How Sustainability Research helps with design thinking

Nina Horstra | 9 November 2023

Booking.com

A bit about me

Nina Horstra

And another bit about me

TUDelft — Delft University of Technology

- BSc Industrial Design Engineering
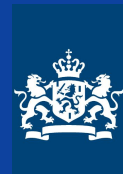- MSc Design for interaction

Booking.com

- UX Research Manager Sustainability, Accessibility, Web & App
- B.Sustainable Ambassador (Greenteam)

KlimaatGesprekken
Carbon Conversations

- Climate coach

- Climate major in Leiden, NL, an initiative of the ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate

I'd love to get
to know you too

What word(s) comes to mind when thinking about **Research** & **Design** for Sustainability?

How much experience do you have with **researching**, **designing** or **developing** for Sustainability?

None
A little bit
A fair bit
A lot

Tourism is responsible for ..% of global greenhouse gas emissions (2019)

Tourism contributes to global greenhouse gas emissions

Tourism is highly vulnerable to climate change

Extreme weather, security concerns, water shortages, biodiversity loss, damage to attractions, overcrowding, quality of life

B.

Booking.com mission:
Make it easier for everyone
to experience the world

A world worth experiencing

3 Focus areas at Booking.com

Company

Operate more sustainably ourselves, and foster a culture of sustainability

Travellers

Make it easier for travelers to make more sustainable travel choices

Travel industry

Collaborate to decarbonise the travel industry

B.

The team of researchers

Eline Metske
Senior Researcher

Isabelle Rodot
Senior Researcher

Nina Horstra
Research Manager

Veronica Ravaglia
Senior Researcher

UX - U = X

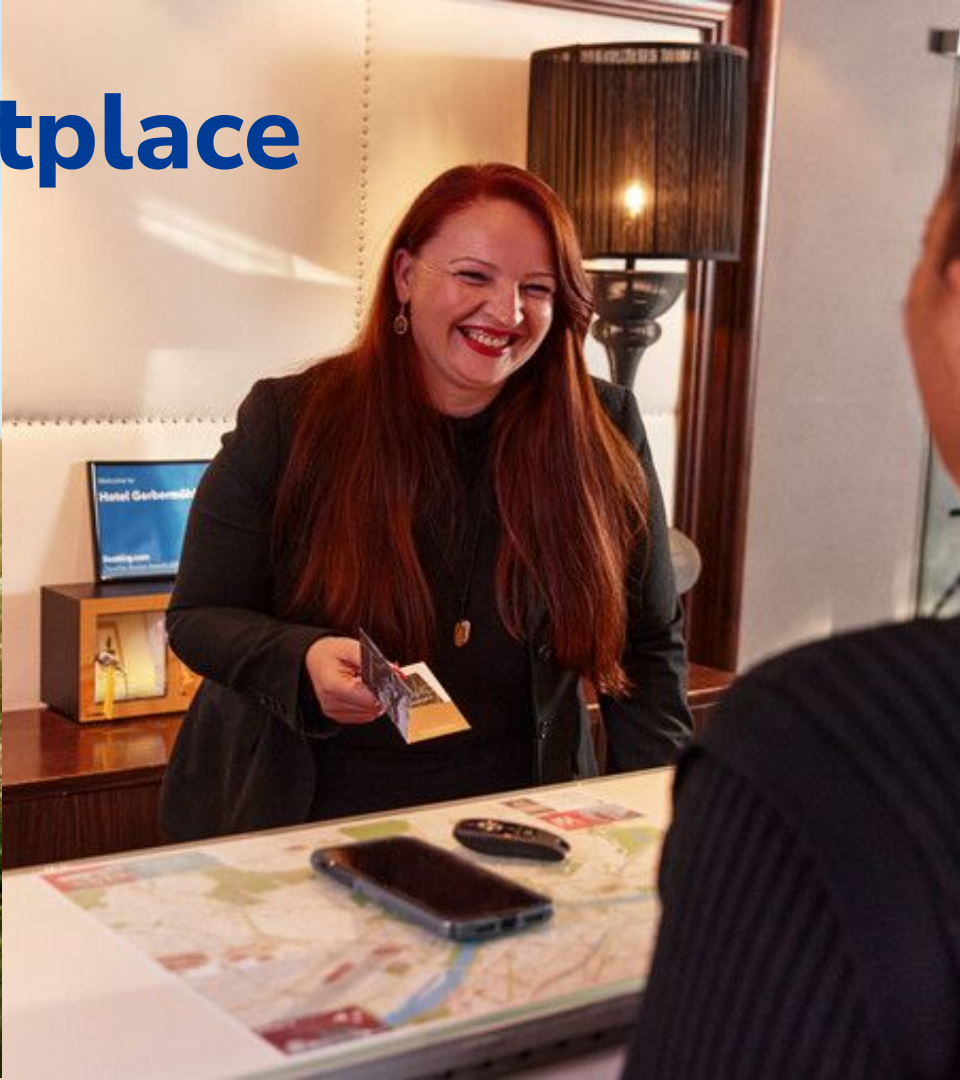## UX without User Research is Not UX

https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ux-without-user-research/

Researching customer perceptions and needs is key to design thinking

Especially when it comes to sustainability

A 2-sided marketplace

Why is this key?

Strategy refinement
In what direction to run?

Awareness of the complexity
Differences, perceptions, legislation and greenwashing.

Needs, contexts, barriers
The say-do gap, biases.

B.

3 main learnings
from research
on sustainability in travel

1. Sustainability is complex

Not everyone is familiar with the concept
Associations of what 'sustainable travel' is

Q: In a few words or sentences, describe what you think of when you hear the term "sustainable travel and tourism.

Understanding of what 'Sustainable travel' entails - *beyond* environmental factors

Q: Which of the following elements of travel would you consider to be more sustainable forms of travel?

"Sustainable Travel" Understanding

Protecting the natural environment	65%
Reducing waste at the travel destination	60%
Preserving wildlife and natural habitats at the travel destination	55%
Ensuring lower/no CO2 emissions through my transportation choice to a destination	51%
Reducing energy usage at accommodation	50%
Ensuring lower/no CO2 emissions through my transportation choice at the destination	49%
Purchasing local produce/services and supporting local businesses	46%
Packing smart (e.g. biodegradable shampoos, sunscreen with fewer chemicals, reusable water	45%
Reducing water usage at the accommodation	44%
Choosing to do activities/tours that boost local economy	42%
Protecting and learning about local cultures	41%
Traveling outside of peak seasons	31%
Ensuring that the economic impact of the industry is spread equally in all levels of the local society	30%
Choosing less popular/crowded destinations	27%
None of these	2%

Our partners also think of environmental factors first

Q: What does "sustainable" hospitality mean to you?

B.

No "one size fits all" approach

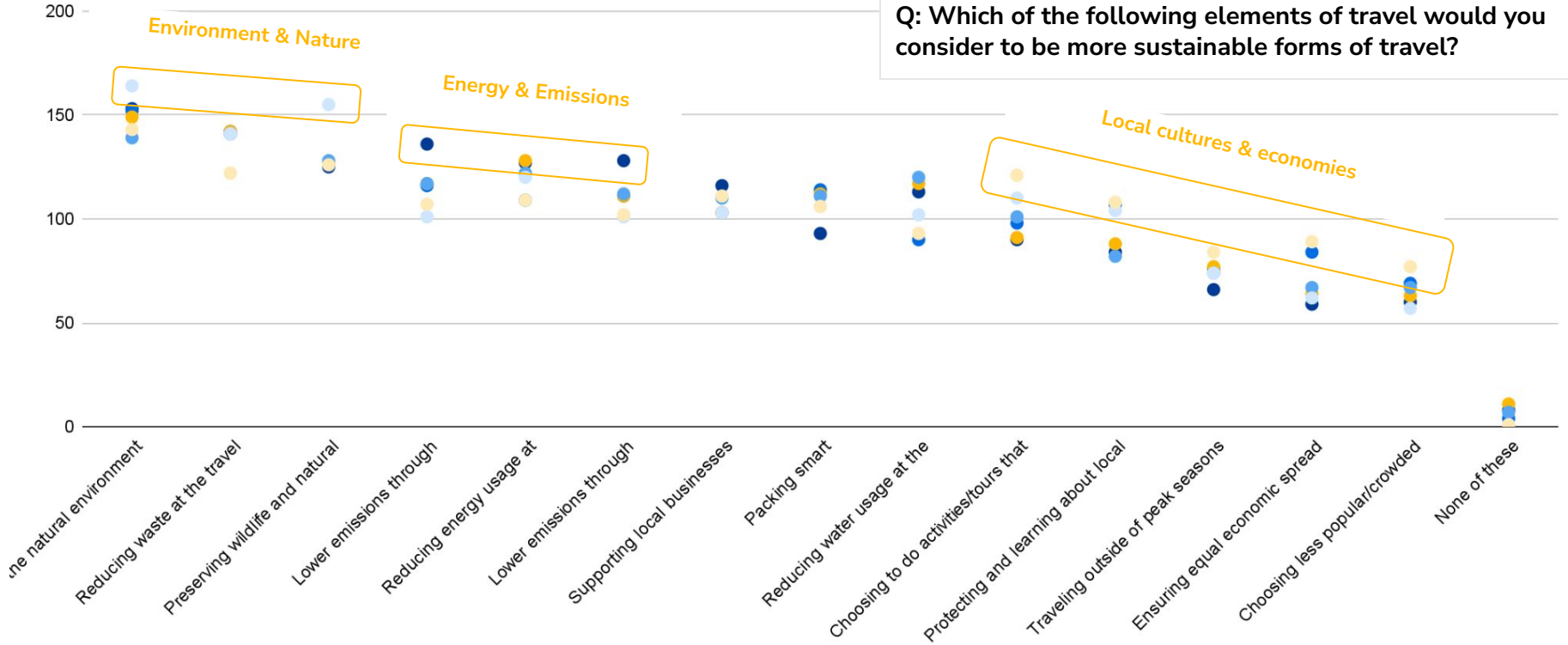Customers can differ vastly in terms of:

🧠 **Knowledge**

❤️ **Values**

🏃 **Behaviours**

B.

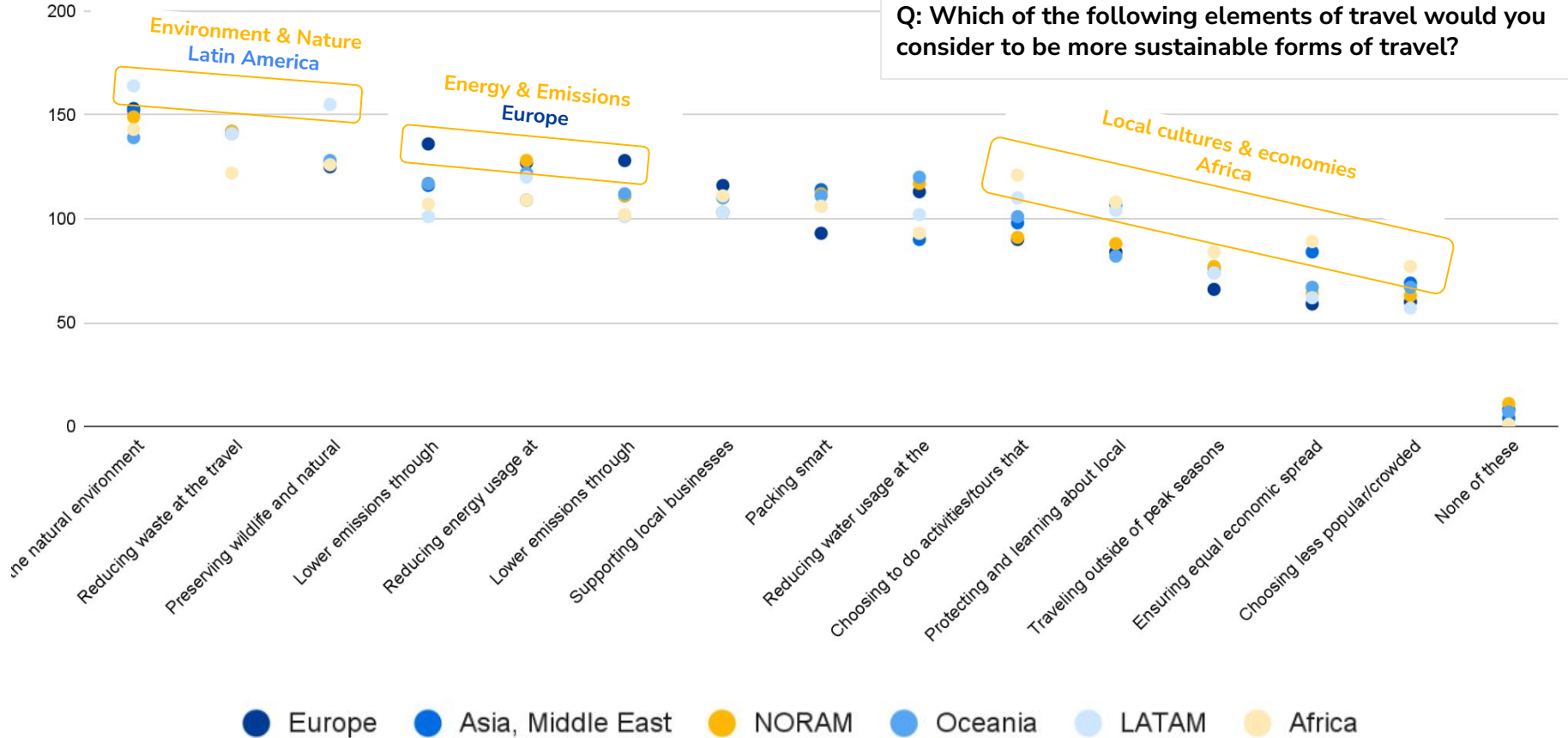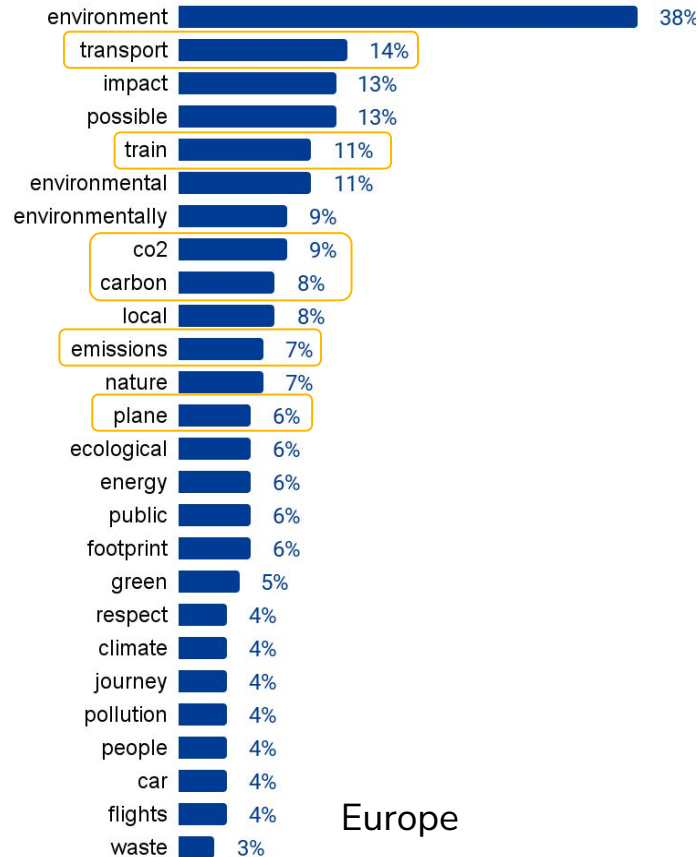# Regional and cultural nuances impact knowledge.

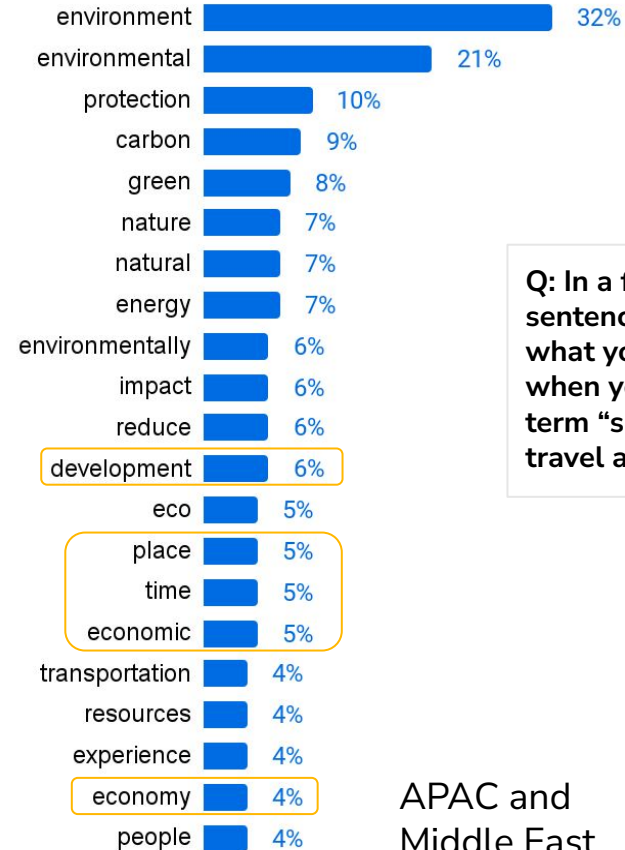Q: Which of the following elements of travel would you consider to be more sustainable forms of travel?

Environment & Nature

Energy & Emissions

Local cultures & economies

? Europe   ? Asia, Middle East   ? NORAM   ? Oceania   ? LATAM   ? Africa

x-axis labels: the natural environment, Reducing waste at the travel, Preserving wildlife and natural, Lower emissions through, Reducing energy usage at, Lower emissions through, Supporting local businesses, Packing smart, Reducing water usage at the, Choosing to do activities/tours that, Protecting and learning about local, Traveling outside of peak seasons, Ensuring equal economic spread, Choosing less popular/crowded, None of these

Regional and cultural nuances impact knowledge.

Q: Which of the following elements of travel would you consider to be more sustainable forms of travel?

Environment & Nature
Latin America

Energy & Emissions
Europe

Local cultures & economies
Africa

Legend: Europe — Asia, Middle East — NORAM — Oceania — LATAM — Africa

Regional and cultural nuances impact **knowledge**.

Europe

Word	Percent
environment	38%
transport	14%
impact	13%
possible	13%
train	11%
environmental	11%
environmentally	9%
co2	9%
carbon	8%
local	8%
emissions	7%
nature	7%
plane	6%
ecological	6%
energy	6%
public	6%
footprint	6%
green	5%
respect	4%
climate	4%
journey	4%
pollution	4%
people	4%
car	4%
flights	4%
waste	3%

APAC and Middle East

Word	Percent
environment	32%
environmental	21%
protection	10%
carbon	9%
green	8%
nature	7%
natural	7%
energy	7%
environmentally	6%
impact	6%
reduce	6%
development	6%
eco	5%
place	5%
time	5%
economic	5%
transportation	4%
resources	4%
experience	4%
economy	4%
people	4%

Q: In a few words or sentences, describe what you think of when you hear the term "sustainable travel and tourism."

B.

Regional and cultural nuances impact values.

Importance of sustainable travel aspects across regions

Q: How important do you consider each of the following aspects of sustainable travel?

Legend: Europe, Asia, Middle East, NORAM, Oceania, LATAM, Africa
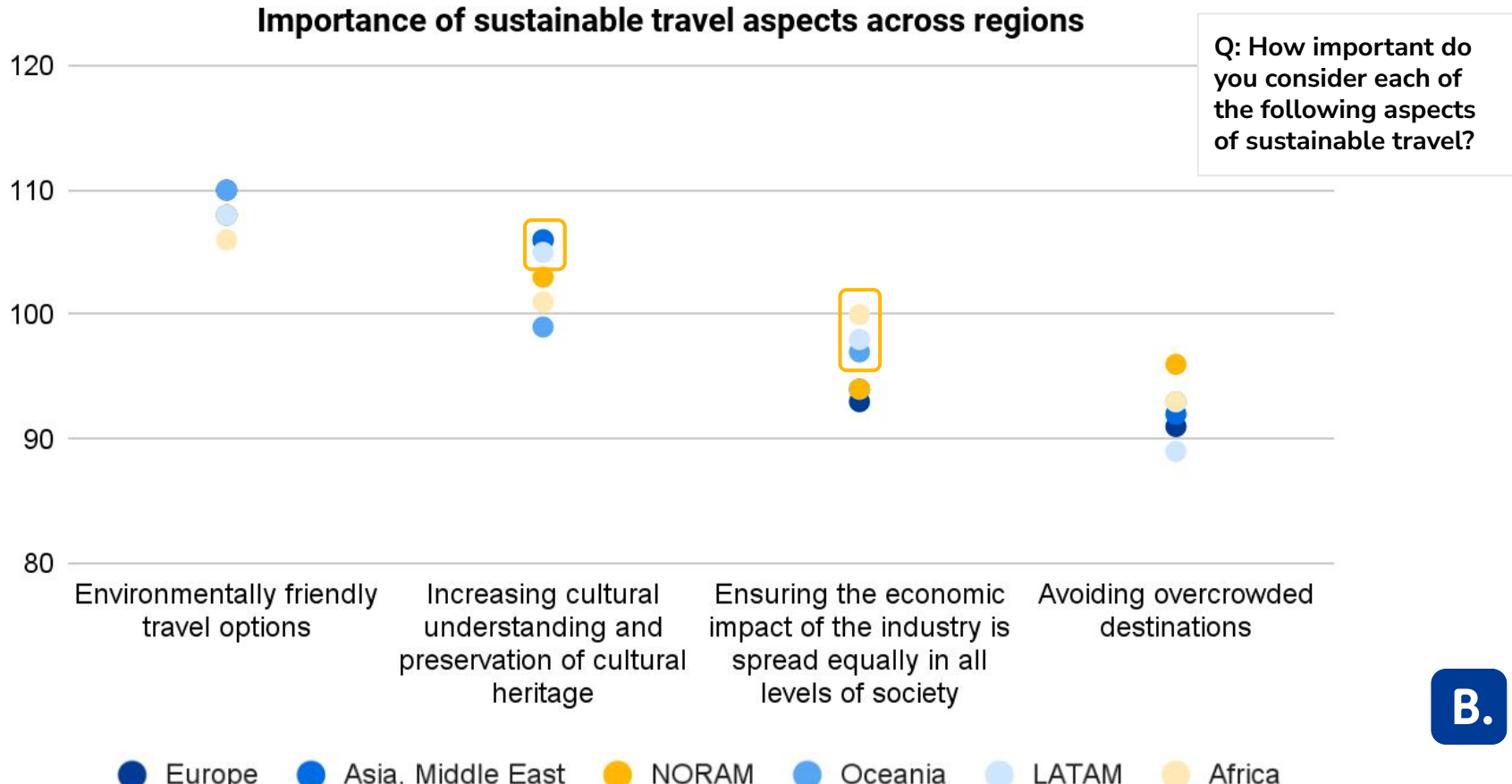
Regional and cultural nuances impact behaviour.

Everyday Sustainable Behaviours across regions

Q: Which, if any, of the following activities do you do in your everyday life?

Categories (x-axis):
- Reusable shopping bags
- Recycling waste
- Reusable water bottle
- Avoid single-use plastic
- Reducing energy consumption
- Reducing water consumption
- Taking public transport/bicycle over car
- Buying more local brands / products
- Purchasing seasonal produce
- Brands / products with recyclable
- Buying organically grown foods
- Consciously reducing consumption of
- Purchasing from brands with strong
- Growing my own produce
- Choosing carbon-neutral products /
- Driving electric / hybrid vehicles
- Eating exclusively plant based / vegetarian

Legend: Europe ● Asia, Middle East ● NORAM ● Oceania ● LATAM ● Africa

Also age drives differences

Q: Thinking about brands and sustainability, which of the following statements best describes you?

18-24 y/o	14%	31%	42%	9%	3%
25-34 y/o	13%	34%	41%	9%	4%
35-44 y/o	12%	31%	43%	10%	5%
45-54 y/o	8%	27%	46%	12%	6%
54-64 y/o	3%	20%	52%	16%	9%
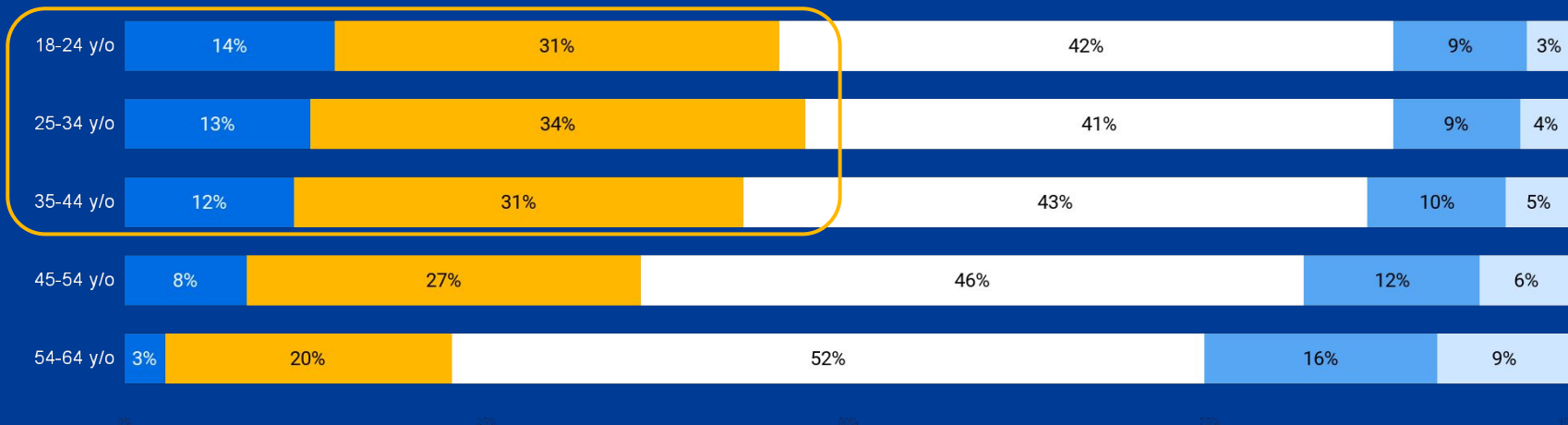
- ■ I only buy products/services from brands that promote sustainability
- ■ I am always on the lookout for brands that promote sustainability
- □ I like it when brands offer products or services that are (more) sustainable, but I doesn't always influence my decision
- ■ I rarely notice when brands offer products/services that are (more) sustainable
- ■ I never notice when brands offer products/services that are (more) sustainable
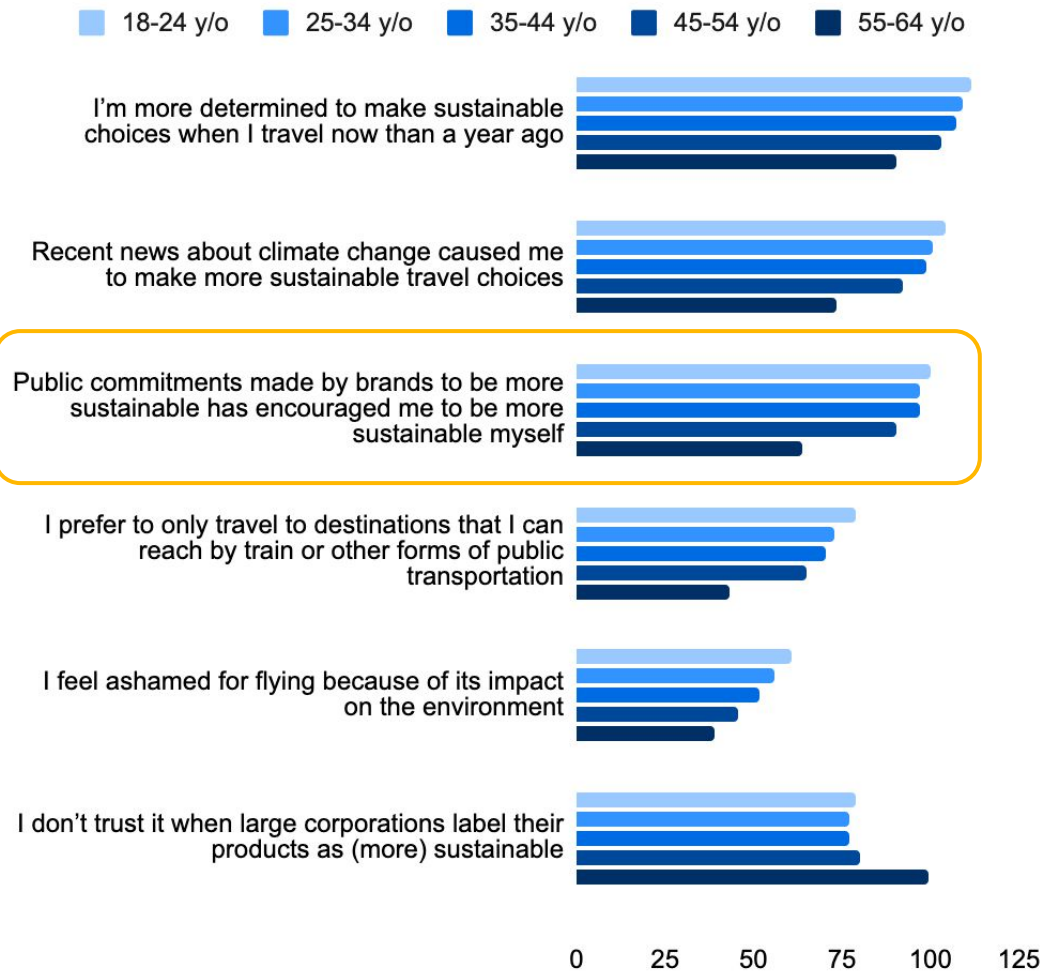
Age also impacts knowledge, values, and behaviour.

Legend: 18-24 y/o, 25-34 y/o, 35-44 y/o, 45-54 y/o, 55-64 y/o

- I'm more determined to make sustainable choices when I travel now than a year ago
- Recent news about climate change caused me to make more sustainable travel choices
- Public commitments made by brands to be more sustainable has encouraged me to be more sustainable myself
- I prefer to only travel to destinations that I can reach by train or other forms of public transportation
- I feel ashamed for flying because of its impact on the environment
- I don't trust it when large corporations label their products as (more) sustainable

0   25   50   75   100   125

B.

The same is true for our partners

Partners' constraints and opportunities vary depending on:

Economic situation

Laws and access to more sustainable options
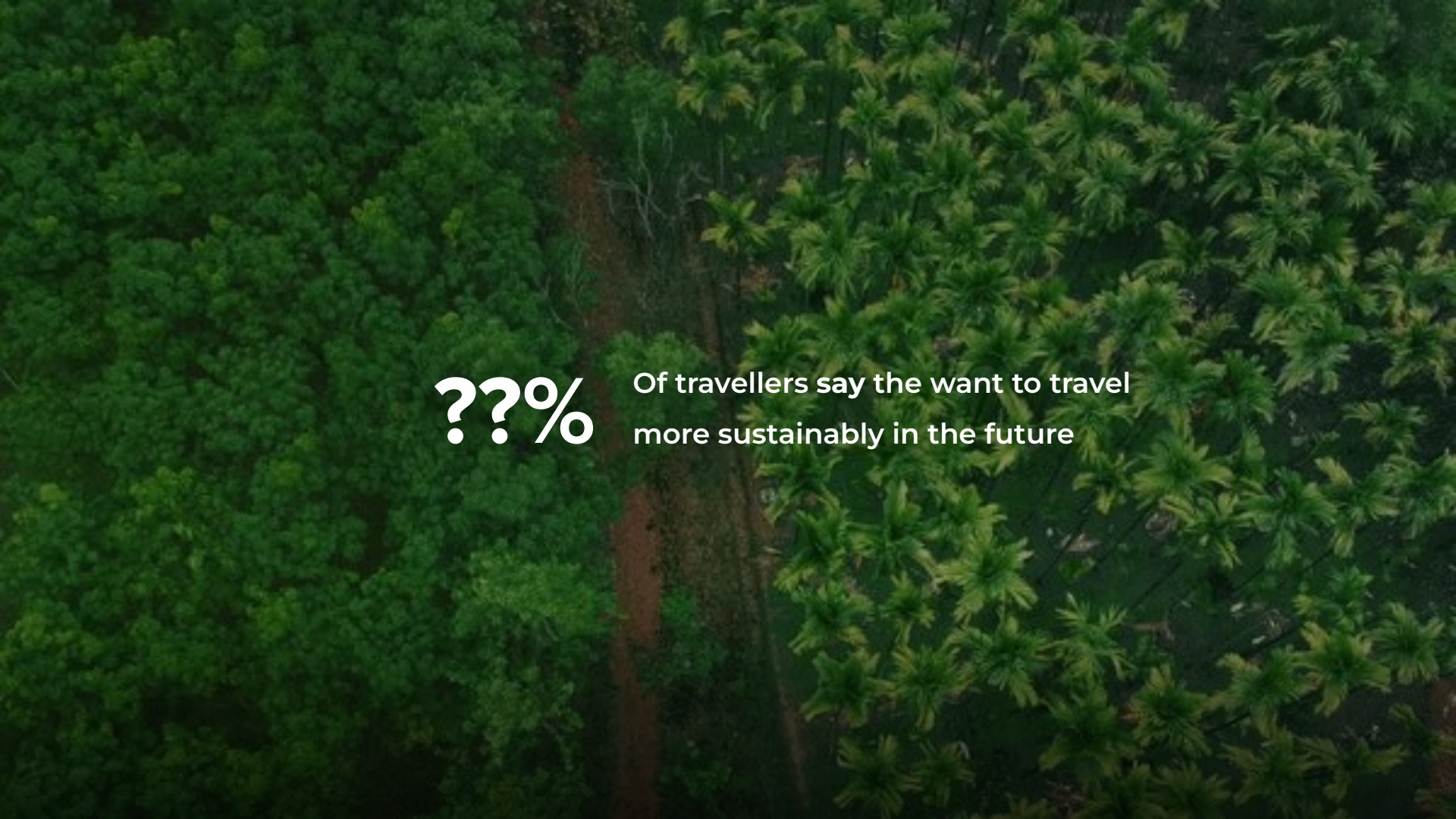
Climate / access to natural resources

Property type

2. What they say is not always what they do

??% Of travellers **say** the want to travel more sustainably in the future

76% Of travellers **say the** want to travel more sustainably in the future

Travelers generally care about the environment and do not wish to harm it

76% of travellers say the want to travel more sustainably in the future

69% want the money they spend when traveling to go back to the local community

66% say they want to leave the places they visit better than when they arrived
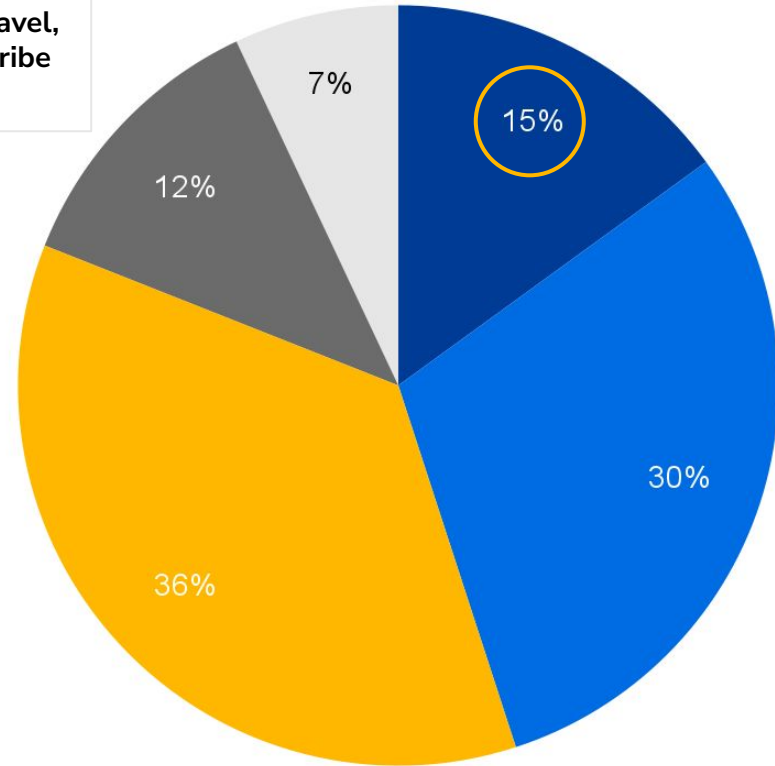
The social desirability bias

Underreporting socially undesirable attitudes and behaviors.

And to over report more desirable attributes.

More 'say-do gap' reasons

Denial of consequences

"It's not that bad"

Downward comparison

"It could be worse"

Denial of responsibility

"Not my responsibility"

Denial of control

"I would like to, BUT"

Exception handling

"Vacations are an exception"

Compensation through benefits

"I'm doing more good than bad"

Monitoring evolution of top barriers
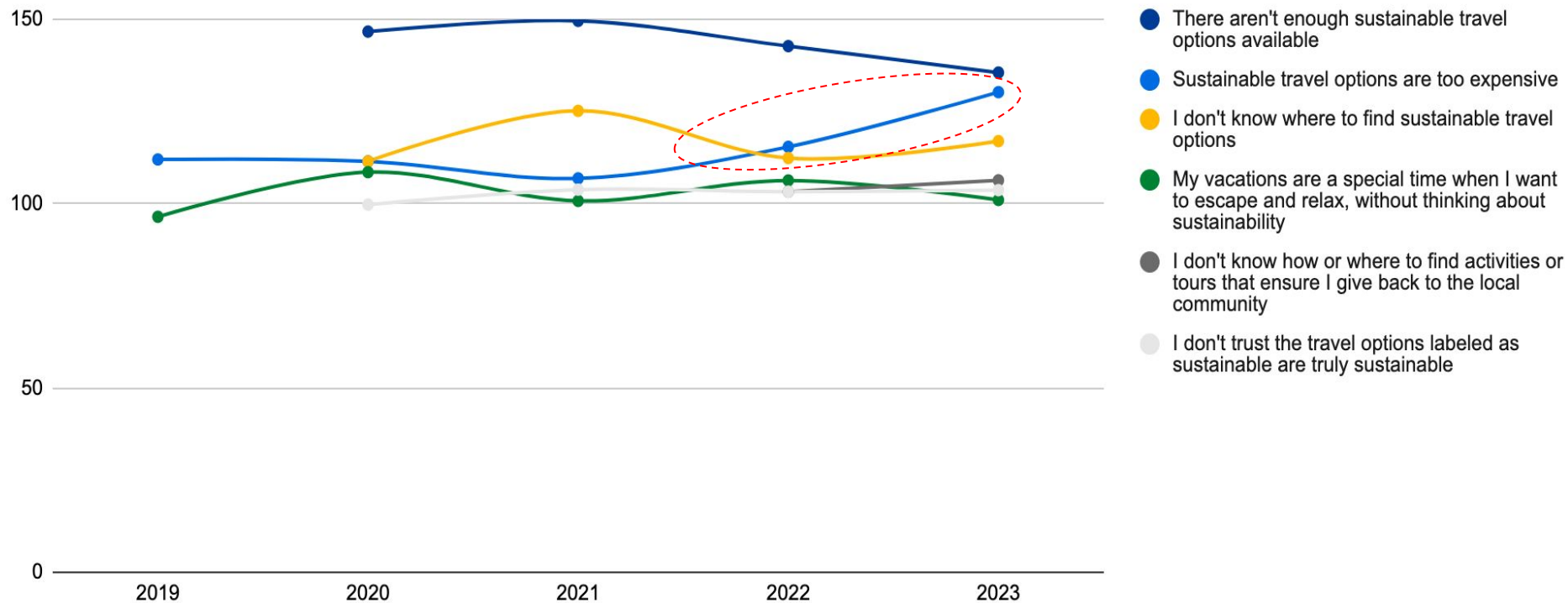
3. Finding the balance between transparency and complexity

Easier sustainable travel with the Travel Sustainable Program

- A transparent way for travelers to make more sustainable travel choices

- Since 2021, 2 million+ properties can indicate their practices (any type of property, globally)

- 500,000+ properties with a sustainability badge, based on 32 practices

- 4 level. 🍃🍃🍃+ Travel Sustainable Level 3+
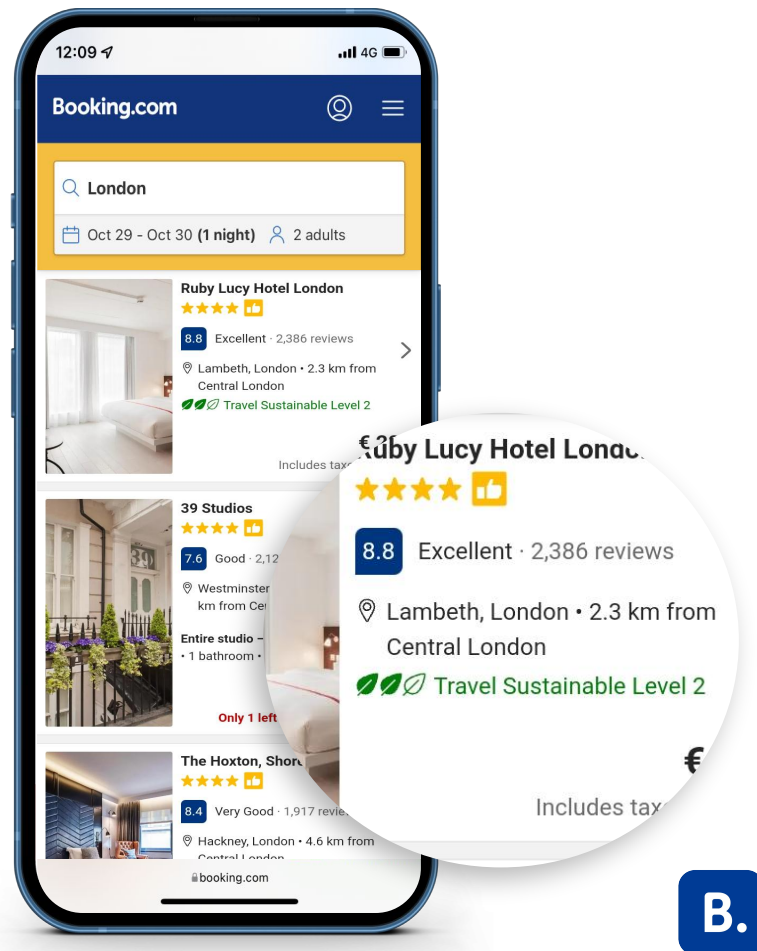
What it looks like on the website
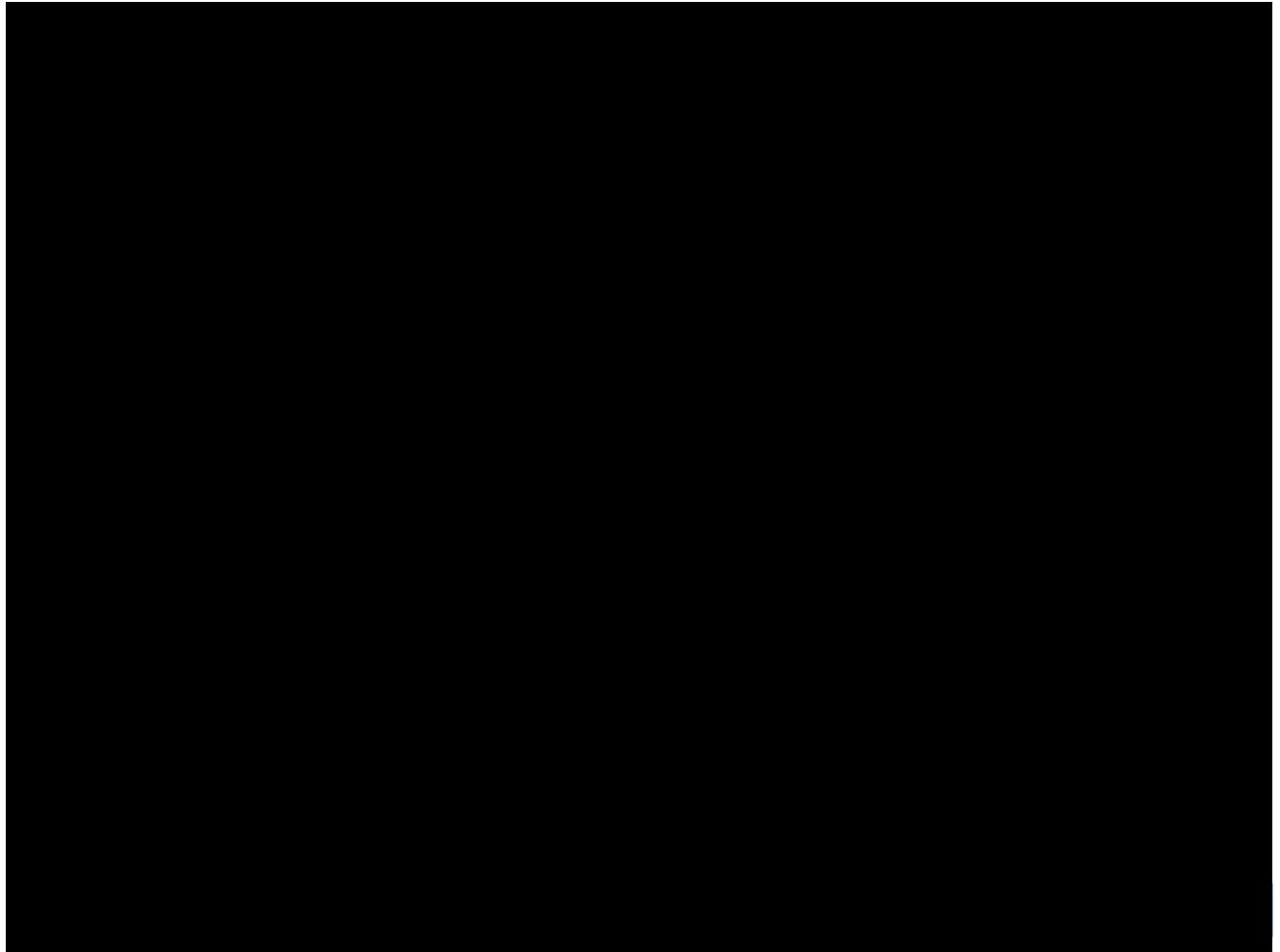
As a traveller, what would **you** want to know about this badge?
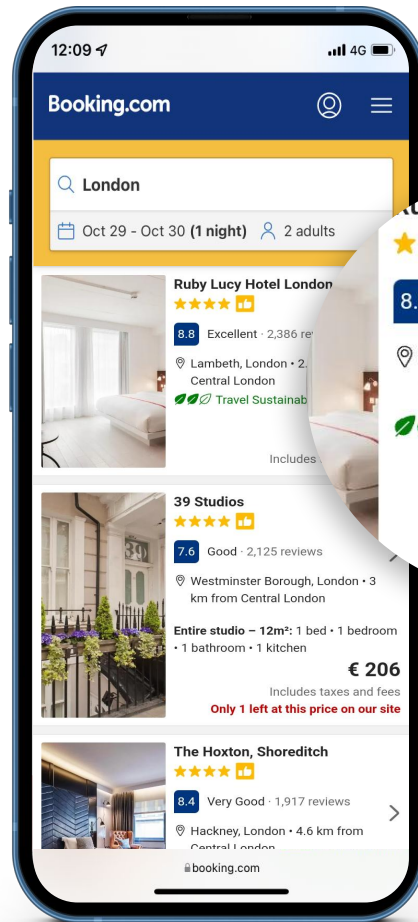
Sustainability adds complexity to the booking process

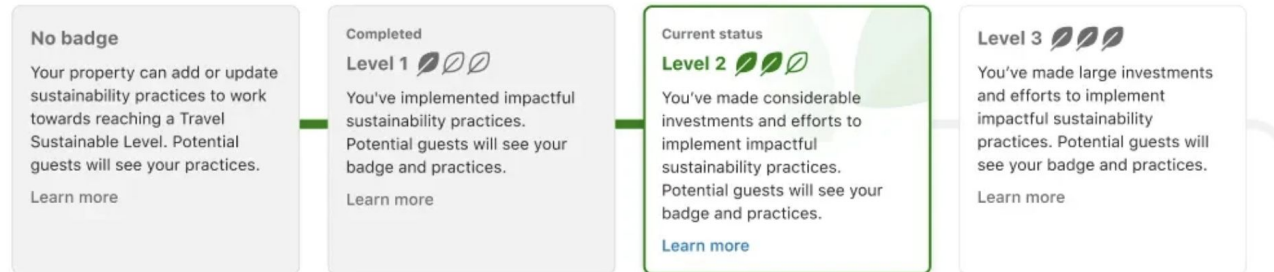A lot of info, and an extra layer of info.
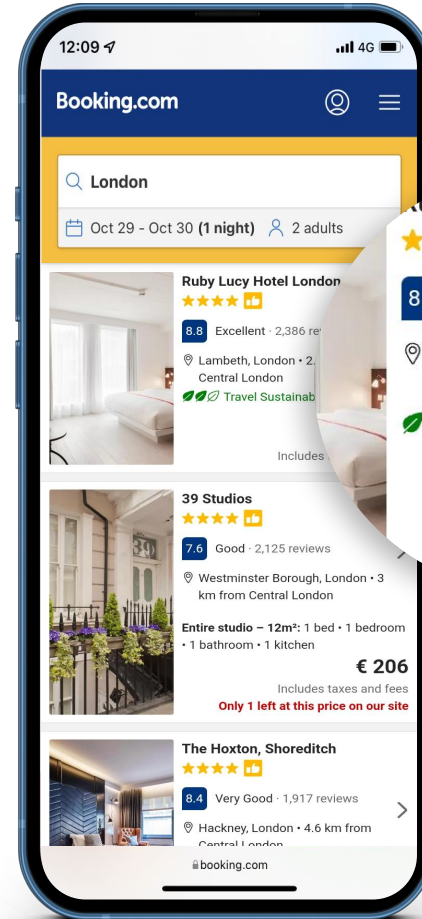
Displaying Travel Sustainable

The Sustainability Travel Sustainable journey

A guide to Travel Sustainable Levels

Add practices to bring your property closer to reaching the next level and attract attention from the 70% of travellers* who told us that they're more likely to choose an accommodation if they know its sustainable.

No badge

Your property can add or update sustainability practices to work towards reaching a Travel Sustainable Level. Potential guests will see your practices.

Learn more

Completed
Level 1 🍃🍃🍃

You've implemented impactful sustainability practices. Potential guests will see your badge and practices.

Learn more

Current status
Level 2 🍃🍃🍃

You've made considerable investments and efforts to implement impactful sustainability practices. Potential guests will see your badge and practices.

Learn more

Level 3 🍃🍃🍃

You've made large investments and efforts to implement impactful sustainability practices. Potential guests will see your badge and practices.

Learn more

What about sustainability certifications?

Certified property ✔

You've made huge commitments towards sustainability by subscribing to one or more external 3rd party sustainability certifications such as the EU Ecolabel, Green Seal, Green Tourism, etc.

Your Travel Sustainable badge, the name of your certification and the practices you've implemented will be shown to guests.

Learn more

Research has a role to play in finding the balance between transparency and complexity

A magical mix

UX Writing

Research

Design

Collaboration between Researchers and UX Writers is key to give travelers the right information the right way

A few last thoughts

A few last thoughts

Rome has not been built in one day

Believe in what you are doing

We are what we repetitively do

Save the earth.

It's the only planet ~~with chocolate~~ **on which we travel.**

Thank you for joining today!
Any questions?

B.

Thank you!
Questions, feedback, ideas?

Booking.com