

R20AWS – Breakout Session

‘Sustainability in Tourism for more Quality of Life and Regional Value Enhancement’

29.5.2019, Vienna

Conclusions

Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world and it represents an important source of income for many regions and cities. On the one hand tourism can also help to achieve quality of life and regional value enhancement for all, including guests, the local population and people working in the sector. But on the other hand, we must not close our eyes and see the necessity to face challenges such as especially climate change, both looking to tourism as contributor to climate change and tourism facing the results and impacts of CC.

Tourism has proven that the sector is able to deal with those challenges: Destinations developed climate-friendly mobility offers, hotels could create an USP with the focus on renewable energies, up-cycling and good working conditions. A hotelier invented a ‘climate-Euro’ as part of the fees for the overnight-stay, that runs into climate protecting measures. Started within one hotel, this initiative should be disseminated throughout whole Europe. Parts of the tourism industry focus on sustainable food, i.e. food that is regional, seasonal and fair trade and on the avoidance of food waste. This contributes to a significant reduction of CO2-emissions.

Such activities are not only accepted but valued by the guests and create high loyalty of the employees. But the time has come – taking the motto of the R20AWS ‘from action to transaction – to step from good and best practices to a comprehensive transformation of tourism towards more sustainability and climate protection.

Sustainability and climate protection in tourism call for responsibility of all involved stakeholders:

- Governments needs to have clear tourism strategies, such as the Austrian Plan T – Masterplan for Tourism, that addresses all aspects of the sector’s economic, social and environmental impact and includes sustainability both within their overall goals and their concrete implementation measures.
- Sustainability must be an integral aspect of tourism success, therefore success indicators beyond the purely economic numbers of arrivals and overnight stays needs to be developed and used.
- Tourism suppliers need more guidance in their sustainability approaches: trainings, support programs, financial assistance for improvements, etc. that create a culture of cooperation and increase the image of tourism as employer.
- The best solutions often appear in a participatory approach, where all stakeholders – decision makers, companies, employees, civil society, such as NGOs, etc. are involved at the same eye-level.

- Business- and Sustainability reports along the SDGs could bring an increasing awareness for the importance of tourism as an instrument for the implementation of the SDGs forward.
- The financial system, e.g. banks and their loans criteria as well as insurance companies, need to support measures for more sustainability more seriously to motivate more tourism suppliers to take sustainability into their business models.
- Tourism marketing needs to move sustainable offers and destinations to the fore, using the values behind sustainability more than the wording 'sustainability' to attract the consumers.
- Tourists need to turn their general growing interest in sustainability into a more sustainable travel behavior, especially in terms of mobility. This could be supported by turning the dry sustainability message into exiting visualisations and authentic storytelling.
- Payments for more or less sustainability – e.g. the climate-Euro or CO2-compensations for flights – should be changed from opt-in to opt-out decisions. In the same vein nightly turndown services or other services could be provided 'opt-in' in order to raise awareness how many resources are spent on even menial tasks. Climate friendly and sustainable behavior could be awarded with incentives.

Christian Baumgartner, 2019-06-02