

Gender in sustainable tourism – how women and men take part in the transformation to a more sustainable tourism in German tourism industry

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Objectives | The paper takes a closer look at women's influence and representation on the transformation process towards a more sustainable and social economy in the German tourism industry. Women are said to be particularly affected by environmental damage because they are obliged to take care of their family's health. This leads to a controversial discussion about the role, responsibility and disposition of women in the transformation process (Mölders, 2015, pp. 164-167, Wichterich, 1995, pp. 106-127). A closer examination of the position and balance of influence of tourism employees is interesting due to following reasons. First, the conventional as well as the sustainable tourism industry are shaped by an above-average share of employed women. Secondly, many of the professional activities in the tourism economy rely on the availability of female-typed skills, such as hospitality or care. Jobs in the tourism industry with a predominantly female connotation are often tied to low status, low career prospect, low wage and sexual harassment (Lund-Durlacher, Bauernfeind & Hergesell, 2010; Madörin, 1996; Stuppäck, 2005). A principle of sustainability is intergenerational justice as well as gender justice (Katz et al., 2015, p. 15). Consequently, especially women would benefit from the implementation of sustainability. Lastly, the tourism industry depends in particular on a socially and ecologically intact environment. Ecofeminist research stated that women have a different approach to nature and a higher environmental awareness than men (Bauhardt, 2010, pp. 322 - 327; Schultz & Weller 1995). To begin with, the following questions have to be answered: How are gender relations represented in the division of work within the

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sustainable German tourism industry? What positions and responsibilities do men and women hold to decide upon sustainable strategies in tourism? Is the potential for sustainable tourism observed within the universities?

Methodology | The scope of the investigation has been limited to tour operators and tourism and destination management organizations, as these institutions clearly provide tourism services as well as actively form new tourism development strategies. In the survey, 800 conventional and 102 sustainable tour operators as well as 176 tourism organizations in Germany were analysed with regard to management levels and functions. The top ten companies of the German tourism industry were observed in greater detail. The sustainable companies and organizations were identified through the certificate 'TourCert', the list of participants of the federal competition for sustainable destination management organizations ('*Nachhaltige Tourismusdestinationen*') as well as the federal organization of sustainable tour operators '*forumandersreisen*'. The tourism programmes at universities were questioned about the proportion of women among the students and the professorships. The curricula of the courses were analysed with regard to sustainability contents.

Main Results and Contributions | The average proportion of female students in tourism programme, both economically and sustainably oriented, is now around 80% (as of December 2016). The share of women in management positions at the tour operators and tourism organizations investigated is 26.6%, which is slightly lower than the average proportion of women in management positions in Germany (29%) (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016). The proportion of women varies depending on the size of the company or organization. In tourism organizations, the percentage of women from the federal level to the regional level increases significantly (see Table 1).

Table 1 | Proportion of women in management level in tourism management organizations

Tourism management organizations	Proportion of women in management level
Federal level (n=6)	14.6 % (41 men, 7 women) ⁴
Regional („Länder“) level (n=21)	25.0 % (30 men, 10 women) ⁴
Regional and local level (n=149)	42.1 % (88 men, 64 women) ⁵

⁴ Präsident*in, Vize-Präsident*in, Vorstand, Hauptgeschäftsführung/
president, vice-president, board of directors, chief executive officer

⁵ Geschäftsführer*in, manager

Source: Own elaboration

The share of women in management positions in sustainable tourism management organizations (36%) is similar to conventional tourism organizations. However, the share of women in leadership in the 800 conventional tour operators is about 23.8%. In the ten largest German tour operators, which held 2/3 of the total revenue of the German tourism market, there is only one woman in senior management (as of December 2016), but four women out of six persons in four of these companies are responsible for sustainability. In the 102 sustainable tour operators, 38.5% of those in management level are women. Very often, a gender-stereotypical division of labor at the companies investigated is observed: the manager is male, the executive employee is female. The responsibilities that are mainly performed by women are the following:

- i) Communication, public relations or marketing

ii) Sustainability or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

iii) Direct contact with the guests, service, information

Limitations | The quantitative analysis had to face statistical uncertainties owing to the lack of detailed information. A particular gender-related motivation and approach regarding sustainable tourism cannot be established solely by analysing the data. Supplementary qualitative research has to follow to identify attitudes as well as the existing balance of influence from a gender perspective.

Conclusions | In order to promote sustainable development, women must have the power to make decisions. Given the high number of women who qualify for tourism management at universities or qualified women who work in tourism, the share of women in leadership positions is relatively small. Particularly in the case of large companies and large tourism organizations, women seem to be pushing the so-called 'glass ceiling'. With flat hierarchies they seem to have better chances. Additionally, a gender-stereotypical division of labor has to be observed within the tourism sector concerning responsibilities. A relation between gender and sustainability can be seen in the tour operators. Women are setting up sustainable travel companies and are thus taking their own lead. Apparently, they have better career opportunities in companies that operate according to the principles of sustainability. Further qualitative surveys will show why and how women (and men) successfully implement sustainable development in tourism.

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