Contemporary Issues in Tourism and Hospitality

Individual Report

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Tourism is not a new phenomenon of our time. People have been travelling for thousands of years. Nevertheless, there are crucial differences between modern tourism and yesterday's travel. For one thing, more and more people are getting faster, more often and ever on the move. Modern tourism is a "big business" that is dominated by a few large corporations (Vellas, 1995). According to data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), international tourism, with revenues of $ 504 billion, replaced the automotive industry as the largest export industry in the world back in 1998. In the opinion of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the international travel business is "only the tip of an iceberg". For the approximately 700 million cross-border travellers annually would add another 2.3 billion tourists who make each in their country holiday. The WTO, therefore, estimates the total global tourism revenue at $ 1.7 trillion annually.

Although the tourism companies, since the nineties on paper always "greener" and advertise with terms such as "ecotourism" or "greener" and "soft tourism" happens in reality hardly anything in this direction. In parallel with inflation of lip service, three unabated tourism trends are increasing for the environment and the social and economic situation in developing countries. Ecotourism is a type of tourism that involves visiting natural, fragile and relatively undisturbed natural areas, which are planned as a small alternative and less intrusive tour as an alternative to traditional commercial tourism (Buckley, 2000). Many holidaymakers interested in land and people no longer want to spend their holidays in bed-castles with huge swimming pools, when the rural population does not have clean drinking water and the locals work for starvation wages in the kitchen. The typical "eco-tourist" is educated and has a high income. He can afford to grab for high quality offers off the mass market and thus be on vacation to calm conscience. Ecotourism promotes conservation and aims to have a positive socio-economic impact on the local population surrounding the attraction. The main objective of ecotourism can be to provide financial resources for the preservation of ecology, to promote respect for different cultures, to educate travellers or to politically strengthen local communities. Environmentalists had considered ecotourism as a critical endeavour since 1980 when the "green" environmental movement just emerged.

Ever since climate protection is on everyone's lips, ecotourism is booming. Combine the modern understanding of the environment with unique travel experience, and you have it, sustainable tourism (Honey, 2008). However, this form of travel is not just about nature conservation. Ecotourism, also called Sustainable Travel, Soft Tourism or Green Travel, is founded by the International Ecotourism Society, founded more than 20 years ago as "responsible travel that protects the environment and maintains the well-being of the indigenous people". This form of travel aims to take particular account of the environment and the local population of a travel destination, while at the same time minimising the burden on nature of ecologically important and protected areas.

Terms such as soft tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism play an increasingly important role in travel planning. Today the terms are often used interchangeably. But what is meant by these terms and how are they defined? Sustainable tourism has three main goals:

Environmental goals: Protecting nature through minor interference, sustainable resource management and climate protection concepts.

Economic objectives: To promote the local economy and create secure jobs with fair working conditions.

Sociocultural goals: Experiencing nature, culture and environment as intensively and authentically as possible without negative influences on culture and tradition.

Many of the most valuable tourism destinations in the world are being or will be damaged by the impacts of climate change. Whether it is more frequent typhoons or cyclones, forest fires, coral bleaching, flooding, snowfall reduction or other impacts, these affect a high proportion of our most prized tourist destinations (Viner & Agnew, 1999).

Therefore, the tourism industry can play an important role in bringing the history of climate change mitigation to travellers, encouraging them to live more sustainably and thus giving these incredible destinations the chance to survive. There is no more powerful way to get this message across than in the place where the events occur. Ecotourism can therefore not be reduced to the ecological aspects, as the term "ecotourism" falsely suggests. It includes more than travelling in nature reserves. It consists of a combination of personal, environmental, social and economic interests: Eco-tourists want to do the least possible harm to the environment during a vacation, to experience nature intensely, and at the same time take the interests of the local population into account to benefit from tourism,

Ecotourism may depending on the nature of the trip, refer to different aspects. In addition to the number one climate scavenger, the plane, there are opportunities in almost all areas affected by tourism to make holidays as sustainable and ecological as possible. This starts with the architecture of accommodation and does not stop with environmental protection. Soft tourism is based on different sustainability criteria, which can be taken into account either individually or in total. Ecotourism should be environmentally friendly, economically efficient and socially just. But how do you combine all these factors with a holiday and where do you do it best? Ecotourism can theoretically be operated everywhere. Over the past five years, the number of travel destinations offering ecotourism and soft tourism has risen from 20 to 40. Also, other streams of soft tourism have emerged, such as Slow Tourism or Under tourism. Here are some examples of regions and countries where ecotourism is already practised today.

Croatia

Tourism in Croatia has increased steadily in recent years, and the trend continues to increase. Popular destinations like Pag, Porec or Dubrovnik are bursting at the seams during the high season. The Croatian national parks are also affected by over tourism. Millions of visitors pose a threat to the ecosystem. Fortunately, there are enough green alternatives.

Mallorca

Around 13 million people travel to the 869,000-strong Balearic Island every year. 40% of them come from Germany alone. For years, the local population has been fighting against mass tourism. Especially Palma, Cala Ratjada and El Arenal are in focus. With targeted measures, the Majorcan government wants to get a handle on the downsides of tourism.

Greece

Greece is one of the most popular tourist destinations worldwide. Currently, there are three tourists for each inhabitant in Greece. Especially dramatic. Tourism focuses mainly on the Greek islands.

National Park of Madagascar

Another unique ecotourism destination is the National Park of Ankarafantsika in Madagascar. There are endangered turtles that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. By impoverished rice farmers, who used the forest and savanna area as a source of water and firewood, the rare animals have been almost expelled. However, thanks to the introduction of ecotourism, stocks have been able to recover. Tourists who are interested in the nature park and its flora and fauna, support with the entrance to nature conservation and other social projects. The rice farmers who cleared the forests are now working as tourist guides. Tips for a trip to Madagascar can be found here.

Alps

To operate environmentally conscious holidays, you do not always have to travel far. In Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland, there are also destinations dedicated to ecotourism. The cooperation Alpine Pearls has set itself the goal of counteracting the endangerment of the environment in the Alps.

Germany

In this country, of course, you have the opportunity to make your vacation as sustainable and environmentally friendly. Already with the options for means of transport, you profit from the small distance. But the choice of the hotel also has a significant impact on the ecological footprint. In so-called organic hotels, soft tourism is very important.

Thailand

Thirty million tourists travel to Thailand every year. This leaves its mark. In addition to massive waste problems in the tourist strongholds, nature and underwater world suffers under the heavy burden. Last year, among other things, the popular Maya Bay on Koh Phi Phi had to be closed.

Other Destinations

Other popular destinations for ecotourism are New Zealand or Bonito in Brazil. But destinations in Europe, such as the St. Kilda Islands in Scotland, which is not only scenically but also culturally very significant and has even been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, have specialised in ecotourism. Some lodgings, such as the Soneva Resort in the Maldives and Thailand, even charge their guests a tax that matches the environmental footprint of their arrival and departure and use the money raised to support reforestation projects in Asia.

Advantages & Disadvantages of Ecotourism

Like every travel trend, gentle tourism and ecotourism also pose risks (Campbell, 1999). For example, the growing interest in destinations that embrace ecotourism is creating ever-increasing numbers of visitors. The critical dimensions of this can be seen in the example of the Californian town of Lake Elsinore. The growing gold poppy flower sparked by uploaded Instagram photos a real hype that paralysed the entire city. Getting control of the so-called over tourism is one of the biggest challenges facing tourist destinations today. This has already developed into a new travel trend, under tourism, the following advantages and disadvantages can be identified so far in soft tourism.

Pros Ecotourism

A sense of responsibility towards the environment and other cultures is increasing

Promoting local institutions and strengthening the local economy

Support of the indigenous population

Resources are spared

Emergence of jobs

Animal welfare

Cons Ecotourism

Rising demand in ecotourism areas

The desired standard may not be guaranteed

Ecotourism has its limits (for example air travel)

Physical/health restrictions

Nature is damaged by too much onslaught

Comparatively more expensive than conventional travel

Australia's beauty is also threatened. Due to global warming, coral reefs are dying, the land is becoming desolate, and bush fires are piling up.

Nevertheless, Down Under is struggling with economic climate protection. The tourism companies in Australia are struggling to keep tourists diving in the Great Barrier Reef, the world's largest coral reef, despite the warnings of scientists (Wight, 2001). Each year more than two million tourists’ armed masks to snorkel and fins diving head to the famous Australian reef, generating revenues of USD 4,300 million in a large industry that employs 64,000 people. But the rise in ocean temperatures has caused damage to the reef and phenomena are known as "bleaching" that could cause the collapse of the number of tourists. The Reef Research Center published a report that caused surprise by announcing "important signs of regeneration" in the main diving areas around Cairns, in the north of the country. Although the report gave rise to enthusiastic media coverage, it deliberately contradicted the findings of other studies on the actual state of the Great Barrier Reef. Since then, Australians have seen many parts of the Great Barrier Reef turn into lunar landscapes. The worst case occurred five years ago when the summer heat had risen unbearably. At that time, on average, 60 per cent of all corals were fading. Some have not recovered until today (Sweatman, et al., 2011).

Climate change threatens the scenic attractions

This is a disaster for Australia's tourism industry. 5.5 million International tourists came to Down alone to see natural wonders like the big coral reef. But now climate change threatens many scenic attractions, and that could keep holidaymakers away in the long term. European protests against long-haul flights add to the £ 50 billion Australian tourism industry that recently attracted visitors with the campaign "Where the bloody hell are you?” "In Europe, many see us as part of the problem," says Daniel Gschwind, chair of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council. "We have to change the picture. We run the risk of losing our competitive advantage" (Atkins, et al., 2003). But Australia has long since turned into a holiday nightmare, according to the climate report from the United Nations. In the coastal zones alone, where most people live, temperatures could increase by as much as 3.4 degrees over the next 50 years. This is at least what the international expert panel Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts.

The consequences would be devastating: corals would die in large numbers, saline rainforests, and sink beaches. Already, drinking water is scarce. In Queensland and the Northern Territory, where wild nature attracts many vacationers, plants and animals will die out. Bush fires, hurricanes and monsoon rains will be more intense. Tropical diseases like malaria and dengue fever could spread to the edge of Sydney. Heat waves will demand even more deaths, write the scientists of the IPCC and it could get worse. Stefan Rahmstorf, a climatologist at the University of Potsdam, warned the stunned listeners of a guest lecture at the Australian University of New South Wales: "The projections so far underestimate the rise in sea level by about 50 per cent." The UN experts believe that the oceans will rise by 59 centimetres by the year 2100. Rahmstorf's data predict an increase of up to 1.40 meters (Rahmstorf, & England, 1997).

A study by the Department of the Environment of New South Wales and the Australian research institute CSIRO also shows that the sea on the east coast of Australia could have risen by up to twelve centimetres in 2070 than previously thought. Many holiday bungalows on the beach would be uninhabitable in the future. The Australian tourism industry is watching with concern as to which news is already penetrating abroad. There are headlines about bleaching corals, forest fires, and the "century drought" that has been rampant on the continent for six years. Australia still has not signed the Kyoto Protocol but consumes as much CO per capita as no other industrialised country.

This angers, Matthew Hingerty, CEO of the Australian Tourism Export Council (Maslen, 2007). Hingerty is said to be part of the new Tourism Task Force and says, "The biggest threat to us is the distorted picture of how much Australia is already suffering from climate change." He now wants to clarify, "We need to make it clear to people in the northern hemisphere that all our natural wonders are still intact”. The fact that the front in Europe is growing against climate-damaging long-haul flights is alarming Australians for two reasons. For one thing, Germany is the second most important EU market for Great Britain. More than 148,000 Germans brought the Australian travel industry almost 500 million euros. On the other hand, aviation is the engine of tourism Down Under: without a plane, the huge continent is neither easy to reach nor to travel when you're there.

For a long time now, the newly established Tourism Special Command has also been calling for action in this area: "In public perception, aviation accounts for 98 per cent of emissions, but in reality it accounts for only two per cent of emissions," said Australian Tourism Minister Fran Bailey July at a summit of the industry in Sydney. Airlines should now increasingly help to correct this image, the minister demanded.

Tourism industry takes environmental protection seriously

The horror scenarios of climatologists have, however, shaken up tour operators and hotel owners. They take the environment seriously because an untouched nature is their business foundation. Since the corals first lost their colour on the Great Barrier Reef, the tour operators in the area are working closely with the state's Great Barrier Reef Marine Authority. By radio, they sound the alarm as soon as parts of the reef change.

Resorts in the Coral Sea like the Lady Elliott Island Resort generate electricity from solar energy and market themselves as ecologically correct (Authority, 2012). And on the luxury island of Hayman, every guest automatically pays three dollars per person for the climate fee. The approximately 62,000 euros collected so far are intended to help scientists to find new strategies for protecting coral.

The diving tour operator Quicksilver has teamed up with researchers from the University of Queensland. Every summer at the far end of the reef, they test whether floating awnings could prevent the corals from fading. "This will not save the whole Great Barrier Reef, but maybe it will save a business," says Ove Hoegh-Guldberg, director of the Center for Marine Studies at the University of Queensland (Hoegh-Guldberg, et al., 2006).

Only in the Australian Alps, the popular winter sports area in the north of New South Wales, are tourism managers so far no bigger worries. In the future, according to the UN climate report, the snowline will continue to shift upwards. But already hundreds of snow cannons are in use. The bitter climate forecasts do not scare anyone here. On the contrary, Andrew Ramsey, chairman of the Australian Ski Association, is already pleased: "Our winters should be clearer, colder and drier ideal for artificial snow" (Kelm, 2008).

Ecotourism, which respects the environment and the local population, is definitely on the rise. Nearly 70 million people now practice ecotourism and travel to places with sensitive ecosystems to help protect them (Agardy, 1993). Ecotourism can make a valuable contribution to raising awareness of the ecological problems of our planet and giving every traveller the chance to do something good for people, nature and animals through his love of travelling. In recent years, the topic of sustainability and environmental protection has become more and more present. Gentle tourism, sustainable or socially responsible tourism, ecotourism, whatever you may call it: behind all the terms hides the idea and the desire to travel responsibly. Be it as little as possible to influence the existing culture and nature, to adapt to the local conditions and to get involved in the native culture or to experience nature as intensively and closely. There are many ways to make your trip ecological.

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