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**ECOTOURISM AND CONVENTIONAL TOURISM: CONTRASTING IDEAS OR COMPLEMENTARY PARTNERS  
IN THE EYE OF THE VISITOR**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Although there is considerable consumer power resting in the hands of the individual tourist, in terms of the types of tourism products offered and the places being visited, there has been, surprisingly, little empirical research regarding tourists' preferences for particular tourism packages and holidays. Furthermore, little is known in relation to tourist differences (or similarities) in preferences for, or motivation towards, mainstream as opposed to ecotourism tourist experiences. This study addresses this deficiency in the literature via empirical research involving a self-completion survey of a sample of 150 tourists. Data collected was captured in Microsoft Excel 2013 and analysed using SPSS version 21. The results indicate that a definite ecotourism market segment does seem to exist and that the motivations of mainstream tourists are significantly different from those of ecotourists, each defined by their preferences and interests. Perceptions of ecotourists and conventional tourists on ecotourism as well as sustainability and ecolabelling in destination selection were also found to be significantly different.