CHAPTER 3

PERCEIVED SOCIAL–ENVIRONMENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AS A BENEFIT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceived benefit of sustainable consumption from a consumer perspective. Communicating corporate social and environmental responsibility is beneficial from a company perspective; however, the advantages for consumers have not yet been sufficiently clarified. We investigated two well-being dimensions as the identified benefit of sustainability. Therefore, an experiment (n = 815) was conducted to identify the influence of different advertisements on social–environmental and emotional well-being while considering the moderating role of consumers’ value orientation. The results revealed that information about sustainability attributes had a significant effect on social–environmental well-being, while the emotionality of the communication had a significant effect on emotional well-being. These effects were partly moderated by consumers’ value orientation: the effect on social–environmental well-being increased with biosphere–altruistic value orientation, whereas the effect on emotional well-being slightly increased with self-enhancement value orientation.

Keywords: Advertising; sustainability; consumers’ value orientation; CSR communication; well-being; emotional benefit
INTRODUCTION

The importance of sustainable behavior has increased in recent decades, yet little is known about the perceived benefits of this behavior from a customer perspective, especially in the broader tourism and hospitality setting. Consumers’ interest in and awareness of sustainable products are high, but at the same time the term “sustainability” and the business model behind this concept are largely incomprehensible to the public. For the average consumer, sustainability as a concept is too complex (Crome, 2004), including in a tourism context (Miller, Rathouse, Scarles, Holmes, & Tribe, 2010). If consumers do not understand what the term “sustainability” includes, it seems reasonable to assume that they have difficulties to identify the added value of sustainable products and services. They may not differentiate between sustainable and nonsustainable tourism products and services; however, several studies have revealed that environmentally friendly consumers indeed prefer sustainable products over conventional ones (e.g., Collins, Steg, & Koning, 2007; do Paço & Raposo, 2010; Karp, 1996; Sirakaya-Turk, Baloglu, & Uecker Mercado, 2014). From a company perspective, communicating corporate social responsibility (CSR) is beneficial. CSR communication is used as a tool to increase company value. Companies that communicate their responsible entrepreneurial activity gain legitimacy (Du & Vieira, 2012), improve their image (Pomerling & Johnson, 2009) and influence customer loyalty (Martínez & Bosque, 2013). CSR communication makes an essential contribution to a firm’s growth by reinforcing its corporate reputation. If consumers perceive the company as responsible, they will value it more highly. However, the question remains: What is the added value for consumers?

Little is known about the benefits of sustainable consumption from a customer perspective. Stern, Dietz, and Kalof (1993) and Schultz and Zelezy (1999) showed that people labeled as “environmentally friendly” were more oriented to sustainability topics than others. According to Pitter (2014), they adopt a more sustainable lifestyle and are more susceptible to marketing messages that promote sustainable products than those with a lower affinity for sustainability. For those driven by the value system of sustainability, it is part of their lifestyle. Environmentally friendly and sustainable behavior is positively associated with a biosphere–altruistic value orientation, and negatively associated with a self-enhancement value orientation (e.g., Doran, Hanss, & Larsen, 2016; Grunert & Juhl, 1995; Harland, Staats, & Wilke, 1999; Stern, 2000; van Riper & Kyle, 2014). People with a biosphere–altruistic orientation show proenvironmental attitudes that are consistent with their principles and have an emotionally positive connection to sustainability. Sustainable products and services are linked to their subjective well-being. Within the context of sustainable tourism, an evaluation of perceived subjective well-being is essential because the sustainability of tourism products and services cannot be finally evaluated, even after consumption. As subjective well-being is a multidimensional construct, we argue that the effect on each dimension of well-being differs depending on the type of communication and consumers’ value orientation. First, communication about the sustainability of a product and service increases social–environmental well-being, whereas a positive
communication style that emphasizes self-referential good feelings increases emotional well-being. Second, for consumers with a stronger biosphere–altruistic value orientation, sustainability and its associated social–environmental well-being are essential. However, for consumers with a stronger self-enhancement value orientation, self-referential positive communication about the product and its associated emotional well-being are necessary to enhance the persuasive effect of the message.

The goal in this study was to show, for the first time, that consumers of sustainable tourism products and services could identify an increase in well-being. Consumers might not evaluate the product in the traditional sense, but they can maximize their well-being by linking the product and service to an emotional gain. Therefore, perceived well-being is the identified benefit of sustainability. We conducted a quantitative experimental study to examine this perceived benefit.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although sustainability is a well-established development goal today, neither the term nor the different models are understood and valued in the same way by scientific disciplines, industry, and consumers. Yet, an effective communication about the social and environmental responsibility of a company can increase the value of the enterprise. CSR communication is used to raise shareholder value. The firm’s growth can be traced back to its increased legitimacy, increased image, and enhanced customer loyalty (e.g., Du & Vieira, 2012; Martínez & Bosque, 2013; Pomering & Johnson, 2009). If consumers value sustainable performance but do not understand the business model behind it, they must favor the personal benefits alongside the business concept. In recent decades, increased corporate communication about the implementation of responsible operational strategies has increased consumers’ awareness of environmentally and socially responsible behavior (Lee & Shin, 2010). However, the term “sustainability” is too complex, often abstract and not understandable to the majority of consumers (Crome, 2004). Consumers’ lack of knowledge suggests that the perceived personal benefits cannot be grounded in the details of sustainability, but rather on a vague positive feeling transmitted by firms’ communications.

Benefits of Sustainable Consumption for Consumers

Communicating sustainability attributes to consumers can produce a general positive feeling. Lichtl (1999; 2008) examined the relation between information about ecological sustainability and perceived emotions. The results of his investigation revealed that an ad that was linked to the Waterkeeper Alliance and contained general environmental information led to significantly higher positive emotions than an ad without such a link. Although the study only investigated the emotions induced by environmental information, Lichtl (2008) generalized the findings to the whole sustainability concept and concluded that environmental topics increase recipients’ well-being. In Lichtl’s (2008) study, the participants’ positive emotions were solely attributed to the fact that the
corporate sustainability performance was indirectly communicated alongside the product information. However, the communication style of sustainable products and services is also relevant to perceived well-being. The German research project balance by Schwender et al. (2008) developed and evaluated new strategies for communicating the sustainability concept to a mass audience. The project emphasized the importance of communicating sustainability topics in an emotionally positive way to reach a broader group of recipients, by increasing recipients’ well-being. The balance project involved various studies that together presented evidence for the effectiveness of the use of a positive emotional communication style to implement environmental consumption behavior. Consequently, an increased feeling of well-being may be attributable either to the sustainability features of a product and service, or to the communication style of the advertisement.

Research reveals that subjective well-being is a multidimensional construct. Hedonic well-being consists of an individual’s perceived happiness, life satisfaction, and affective balance. Following Keyes (2007; 2014), this domain is referred to as emotional well-being. This emotional dimension includes emotions concerning oneself. Whereas, altruistic emotions refer to the positive feeling brought by a sense of fitting into society (Keyes, 1998) and feeling connected to nature (Howell, Dopko, Passmore, & Buro, 2011). The reflection of the self as a part of both society and of the natural environment results in increased well-being. In contrast to emotional well-being, which is a rather self-referential feeling, social–environmental well-being implies more altruistic feelings.

Advertisements for sustainable products and services provide people with an increased sense of well-being. Assumedly, different aspects of an advertisement trigger the two domains of well-being: information about sustainability increases social–environmental well-being, whereas the use of an emotional communication style increases emotional well-being. First, sustainability generates a feeling of connectedness toward other human beings and toward nature (Howell et al., 2011). Social contribution and social actualization are central in the context of sustainability. Social contribution refers to the perceived possibility and responsibility to act in a way that is for the common good. Social actualization is the belief in the power and potential of society to make the world a better place (Keyes, 1998). Grounded in the fundamental human desire to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), a healthy individual has a feeling of connectedness and belongingness. The environmental dimension must be taken into consideration as well as the social dimension. Information about sustainability is expected to promote good feelings about one’s connectedness to nature. Connection to nature is an important predictor of ecological behavior and well-being (Mayer & Frantz, 2004). Advertisements that include sustainability information increase consumers’ well-being by providing information about the promotion of environmental and social welfare. This is one possible means of maintaining and strengthening the sense of belongingness toward society and connectedness to nature.
Hypothesis 1. An advertisement that emphasizes the sustainability aspects of a product and service will enhance recipients’ social–environmental well-being.

Second, the self-referential positive communication style of an advertisement affects emotional well-being. Topics about sustainability must be communicated in a positive way and the recipient should feel confident about the instruction for action proposed by the message (Schwender et al., 2008). Advertisements include a behavioral instruction such as buying the product or booking the promoted hotel. Recipients know what to do and how to do it. It is assumed that people feel good about themselves if they know that they are behaving in a sustainable way or supporting a company that operates in a socially and environmentally responsible way. This self-referential positive feeling must be transmitted by the communication to increase recipient’s emotional well-being.

Hypothesis 2. An advertisement for a sustainable product and service that emphasizes the feel-good factor of the product as a benefit will enhance recipients’ emotional well-being.

Consumers’ Value Orientation

Marketing researchers often refer to the specific target group of consumers who are interested in sustainable products and generally have a higher knowledge of social and environmental issues as the LOHAS (Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability). These consumers can be categorized according to their typical attitudes, behavior, and personal values (Helmke, Scherberich, & Uebel, 2016; Pittner, 2014). Specific knowledge about this target group is commonly used to develop marketing strategies to reach and sell them sustainable products and services. Such communications are aligned with their respective values. On the basis of previous studies that have revealed that people with a biosphere–altruistic value orientation tend to have environmental friendly attitudes and behavior (e.g., Doran et al., 2016; Grunert & Juhl, 1995; Harland et al., 1999; Schultz & Zelezny, 2003; Stern, 2000; Stern, Kalof, Dietz, & Guagnano, 1995; van Riper & Kyle, 2014), communication is adjusted accordingly. In contrast, this style of communication does not address individuals who value self-enhancement life goals (Schultz & Zelezny, 2003). However, individual differences need to be taken into consideration when constructing a persuasive message for marketing purposes. Value orientation is a predictor of and precondition for sustainable consumption (Thøgersen & Ölander, 2002), which shapes attitudes toward pro-sustainable behavior (Stern et al., 1993).

The universal value system is structured as a circle along two continuums (Schwartz, 1994). The first continuum is from Self-Enhancement to Self-Transcendence and the second is from Openness to Change to Conservation. No association has been found between the values along the latter continuum and environmental topics (Stern & Dietz, 1994; Stern, Kalof, et al., 1995); thus,
they are not introduced in further detail here. Self-enhancement includes two types of values, achievement and power, comprising social power, pleasure, authority, ambition, wealth, influence, success, and enjoyment of life, and it constitutes one’s propensity for social superiority and esteem (Schwartz, 1992, 1994). These self-enhancement values involve a personal process. At the other end of the continuum, self-transcendence emphasizes concerns about other human beings and nature. Two types of values are included, universalism and benevolence, comprising unity with nature, protecting the environment, a world at peace, equality, social justice, helpfulness, a world of beauty, and a sense of belonging. Within the research field of proenvironmental attitudes, Stern and colleagues (1995) supplemented self-transcendence with two further values, preventing pollution and respecting the earth, and titled the resulting factor biosphere–altruistic. These two value orientations (self-enhancement and biosphere–altruistic) form a continuum. This means that people do not hold either one value orientation or the other, but may have more of a self-enhancement value orientation, more of a biosphere–altruistic orientation or be located somewhere in the middle.

To investigate an effective marketing strategy for sustainable tourism products and services that reaches a broader target group, it is important to take different values into consideration. Social–environmental well-being is expected to be enhanced by information about the sustainability of the product and service ($H_1$), and emotional well-being to be enhanced by the emotionality of the communication ($H_2$). In addition to this state-like property, subjective well-being has a trait-like property (Diener, 1999). Personality traits are one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of subjective well-being (Lucas & Diener, 2009). Therefore, personal traits such as values should not be neglected in the investigation. First, individuals who value biosphere–altruistic life goals more than self-enhancement life goals are highly interested in improving social and environmental welfare. People who place concerns about other human beings and nature over personal concerns are probably reachable by an increased social–environmental well-being. It is therefore hypothesized that these consumers are likely to be more susceptible to advertisements for products and services that emphasize sustainability. Second, individuals who value self-enhancement life goals more than biosphere–altruistic life goals are highly interested in improving their personal position and strive harder to increase their emotional well-being. Self-referential emotions are therefore hypothesized to be more important for these consumers and, thus, they are likely to be more susceptible to advertisements for sustainable products and services that emphasize feeling good about themselves. Consequently, it is hypothesized that the postulated effects ($H_1$ and $H_2$) are moderated by consumers’ value orientation ($H_3$ and $H_4$).

**Hypothesis 3.** The stronger a person’s biosphere–altruistic value orientation in relation to her self-enhancement value orientation, the stronger the postulated effect of emphasizing sustainability aspects in communication on social–environmental well-being.
Hypothesis 4. The stronger a person’s self-enhancement value-orientation in relation to her biosphere–altruistic value orientation, the stronger the postulated effect of the emotionality of the communication on emotional well-being.

RESEARCH METHOD
To examine the perceived benefits of sustainable behavior, a quantitative experimental study was conducted. The experimental study aimed to verify that sustainable products and services generates a good feeling in the form of a clear conscience and the possibility of influencing well-being through persuasive communication with respect to consumers’ value orientation.

Research Design and Procedure
The experiment used a 3 (advertisement: sustainability aspects positively communicated (S-PRO) versus sustainability aspects regularly communicated (S-REG) versus no sustainability aspects communicated (NO-S)) × 3 (value orientation: stronger biosphere–altruistic (BA) versus ambivalent (A) versus stronger self-enhancement (SE)) between-subjects design. For the experimental manipulation, we used a digital brochure advertising a fictional hotel. For the quasiexperimental factor we measured the value orientation of the participants as continuous variable and then grouped them accordingly.

The participants were told to imagine a scenario in which they were looking for holiday accommodation in Portugal. They were randomly assigned to one of the three advertisement conditions. The participants received a hotel brochure that included a) information about the sustainability aspects of the offer and emphasized the positive self-enhancement from consuming these products and services ($n_{S-PRO} = 282$), b) only the information about the sustainability of the offer without a positive communication style ($n_{S-REG} = 256$), or c) no information about the sustainability aspects of the offer ($n_{NO-S} = 277$). The hotel was a fictional, mid-range, independent three-star beach hotel on the coast of Portugal. To modify sustainability, the information about the standard amenities was the same, but the information about sustainability was either included or not. To modify emotionality, the wordings and pictures used in the brochures were different. For example, the highly emotional positive brochure included the line “Feel good about your booking having contributed to a better world by supporting our hotel’s sustainable management concept,” while in the less positive emotional brochure the line “Recognize your contribution to a better world with your booking by supporting our hotel’s sustainable management concept” was used. The request to book the promoted hotel was worded without sustainability information: “Book your vacation experience with us and contribute to our hotel’s management concept by booking now.”

Following the manipulation, the participants were asked about their feelings and opinions about the hotel in general and the brochure in particular. The questionnaire ended by asking about the participants’ holiday preferences,
value orientation ($n_{BA} = 295$, $n_A = 307$ and $n_{SE} = 213$) and social demographics. The participants were then debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Sample and Data Collection

The experiment was completed by 815 participants from Germany, Switzerland (German speaking region), and the United States ($n_{DE} = 284$, $n_{CH} = 265$, $n_{USA} = 266$). Soft quotas for age, gender, and education were used to obtain sample distributions similar to the population distributions of these variables. A professional company for online access panels recruited the participants in Germany and Switzerland. Their partner company recruited the participants in the United States. The participants were aged between 18 and 69 years ($M = 43.28$, $SD = 14.06$), with 430 (52.76%) women and 385 (47.24%) men. Two hundred and fifty-four (31.17%) participants had a low level of education (compulsory education, high school), 315 (38.65%) had a medium level (college without a degree, associate degree), and 246 (30.18%) had a high level (higher vocational training, college, and university).

The sample included a broad distribution of employment types, incomes and living accommodation in the corresponding country. The majority (56.44%) of the participants were economically active, 35.09% were not employed (9.94% looking for work and 25.15% not looking for work) and 8.47% were in training or education. Among the German sample, 31.69% had a gross annual household income of €20,001–40,000 (40.14% below this range and 28.17% above), 22.64% of the Swiss sample had an annual income of CHF52,001–78,000 (37.36% below and 40.00% above), and 44.98% of the US sample had an income of US$15,001–61,250 (16.92% below and 39.10% above). No particular bias was noted among respondents from different political states of the corresponding country.

Measures and Data Analysis

Independent Variable

To verify the effectiveness of the manipulation, the participants were asked to indicate how much information the brochure included about sustainability (“In your opinion, did the brochure describe in detail the economic, social and environmental commitment of the hotel?” 1 = did not describe these commitments at all; 7 = described these commitments a lot). Furthermore, they indicated the extent to which the text and pictures in the brochure conveyed positive feelings (“In your opinion, how much did the brochure convey positive emotions while reading?” and “In your opinion, how much did the brochure’s images specifically aim to convey positive emotions while reading?”; 1 = no positive emotions at all; 7 = a lot of positive emotions).

Moderating Variable

Following Schwartz (1992) and Stern, Dietz, and Guagnano (1995), the participants were asked to indicate the priority of guiding principles on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all a priority; 7 = extremely high priority). Biosphere–altruistic value
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Orientation was measured by six items with scores summed to create a mean index (e.g., “Equality: equal opportunity for all”; \( \alpha = 0.90; M = 5.48, SD = 1.11 \)). Self-enhancement value orientation was measured by six items pooled to create a mean index (e.g., “Authority: the right to lead or command”; \( \alpha = 0.85; M = 4.18, SD = 1.23 \)). As we were interested in the ranking of the values in order of importance, we calculated a difference score (Schwartz, 2003) by subtracting the self-enhancement index from the biospheric–altruistic index. Higher scores indicated a more biosphere–altruistic value orientation, whereas negative scores indicated a more self-enhancement value orientation. This difference score was divided into three quantiles representing the participants’ value orientations.

Dependent Variables

The measure of subjective well-being was adapted from previous work (Lamers, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, ten Klooster, & Keyes, 2011). Additional items were developed to measure the sense of belongingness toward nature. All items were pretested and amended accordingly. Each item was rated on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) confirmed the two dimensions of subjective well-being. Emotional well-being was assessed with three items summed to create a mean index (e.g., “With this booking I feel that I contributed something important to my life’s happiness”; \( \alpha = 0.93; M = 5.3, SD = 1.41 \)). Social–environmental well-being was assessed with five items summed to create a mean index (e.g., “With this booking I feel that I contributed something important to protect the ecosystem”; \( \alpha = 0.96; M = 3.96, SD = 1.76 \)).

FINDINGS

All analyses were controlled by the effect of citizenship of the participants. The observed effects do not change, if the same analysis is done without controlling for this factor. However, the citizenship of the participants had a significant influence on the perceived well-being. On average, American citizens perceived a higher level of well-being (social–environmental well-being: \( M = 4.50, SD = 1.77; \) emotional well-being \( M = 5.66, SD = 1.21 \)) than German (social–environmental well-being: \( M = 3.82, SD = 1.75; \) emotional well-being \( M = 5.02, SD = 1.51 \)) or Swiss citizens (social–environmental well-being: \( M = 3.65, SD = 1.63; \) emotional well-being \( M = 5.13, SD = 1.40; \) Wilks’ \( \Lambda = 0.94, F(4,1574) = 12.21, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.032 \)). Since level differences between the countries were not part of this study, we will not go into further detail.

Manipulation Checks

To examine whether the advertisements were perceived differently across the experimental conditions, two analyses of variance with Helmert and reverse Helmert contrasts were conducted. Overall, a significant effect of advertising
on the perception of sustainability information was found ($F(2,812) = 65.46, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.139$). The participants who received information about sustainability reported significantly more information about economic, social, and environmental sustainability ($M_{S-PRO} = 5.07, SD_{S-PRO} = 1.43; M_{S-REG} = 5.16, SD_{S-REG} = 1.42$) than those who did not receive this information ($M_{NO-S} = 3.81, SD_{NO-S} = 1.75$; contrast $= -1.31, SE = 0.11, p < 0.001$). There was an overall significant effect of advertising on perceived emotional communication style ($F(2,812) = 7.55, p = 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.018$). The participants in the high emotion condition reported significantly more positive emotions ($M_{S-PRO} = 5.75, SD_{S-PRO} = 1.12$) than those in the other two conditions ($M_{S-REG} = 5.42, SD_{S-REG} = 1.29; M_{NO-S} = 5.37, SD_{NO-S} = 1.35$; contrast $= 0.36, SE = 0.09, p < 0.001$). Therefore, the deliberated manipulation was successfully implied.

Hypothesis Testing

Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) with Helmert and reverse Helmert contrasts were used to test the hypotheses on the effect of communication ($H1$ and $H2$). The moderating effect of value orientation ($H3$ and $H4$) was analyzed in further detail by a simple effect analysis. The MANOVA revealed that the advertisement (communication) had a significant effect on the two dimensions of well-being (Wilks’ $\Lambda = 0.89, F(4,1606) = 23.46, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.055$) and value orientation had a significant effect on the two dimensions of well-being (Wilks’ $\Lambda = 0.97, F(4,1606) = 5.39, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.013$).

Communication Effects

The advertisement (communication) had significant effects on perceived social–environmental well-being ($F(2,804) = 43.85, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.098$) and on emotional well-being ($F(2,804) = 7.80, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.019$). Participants who read the advertisements that emphasized the sustainability aspects of the hotel reported significantly higher social–environmental well-being ($M_{S-PRO} = 4.31, SD_{S-PRO} = 1.28; M_{S-REG} = 4.43, SD_{S-REG} = 1.30$) than those who read the advertisement without sustainability information ($M_{NO-S} = 3.23, SD_{NO-S} = 1.28$; contrast $= -1.14, SE = 0.12, p < 0.001$). Therefore, the first hypothesis was supported. Participants who read the advertisement that emphasized the good feeling obtained from booking the sustainable hotel reported significantly greater emotional well-being ($M_{S-PRO} = 5.51, SD_{S-PRO} = 1.17$) than those who read the advertisements that did not emphasize the emotional benefits ($M_{S-REG} = 5.28, SD_{S-REG} = 1.19; M_{NO-S} = 5.05, SD_{NO-S} = 1.17$; contrast $= 0.35, SE = 0.10, p = 0.001$). Therefore, the second hypothesis was supported.

Interaction Effects

The MANOVA revealed that the interaction between advertisement and value orientation had no significant effect on perceived well-being (Wilks’ $\Lambda = 0.99$,
F(8,1606) = 1.11, p = 0.35, η² = 0.006), neither on social–environmental well-being (F(4,804) = 1.95, p = 0.10, η² = 0.010; see Fig. 1) nor on emotional well-being (F(4,804) = 1.18, p = 0.32, η² = 0.006; see Fig. 2). However, because an overall moderating effect was not expected, a simple effect analysis to test the hypotheses was conducted. This analysis indicated that perceived social–environmental well-being was significantly higher when the advertisement included sustainability information (M_SE = 4.41, SD_SE = 1.40; M_A = 4.31, SD_A = 1.25; M_BA = 4.57, SD_BA = 1.30) than when it did not (M_SE = 3.65, SD_SE = 1.20; M_A = 3.17, SD_A = 1.26; M_BA = 2.87, SD_BA = 1.28). These mean differences were significant for all three target groups. However, the higher the biosphere–altruistic value orientation, the greater the differences (ΔM_SE = 0.76, SE_SE = 0.28; ΔM_A = 1.14, SE_A = 0.22; ΔM_BA = 1.70, SE_BA = 0.23). To get a better understanding of these mean differences, we additionally conducted a second MANOVA after splitting the data. Hence, the group of people that received an advertisement with the sustainability aspects positively communicated were excluded. Overall, the results of the MANOVA showed again no significant interaction effect on perceived well-being (Wilks’ Λ = 0.99, F(4,1048) = 1.77, p = 0.013, η² = 0.007). However, as proposed by the third hypothesis the interaction between advertisement and value orientation had a significant effect on social–environmental well-being (F(2,525) = 3.29, p = 0.04, η² = 0.012). Therefore, the mean differences differ significantly from each other. The higher the biosphere–altruistic value orientation, the stronger is the communication effect on social–environmental well-being. Therefore, the third hypothesis was supported. Furthermore, the analysis indicated that the participants who received no sustainability information about the product perceived significantly different levels of social–environmental well-being (M_BA = 2.87, SD_BA = 1.28; M_A = 3.17, SD_A = 1.26; M_SE = 3.65, SD_SE = 1.20; F(2,804) = 4.76, p = 0.009, η² = 0.012). Whereas those who did receive the sustainability information showed the same high level of perceived social–environmental well-being (F(2,804) = 0.64, p = 0.527, η² = 0.002).

![Fig. 1. Interaction Effect of Advertisement *Value Orientation on Social–Environmental Well-Being.](image-url)
The simple effect analysis showed that participants with an ambivalent or self-enhancement value orientation perceived higher emotional well-being when sustainability was communicated in a positive manner ($M_A = 5.50$, $SD_A = 1.17$; $M_{SE} = 5.37$, $SD_{SE} = 1.17$) than when it was communicated in a neutral manner ($M_A = 5.14$, $SD_A = 1.17$; $M_{SE} = 5.04$, $SD_{SE} = 1.17$). For participants with a biosphere–altruistic value orientation, the emotionality of the communication had no influence on perceived emotional well-being. However, because the mean differences were not significant, the fourth hypothesis was not supported, although the analysis confirmed that when sustainability was communicated neutrally, participants with an ambivalent or self-enhancement value orientation perceived significantly lower emotional well-being ($M_A = 5.14$, $SD_A = 1.17$; $M_{SE} = 5.04$, $SD_{SE} = 1.17$) than those with a biosphere–altruistic value orientation ($M_{BA} = 5.66$, $SD_{BA} = 1.17$; $F(2,804) = 5.06$, $p = 0.007$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$). In contrast, when sustainability was communicated positively, there was no difference in the level of perceived emotional well-being ($F(2,804) = 1.09$, $p = 0.336$, $\eta^2 = 0.003$).

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

This study provides insights into the perceived benefits of sustainable tourism products and services from a consumer perspective. This study is the first to test consumers’ perceived well-being as an individual benefit of booking a sustainable hotel and the persuasive communication of this perceived advantage. Consumers’ emotional gain was analyzed with respect to the multidimensionality of the concept of well-being while also considering consumers’ value orientation. An emotional transfer was considered to be crucial for the majority of consumers, rather than a simple knowledge transfer. Even though people struggle with the term “sustainability,” they can value the concept at a high level by identifying it as something important and good. Consequently, they can identify an
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indirect benefit for themselves without a detailed knowledge about the concept. Consuming sustainable products and services makes one feel good because it is the right thing to do.

Therefore, transferring this good feeling through communication is important. The good feeling is affected by the sustainability attributes of the product and service (social–environmental well-being) and by the emotional communication style of the advertisement (emotional well-being). Advertisements for sustainable products and services should offer potential customers information about sustainability and frame the message in an emotionally positive way. This information will in turn raise the acceptance and demand for these sustainable products and services. The experiment revealed the importance of communicating sustainability to increase social–environmental well-being. If the sustainability of the offer is framed in a positive way and the advertisement emphasizes the feel-good benefit of the product, emotional well-being will increase. In sum, in the context of advertising sustainable products and services, the two dimensions of subjective well-being were triggered by the different communication characteristics of the brochures: Information about product sustainability increases social–environmental well-being, while communicating the good feeling that sustainable consumption brings is beneficial for perceived emotional well-being.

However, the effect of the advertisement was not identical for all consumer groups. The effect of the advertisement was moderated by the value orientation of the respondents. For people with a high affinity to sustainable behavior (biosphere–altruistic value orientation), the sustainability attributes of the product and service are essential and an emotional communication style transfers limited or no additional emotions. For this target group, both social–environmental and emotional well-being are high as soon as the advertised product is perceived as sustainable and corresponding relevant information about it is provided. Those who are less concerned about sustainable behavior (ambivalent or self-enhancement value orientation) show the same high level of emotional well-being only if the advertisement for the sustainable product includes positive emotions. Communicating the good feeling associated with sustainable consumption increases (tendencies) the emotional well-being of people with a less biosphere–altruistic value orientation. Communicating the sustainability aspects of the product increases social–environmental well-being for all target groups, but it is stronger for people with a stronger biosphere–altruistic value orientation.

Practical Implications

The results have valuable practical implications. The benefits of communicating social and environmental responsibility are mostly understood from a company viewpoint. To increase the value of the enterprise, companies express their corporate sustainability performance on public platforms such as websites and in CSR or sustainability performance reports. However, understanding the benefits of sustainability from a consumer viewpoint provides an opportunity to
develop new marketing strategies to expand potential consumer markets for a given product. As this study demonstrates, by formulating marketing messages slightly differently, it is possible to address potential consumers who may normally be less attracted by sustainability marketing messages. The findings of this study reinforce the idea that it makes business sense to use an emotional message style in hotel advertising by emphasizing the self-referential good feeling that can lead to the effective and persuasive communication of sustainable products and services.

Limitations and Future Research

Tourism goods in general transfer positive emotions, and hence there is only little variation in emotional well-being among different communication strategies. Booking a hotel is similar to taking a vacation, which has a positive effect on visitors’ emotional well-being (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004). The participants in the present study were told to imagine that they were looking for a hotel. Therefore, the participants had a positive association with the target behavior of booking a sustainable hotel because they associated it with taking a holiday. Although their emotional well-being increased due to a change in communication style, the effect was not very strong. Well-being was already on a high level, due to the topic of taking a holiday.

The investigation of negative emotions, included in a decision-making process, was not part of this study, because the behavioral decision was already determined. Participants of this study had the instruction to imagine that they were looking for a hotel for their next vacation. Therefore, booking a hotel was the predetermined behavior. Negative feelings such as moral feeling (Bamberg, 2013) or regret (Carrus, Passafaro, & Bonnes, 2008) as part of the behavioral decision-making process was not evaluated. Perceived social–environmental and emotional well-being as benefit of pro-sustainable behavior was the focus of this research. Consequently, negative emotions during the evaluation of different behavioral opinions (e.g., taking the car or the bike to work) was not included in this research design.

This study examined the influence of communication on subjective well-being and the role of value orientation while controlling for respondents’ country of residence. Future research may investigate the cultural influence in further detail. Different value orientations cannot be exclusively traced back to cultural differences. Although values are culturally shaped to a certain extent, sustainability research shows a gap in comparative studies that deal with this question. Only a few theories postulate a difference between Western industrialized nations, although differences in social development and environmental policy suggest that they may exist.

Investigating whether increased subjective well-being has a positive influence on sustainable attitudes and behavior is worthwhile. Sustainability research has revealed that efforts to influence pro-sustainable attitudes and behavior are successful when consumers trust in the information given by the company. For example, Ponnapureddy and colleagues (2017) found that trust perceptions had
a positive effect on behavioral intention. In consideration of these findings, it would be interesting to analyze whether an increase in subjective well-being and the perceived trustworthiness of the communication can lead to pro-sustainable attitudes and ultimately promote sustainable behavior.

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DISCLOSURE

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