Responsible Tourism: Does Size Really Matter?

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Zusammenfassung
Sanfter Tourismus ist seit 20 Jahren eine Philosophie für umweltfreundlichen Tourismus. Eine Vielzahl an Definitionen legt den Schwerpunkt des Sanften Tourismus auf die Gruppen/Tour-Größe. Kleine Gruppen, so das Argument, haben einen geringeren negativen Einfluss auf die Umwelt. Dennoch kämpfen viele kleine Unternehmen mit den Idealen eines Sanften Tourismus, oft aufgrund von Faktoren, die jenseits ihres Einflussbereiches liegen. Auf der anderen Seite gibt es große Unternehmen, die zwar keine „sanften" Tourismusunternehmen sind, aber dennoch nach (selbst auferlegten) Regeln und Maßnahmen agieren. Sie geben positive Beispiele, die es wert sind kopiert zu werden. Dieser Beitrag stellt zwei kleine Anbieter vor, die langfristig fehlgeschlagen sind. Am anderen Ende des Spektrums werden zwei Giganten im europäischen Tourismus vorgestellt. Sie sind zweifellos Unternehmen des Massentourismus, operieren aber trotzdem so umweltfreundlich, wie in diesem Bereich möglich.

Abstract
Ecotourism has been a philosophy for a more environmentally conscious tourism for more than twenty years. Many definitions of the term emphasise the small scale of ecotourism. They argue that small groups produce less negative impacts. However, there are many small-scale operations struggling with the ideals of ecotourism, often due to factors beyond their influence. On the other hand, large-scale operations are not called ecotour operators, but are operating according to (self-set) codes of conduct and give positive examples that are worth copying. This article introduces two case studies, showing where small-scale ecotourism failed in the long run. At the other end of the spectrum, two major players in Europe's tourism industry are introduced. They are large-scale operations and operate as environmentally friendly as possible.

Introduction

The term ecotourism is a widely used label for all sorts of tours, accommodation, travel agents and many more. Many researchers attempted to define ecotourism, but it seems that depending on the context, definitions vary considerably and we are still far away from an all encompassing definition. One of the most prominent and most quoted definitions, maybe because it was the first conscious use of the

term, came from Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, who stated that *"we may define ecological tourism or ecotourism as that tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both past and present) found in these areas"* (1987: 13). Later on, a variety of researchers stated that ecotourism should be small-scale tourism (Jones 1992, Warren & Taylor 1994, Wheeler 1994, Orams 1995, Thomlinson & Getz 1996, Gilbert 1997, Khan 1997, Lindberg & McKercher 1997, Lück 1998). It is argued that with ecotourism growth it starts to become a mass venture and the old problems of mass tourism re-occur. This article attempts to illustrate that smale-scale ecotourism can go badly wrong, whereas large-scale operations might not be labelled "eco", but have a positive impact and are examples worth to support and copy. Four case studies will be employed, including SeaCanoe in Phuket/Thailand, Safaris in Kenya, Robinson Club Baobab in Kenya, and LTU International Airways.

Case Study One: SeaCanoe, Phuket/Thailand

Over the past few years Thailand's tourism experienced increasing tourist numbers, while other Asian countries suffered from the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997. Three factors were in favour for Thailand's tourism: The Tourism of Thailand's (TAT) 'Amazing Thailand' campaign in 1998/1999 brought Thailand on the map again and succeeded to change the negative image of a sex-tourism destination into an image of a fascinating and exotic paradise. Secondly, due to the political instability in Indonesia many tourists preferred the politically stable Thailand over holidays in Indonesia. Finally, the Asian Economic Crisis fostered tourism to Thailand from other Asian countries because holidays in Thailand were much cheaper than in other traditional destinations, such as Australia, New Zealand or North America. Phuket is Thailand's largest island and substantial tourism development started in the 1980's. Today, the 'Pearl of the South' has to cope with 20,000 landing aircraft per year. 20,600 licensed hotel rooms and a large number of small unlicensed guest houses offer a wide range of accommodation in all categories (Shepherd 2001).

In 1989, SeaCanoe in Phuket was founded as an extension of the kayak operation based in Hawaii. SeaCanoe was the first operator offering tours with inflatable kayaks to the caves in Phong Nga Bay. Access is possible at low tide only and SeaCanoe allowed limited numbers of kayaks at a time. With the ideal of ecotourism in mind, SeaCanoe addressed environmental issues during the tours, employed well trained guides and operated in accordance to high safety standards. In 1992, SeaCanoe recognised the first competitor on the market, offering cheaper tour prices and higher commissions for travel agents, but a lower quality standard. Competition increased and in 1996 SeaCanoe saw themselves as one in a number of kayak tour operators. The established name of SeaCanoe became a synonym for kayaking in Phong Nga Bay, regardless of the specific operator. Tourists could not distinguish between the operators and often competitors' tours were sold as 'SeaCanoe tours'

(Shepherd 2001). In his PhD thesis about SeaCanoe, Nick Kontogeorgeopololous (cited in Shepherd 2001) referred to other companies with terms like "unappealing, disgusting food, decrepit escort boats" and noted that some companies "ignored safety and natural history information". Also, some companies had "minimal English language skills".

With no clear rules or regulations, basically everybody was (and is) able to start a sea kayak operation. The situation today is far away from ecotourism. Shepherd (2001) notes that *"the situation in the bay and in and around the caves become nothing short of disgrace. Quite literally, dozens of kayaks form traffic jams and queues which gives the impression of Bangkok's 'floating market' rather than a back-to-nature experience"*.

Case Study Two: Safaris in Kenya

Kenya is one of the leading tourist magnets in Africa. Tourism is the country's leading foreign exchange earner that contributes about 12 % to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Akama 1996). Olindo (1997) states that Kenya, and especially Amboseli National Park, is the world's leading ecotourism attraction. The word wildlife *"evokes images with elephants, zebras, giraffes, lions, gorillas and other remarkable animals of the African savannahs and forest"* (Akama 1997: 567). Safaris are an accepted ecotourism activity and the primary reason for most travellers to Kenya. Ballantine and Eagles (1994) defined ecotourists by three qualifying criteria, including a social motivation, the desire to travel to 'wilderness or undisturbed areas', and a time commitment (at least one third of the Kenyan holidays have to be spent on safari). Their survey included 99 Canadian tourists travelling to Kenya and 84 % of these qualified as ecotourists.

Safaris are usually small-scale tours in minibuses for eight to twelve passengers. Once a unique experience and due to the conservational aspect (taking photographs rather than hunting for trophies) certainly an eco-experience, a safari in Amboseli National Park today is far from the romantic, thrilling encounter with lions and elephants. The current situation is well illustrated by Olindo (1997:90):

> *'In the flatlands of Kenya's Amboseli Game Reserve, a lioness lies resting. Every few minutes, a minivan or bus drives up and the crowd of tourists inside snap their camera shutters. The animal may remain for two hours. In that time, twenty-five vehicles might stop and stare'.*

In fact, there are so many vans moving within the park, that large dust clouds are a common sight. A lack of regulations lets drivers leave the tracks and drive close to the animals. In the whole reserve, large animals have no space left to retreat (National Audubon Society 1991). Some 650,000 travellers spend about US $ 350 million per year in Kenya's parks and protected areas (Olindo 1997). Elephants, for example, are much more worth in tourist revenues than they are for their ivory. The 'Old Man

of Nature Tourism' is in trouble and currently ecotourism in Kenya is certainly not sustainable.

Case Study Three: Robinson Club Baobab, Kenya

The brand Robinson Club is a subsidiary of TUI (Touristik Union International). TUI is Europe's largest tour operator with about 12.9 million pax in 1998/1999 (Fremdenverkehrswirtschaft International 2000). TUI, including the branch Robinson Club, set a variety of criteria for their holiday destinations, hotels and carriers (Table 1). An environmental database is used in planning and information in catalogues.

Table 1: TUI's Environmental Criteria for Destinations, Hotels and Carriers

TUI Destination Criteria	TUI Hotel Criteria	TUI Carrier Criteria
• Bathing water and beach quality	• Wastewater treatment	• Energy consumption
• Water supply and water-saving measures	• Solid waste disposal, recycling and prevention	• Pollutant and noise emissions
• Wastewater disposal and utilisation	• Water supply and water-saving measures	• Land use and paving over
• Solid waste disposal, recycling and prevention	• Energy supply and energy-saving measures	• Vehicle/craft, equipment and line maintenance techniques
• Energy supply and energy-saving measures	• Environmentally oriented hotel management (focus on food, cleaning and hygiene)	• Catering and waste recycling and disposal
• Traffic, air, noise and climate	• Quality of bathing waters and beaches in the vicinity of the hotel	• Environmental information for passengers
• Landscape and built environment	• Noise protection in and around the hotel	• Environmental guidelines and reporting
• Nature conservation, species preservation and animal welfare	• Hotel gardens	• Environmental research and development
• Environmental information and offers	• Building materials and architecture	• Environmental co-operation, integrated transport concepts
• Environmental policy and activities	• Environmental information and offers of the hotel	• Specific data: Vehicle/craft type, motor/power unit, age
	• Location and immediate surroundings of the hotel	

Source: TUI (undated)

Robinson Club Baobab lies in a tropical coastal forest at Kenya's Diani Beach, 35 kilometres south of Mombasa. The club comprises 80 double rooms in two-storey houses and 70 double rooms in bungalows. Only 2.5 % of the total area of 250,000 m^2 are built on, and the whole area has been established as a nature preservation park with endemic plants, which are already extinct in other parts of Kenya's coast (Lerner & Hagspiel 1999).

Robinson is operating according to a code of conduct set by TUI, including a wide variety of issues, such as architecture, water treatment, waste treatment, social matters and many more.

Architecture

When renovating and redecorating the club, TUI placed emphasis on the use of local materials. This resulted in a typical African architecture with straw-roofed bungalows in an African style, made of coral blocks and mangrove timber. The bungalows have been carefully integrated in the park (Lerner & Hagspiel 1999).

Rubbish Issues

The main goal for the club is to avoid rubbish rather than dispose of rubbish. Robinson Club Baobab does not use any disposable cutlery and crockery. Soft drink and beer cans are unknown in the club, too. When supplying the club with food, emphasis is put on low package products. For example, jam, butter and marmalade are not served in small individual packages, but bought in bulk and served in bowls.

Robinson Club Baobab heavily relies on local food. This guarantees freshness and supports the local community. The club's staff is allowed to take unused food home. Non-usable leftovers are composted in their own device or passed on to those local farmers the club buys their products from. Additional humus is used as fertiliser in the club's gardens (Lerner & Hagspiel 1999).

Water Issues

The club has a need for about 7,000 m^3 fresh water every day. This is an enormous amount of water, especially in a country with seven rainless months. The club's wastewater is not pumped into wild soak-aways or even into the sea (as is common practice). The club built their own fully biological sewage system. This system consists of three 30 m by 10 m large ponds, which are used for all wastewater produced by the club.

Plate 1: Biological Sewage System at Robinson Club Baobab

Source: Courtesy of TUI Hannover

Water runs from pond to pond, evaporates and gets cleaned by a special plant (Nil Cabbage) and fish (Tilapia fish). Arriving in the third pond, the water is clear enough to be used to water the gardens. The soil acts as an additional filter and the clean water finally flows back into the ground water system (Lerner & Hagspiel 1999).

Social Issues

Club Baobab is fully aware of the situation of being a 'guest' in a foreign country. The above mentioned points not only affect the visitors, but also the local community in a positive way. In addition, the club offers a trainee programme for young local people. In all departments of the club, young local people are trained (Lerner & Hagspiel 1999).

The Holistic Approach

As Europe's largest tour operator, TUI tries to follow a holistic approach regarding the environment. All departments are involved in the process and trained. Continuous monitoring attempts to establish and to keep high standards. SWOT analyses are repeatedly undertaken and weaknesses identified. For quality control, reports of TUI's tour guides and clients' correspondence are evaluated. Consultation is offered to local hotel owners. Expertise on composting and sewage management, noise pollution and alternative energies, and sources for governmental subsidies are only a few examples of the help offered (TUI 1993).

Case Study Four: LTU International Airways, Düsseldorf/Germany

LTU is Germany's second largest charter carrier with more than 7 million passengers per year and a fleet of 35 modern aircraft (LTU 1999a). Already in 1992, LTU added the principle of environmental protection to its company philosophy. Continuous work on reducing the amount of kerosene and thus the amount of exhausts through modernising the fleet is a high priority task. All LTU aircraft are matching the strong noise regulations of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO Chapter III, Annexe-16-certification). Moreover, LTU obliges their pilots to kerosene and noise reducing start and landing procedures (Immelmann 1996).

LTU also supports environmentally friendly travel between the passengers' homes and the airport. LTU passengers are eligible for a reduced Rail&Fly ticket on the whole German railway net. Passengers flying out of Düsseldorf or Cologne/Bonn (about 50 % of LTU's passengers) have the advantage of free use of public transport within these areas. In 1996, more than 250,000 travellers used this environmentally friendly and stress-free service. Finally, LTU connects the two major airports of Düsseldorf and Frankfurt with a daily coach shuttle service, called LTU Sky Shuttle (Immelmann 1996). This shuttle is less harmful to the environment than private traffic by car or an air shuttle.

LTU also continuously reduces the amounts of rubbish produced during the flights. The majority of goods used on board are now bulk goods. Here alone, LTU was able to reduce about 80 % of the produced rubbish. As for the rest of the rubbish, LTU already separates it on board and transfers it for proper recycling at the final destination. The results speak a clear language: Although the number of passengers increased from about 4 million in 1990 to more than 6.9 million in 1996, the amount of rubbish in that period was reduced from 1093 tons to 824 tons. Taken the increase of passengers into consideration, this is a reduction of almost 50 % (Immelmann 1996).

It seems to be a matter of course that LTU also supports environmental research and protection projects in different parts of the world. The variety of LTU's commitment to the environment is also documented by two major projects, the C.A.R.I.B.I.C. project and the 'Ökobeutel' ('eco-bag'). Those two projects are unique within the industry.

The C.A.R.I.B.I.C Project

C.A.R.I.B.I.C. stands for **C**ivil **A**ircraft for **R**emote Sensing and **I**n-Situ-Measurement of Troposphere and Lower Stratosphere **B**ased on the **I**nstrument **C**ontainer and is a project for scientific research on the atmosphere. The 'greenhouse effect', 'climate change' and the 'depletion of the shielding of the ozone layer' became key-

words for constantly growing damage of the atmosphere due to emissions from human activities on the earth. C.A.R.I.B.I.C. is a unique programme under the leadership of Prof Dr Paul Crutzen (awarded the Nobel Prize for his research on the ozone layer). Several participating institutes and companies (Table 2) also contribute to this project. The aim of the project is to gain a better understanding of changes in the atmosphere and achieve better predictions about the consequences of global climate changes (Immelmann 1996; LTU 1999b).

Table 2: Participating Partners in the C.A.R.I.B.I.C. Project

Partner	Subject
Max Planck Institute for Chemistry (MPI) Mainz, Germany	CO-Concentration/Whole-Air-Sampler
Institute for Meteorology and Climate Research (IMK) University of Karlsruhe, Germany	Ozone Concentration
Institute for Tropospheric Research (IfT) Leipzig, Germany	Aerosol Concentration
GFAS Gesellschaft für angewandte Systemtechnik Immenstaad, Germany	Co-ordination of the project/ Development of the container system
LTU International Airways Düsseldorf, Germany	Modifications on the aircraft/Avionics & Technical Engineering/Co-ordination with Boeing/Certification and test flights
Also joined in the second phase of the project:	
Royal Meteorologic Institute De Bilt, the Netherlands	University of East Anglia Norwich, England
Institute for Nuclear Physics Lund, Sweden	Max-Planck-Institut für Aeronomie Katlenburg-Lindau, Germany

Sources: Immelmann (1996), LTU (1999b), Hoffmann (2000)

LTU's Boeing aircraft B767-300ER "Uniform November" was modified with a probe system and a cockpit control for the container. The container is equipped with measuring and monitoring tools to measure aerosols, ozone and carbon monoxide. Furthermore it contains 12 bottles of 20l content for automatic flooding during flight through the "whole air sampler", which is fixed at the bottom of the fuselage. With this "whole air sampler" air samples are collected for later analysis in laboratories back in the institutes. The advantage of this system is that samples can be collected during regular passenger flights (Immelmann 1996; LTU 1999a).

Plate 2: The C.A.R.I.B.I.C. Container is Loaded on LTU's B767 'Uniform November'

Source: Courtesy of LTU Düsseldorf

Since the inaugural flight from Malé (Maldives) to Munich (Germany) on the 5th May 1997, the modified B767-300ER is employed on a variety of routes throughout LTU's network to and from North America, Asia and Africa (LTU 1999b).

The C.A.R.I.B.I.C project aims to get a better understanding about the physical and chemical processes in the tropopause and the stratosphere. First results show some surprising facts, as shown by the following three examples.

1. In November 1997, for example, high concentrations of carbon monoxide (CO) were registered above the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. This high concentration was a result of the extensive forest fires in Southeast Asia in the second half of 1997. Due to the El Nino phenomena this concentration was clearly higher than in the previous years (Hoffmann 2000).

2. In 1998, an unexpected high concentration of carbon monoxide and aerosols was identified only a few 100 metres above the tropopause. This is clear evidence of the fact that "polluted air" in the troposphere moves up to the stratosphere. There is only little knowledge about frequency and size of exchange processes between troposphere and stratosphere and this project aims to gain further data about those processes (Hoffmann 2000).

3. In August 1997, high concentration of methane was found above the Indian Ocean. Meteorological investigations proved that the air masses with a high content of methane above Southeast Asia moved from the surface up to a height of 10,000 meters. There is evidence that this methane was emitted from the extended rice fields in North India and China. These results show that processes on the ground have a clearly higher influence on higher atmospheric layers than the emissions of today's air traffic (Hoffmann 2000).

LTU and the associated institutes continue research with the C.A.R.I.B.I.C. project and more results are expected subsequently.

The Ökobeutel ('eco-bag')

The Maldives is a state comprising 1,200 islands (202 inhabited) and 19 atolls (Preuss Touristikinformation 1995). The Republic is heavily reliant on tourism and is a paradise for water sports lovers. Due to the geographic location of the country, waste disposal is a severe problem. The small islands do not offer the opportunity of waste dumps and most of the waste is dumped into the open sea. LTU alone is generating almost 20 per cent of the total inbound tourism to the Maldives (Hoffmann 2000). Due to these high numbers of visitors, LTU took over the ecological responsibility and started the 'eco-bag' programme in 1993. Flight attendants hand out rubbish bags to every passenger on LTU flights to the Maldives. They ask the tourists to collect all inorganic waste during their stay and bring the bag back to the airport at the end of their holidays. At the check-in LTU staff take care of the bags, and after sorting the bags they are loaded in special containers and flown out of the country back to Germany. In Germany the waste is finally transferred to recycling stations for recycling or proper disposal (LTU 1999b). Over the first six years of the programme LTU distributed more than 300,000 eco-bags and about 80 % of all passengers participated in the programme. The result is an amount of more than 400 tons of rubbish, which has been flown back to Germany instead of being dumped into the ecological sensitive ecosystem of the coral reefs. As a result, LTU was awarded the "Green Palm Tree" of the renowned tourism journal *GEO Saison* in 1996. In 1995, LTU received the governmental conservation award by the President of the Maldives (Immelmann 1996; Hoffmann 2000).

Related to the eco-bag project is the project 'Clean up the Reefs'. Once a year, divers from the world's largest diving organisation PADI in co-operation with LTU clean the coral reefs around the hotel-islands of the Maldives. The collected rubbish is brought to Germany by LTU for adequate disposal or recycling. PADI awarded LTU with the conservation award A.W.A.R.E. in both years 1995 and 1996 (Immelmann 1996; LTU 1999b).

Conclusion

It is often argued that ecotourism is working with small-scale operations only. This paper introduced the reader to four tourism ventures, two small-scale ecotours and two major players in mass tourism. While the small-scale operators in Phuket and in Amboseli National Park started off as ecotourism operations, they had to face two main problems: 'Eco-pirates' copied the idea and left the 'original' helpless as

one amongst many. The tourist can hardly distinguish between the tours that are offered. The other problem is that mass follows class. If it is kayaks jammed in caves or mini-vans circling around lions, the effects of the sheer amount of tours have detrimental ecological and environmental effects on wildlife and nature.

On the other hand, the introduction of two large companies illustrated that big players in mass tourism can make a difference. Neither of the introduced companies use the label "ecotourism" for more effective marketing. However, they are taking responsibility for their actions and it is fair enough that they are proud of their commitment and the received awards.

The author believes that in the discussion about ecotourism, the aspect of scale is often too prevalent. The impacts of tourism are dependent on many more factors and the focus should address a holistic assessment of impacts. Environmental responsibility is crucial for a sustainable development. It is naive to think that tourism could live without mass tourism. But mass tourism can be managed as consciously as small-scale tourism. Taking responsibility means investing in the future and in the host communities. It also comprises taking action and active support of vital research for a better understanding of the impacts tourism has on the host communities and the environment in general.

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