulated. - 1R*
- *For other companies on an island, it is difficult with the infrastructure, which is why tourism is important. - 1R*
- *Positive with people's life and income for the island. Negative with littering and water consumption: - 1R*
- *Both positive and negative, positive-economy negative-environment. - 1R*

The interaction among residents and tourists

On what scale do you interact with tourists ?

1 being the lowest

- 1: 9.7% (3R)
- 2: 9.7% (3R)
- 3: 25.8% (8R)
- 4: 38.7% (12R)
- 5: 16.1% (5R)

5 being the highest.

Based on your interaction with tourists, how often do they come back ?

- They never come back: 2.5% (1R)*
- They rarely come back : 2.5% (1R)*
- They sometimes come back: 37.5 % (15R)*
- They come back once or twice: 20% (8R)*
- They come back multiples times : 37.5 % (15R)*

Culture and its importance

What do you think is the culture that shapes Gotland? 24 Respondents

General culture statements

- *World heritage and history : 1R*
- *Nature and culture together : 1R*
- *All culture: 2R*
- *Our history: 1R*
- *The Middle Ages beautiful beaches beautiful open nature: 1R*
- *The landscape : 1R*
- *History, nature, buildings and the mentality of the residents: 1R*
- *The Middle Ages: 1R*
- *The way it's always been shapes the island. Difficult for changes on Gotland: 1R*
- *Bygdegårdar studieförbund associations which ensure that Gotland's culture and cohesion remain: 1R*
- *The width 52 km : 1R*

Specific attractions statements

- *Knight games, medieval week, outdoor theater: 1R*
- *The ring wall: 2R*
- *Food, art and music : 1R*
- *Art, textiles, wool, music, theater, Medieval Week, food culture: 1R*
- *Raukat: is a beach pillar that arises on beach terraces from the abrasion of the waves on coasts consisting of in homogeneous rock types: 1R*
- *Concerts, medieval week and summer theater: 1R*
- *Churches*
- *The World Heritage Ring Wall Gutnish sports, see the film Gotland Idrottens ö by Lars-Gunnar Björklund, I have put it on youtube Wåg i Smissarve änge it's called, food and drink culture we protect Gotland drink and saffron pancake ;)e*
- *Nature, music, the urban environment, the ring wall, campus, library*

Negative statements

- *Unfortunately the one that is to the disadvantage.. Stockholm week is the bottom and should be banned!: 1R*
- *Negative culture as there are far too few tourist sites on the island: 1R*

Competition

What do you think about competition in nearby islands?

There is no competition statements	Not aware of any competition	Competition is good statements
<p><i>There is none 18R</i></p> <p>Ex. :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>There is no major competition, there are two different islands!</i> - <i>Gotland has no competitors.</i> - <i>Does not exist</i> 	<p><i>Which neighboring island??</i></p> <p><i>Big/Little Karlsö, Gotska Sandön</i></p> <p><i>or...?</i></p>	<p><i>Everyone must protect their island.</i></p>

- Weak		
<i>It does not feel that there is any competition</i>	<i>Do you mean Öland as a neighboring island? Can't say that Gotland has any "neighboring island".</i>	<i>Positive with two nice islands</i> - <i>A little more cooperation could probably benefit both</i> - <i>Good. The one does not exclude the other</i>
<i>If you mean Öland, even though Fårö and the Karlsöarna are closer, I don't see any competition. There are plenty of visitors to both islands. We usually joke that it's unfair that they have a bridge but we don't. I have never been to Öland.</i>	<i>I wasn't exactly aware of it but I consider it unnecessary.</i>	<i>Competition is good: 4R</i>
<i>- Competition is always good, then you improve, but with Gotland's culture and ring wall, no island can compete.</i>	<i>Didn't know it existed now</i>	<i>Regardless, all islands that are inhabited are needed</i> <i>The tourists themselves choose which island they want to go to.</i>
<i>No competition with Öland.</i>		<i>Both good and bad with competition</i>
<i>I do not experience any competition with Öland</i>		<i>Island tourists are not competitive. sea or beach, there is room</i>

Do you think Gotland stands out compared to the other ones in your region and in what ways?

Culture: History and Nature	Culture: History and Nature	General: ex. attractions, proud residents
<i>World Heritage and history (Nature is unique)</i>	<i>Gotland is unique with its culture, nature, and history . There is something here for everyone all year round. It is today well-ordered and a good "flow" of the tourist stream</i>	<i>Absolutely, Gotland is a particularly beautiful island</i>

<i>Gotland has very different landscapes, just go from north to south and you see so much difference</i>	<i>Gotland stands out, with culture, nature and a large selection of pubs</i>	<i>The magic'</i>
<i>Unique place, the beauty of nature, the beaches, Visby, the food</i>	<i>Nature. It is a great mix of nature. Northern Gotland is more barren than southern Gotland, which is much more lush, but they also have beautiful raukas.</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
<i>Yes, because Gotland is unique because it is a world cultural heritage and we have the rauks.</i>	<i>Yes, with our unique nature, and cultural heritage.</i>	<i>If you have gone here, you must stay even if the weather is bad. The boat trip is very expensive.</i>
<i>Unique nature</i>	<i>That we still have nature and the right of the people. That our beaches are accessible.</i>	<i>The boat route makes it more exclusive and worth the trip</i>
<i>Its location in the Baltic Sea, nature, variety, history</i>	<i>The environment and the people!</i>	<i>Yes, Gotland is unique</i>
<i>Nature</i>	<i>Oh yes!! = medieval architecture, nature and beaches</i>	<i>We are unique. Ringmur, Visby, raukar, beaches, there are lots that others don't have, plants that aren't found anywhere else</i>
<i>We have some things they don't. Raukar, Midsummer week, unique food and drink, etc. (meaning öland)</i>	<i>More to offer (compared to Öland)</i>	<i>There is no other island like Gotland</i>
<i>Öland is unique?? (indicating sarcasm)</i>	<i>Absolutely! For what the island offers: exotic</i>	<i>- Gotland är Östersjöns hawaii: Gotland is the Hawaii of the Baltic Sea - Gotland is Gotland! - Gotland is most beautiful</i>

Demographic

What are the common nationalities among tourists within Gotland?

→ Germans: 28R

→ Swedes: 11R

- Danish : 8R
- Finnish: 4R
- Norwegians: 4R
- USA: 4R
- Dutch: 2R
- British: 2R
- Polish: 1R (The cruise ships)
- Asians: 3R

What kind of tourists usually visit your island?

- 79,5 % claimed to be families (31R)
- 12,8 percent claimed to be groups of young adults visiting (5R)
- 7,7 % claimed to be couples with no children that visit (3R)

Unstructured Interview with Strandakar Hotell

Interviewee: Charlotte Criwell

Position: CEO

Date of interview: 23/11/2022

Location of interview: (conducted digitally)

List of acronyms: IN=interviewer CC= Charlotte Criwell

Introduktion (Hotels, Spa resorts , Restaurants)

IN: Who are your guests? (Consumers/products & services intro)

CC: The most common guests we have are the DINKS, double income, no kids. They are usually around 60 or a little bit more at least during the winter season or the low season, during the summer it is more diversified, because you have guests from everywhere who pass by and drop in. So during the low season, it is people whose children left home so they do not have kids to take care of anymore.

IN: In terms of ethnicity? What is the most common one?

It depends if we have a pandemic or not. During the pandemic it was basically just swedes , the Germans and swiss are common visitors though they had to be quarantined if they left the country. We have a lot of Swiss and Germans, and during the summer sometimes we have more foreigners than swedes. During the winter 90% of our guests are from Gotland so the typical Gotlandic people, or guests from the Stockholm area or people who have any sort of connection to Gotland. May, June, september; we have a lot of

Germans and Swiss. This year we had travelers from all around the globe; mexicans, japanese, chinese, all european countries.

IN: What products or services does your hotel offer?

CC: We are actually located in the countryside and our main theme is tranquility and harmony, leave the city, leave the stress behind, come to the countryside and eat good food and have a luxurious vacation.

IN: So would you say the main unique feature is around nature?

CC: It's nature, a lot of active hiking, back riding, but it is also culture and Gotland has a lot of culture. If you are into English life, the Germans like everything that has to do with the iron age, bronze age and viking age and you have those all around Gotland. We even have that in our own grounds, a burial site from the bronze age and iron age era.

IN: Which would you say is the most successful of the two: history or nature?

I think the tranquility, the nature bit, because you can stay anywhere and see culture, but very few hotels exist in the countryside with high quality. The nature is considered the most unique because culture can be seen anywhere while nature not all hotels offer this.

Marketing

IN: What is the brand of your business?

CC: You come here because you want to leave the stress, and eat really good food, we have a really good kitchen. But mostly to leave the stress, we went so far that we don't even have televisions anywhere.

IN: In what ways does your business measure customer satisfaction / experience?

CC: We are part of something called the petit hotel. They call it a bonus program, for our own reasons we do not have our own program. We do have returning guests, who've come to stay 15 times in 5 years, they come 3 to 4 times every year. The people who come during the winter seasons I would say 50% of them are returning guests. The ones who do return back often enough usually get 5% off in their living or some sort of offer though there is no formal program that sets for such a bonus.

IN: How relevant is your market strategy to today's shifting social trends?

CC: We are into instagram, facebook pages , we do also put things on Gotland.com , but that is the limit to social media. It is too expensive for students at the university to come here, so the ones that are core clientele, are not into social media. They do not even know what tik tok is.

IN: What is your competitive advantage?

CC: The thing is we are located in the countryside. During the winter season we do not have any competitors because we are the only hotel that remains open in the countryside. During the summer season, Öland sells itself. The highest season for us is always booked whether we do anything or not. What we would like to promote more is activities, such as hiking or having a guide that shows you where all the good fishing spots are.

IN: Do you guys have any type of benchmarking?

CC: It is really hard to benchmark when there is not anyone else to benchmark with especially during the low season. During the low season our biggest product is a 5 course degustation menu ; staying overnight and having a breakfast buffet , nobody else has that, therefore nobody to compare with. The only benchmarking we can do is hotel analytics , doing the price range comparison, though it is hard to do

benchmarking when it comes to quality. What we also do is we have customers fill in a feedback form, where we try to see if there is anything we are missing, are you happy with the services, food etc.

IN: How are you defining the difference between marketing, advertising, and public relations?

CC: *No*

IN: How do you guys market yourselves out there and show people you exist?

CC: *Use the typical Gotlandic magazines such as Gotland just nu and so we advertise in those magazines. We implement seasonal advertisements such as now we have Julbord which is 'Christmas table' found in the local paper. Depending on the season this time a year it's mainly local people that come which is why we advertise in the local papers. During the summer we advertise in tourist magazines. We have tried different techniques such as advertising on ferries though that was useless because those riding a ferry already have a place to stay and we are trying to get people to already come to us. We also tried advertising in the stockholm area and as far as we can tell it has not had any effect.*

IN: You mention a lot of magazines. Do you have any tourism partnerships?

CC: *No*

IN: In terms of eco-tourism would you say that plays an important role for the hotel and attracting tourists: especially being around nature ?

CC: *We work actively with sustainability , we work with the food when it comes to sustainability. We have power solar panels and ground heating, It is a new hotel therefore everything is new but do work with sustainability*

IN: Do you take advantage of the eco-tourism and adventure travel opportunities in your area to attract tourists? If yes then how?

CC: *Tranquility and harmony is what attracts the Germans, and the German market is where we want to put in all the effort next year, because Germans travel outside the high season. For the high season it is always full, they always have a waiting list for people during the summer so there is not the need to really put anything out there. What we want is to promote people to come here in March, April and October and such lower season months. The German and Swiss market are more interested in traveling outside the summer season; the Swedes are very limited to 6 weeks in the summer.*

Seasonality:

IN: Would you say seasonality plays a role in the success of your business?

CC: *March and April*

IN: How do you promote and reach out to the demographic change during different seasons?

Overnight stay, degustation menu and breakfast buffet to stand out in the lower season (On fridays and saturdays cus that's when the swedes come) . Would like to increase this to the whole week, though being open for only five years there is still work to do in this sector.

IN: Would you say your business and the services it offers represent Gotland as a whole?

CC: *Where we are situated represents the nature of Gotland because you have easy access everywhere, all you have to do is step out of your room and you are in nature, so yes we do present a part of Gotland.*

Unstructured Interview with Your Gotland Tours

Interviewee: [Consuelo Griggio](#)

Position: Founder and CEO

Date of interview: 25/11/2022

Location of interview: Gotland (conducted digitally)

List of acronyms: IN=interviewer CG=[Consuelo Griggio](#)

Introduction

I am the founder and CEO, so I founded the company in 2016. I moved to Gotland in 2015 from Canada, and I started working part time at a university as a social anthropologist and I am doing research here in tourism and heritage. I started doing research in 2016 with tourist guides and I started touring because: us anthropologists, we become what we study. I became a certified tour guide in 2019 so i passed the exam so i am a certified guide with the swedish association of tourist guides. I founded the company and wanted to do it as a summer thing.

IN: Who are your guests? (Consumers/products & services intro)

CG: I made a conscious choice from the beginning that I did not want to tour with big groups because I wanted the tours to be exclusive. My clients, which I like to call my guests, are usually from outside of Europe; most of them are from the US. The age is between 50-70 years and are usually couples, and are middle upper class, with a good education level and are financially secure so they like to experience something very exclusive. I would like to add that my tours are not cheap, so they are not for everyone, so if you come to me you know you are going to spend money.

IN: What products or services does your business offer?

CG: My tours are tailored, so you come to me and you tell me what you want to see and then I organize a tour around your interests, time and whatever you want to see and that is very specific. I craft tours around you, on the other hand if you do marketing is also be influenced by marketing on the outside, for example many of the Americans come here because in the past 4 or 5 years, there appeared articles on the New York Times talking about Gotland, so Gotland became famous in the U.S. which is why they came here. And you know marketing is heritage, it is a selective process, you can not describe everything. The articles have spoken about different parts of Gotland from Visby to Fårö, and such places raised interest as people were reading about them. This selective process has influenced Americans to go see what they have been reading about in real life. I try to stir them away and organize visits that are less known, and that is actually what they like most about the tours, the off beaten path. A path that can go from meeting people in rural areas or eating something different that is homemade or traditional. Going back to the tours, they are then worked upon to be specific for the guests whether it is landscapes or boat tours; at the end it is whatever the client wants. So in the official website there are no official packages but there are different ideas presented to customers as suggestions though the platform is not your typical ready to go packed tours. Something new that happened to me this previous year was I had two sets of guests that asked me to organize tours to visit the places where their ancestors came from. This goes back to their great great grandparents being from

Gotland and wanting to see where they lived, the churches they got married or whatever. This was really surprising this year because that was really new.

IN: Would you say the majority of your guests are seeking such attractions (history)?

CG: History is important in Gotland, especially the Viking history despite it not being very visible in Gotland compared to other places; though when people read about it they still want to see the place they read about. The landscapes like the raukar are also important in Gotland. But yes heritage in Gotland is important.

Marketing

IN: What is the brand of your business?

CG: I am a lifestyle entrepreneur, I have my values and I try to translate them to my business so I do not have any employees but I collaborate with local people so as a lifestyle entrepreneur I think that a connection to the rural community is important so we are all on the same level. These are examples of values I bring to my brand. For example, I am driving a biofuel car which is produced on the island, making it local and pollutes less.

IN: In what ways does your business measure customer satisfaction / experience?

CG: Face to face they usually tell me if they are happy or not and they usually are. I have tripadvisor which has become a very important instrument for me. Instead of spending a lot of money in marketing I have been collecting five stars reviews and those seem to be working for the past 3-4 years especially with North Americans who check tripadvisor and see the reviews and then they come to me. The majority give me reviews so it makes it easy to track KPIs, especially with dealing with a smaller group.

IN: What is your competitive advantage?

CG: Tailored to your needs, and I try to do my best. I have language skills, I can offer those tours in four different languages. My expertise as an anthropologist, so you don't just get a certified guide, you also get an academic, so the perspective is different. Also, my connection to the Gotland society because I live here and I know the people and from that I collaborate with the local residents. Because you know people locally, it becomes very important. I have had people stay with me for 2 or 3 days so you create a deep relationship, so it is not for just 2 or 3 hours. We eat together, they even come to my home which is very exclusive, my home is 135 years old so they are seeing something even more exclusive. From there it is easy to get reviews, so 99% of my guests write something.

IN: Are you keeping track of such numbers, KPIs?

CG: It is not that hard for me to keep track of them. At the end of the day I do earn more money than those who have big groups to deal with so keeping track with a smaller group is easy. I do use Google business as a tool to gather all the statistical information; such as tracking the amount of people visiting her profile, pictures posted among others.

IN: How do you advertise to your audience ?

CG: *Facebook is the platform for older people, so I know Facebook is my best source because you get to narrate your story better". She shows her private life at times to make it more personal and interesting*

IN: Any tourism partnerships?

CG: *Yes, Collaborating with locals has helped me increase the scope of my clientele, so now I am able to reach out to Swedes because before it was just international people, so they have definitely maximized the offer.*

Seasonality

IN: Would you say seasonality plays a role in the success of your business?

CG: *Gotland has a problem, the high season is very short, and if we want to be generous we can say it is between May-September. The weather plays an important role, the good months are June, July, and August. A lot of Germans do come during May or August as that is when they have their vacation. Seasonality is good for me because I only work during the summer, but it is a hinder for the rest of the tourist industry here. For me the rest of the year I work as an anthropologist and I do research, so seasonality does not affect me though it does affect the rest of the island. Seasonality in small islands is the main issue, compared to the canary islands as an example. Compared to Kiruna up north lapland snow and hiking : öland and gotland do not have that.*

IN: Does the demographic change during high and low seasons?

CG: *Marketing for the Germans is important here..*

Gotland Excursion - Structured interview

Internal marketing

Brand (products and services)

Guided tours, in Visby and out in the Gotland countryside. Sights, local history..

We work with guests from different cultures and in different languages, and try to accommodate different needs and expectations within the framework of a tour of a few hours.

Half-day tours with guide and bus.

Culture: *Tourism, traditional group guiding; how is this incorporated in everyone's agenda: We are formulating this in our development work right now.*

Customer experience: *We have repeat customers, but no loyalty program or similar.*

Advertisement: *No specific platforms or booking platforms as we do not address individuals.*

External marketing

Demographic : *We receives cruise guests, in direct communication with shipping companies, agents etc. Also groups traveling with DG..*

Competition : *Advantages: flexibility, attentiveness, willingness to serve, and innovative thinking. Today, the availability of transport capacity is too limited, this affects the island compared to other ports in the Baltic Sea.*

No KPIs.

Innovation: *Surprise packages, not pre-specified beyond level/price range.*

Partners: *On the contrary, less well-intentioned, influenced by external factors beyond our control.*

Eco tourism: *Nature, ancient remains, landscape, geographical location become part of the experience depending on where the guests come from, what they are looking for/appreciate. We would love to offer more "odd" meals/tastings.*

Seasonality: *The destination is fighting valiantly to try to extend the season in addition to the 10 weeks in the middle of summer.*

Survival in the low season: Fewer staff on duty during low season.

Does demographic change in the low season?

Visitors from the older groups are less guided to public holiday periods or school holidays.

Today, "the elderly" are a partially affluent group.

How does the business represent Gotland as a whole ?

The business does present a part of Gotland: Yes, at least parts of the destination; social, labor market, cultural.

Tourist office of Gotland - structured interview

Products/services and specialization

Souvenirs and event tickets that we sell in the tourist office. We are a tourist agency authorized by VISITA . We don't package anything, but tickets to, for example, the Medieval Week event are popular and fridge magnets.

Brand: *The green Tourist Information and the Gotland brand. The sustainability work on Gotland is ongoing within the entire industry.*

Demographics: *Everyone – young, elderly, families etc. visit us. Unfortunately no figure on how much they spend. Scandinavia, our European neighbors and also non-European ones such as the USA, Japan.*

KPIs: *We have no active measurements, but reviews can of course be given on tripadvisor and google.*

Appendix B: Öland

Öland Local Residents Survey

Importance of tourism in Öland

1. General Economy - 17

- *It gives income to many living on the island - 1*
- *More money to the municipality and businesses - 2*
- *The sales percentage for small businesses intensifies - 1*
- *Gives income to the island - 6*
- *Money comes in - 3*
- *Our economy and service - 3*

2. Business purposes / survival - 11

- *Many get to appreciate the cozy nature and entrepreneurs shine - 1*
- *More alive and movement, many get to take part of what nature and culture gives - 3*
- *Makes the island more 'lively' although it's nice when the tourism season is over - 1*
- *Make the local business support themselves throughout the year - 1*

- *Increases the turnover of goods and products - 1*
- *Keeps the island alive - 1*
- *Spreads joy to the island - 1*
- *Affects the business world and provides for the future - 1*

3. Employment opportunities - 7

- *Work opportunities, life and movement on smaller locations - 1*
- *More visitors on the businesses creates opportunities for more locals to support themselves financially - 1*
- *Possibility of livelihood for the working age, revenue to the municipality that goes on to the residents - 1*
- *Generates work and income for the locals - 3*
- *Positive for trade and the labor market - 1*

Positive and negative statements - 3

- *Way too many people coming to the island at once. Introduce restrictions on how many people can stay on the island during a day*
- *Unfortunately, SOME need training in how to behave in nature and to read about how / what / not what to do in nature*
- *Lots of people on the island, living is good for businesses even though many businesses are run by tourists and close after the season. Tourism also drives up house prices as individuals with purchasing power buy up houses, which causes the villages to become impoverished & in some cases close down in winter when there are no permanent residents left. There is also a need for an increased service during the summer in health care, water supply & sewage, which we permanent residents have to pay for the whole year as it needs to be over-dimensioned. It might sound negative, but I still like the tourism, but those who have summer houses here should pay taxes in the municipality while they are here.*

The interaction among residents and tourists

On what scale do you interact with tourists?

1 being the lowest

- *1: 13,3% (4 in total)*
- *2: 13,8% (4 in total)*
- *3: 31% (9 in total)*
- *4: 31% (9 in total)*
- *5: 10,3% (3 in total)*

5 being the highest

Based on your interaction with tourists, how often do they come back?

They never come back: 5,4% (2)

They rarely come back : 0% (0)
They sometimes come back: 37.8 % (14)
They come back once or twice: 13,8% (5)
They come back multiples times : 42,2 % (18)

Culture and its importance

What do you think is the culture that shapes Öland?

General culture statements

- *Music, nature and culture. Craftsmen and ornithologists*
- *Unique nature, antiquities, flora, and fauna*
- *Arts, theater and nostalgic clubs that travelers visit*
- *Many different forms of arts, food, music, and ceramics*
- *Landscape, weather and wind*
- *Arts and landscape*
- *All of the 'Ölandish' culture*
- *Sun, sea and restaurants*
- *Food, concerts and the people*
- *Landscape culture, historic culture and ancient remains*
- *Culture brings everyone together*
- *Everything that builds up on history about the island and new thinking*

Specific attraction statements

- *In the south of Öland, there is the world heritage of the Great Alvaret, hiking trails, birds & lots of artists. Northern Öland is more characterized by beaches, swimming & party life & that's where most tourists go.*
- *The theatre Röda Lyktan located at Gammalsbygården gives amazing shows*
- *'Ölandish' features such as Alvaret, lighthouses, pretty bathing sites, nature, animals, and different traditions based on the calendar seasons.*
- *The harvest festival is probably one of the larger cultural events on the island. But there are also many who deal with creating some form such as paintings or music.*

Competition

What do you think about competition in nearby islands?

There is no competition	Not aware of any competition	Competition is good
<i>There is no competition - 6R</i>	<i>It's not something i experience - 5R</i>	<i>Competition is good - 7R</i>
<i>There is no need for competition</i>		<i>It's good, the advantage is that Öland has a bridge</i>
<i>Not a problem, there is room for everyone</i>	<i>Which neighboring islands? Are there more islands nearby that you can reach with a bridge?</i>	<i>Competition is important for development</i>
<i>Competition is bad</i>	<i>I don't think it is a problem</i>	<i>It is good, Gotland invest on things that Öland doesn't</i>
<i>I can't see any competition</i>	<i>Not a lot of competition</i>	<i>Competition is good, but Öland is better</i>
<i>I don't experience any competition</i>	<i>There is room for everyone</i>	<i>There is competition, but everyone can lure in tourists</i>
	<i>It is positive, although we are in the same sea so it seems there is no competition</i>	

Do you think Gotland stands out compared to the other ones in your region and in what ways?

Culture: History and Nature	Culture: History and Nature	General: ex, attractions
<i>Nature and beautiful beaches</i>	<i>Unique weather and nature - 3R</i>	<i>Öland is a national pearl, it can't compare with the surrounding landscapes except for the neighboring island, Gotland</i>
<i>Long summer season</i>	<i>Unique nature - 5R</i>	<i>Yes, Öland stands out, but we can be better</i>
<i>Good availability of birds e.g El Dorado for birdwatchers</i>	<i>The beautiful and unique nature, geology, and fauna</i>	<i>Öland is the best - 2T</i>
<i>Good weather and the pure Öland people are very nice and</i>	<i>Closeness to the sea with a lot of pretty beaches</i>	<i>Öland is relatively big with a lot to offer</i>

<i>helpful</i>		
<i>Nature and culture stands out and attract tourists</i>	<i>The sea and the pleasures of life</i>	<i>The Öland nature, harvest, food, and art stands out</i>
<i>Öland stands out with the unique nature in a relaxing way</i>	<i>It is pretty to live on an island with so many hours of sun</i>	<i>There is a lot going on during a long season fo all kinds of interests</i>
<i>So much culture and so many historic places. A fascinating varied nature</i>	<i>It is probably the calm, the sea, nature and the simplicity that shines the strongest.</i>	<i>A good amount of Swedish people have never heard of Öland and confuse it with Gotland</i>
<i>It is unique to live on an island with the landscapes that Öland has</i>		<i>Öland gives the feeling of home friendly</i>
		<i>I find it quite a cozy feeling to live on an island. Everything is a little smaller and more accessible.</i>

Interview type: Unstructured interview

Interviewee: Marcus Carlsson

Position: Tourism manager

Date of interview: 14/ 11/2022

Location of interview: Digital

Can you tell me some unique features that make Öland stand out?

There are many things that we can market. Some of the biggest things are of course the summer season, we have a lot of campsites. We have one of the best campsites on a single island both in Sweden and also internationally, comparing it with Canary Islands or Greece. An important aspect of our destination is the nature attractions such as hiking trails, biking trails, and camping, which skyrocketed during the pandemic.

We want to market things that will drive people to the island. This is why we are focusing on the big things. A big thing that happened in 2022 was that we had a lot of concerts and really big events. We had the celebration of the princess Victoria, a big Harley Davidson event and over 80 concerts. All of these events are really big for us and attract a lot of guests. We also have the Borgholm Castle which has good sound acoustics and a nice environment to create events. We also have the harvest festival which is over 200 000 people just for that period. Last year we had a new event on Öland, The art landscape of Öland, which consisted of all the five arts groups in Öland having opening hours at the same time. We want to make this event the biggest art event in Sweden, so we have big hopes for this event. To summarize, the summer with the sand and sea, as well as the outdoors and the culture part are the main features that Öland has to offer.

Can you talk about the new marketing opportunities for Öland?

A big challenge for Öland is to have a longer season, because we don't want to see the big spike during summer. For us to be a sustainable destination we need to broaden the season and for that we need to find other groups that come to Öland than the typical guest that comes during the 'normal period'. We think that the outdoor part is an important part that we need to develop a lot. We also think that nature by itself can attract a lot of people. The difficulty is that the measurements to see if this could work or not is not sufficient because we are a relatively small destination with 60 000 people, and not a million people which could make things easier.

What about the demographic and targeted groups for Öland?

The target group that likes to go on weekends is something we want to attract during the off-season. The international market is also interesting for us because they have different schedules. When the Swedish are working, the international tourists are off, and we want to attract them. If we can attract them, then we could have a longer season where businesses could be open longer and we could see Öland as an all-year perspective. We are also looking a lot at the 65+ because they have time and money to make trips. They have the possibility to go wherever they want since they have the possibility to do so. We are looking at the environmental part as well and attract the eco-friendly people as well.

When it comes to money and the economy of the tourists, Öland has both the expensive aspect and the more friendly aspect. The quality of the restaurants have gone higher, but the quality of the natural attractions which are not as expensive have also gone up. The standard of living has gone up. I would say that we are on the same level as the big destinations like Greece or Spain, but we also have the cheap attractions.

What kind of marketing strategies do you use for Öland?

80% is digital and 20% is printed. The big part is digital marketing and mainly social media. Our big channels are Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok. We are making organic content, but we are also looking at how the ads are going, how the content is going. Those three are the main ones, but we are now also looking at YouTube and for the behind-the-scenes aspect we post on LinkedIn but that is mainly for the businesses. A big aspect of social media is that we are looking at trends and how we can utilize it for our benefit.

Can you talk about benchmarking and how it works for destinations?

We are looking at other destinations that are similar to us. We are looking at Gotland, Halmstad,

and Skåne but we are also looking at non-destinations content to get benchmarking. We are trying to look at trends, at the psychology of people and how they perceive ads and trends. A key for us is to get good marketing trends from different fields because a lot of things work if the psychology is behind it.

What about customer experience?

We have a destination network with every destination in Sweden. It is a big organization that shares reports with all of the destinations about how happy the guests are with the destinations. We have the most satisfied customers for the fifth year in a row for Sweden. It is measured as net promoter score (NPS) where we have 59. We know that we have satisfied customers and we are working on trying to further develop and not be satisfied with these numbers to create even better results. Now we are not measuring the summer season, we are mostly measuring the periods of January – May and September-December. SNDMO is the name of the organization and the summary that we get from them is the big thing that we look at.

Interview type: Semi-structured interview

Interviewee: Agneta Larsson

Position: Founder/CEO

Date of interview: 26/11/2022

Location of Interview: Digital

Who are your guests?

In the summer we have regular tourists. All different ages, quite a lot of children and families and young age groups. The season is quite long here because we are in the middle of the ‘bird Mecca’ of Sweden. We get lots of wonderful nature people coming here. People interested in birds, butterflies, orchids, everybody is interested in nature, that demographic. They are usually in their 60’s, although some are younger, but the majority are older. They come from all over the world and know the island better than we do. They know exactly what they want to do on the island. They start coming in April, all the way through mid-June, because the birds are not interesting anymore at that time. That’s when the regular tourists come in. People that come in the spring, they are regulars that come year after year. They also come in the fall during September through November. These tourists are also in their 60’s and interested in nature, birds, archaeology and anything that is related to the nature of Öland.

What products or services does your business offer?

We offer three varieties of products for our guests. Firstly, we offer a hotel-based service with breakfast and room service. It is a bed and breakfast, but the rooms also have their own kitchen if they want to cook for themselves. In the winter we also have a pub where we serve food and drinks together with good music and entertainment. We also opened a yoga studio for the ‘yogis’. We thought the yoga studio would only be open during the off-season, but recently we noticed that it was a good idea to open it during the summer season as well.

Can you think of a unique feature that stands out?

All of (the business) is pretty much down to earth I would say, right. The pub, our guests, the whole, that would be the theme that it’s close to nature, close to the heart. We want our guests to visit us, relax, and just experience nature

Would you say that nature is an important aspect for your business?

Yes definitely. With all the wonderful nature people we have staying at us, I would say that nature is an important factor.

What is the brand of your business?

Well, we want to create a place where you can stay and feel calm and relax, maybe do some yoga with us or just hang out. I would say that our business is basically to relieve stress and just enjoy a calm and easy time with us.

In what ways does your business measure customer satisfaction / experience?

We are not part of any organizations to help us track the satisfaction of our guests. We just ask them what they think and how we can improve. We do have returning guests, mostly the nature people who are interested in birds and other nature stuff. They usually come every year and sometimes we do give them a discount, but that is not something we do often. We do create packages together with our pub where you get a 5-10% discount.

How relevant is your market strategy to today's shifting social trends?

We are lacking on social media. We do some work with Facebook, same with Instagram, but not a lot. We recently learned that we should be on Tik Tok as well, that is our goal. With Yoga, the music, and the pub we are aiming to attract a younger audience who most likely are bringing their friends. But yes, we want to keep working on our social media.

What is your competitive advantage?

I would say that our advantage is that we are so close to all this nature with Ottenby so close by as well which is much appreciated for the bird watchers, who are our main clientele. Our pub is fully booked every Friday and people from Stockholm and other places in Sweden want to come here to relax, listen to good music, eat good food and feel calm for a day or two.

What type of benchmarking strategies do you use?

We don't really do any type of benchmarking since every hotel or small bed and breakfast help each other. If we are missing some towels or sheets, we can just go to the other businesses close by and they will help us. Or if we get some guests here but there is no room available, we recommend them to the closest hotels, we even drive them there if we can because if we keep the guests down here, everybody wins.

Do you have any tourism partnerships?

I wouldn't say partnerships, but like I said, we do help each other with the close businesses.

In terms of eco-tourism, would you say that it plays an important role for the hotel and attracting tourists?

Yes, definitely. Nature is basically the main protagonist of our business. Most of our customers are interested in nature and we incentivize our guests to visit Ottenby and the other nature reserves of the island and appreciate the nature Öland has to offer.

Do you take advantage of the eco-tourism and adventure travel opportunities in your area to attract tourists?

We have nature reserves just minutes away by car. We have the Eketorps castle really close by as well. I would say that nature is definitely an advantage for us and for the guests we have had for all the years we have been open.

Would you say seasonality plays a role in the success of your business?

I think that seasonality is important for any business here in Öland. We are lucky to have guests both before and after the high season ends because of the nature of the people that visit us and stay with us. Now with the yoga studio and with the pub we are trying to get out of the seasonality aspect and focus on the winter and autumn periods because we are getting old and the summer is really chaotic for us to keep working like we do.

Would you say your business and the services it offers represent the destination as a whole?

I would say that our business is really down to earth, where you can appreciate the nature and the environment that Öland has to offer, so yes, I would say that we represent the natural and cultural aspects of this island, and we are very happy to do that.

Interview type: Structured interview

Interviewee: Aimeé and Thomas

Position: Founders

Date of interview: 22/11/2022

Location of Interview: Digital

Who are your guests?

Our guests vary from different parts of the country and social status. A small percentage of our guests are internationals, but usually we get Swedish guests to stay with us. For the most part our guests are either families or elderly couples.

What products or services does your business offer?

We are a bed and breakfast that offer different types of emotions and experiences based on the different decors in each room. Food and beverage are some special products that we serve here to our guests. Kroppkakor is usually what catches the most attention from tourists.

What is the brand of your business?

We want our guests to experience what the island has to offer. We want our guests to feel the sensations and what it is like to live here in Öland. What makes us stand out is what we offer, Kroppkakor and praliner are our unique products. What we offer is the Öländish feel.

In what ways does your business measure customer satisfaction / experience?

We have recurring guests visiting us. Sadly we don't have any programs or offer any discounts.

How relevant is your market strategy to today's shifting social trends?

We use Facebook for social media. Other than that we use simple word of mouth and Google reviews so our guests can find us.