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# Tourism – Politics’ darling and poor cousin



Felix Kolbeck

Since the beginning of the 20th century in the industrial countries

- life expectancy has almost doubled
- the period of employment has been massively reduced and
- real incomes have multiplied.<sup>1</sup>

For tourism, travel and leisure more and more resources in the form of time and money are available. Traveling serves many different, also politically relevant, purposes: international understanding, business, relaxation, health. The importance of the “phenomenon tourism” has thus increased over-proportionally. Economics and science have complied with this by systematically developing the “system tourism” with all its forms and value-added steps – the know-how in tourism is practiced, managed, trained and taught.

And politics? What is it exactly about the know-why in tourism? Here opinions differ. The questions range from “Why even a tourism policy?” to “Why doesn’t politics do more for tourism (including here: in OUR region)?” There is no pat answer to

these questions: daily politics is not like running a hotel, where similar or the same management principles and success factors apply internationally and across all size ranges. Politicians want to be re-elected, travel destinations too, but here the play on words and the similarity end.

In Germany those policies relevant for tourism are embedded in all levels of regional authority and associations. Since these have different and partly even competing interests, we should rather be speaking of a more or less coordinated tourism-related “policy mix” under the primacy of the economy, rather than of a self-contained or at least coordinated tourism policy.<sup>2</sup> This diversity is, in sum, also beneficial – it leads to competing concepts and ideas, promotes innovation and demands arguments.

The currently existing 195 national territories in the world differ, besides their natural landscapes, strongly in terms of structure (dependence on individual branches of the economy, demography...), organisation of the community (degree of democratisation, centrality...), culture(s) and stability (requirement for the develop-

Tourism induces emotions – which ones are followed by politics?

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ment of sustainable structures of any kind). Therefore it is obvious that for example in a state which is highly dependent on tourism and which has a stable, authoritarian centralised structure, a totally different tourism policy predominates than in those states with for example federal and pluralistic economic and social systems that react within a short period of time in a more instable way to changing values and other phenomena.

The following pages will first of all point out some general framework conditions for tourism policy, followed by concrete actions required in the near future as a result of the above-mentioned framework conditions.

## 1. Global level: Natural incongruities of tourism and politics

The mere coming together of tourism and politics does not by a long chalk result in a tourism policy, let alone in one which is coherent and characterised by extensive competencies and budgets. This failure is often due to the fact that the spatial borders of tourism (destinations, source markets, traffic flows) very often differ a lot from the politically relevant demarcations.



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1 Several statistics from <https://de.statista.com> and Schneider 2001, p. 28.

2 Cf. Freyer 2015, pp. 463-466.

Holism, cross-sectional industry, globality, system character ... these and other terms connotated with tourism are more a curse than a blessing for a target-oriented tourism policy. Because in many places politics serve branch-specific and often short-term individual interests. Politics as well as government decisions and actions serve among other things to compensate market failure. The economic theory of democracy<sup>3</sup> and the new political economy show vividly that the state and its political decision-makers – just like the market – take incomplete decisions and actions which are based on maximising self-interest and which often stand in the way of such compensation.

Strong disparities in income, wealth and regulatory density automatically lead to tax optimising and risk balancing corporate structures as well as strong price pressure. As a result, especially small, local providers are barely able to make a living because in order to run a successful tourism business, structures like

these demand a lot of patience. Investments in tourism involve high individual risks and show their profit and cash flow effects with varying intensity and speed in the individual value-added steps. Consequently, tourism welfare and profit effects are distributed disparately on both levels: Globally between states and regions and locally within companies and individuals in the tourism sector.

These disparities are reproduced throughout all political levels and lead to very different interests and structures in international tourism policy. A politician who is interested in tourism-related topics is initially confronted with a thematic and interest-driven “bank of fog”, so to speak. Furthermore, political decision-makers are often socialized in certain thinking patterns due to their specialised educational and administrative path. This makes it much more difficult for them to access tourism with its holistic and cross-sectional elements.

Thus initiating or even implementing globally sustainable tourism

concepts and frameworks seems almost impossible. Hence, on a local level, tourism is often the darling topic for some politicians, while others – on higher political levels – pay little attention to it or look down on it as old-fashioned. .

## 2. Values level: Travelling in times of radical individualism

Politics should serve people. Tourism policy has to maintain a balance between

- the visiting tourists' holiday motives (incoming),
- the need for mobility of tourists departing (outgoing) and tourists travelling within a certain area (domestic),
- the local peoples' daily and leisure needs.

But these people are changing.

In western-style democracies the people who elect and drive politics have become travellers and now also to some extent “value nomads”. Hardly anybody is interested in knowing where they actually hail from, but only where they can go to next.

Borders separate – travelling connects.

 IvanSemenovych

3 Cf. Downs 1968.





Due to the loss of many classical value patterns we live in an age of radical individualism. Each and every sensitivity has to be addressed, diversity has become a substitute religion. Individuality is lived out excessively, as seen in travelling and consuming.

The foundation for this is laid early. Education, integration and the imparting of values are less and less considered a personal task which fosters diversity but are more and more imposed on "society at large" in the form of its educational institutions. Nurseries, kindergartens and schools are systematically overtaxed by this and inevitably react to this by leveling and lowering standards which they are then even criticised for and have their authority questioned by precisely this "society". Hardly surprising that fewer and fewer people see their future career in the educational sector.

Hence, when they come of age, we have a generation of young voters, university applicants, workers and travellers who, quite rightly, still need to find themselves and live out their individuality. By the time they have turned 40, many of them have travelled to more countries and continents than all previous generations put together yet they are still on a search to find themselves. Others de-

Summer 2019: Partying far from home or "flight shaming"? – Most important, staged.

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liberately choose other pathways in life, or roads to travel – they are looking for closeness and home, for many different reasons.

Many young voters and young travellers display a surprisingly wide range of discrepancies between awareness and behaviour, be it environmental awareness (travelling being a very good example), in their social behaviour or in adhering to or copying role models. In contrast to former times however this does not seem to lead to cognitive dissonances in this generation. The opposite is true, this way today and that way tomorrow, no limits – you can achieve anything – after all, we came into the world with this mantra. They imagine themselves to be part of an individualistic collective, where deviance<sup>4</sup> or even a sense of shame cannot arise in the first place. And even if it does: the latest trend, the next travelling destination, the latest hype are all just around the next Instagram corner, which makes thinking about one's own behaviour of the past two or three years obsolete.

Thus conflicts do not arise on a personal level but all the more so between social classes: on the one hand those who can afford a (travel-) exces-

sive lifestyle and even consider it a vital part of their development, on the other hand those who simply cannot afford it.

### 3. Local levels and their connections – mobility and traffic

Mobility and the means of transport needed for mobility to succeed are a good example of the imbalance between the requirements of society as a whole and individual political actions.

There is no question that for reasons of climate protection, traffic, if possible, should be avoided and there should be a strong increase in price for the remaining means of transport. The receipts from transportation help companies in the business, in a market-economy structure, to advance technical progress and innovation, which in turn helps to minimize the pollution caused by traffic. Mobility actually has to become more expensive now, but this will only be the case in the medium term. This applies to all forms of mobility. Of course, the increase in price should be much higher for long-distance flights, which heavily pollute the atmosphere, than for example for local public transport. So much for the theory. In practice, through subsidies and communication, politicians offer incentives and send signals going in the

<sup>4</sup> Not accepted, divergent behaviour. Cf. Heuwinkel 2019, p. 141 f.

opposite direction: short-, middle- and long-distance trips. Vote-catching calls for free local public transport, bus trips to Berlin for 9 euros and flights to Mallorca for 19.99 euros lead in total to a contra-productive, for-free mentality which inhibits any form of development. Because a for-free mentality always means disdaining those things for which one is only willing to pay either a very low price, or better still nothing at all.

Mobility is not appreciated in our adipose, affluent society anymore, but seen as a matter of course and even as a necessity for staging one's own "travel self". This not only applies to mobility but also to other forms of services. Providing free local public transport will not lead to it being used more often because in growing metropolitan areas additional capacities during rush hours are simply not available. Local public transport needs more, not less money. For this product to become free of charge either cross-financing from other political sectors or massive tax increases would be necessary.<sup>5</sup> Both are not ac-

<sup>5</sup> This applies even more so since cost exemption promises currently compete on the political marketing agenda: nursery schools, kindergarten, cultural offers, local public transport ... What is sure about this development are profit-taking effects for the better-off and a medium-term loss of quality.

ceptable to the general public. What is even more serious in the medium term is the elimination of competition due to cost exemption – it simply does not pay to put qualitatively better products on the market.

For town and city councils, massive investments in overdue capacity expansion of inner-city mobility are fundamentally unattractive. They cause trouble (protests because of construction sites, noise etc.) today and revenue only accrues several election terms later because of grotesquely long planning procedures and antiquated cost-benefit criteria. Basically, many city centres today are not capable of development anymore because even announcing a development project provokes sensitivities like citizens' action groups or even referendums, which are enthusiastically latched onto by the media.

As regards mobility and traffic policy and its management, this leads on the various regional authority levels to client-oriented symbolic politics instead of to sustainable, radical solutions. In Munich for example, as a quick way to help the climate, car lanes would urgently have to make way for high-frequency bus lanes, everything else would only be feasible in the long term. But what is happen-

ing? E-scooters are being introduced and, against all common sense, celebrated as a contribution to sustainable traffic. De facto, [road] traffic is on the one hand shifted from previously emission-free and healthy modes of transport (walking, cycling) to an energy- and maintenance-intensive means of transportation. On the other hand, an additional means of transport is being released onto an already too small traffic area and it is almost impossible to sanction wrong usage and vandalism. It is, in fact, not about sustainability but coolness, not about the community but about ego.

#### 4. What people expect from politics

The past decades have shown that in developed (industrial) nations travel behaviour has hardly changed in favour of sustainability. Moral pressure or even voluntariness will not change this at all.

Thus the recent demand for "flight shaming", which arose from the "Fridays for Future" demonstrations, is nothing more than a game of make-belief of the social utopia type, because a sense of shame requires a coherent value system or at least a cultural understanding, within which deviations arising from social pressure can trigger feelings of shame among the "deviators". As mentioned above, on the values level, we are however experiencing the exact opposite. As a result, the market for ecologically sustainable travel is and remains a niche one, whose relative size in comparison to the "classic" growing travel markets of major emerging countries is even declining.

In such constellations the call for state intervention is usually loud, an admission of individual responsibility rather muted.<sup>6</sup> But many people at least are beginning to understand that in the travel industry as well the motto "faster, higher, further!" cannot be maintained. And this expectation is being increasingly made clear to politicians who should not criticise travelling but continue to facilitate it in a responsible way.

Red lights – traffic restrictions in Lisbon's Old Town.

 Felix Kolbeck



<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bausch/Humpe 2019, pp. 24-27.



### 5. What politics needs for this

It is after all not the case that politics has no influence on the tourism industry. What is needed in many cases though is a change or changes of perspective and paradigm, because tourism itself is not an industry that per se produces many innovations.

What would be helpful for a change of perspective is a focus on closeness instead of distance and not just vaguely through populism and a sense of home. As with increasing distance, covering that distance accounts for most of the polluting emissions from a trip, politics has to focus more strongly on the development of leisure and holiday opportunities that are close to the city or at least earthbound. The conditions for summer tourism in Central Europe are good since many holiday destinations in the Mediterranean are, due to climate change, getting too hot. Such close destinations can, like another travel product, be designed either for an exclusive or for the mass market. There are plenty of areas, ideas and examples. And, admittedly, regulations and obstacles too. This is an-


other reason why a lot of tourism takes place in distant and usually considerably less regulated markets.

Additionally, tourism needs fresh ways of thinking. Tourism needs comprehensive approaches to thinking, planning and acting, not just on a ministerial level but on all levels of administrative practice. Tourism policy in the light of the above-mentioned developments needs a general, cross-departmental understanding of tourism as a whole system. Tourism studies, which are globally growing and advise politicians on the major issues facing tourism in the future, such as sustainability, demographic trends, city and space development, are based on this principle.

For the issues facing tourism in the future, capable research and teaching at the public universities of applied sciences are essential in order to be able to deliver scientifically substantiated fundamentals and solutions to address the problems and challenges. In basic research as well as in applied research, innovative approaches, new ideas and future-proof strategies to address the challenges

Closeness – travel opportunity and political topic.

 ARochau

and problems in tourism must be developed. It is the task of politics to create and sustain the necessary structures for this and increase competence in the field of tourism by facilitating suitable career paths on all levels of administrative practice. 

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# Tourism development caught between neoliberalism and political crises

## Case study Jordan

Markus Pillmayer, Nicolai Scherle

King Abdullah II of Jordan<sup>1</sup>

*Transform Aqaba into a world-class business hub & leisure destination, enhancing the quality of life & prosperity of the regional community through sustainable development while being the driving force for the development of Jordan.*

For some considerable time now the Arab countries have primarily been associated with political crises – and in the media frequently depicted in a relatively one-sided manner. Seen against this background the above, very ambitious, quote from King Abdullah II of Jordan sounds like a rather unexpected “saviour” which you would not necessarily expect to hear in this region. Nevertheless, and largely unnoticed in public discourse, several countries in this region have experienced a remarkable economic transformation process characterized above all by increased neo-liberalization of their economic structures. This article will examine core struc-

tures and the implications of this extremely complex process, using the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as an example. This rich in tradition destination along the Jordan river can for years not only boast increasing international demand for touristic services due to its relatively high level of political stability, it is also an ideal example of the increasing neo-liberalization of the touristic structures in this region.

### The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

To quote the well-respected German Middle East expert Volker Perthes from the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Berlin (the German Institute for International and Security Affairs): “No other country has so often been declared superfluous as has the Kingdom of Jordan.”<sup>2</sup> As a typical product of colonialism whose national boundaries were primarily a result of colonial policy decided around a table, Jordan was often labelled an artificial entity with a very uncertain future and one which threatened to implode at both its endogenous and exogenous stability borders. At the same time the country’s economic potential is seen as at least as inauspicious as its political-geographic position as a buffer state squeezed between numerous political flashpoints. In view of its very challenging political and economic structures, the Hashemite Kingdom has in the past two decades been increasing its efforts to optimize the economic framework both for local entrepreneurs and for foreign investors.<sup>3</sup> This is also due to the fact that the Jordanian dynasty recognized earlier than many of the other governments in the Arab world that economic discontent can quickly turn into a public questioning of

the legitimacy of the state and its institutions.

### Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority

One of the central reform steps taken by the Jordanian government at the beginning of the 2000s was the implementation of the so-called Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) in the hope that it would initiate a sustainable economic upswing which would radiate far beyond the south Jordanian metropolis on the Red Sea. Following in particular China’s example, implementation of the Special Economic Zone in Aqaba was based on a regional and regulative development concept which was to go beyond the conventional scope of classical industrial development. Special economic zones are not only used to carry out free-market experiments in a planned economy but with their extremely business-friendly conditions and climate they also pursue in many cases a neoliberal policy which has, however, at least since the latest economic and financial crisis lost a lot of its appeal.

Following in particular François Perroux’s concept of development poles<sup>4</sup>, in the context of Special Economic Zones it is assumed that by means of specific incentives, economic activities within, as a rule, a geographically and legally well-defined area are particularly promoted. To do so, two forms in particular are used, which however are frequently indistinguishable from each other and in fact even combined. On the one hand, financial incentives such as for example tax breaks, exemption from custom duties or granting loans on preferential terms can be used to persuade companies to invest in a special economic zone. On the other hand, it

Map of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

© Markus Pillmayer

1 www.aqabazone.com [07.08.2019].



2 Perthes 2009, p.241.

3 Cf. Oxford Business Group 2018.

4 Cf. Perroux 1955.

is possible in special economic zones to carry out deregulatory measures through, for example, entrepreneur-friendly laws on competition, planning, contracts and labour.

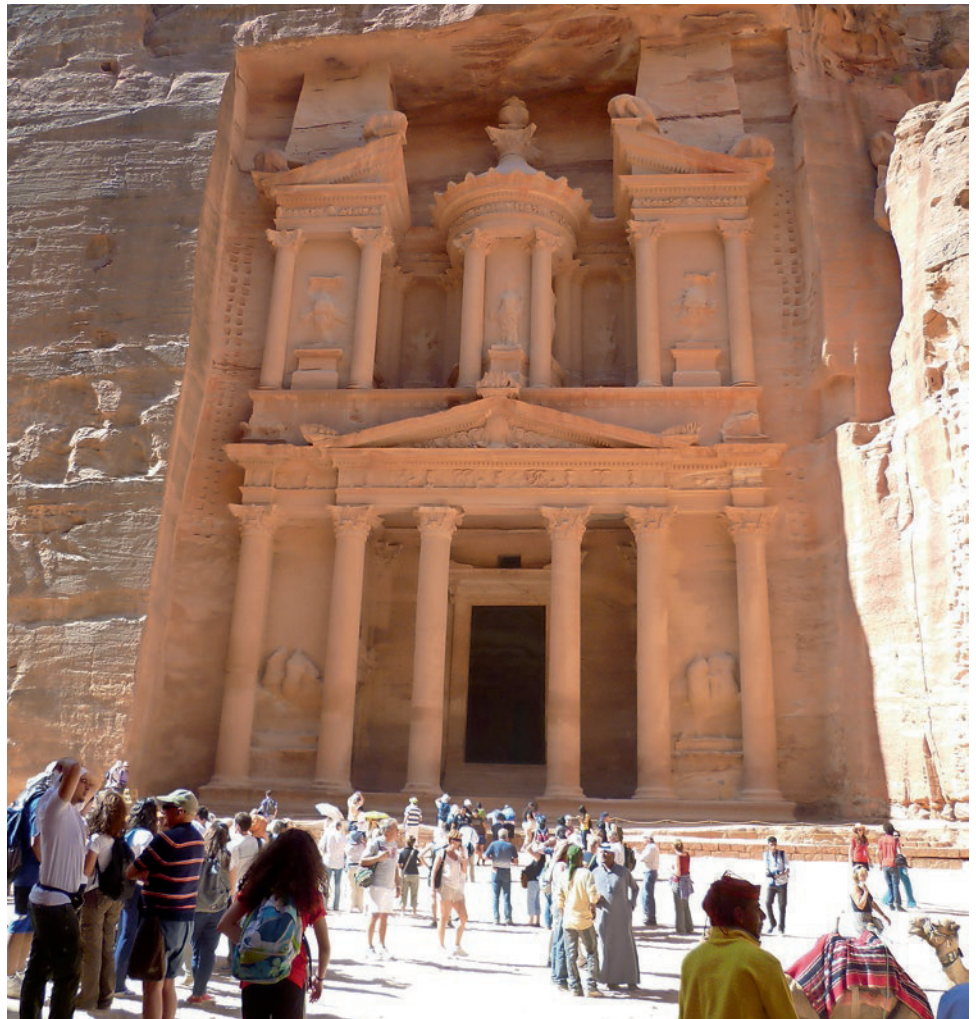
With Jordan's independence in the year 1946, Aqaba became an integral part of the Hashemite Kingdom, although neighbouring Saudi Arabia for a long time laid a territorial claim to the south Jordanian city. Not until 1965 – as part of an exchange of territory – did its neighbour recognize the Jordanian state's authority over Aqaba. With the setting up of the Special Economic Zone in the year 2001, the Jordanian government wanted to send a clear signal of its willingness to carry out economic reforms, in particular with regard to foreign investors. Imad Fakhoury, the Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, for example stated in the start-up phase of the Special Economic Zone

*“We expect the ASEZ to make Aqaba a key engine for Jordan's economic growth (...) We want to see Aqaba to deliver the full potential of its existing infrastructure and serve as a gateway to the global economy for investors. The combination of the ASEZ's location, its incentives, its one-stop-shop approach for investors and the opportunities opened up by Jordan's easy access to the world's major markets, including both the US and the EU, should make it a great business, logistics and leisure destination.”<sup>5</sup>*

### The Golden Triangle

Against this background the main aim was to leverage two tourism-specific assets. One was – with regard to stationary beach holidays – the excellent snorkelling and diving conditions along the Jordanian section of the Red Sea, the other – with regard to southern Jordan's nature and cultural tourism – its positioning as a city destination in the so-called Golden Triangle.<sup>6</sup>

The Golden Triangle includes in addition to Aqaba the world-famous Nabataean city of Petra, now a World Cultural Heritage Site, and Wadi Rum, immortalized in the literary works of



Lawrence of Arabia and one of the most impressive desert landscapes in the world. In view of the relative proximity of the two destinations to Aqaba, both the people responsible for tourism at the Jordan Tourism Board as well as the local tourism protagonists gradually recognized the enormous potential, not least in terms of capitalizing on them as tourism assets, of marketing and utilizing synergy effects resulting from a strategic networking of the individual destinations. This factor is reflected not least in the National Tourism Strategy passed in 2011 which with regard to its product development adopts for the first time a regional cluster approach which has also been successful in other destinations.<sup>7</sup>

As part of a project supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) which from an incremental perspec-

The so-called Treasure House in Petra.

 Markus Pillmayer

tive concerned itself with the internationalization of tourism structures in Jordan<sup>8</sup> and which between 2012 and 2018 led the two authors of this article to visit both Jordan and the Internationale Tourismusbörse ITB (International Tourism Fair) in Berlin on several occasions in order to interview experts, particular attention was paid to the development of tourism in the Special Economic Zone Aqaba. The main reasons for this were the following two considerations: on the one hand, in the context of Jordan's tourism strategy Aqaba, both as an urban destination in the Golden Triangle and as the country's only seaside resort, plays a central role in the future exploitation of tourism and, on the other hand, precisely the implementation of the Special Economic Zone is a paradigmatic manifestation of the increased neo-liberalism of Jordan's economic structures.<sup>9</sup> The

5 Quoted by Kardoosh 2005, p.17.

6 Cf. Pillmayer/Scherle 2012.

7 Cf. Jordan Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities 2011; Mahafzah 2015.



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8 Cf. Pillmayer 2014.

9 Cf. Scherle/Pillmayer 2016.

latter aspect above all appears particularly interesting as in terms of its economic and social structures Jordan is still seen as a classic rentier state.<sup>10</sup>

Against this background selected experts from the fields of politics, economics and tourism were requested in semi-structured interviews to give their assessments with regards to the current transformation processes in the Special Economic Zone.

### Implementation of neoliberal concepts

Let us first quote an official representative of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone authority which acts as a central strategic and operative controlling authority for the Special Economic Zone whose six-member commission is directly appointed by the government and reports to the Prime Minister: *“Aqaba and especially Jordan are following a very neoliberal policy, to*

*open markets and to attract international investors. We have 6000 years of economic zone in Aqaba due to the fact that people for 1000s of years were conducted commerce within this area. So I believe in liberalizing, opening up markets to get investors and provide at least job opportunities for the local people. That is the way to go. Is this a good way? I am not quite sure but it is a matter of fact that we have learned a lot of this from the US, which always used Jordan as some kind of base for their operations in this region.”*

In this context it is remarkable that the speaker not only refers to the noticeable and increasing neoliberalism of Jordanian economic policy over the past few years, but also deliberately raises the question of whether or not such an economic concept is the right path for the Hashemite Kingdom to take. In particular in view of the traditionally close economic ties between the USA and Jordan – the main reason for which being that Jordan, from a US American viewpoint, is one of the most important geostrategic partners in this politically very unstable region – it was possible to

implement neoliberal concepts relatively quickly here compared to in the neighbouring countries (in particular Syria and Iraq). Another point is that the Jordanian royal family maintains close personal ties on a private level with the USA; a fact that very probably helped to spread neoliberal ideas. The statement by an eminent tourism expert who teaches in one of the world’s leading tourism and hospitality academies, which also maintains a training facility in Jordan, should be seen in this light:

*“As long as King Abdullah rules with his government, which is very conservative, not very much is going to change. The King can dissolve the cabinet at any time and has done so three or four times recently – and he usually does it to bring in even more people with neoliberal ideas. It is clear that this doesn’t please everybody. Moreover, such ideas are always associated with the Western way of doing business which most people are either suspicious of or even completely reject. According to the motto: Everything that comes from the West is bad! Sometimes that is even true!”*

<sup>10</sup> A type of economic system widespread in the Orient and based primarily on exploiting agricultural and industrial producers and skimming off shares of the revenue (= rents); moreover, only a few investments, or none at all, on the part of the owners are allowed.

Nomad accommodation for tourists in Wadi Rum.

© Markus Pillmayer





This quote not only illustrates the exceptional power traditionally wielded by the Jordanian royal family and which is still far removed from the ideals of a constitutional monarchy in the West, it also again makes very clear how proactively the King and the government, which is very dependent on him, are trying to break down the economic structures characteristic of a rentier state. In this context the Young Entrepreneurs Association should be explicitly mentioned which, within the scope of the interviews conducted, was frequently seen as a neoliberal entrepreneurial spearhead for liberalized market conditions which primarily follow the laws of globalization and competition.<sup>11</sup> At this point it should likewise be noted that in the past few years resistance to a forced neo-liberalization of the Jordanian economic structures was primarily concentrated in two groups: on the one hand the traditional elites who of course benefited the most from rent-capitalist economic structures, on the other hand Islamic groups who even in Jordan are being listened to more and more, especially by the losers in an increasingly globalized world. The latter in particular fear an increasing “sell-out” of Jordanian interests in favour of foreign investors, above all investors from the Gulf States. Those however who think that such criticism comes

only from people who do not profit from the transformation processes outlined above will have to think again. A consultant who works for the Jordan Investment Board says for example:

*“There is too much foreign money, too much investment in the market. For me, personally, the market is overheated. Imagine the huge construction sites we have here in Jordan. Abdali in Amman, the Lagoon at the Dead Sea, Ayla, Saraya and Marza Zayed down in Aqaba. Due to the uncertain economic situation in the country, all projects are on hold or have had to slow down. Partners changed, disappeared from one day to another, there are bills still to pay and we are still in an economic and financial crises. This more and more without any kind of judgement must come to an end. Otherwise everything will blow up. And then?”*

Precisely a statement like this, and coming from someone close to business, is grist to the mill of the critics of unfettered neoliberalism which, from their rather sweeping perspective, serves solely the entrepreneurial interests of a globalized capital market.<sup>12</sup>

#### Aqaba: a second Dubai?

As became clear again and again in the interviews conducted, many an investor did indeed think the same as

Sign at Saraya Aqaba building site (Saudi Oger – a Saudi Arabian company mainly involved in the construction and real estate sectors – meanwhile insolvent).

© Markus Pillmayer

several politicians on both the local and the national level. They thought Aqaba could develop into a second Dubai, which as a result of accelerated promotion for the logistics, transport and tourism industries initiated a very successful differentiation of its economic structures over a number of years. The numerous construction sites which bear witness to these expectations and which are shown for example on the photos on pages 27 and 28 are, at least for the moment, facing a very uncertain future. The continuing political instability in the region, once again considerably increased by the civil war in Syria, and the associated effects on changing international tourism customer markets has in turn consequences locally. The expert quoted below, who represents an international development organization, is likewise critical in his assessment of the latest economic developments in the Hashemite Kingdom:

*“I do not think it is a good idea to open Jordan to every kind of market, to create these kind of special economic zones we have in Jordan now. We need investments and exchange because we have no real goods to trade. But not every kind of concessions! Sometimes I have the feeling that too many people only want making fast money and have Dollar signs in their eyes. But what is the price we have to pay? I fear that one day we will wake up and*

11 Cf. Sukariah/Tannock 2014.

12 Cf. Bogaert 2013.



Sign at Aqaba Ayla building site.

© Markus Pillmayer

*recognize that it was a bad idea to let everything loose, without any kind of control. We need control about what is going on in our market because we have an increase in prices, in taxes etc. Life is becoming that expensive, who can still afford it? We are not in Europe; we are in the Middle East!"*

Even though the expert quoted in conversation welcomes the bulk of the economic reforms introduced under King Abdullah II – especially in respect of the increased internationalisation of the Jordanian tourism structures – it is on the whole clear that he wishes the Jordanian government to accelerate its efforts to regulate and thus better restrain uncontrolled market mechanisms. Such demands are not unusual any more in Western countries either, if we think for example of the now increased control of the banks and the associated bank supervision. The reality is that at the present moment the vision of a Jordanian Dubai on the Red Sea envisaged by many a political protagonist and strategic investor has, in view of the recent political developments (Arab Spring and the resultant civil war in

Syria), largely gone up in smoke or has at least for the moment become very remote. A fact which however is not regretted by all, especially not by the local small and medium-sized enterprises, as the following quote from a medium-sized entrepreneur during the expert interviews shows:

*"The mainstay of Jordanian tourism is above all its small-sized structures which are almost exclusively characterized by dedicated family-run businesses. Anonymous investors who are only out to make quick profits are not part of our culture. To be quite honest, don't the failed construction projects in Aqaba tell a very clear story?"* ■

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# A playground of power struggle in politics

## The current situation of tourism policy in Turkey

Pelin Ozyurt, Markus Pillmayer

**“Turkey warns tourists: criticise Erdogan and we will arrest you!”** titled the renowned British daily newspaper *The Times* in March 2019.<sup>1</sup> The threat appeared to be aimed primarily at visitors from Germany, where the foreign office has advised its citizens to avoid criticising President Erdogan’s government on social media if tourists plan to visit Turkey. What has happened to one of the favourite destinations of German tourists, which is – according to the DRV Deutscher ReiseVerband e.V.<sup>2</sup> – ranked second after Greece in the forecast for German holiday destinations in 2019?

### Promises, expectations and the reality: the latest tourism agenda in Turkey

From a historical perspective, development of the tourism industry in Turkey could be interpreted as a playground of the power struggle in politics, which is painted only in black and white.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the pluralistic nature of destination planning identified in Turkish development plans, in practice this has been a monopolistic domain in which tourism policies have been mainly shaped by the government’s refusal to cooperate with any other stakeholders or lobby groups.<sup>4</sup> Turkey has been ruled by the AKP government since 2003, following democratic elections. The country is still run by the same government in which the reliability and the fairness of policies in general are wide open to discussion. On the basis of official announcements from governmental institutions,<sup>5</sup> the priorities and goals of tourism have been specified as widening the variety of alternatives (health and medical tourism, MICE,



Tourists on a beach in Fethiye on the Turkish Riviera in the southwest of the country.

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sustainable tourism etc), which could potentially increase the number of tourists, while other parties clearly pledged to offer cultural festivals, fairs, financial aid or scholarships to students of tourism, and cooperation with the municipal authorities, agencies and civil organisations. At this point, it becomes quite clear that the government has actually only been more interested in financial returns through higher occupancy rates than offering travellers a variety of diversified alternatives, which are also successful in the long term.<sup>6</sup>

### Disappointment among the electorate: what went wrong?

Although the government claims it has been hugely successful, mainly due to the last elections in 2018 and the polls in 2015, it is widely accepted that there are two sides to this story. Contrary to the claims of the government, forgotten promises, heavy-

handed policies, arbitrary detentions and obstacles to free speech have become regular everyday reality in Turkey. After losing its hope of joining the EU, Turkey has abandoned its idea of being part of the European identity and is increasingly considering focusing on the Middle East for the coming years.<sup>7</sup> This highlights the obvious dilemma or ‘chicken-or-egg’ issue. On the one hand, it is uncertain whether Turkey could make a successful entry into the authoritarian domain of politically unstable markets of the Middle East. On the other hand, a renewed rapprochement with Europe would entail (too?) many responsibilities.

Moreover, the Department of Cultural Assets and Protected Areas has been transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation instead of the Ministry of Tourism. Certain government-related institutions have been granted permission to construct shopping malls and hotels on

1 The Times 2019.

2 DRV Deutsche ReiseVerband e.V. 2019.

3 Balkan/Balkan/Öncü 2015, p. 31.

4 Yuksel/Bramwell/Yuksel 1999.

5 Girard/Polo/Scalbert-Yücel 2018.

6 Aymankuy/Demirbulat/Aymankuy 2016.

7 The Globalist 2017.

protected archaeological sites. In the meantime, the Ministry of the Environment and Urbanisation has not really been cooperating with any other political bodies.<sup>8</sup> Needless to say, the representatives of the ministry are being appointed by president Erdogan and they are entitled to manage the rules and policies in line with the government agenda.

### Whose parks and whose rights?

The name of the ruling AKP may stand for justice and development, but it is worth questioning the extent to which the policies have been fair and square thus far, or have even achieved development objectives, especially in terms of tourism. The party made a move towards pledging for economic advancement and 'justice for all'. However, considering violations of the rule of law and civil liberties, its pledges seem to have remained unfulfilled, and public funding has favoured the business elite and companies, working through highly politicised state institutions, virtually marginalising both the opposition and dissidents in society.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, democratic rights granted equally to all have turned into rights granted to the 'chosen'. As a result, parks, which are public plac-

8 Duru 2015.

9 Esen/Gumuscu 2017.



es, have become a symbol of the historical fight for democracy between the 'chosen' and the 'others'. The mass protests surrounding Gezi Park were actually triggered by heavy-handed policies that marginalised a dissident segment of society.<sup>10</sup>


### This is not about trees – this is about democracy

Although Turkey is still one of the 'World's Top Tourism Destinations',<sup>11</sup> the AKP government has shaped poli-


10 Erensü/Karaman 2017.

11 UNWTO 2018, p. 8.

Protesters being dispersed with water cannons in Taksim square in central Istanbul.

 Murad Sezer/REUTERS/stock.adobe.com

Gezi Park being cleared by the police.

 Murad Sezer/REUTERS/stock.adobe.com

cies aiming at safeguarding excessive power and authority over the people, rendering tourism a mere tiny detail of economic development. For example, the authority under the Ministry of the Environment and Urbanisation approves and supports the construction of industrial zones and buildings in sensitive and protected areas, which does more to support neoliberal settlement policies than preserve and protect Turkish cultural heritage.

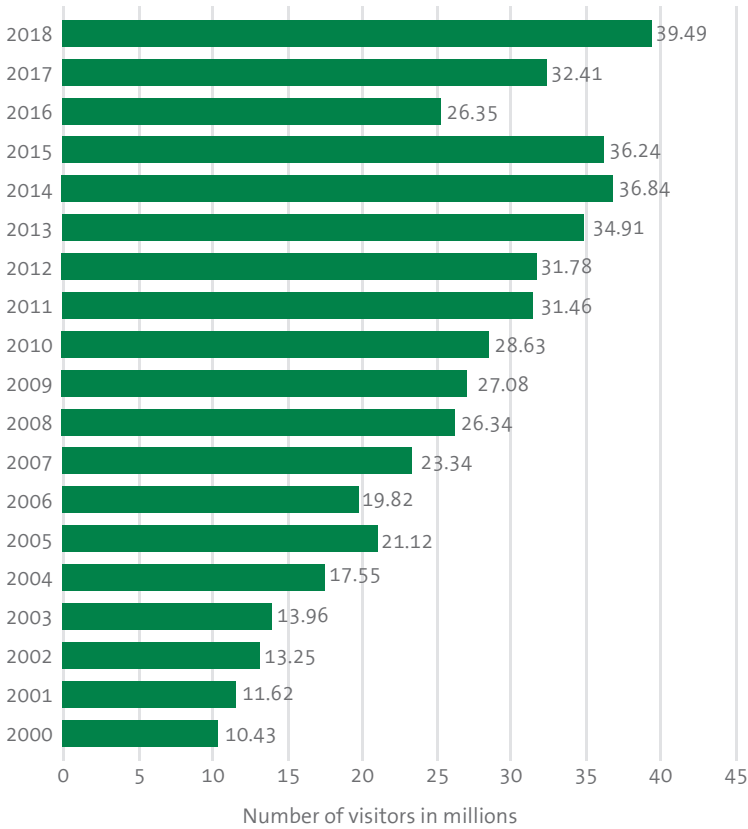
In 2013, Turkey witnessed nationwide demonstrations after the government announced a plan to virtually destroy Istanbul's Gezi Park in order to build Ottoman-style military barracks, a mosque and a shopping mall on this site.<sup>12</sup> Gezi Park is one of the few remaining inner-city green spaces in Istanbul and is regarded as a showcase project of the French architect and urban planner Henri Prost, with French-style boulevard trees, flower beds and benches. It is situated in Taksim at the very heart of Istanbul, an area famous for its many local and international hotels. The demolition sparked an outcry in the country among people who merely want green areas where they can enjoy nature and find a place for recreation in an urban setting. The park was a public area that could not only be enjoyed by locals but also held appeal

12 Raj/Griffin 2017, p. 19.



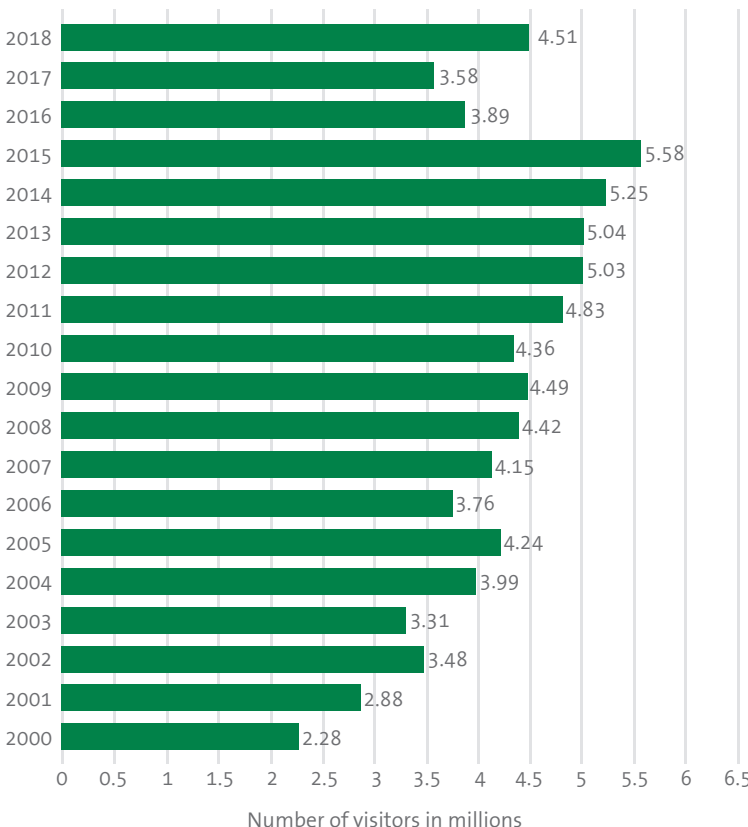
Figure 1 and 2: number of visitors arriving in Turkey, 2000 to 2018

1. All foreign visitors



Ministry of culture and tourism (Turkey) 2019, Statista

2. German visitors



to tourists as a place to relax. The protests started as a silent sit-in by a handful of activists surrounded by tents. In late May 2013, the police entered the park and tried to disperse the demonstrators by burning their tents. The government's insistence that it wanted to build on the area was followed by the heavy-handed intervention and excessive use of force by the police, which was openly called for and ordered by the government.

What started quite peacefully as a move to protect one of the last remaining green areas in Istanbul evolved into a struggle for democracy. The protests which then took place nationwide lasted for days, sending a clear message to the government to be heard and recognised. The government promptly called the protesters a "bunch of looters and terrorists" and arrested some 4,900 people, leaving many seriously injured.<sup>13</sup> From that point onwards, the protest was no longer about trees. It was about democracy. Many countries, including Germany, issued a travel warning for Turkey, shocked by the harsh actions of the police and the associated crackdown on protests. The threat by Süleyman Soylu, Turkish Minister of the Interior, to arrest tourists at airports if they showed solidarity with the Gezi Park protests and to brand them terrorists or traitors, only worsened the situation.<sup>14</sup>

But tourism only really collapsed three years later (see Figure 1), when a series of events scared off the tourists. In January 2016, an Islamist suicide bomber blew himself up next to the Hagia Sophia. Eleven Germans and one Peruvian died. Later the same year, there was an assassination attempt at Istanbul's Atatürk Airport and a failed political coup against Erdogan. In 2017, the disturbing news continued with an attack on Istanbul's hippest nightclub, Reina, and the arrest of the German journalists Meale Tolu and Deniz Yücel and the human rights activist Peter Steudtner.<sup>15</sup>

Since then, there have been no further assassinations and the three well-known Germans have also been

13 Amnesty International 2013; The Telegraph 2013.  
14 Duran/Özdemir 2015; Winter 2019.  
15 Die Zeit 2018.





released. This already seems to have reassured tourists (see Figure 2). If people only want to lie on the beach in Antalya or visit Istanbul, they will hardly notice that there are still restrictions in place. The airport passport controls take as long as they always have, only the queues at the ticket counter in front of Hagia Sophia are much shorter than before.<sup>13</sup> So it remains to be seen if the decision taken by the tourism politicians to focus more on the Middle East, and not just the European markets, will prove to be correct in the medium to long term.<sup>16</sup>

### Reading between the lines and minding the gap

Today, in 2019, the AKP government still seems to be misjudging the importance of tourism. Moreover, for many politicians tourism has become synonymous with developing infrastructure. It is as if tourism has never been thought of as an instrument for opening up to the world, welcoming diversity, making travellers feel safe and at home, enabling them to enjoy nature and history while interacting with locals – all things with the potential to foster cultural exchange. In May 2019, Binali Yildirim of the AKP,

who was also the party candidate running for the Metropolitan Municipality of Istanbul, described his approach for developing tourism in Istanbul: he simply promised voters that he would welcome more tourists and outdoor places like Paris. According to Yildirim's twitter account, Istanbul had everything to be admired for – bridges, tunnels, roads and the recently opened airport, which after all claimed to be the biggest in the world.<sup>17</sup> At this point, it is worth asking whether tourists from Europe and the USA would really be eager to travel to Istanbul just to see infrastructure projects. By only talking about things in theory but not actually doing what it says in practice, Turkey fails to understand what is really lacking in terms of destination planning and action, with not enough place for other stakeholders within a decentralised political system.

### Not in 2003, nor in 2013 – but there's still hope for 2023

Statistically speaking, and considering its track record, the government does not seem to have been successful with its tourism policies. The way it has defined tourism and the extent

A mass demonstration in Istanbul on the 3rd anniversary of the Gezi Park protests.

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to which its importance has been recognised have resulted in the industry being trapped in a cage that only lets in a handful of people – assuming they are part of the nepotistic system.<sup>18</sup> In other words, it has become a political playground. The AKP government now has an agenda for 2023: Turkey is planning to double the number of foreign visitors and attract 70 million tourists by 2023, generating revenues worth USD 70 billion.<sup>19</sup> Technically speaking, the plan does nothing to introduce anything new, setting store by even more mass tourism, and does not seem innovative in comparison to international competitors.

These figures indicate poor strategic planning processes, a lack of destination management, little interest in specific tourism policies, shortcomings in identifying the market segment, partisan policies, only thinking in economic terms and continual political instability.<sup>20</sup> Destination development should be based on deficiencies in a region (e.g. infrastructure,

<sup>18</sup> Nepotism is the excessive procurement of advantages by and for family members, relatives or close friends. Examples include unusually favourable contractual conditions, the omission of necessary company audits or the unlawful granting of a management position in an organisation.

<sup>19</sup> Hürriyet Daily News 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Polat/Aydinli 2017.

<sup>16</sup> NTV 2017.


<sup>17</sup> Yildirim 2019 (translated from Turkish).

transportation, health services, hotel and restaurant facilities, and activities) and the demands and expectations of local communities combined with target group-specific market research under the supervision of stakeholder-oriented destination management.<sup>21</sup> What for a tourist is a holiday destination, is first and foremost home to a local. Thus, turning a destination into a fairy-tale product – in which the locals might not feel comfortable – will not only crush confidence among locals regarding policies, but also potentially create friction between tourists and the locals. In addition, one should bear in mind that tourism is a political issue. So when domestic and foreign policies are aggressive, when there is political instability at the destination, and a government is too strict and there is no sense of security, this provides tourists with a number of reasons to avoid a destination. It is difficult to predict which consequences this will have for tourism policy in the future.

One way to reduce the amount of time it takes to polish your image again is to have alternative plans and use professional marketing. Last but not least, even if the tourism industry is inseparably linked to economic development, it should be remembered that political volatility, social disorder, a lack of opportunities and poor services will encourage tourists to say “no thanks” and go for other options – which can turn economic gains into an economic loss.

Similar to destination development plans carried out to date, the tourism strategy in general revolves around the expansion of branding, marketing, promotion, sustainability and international collaboration, without any specific focus. Currently, however, one could question how much more Turkish government(s) could actually do beyond what has already been done – and what has failed<sup>22</sup> – and to what extent tourism has been recognised as an independent, dynamic entity which should be removed from the chaotic environment of future politics. ■

Istanbul's new airport with its landmark air traffic control tower.

 Serpil/stock.adobe.com



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<sup>21</sup> Cankurtaran/Çetin 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Arslan 2014.

# Alexa – Where is the journey taking us?

## Voice app pilot project for the Digital Transformation Lab

Ralph Berchtenbreiter

**Prof. Dr. Gudrun Socher from the Department of Computer Science and Mathematics and Prof. Dr. Ralph Berchtenbreiter from the Department of Tourism at Munich University of Applied Sciences have developed an interdisciplinary and interdepartmental project-based teaching format to promote the teaching of “Future Skills”. This article will give a brief presentation.**

### Future Skills in a digital world

That digitization causes profound changes in the world of work is a well-known fact. That for the implementation of digital projects primarily software engineers are needed is also clear. But software is not an end in itself. Software is always associated with a requirement which has to be solved or improved by software. Accordingly, in all those areas where these requirements arise (or could

arise) digital competencies must exist in order to seize the opportunities offered by change.

The Stifterverband der deutschen Wirtschaft (Association for the Promotion of Science and Humanities in Germany) has issued a position paper on which competencies are lacking in Germany for advancing the digitization process here.<sup>1</sup> These competencies are called “Future Skills” and describe skills which are expected to become more important in the world of work and in society across all branches in the next five years.<sup>2</sup> They can be divided into three categories:<sup>3</sup>

- **Technological skills or tech specialists:** competencies needed for designing and implementing the technologies. Examples: developers, UX specialists, data scientists etc.
- **Key digital qualifications or basic skills:** competencies which in the fu-

1 Cf. Kirchherr et al. 2018.  
2 Cf. Meyer-Guckel et al. 2019, p.14.  
3 Cf. Kirchherr et al. 2018, p.5.



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ture everyone will need in order to find their way in a digitized world and participate in their job and in society. Examples: digital learning, digital literacy, collaborative working.

- **Key non-digital qualifications or classical skills:** competencies which in the future everyone will need in order to be able to adapt to a dynamic and rapidly changing environment. Examples: adaptability, creativity and stamina.

This presents a challenge for universities of applied sciences too. What changes in teaching are required in order to meet these requirements? Realizing that digitization is always associated with a specialist domain allows the conclusion that departments must work together in an interdisciplinary way in teaching and research. Each department contributes its specific know-how in order to work out innovative solutions.

“Die Höhle des Löwen” (The Dragons’ Den): Students of the project from the Departments of Computer Science and Mathematics and Tourism after the presentation before the jury.

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### Task and Goal

A total of 128 students in the “Software Engineering” course delivered by Gudrun Socher and the “Digital Marketing & Management” competence field by Ralph Berchtenbreiter were given the task of developing voice-supported virtual assistants (voice apps) on the basis of Amazon technology in the form of Alexa skills.

Among the basic digital skills which everyone should be able to apply in their working life in the future is the digital generating of knowledge or digital learning.<sup>4</sup> Following Wing (2006), algorithmic thinking is considered an elementary prerequisite for digital learning. Algorithmic thinking can be seen as the interaction of decomposition and abstraction of tasks.<sup>5</sup> It was precisely this skill which among other things the project approach selected was intended to promote. An accompanying study evaluated whether or not this was successful. The hypothesis was that the students’ static and dynamic ability of abstraction improved from the beginning to the end of the project.<sup>6</sup>

The students were set two targets. First of all they had to find a use case in which a voice app from the user point of view actually does offer an advantage over a non-voice based solution. Secondly, the idea had to be implemented and executable on Alexa Echos as a minimum viable product (MVP) at the end of the course. Thus the idea had to be made “marketable” within a short space of time and with the resources available. Finally, the ideas had to be presented to a jury in the form of a sales pitch, as for example in the TV show “Die Höhle des Löwen” (The Dragons’ Den). The jury was made up of experts, namely Lars Schmitz (Digital Innovation Lead at Amazon Web Services), Dr. Sven Winterhalder (Head Strategic Advancement Office) and Dr. Florian Allwein (Head of Digital Transformation Lab at the Munich University of Applied Sciences).

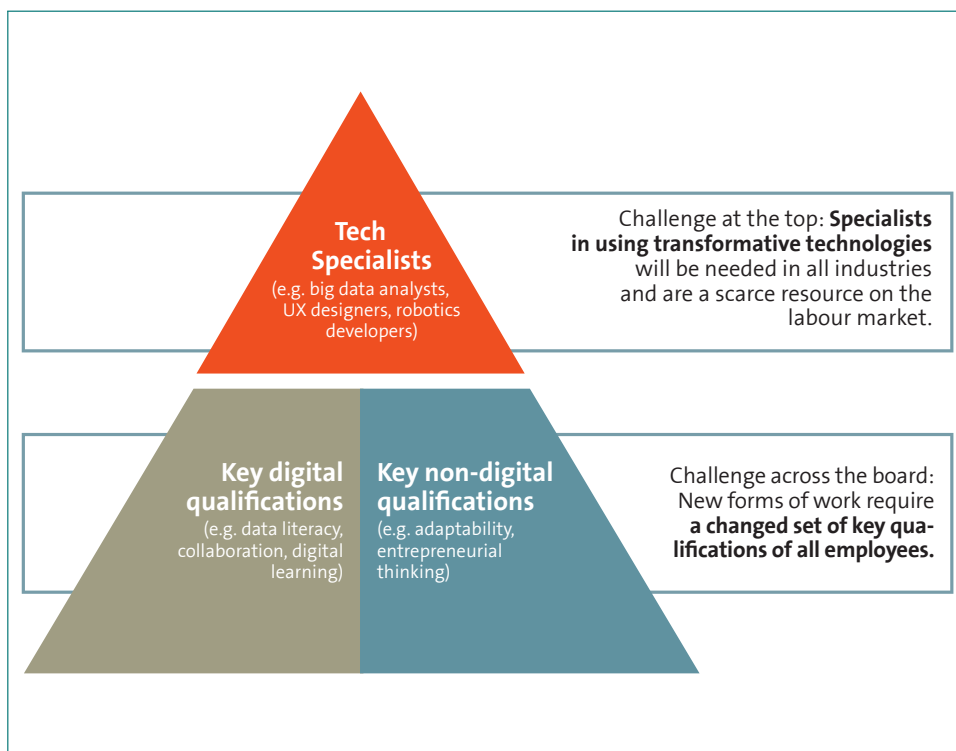


Figure 1:  
The Future Skills.  
Kirchherr et al. 2018, p. 4

### Why a voice app?

Speech is the natural medium of communication for humans. In man-machine communication however, technology was not able to meaningfully replicate this until some time ago. Movement and gesture control using modern digital devices could already be seen as progress in the sense of “natural” interaction with devices. Advances in speech recognition through artificial intelligence methods now make it possible to take another step closer to the target of intuitive interaction and allow speech control in the form of Voice User Interfaces (VUIs) to become an important user interface.

Of course the technology could still be improved. Those however who discuss these (momentary) shortcomings do not realize that, technologically, the gateway to new, extended man-machine communication has been opened.

But just as we humans do not communicate or process information through speech alone, no more will speech control be the ideal interface in each application. For the technology to be accepted, it is necessary to think in a user-centred way: When does speech control in an application make sense at all? How should a com-

munication process between user and voice app be designed and programmed so that the user will not be disappointed and abort a basically meaningful application? The following specific features of speech in particular provide a framework for both questions:

- **Speech is sequential:** Our ears can only register information sequentially. With a VUI in comparison with visual information on a Graphical User Interface (GUI), units of information to be communicated can only be communicated consecutively and not simultaneously. Moreover, as opposed to our eyes, our ears cannot “scan” or “skim” information.
- **Speech is fleeting:** As opposed to visual information, spoken information cannot simply be repeatedly registered by the user, but has to be explicitly repeated.
- **Speech is invisible:** No graphic aids of any kind can be used to make clear to the user what actions or formulations have to be used in order to advance a process. Moreover, content can only be described on a speech level which is often insufficient, especially in the case of emotional content. A picture simply often says more than 1,000 words.

4 Cf. Kirchherr et al. 2018, p.5.  
5 Cf. Wing 2006, p.33.  
6 Cf. Socher et al. 2019a, p.61.

Applications where speech alone is an advantage are therefore limited. Processing a complex touristic booking process for example purely through speech control is absurd. For large data volumes (images, videos etc.) and complex user interface processes, graphical user interfaces offer advantages over speech-based user interfaces due to the specific features of speech mentioned above. In the future, therefore a combination of different user interfaces, so-called Multimodal User Interfaces (MMUIs), will be used.

### Implementation

Mixed teams consisting of four to six students from the two departments were formed to implement the task. The tourism students assumed the role of project owner and user experience designer and in the process made use of the department's Digi-Lab. They were responsible for the user-centred requirements definition of the selected application and for the design of the voice app communication processes. The computer science students took on the role of software engineer and used their programming expertise to implement the skills and gave technical feedback on the concepts (compare also Figure 2).

Amazon Web Services (AWS) supported the project through Amazon Echos and cloud-based AWS technologies. The project was a pilot project for cooperation between AWS and the Munich University of Applied Sciences as part of the Digital Transformation Lab<sup>7</sup>.

Altogether, the project was intended to support several levels of the needed "Future Skills": the UX design of the voice user interfaces promoted the technological skills. Basic digital skills were trained in various ways: digital literacy through the use of specific application software with which the students had to familiarize themselves independently (Github for project management, VoiceFlow for design of the VUIs as well as the Alexa developer console and AWS Cloud Services for implementing the skills). The forming of

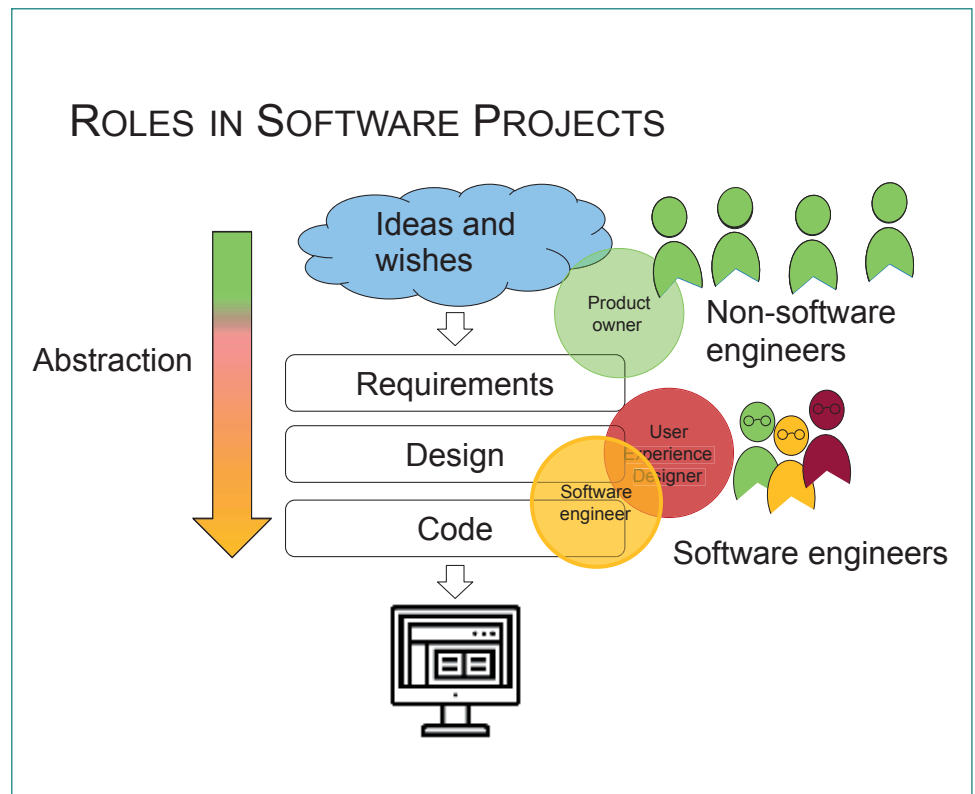


Figure 2: Roles in software projects  
 © Socher et al. 2019b, p. 5

interdisciplinary teams consisting of students from different departments improved collaboration competencies and the SCRUM-based project management agile work. And classical skills were also comprehensively practised: the need to find a meaningful use case meant that creative thinking and adaptability were required.

Because of the high degree of innovation, there were no ready blueprints for any of the use cases. The students therefore had to develop a high level of problem-solving skills and in particular familiarize themselves with the modelling techniques of a VUI. The students were deliberately given little guidance and were confronted with the tough job of presenting at all costs an executable Alexa skill in the final presentation. Own initiative and staying power were thus needed for the project to be successful.

### The results

Eleven new Alexa skills from different areas convinced the jury. They included a cooking assistant for the gastronomy management sector, a destination quiz as an entertaining way to get to know a destination and

a local public transport assistant which included a link to the live data of a local public transport service provider.

To quote Lars Schmidt after the results were presented: "I am very impressed by the work the students creatively and professionally presented at the joint closing event – see "Dragon's Den". It is remarkable what they achieved with the Alexa SDK in a relatively short space of time. I have witnessed fantastic and diverse ideas, every single live demo worked and, like in "Dragon's Den", the results were presented very structured and clearly. The project has shown how easily this important issue of voice control can be implemented and how diverse its applications are. We at AWS firmly believe in voice control assistants and are pleased that the Munich University of Applied Sciences has focused on this important issue so soon. I was particularly pleased that the two departments, Tourism and Computer Science, collaborated to give the students the opportunity to work together in a cross-department way, as this is exactly what they can expect later in their everyday job. I would like to say a special thankyou to Pro-

<sup>7</sup> More detailed information on the Digital Transformation Lab at [www.hm.edu/allgemein/kooperationen\\_transfer/dtllab/index.de.html](http://www.hm.edu/allgemein/kooperationen_transfer/dtllab/index.de.html).

essor Socher and Professor Berchtenbreiter who made this project possible in the first place and am already looking forward to its continuation.”

The research results presented at the 16th “Software Engineering Courses at the Universities of Applied Sciences” (SEUH 2019) workshop in February 2019 at the Bremerhaven University of Applied Sciences<sup>8</sup> also show that the project-based, interdisciplinary and interdepartmental approach chosen is the correct way to go. It was possible to empirically prove that the tourism students’ static ability to abstract improved significantly.<sup>9</sup> A non-significant improvement could be observed for the dynamic abstraction capability. The project set-up can therefore be optimised even more.

8 Further information on the workshop can be downloaded at: <https://informatik.hs-bremerhaven.de/seuh2019/>.

9 Cf. Socher et al. 2019a, p.62ff.

The Department of Tourism is excellently positioned as regards research and teaching in the field of digitization. Interdisciplinary projects such as this one in collaboration with the Department of Computer Science and Mathematics, the early setting up and continuous development of an own DigiLab<sup>10</sup> for application-oriented research and teaching, special fields of competence (Digital Marketing & Management, Data Analytics & Business Intelligence in Tourism), the study focus on Digital Marketing & Management and the dual Work & Study Programme are concepts which enable us to offer future-proof teaching and be a competent contact for industry on digital issues. ■

10 On the necessity for new learning environments and agile innovation rooms, see also Meyer-Guckel et al. 2019.

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# Genuine hospitality in Munich

## Creating networks and personal exchanges



Lewis Kaplan

The collaboration between Durban University of Technology (DUT) and Munich University of Applied Sciences (MUAS) was initiated by the MUAS department of tourism in spring 2014. The exchanges of students and faculty have enjoyed great popularity since then and collaboration has been extended to additional departments. Since 2016, the partnership between DUT and MUAS has been supported through a grant from the Erasmus+ Program with partner countries. Therewith, many additional mobilities at student, staff and faculty level could be realized.

Lewis Kaplan, Senior Lecturer at DUT, is one of the faculty members who has taken part in a teaching exchange. In the following interview with the Passport team he shares his experiences and thoughts.

### Why did you come to MUAS on the exchange and what did you teach?

Ms Veronika Wäninger of the MUAS central International Office had visited the Durban University of Technology and presented many interesting insights about the university and its various departments including possible joint ventures between our two universities. The idea of lecturing and visiting Munich has excited me. As I am also very interested in history and global views a visit to Munich sounded appealing. In addition to the variety of programmes offered, the idea of meeting other (visiting) lecturers was the big attractor and subsequently on visiting my expectations were fulfilled. The exchange provided me with the opportunity to have lengthy discussions with academic and administrative staff and to gauge the level of some of the programmes.

I taught an element of Strategy and Agile Project Management to a number of students from different programmes in the Department of Tourism. The interactions and after class discussions indicated that the



Lewis Kaplan during one of his lectures.

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students were able to relate the theoretical aspects of the lectures to their studies. There was a very strong sense of accomplishment from the MUAS staff, students and myself.

### What were your major impressions?

**Of the city:** Landing at Munich airport, I discovered it to have the branding 'Living ideas – Connecting lives'. The branding as it turns out began defining how the rest of my trip progressed. My immediate impressions from landing at Munich airport and then travelling into the city was the level of neatness and helpfulness by the people. The city of Munich was easy to navigate around with many forms of transport available. People were always very friendly and polite in any and all my interactions. Google translate was very rarely used! During my short stay, besides lecturing and having meetings with the staff, I managed to visit a few icons of Munich – Marienplatz and the old town for example. The BMW tour was also a fantastic opportunity to view firsthand German engineering. I will always remember the level of pride and professionalism the people have in whatever they were undertaking.

**Of the department:** The academic and administrative staff made my stay an awesome experience. The

warmth and inclusiveness towards me by everyone I met was genuine hospitality. I met many of the professors and staff of the Department of Tourism and all made me feel as if I was part of the team. There was a deliberate sharing of excellent ideas during the meetings for projects and engagements. The working environment of the department such as the offices and lecture venues was impressive, especially the layouts, furnishing and technologies. I am looking forward to our future academic debates and other projects.

**Of the students:** Firstly, this was one of the main reasons I applied to lecture at MUAS and what interested me was the opportunity to engage with international students. On arrival I was made to feel very welcome by the various groups of students. During the lectures, the students really impressed me with their interest and questions about the subject matter. Overall the students had an impressive view of the world and the global environment into which they were preparing for.

### Did you notice any differences concerning tourism studies in South Africa and Germany?

Generally, the tourism and hospitality studies in South Africa and especially at DUT have a major emphasis in the

knowledge areas of tourism and hospitality. Whereas in Germany the emphasis is within the management subjects.

#### What are the challenges of the tourism industry in South Africa today?

The major challenge facing tourism in South Africa, in my opinion, is the extent of competition from various countries. Air travel is becoming more affordable and the general rise of wealth from within the G20 countries means that more people can visit more exotic and distant places. Even saying that there is increased competition, the tourism industry has been growing in South Africa by about 4.2% in the past year. This industry accounts for about 10% of the jobs here.

Thus there is pressure on the tourism industry in South Africa to offer more, such as experiences to visitors. In previous decades, waves of tourist would generally visit a place to look, take photos and then leave. Those days are phasing out fast. The tourism industry is beginning to address the need to expand offerings of experiences to both local and international visitors.

#### When you think of tourism and politics in South Africa what comes to your mind?

As I said previously, tourism is expanding in South Africa. I think visi-

tors factor in the risks associated with international travel and make informed decisions before booking. The politicians seem to be working hard to improve the tourism environment which in turn then facilitates more visitors. We have a stunning country with many varied experiences and opportunities for travel. South Africa has such a diverse landscape and markets itself as “a world in one country”.

#### What are your favorite sights and destinations in Germany?

Germany has so much to offer that in a month I would find it difficult to visit and enjoy all of Bavaria, let alone Germany with all the cultural, shopping and outdoor activities. And then there are the winter activities, which I would also look forward to at some time. I also really enjoyed a day visit to the Bodensee with friends.

#### ... And in South Africa?

Here in South Africa there are many and varied experiences for both the ‘arm-chair’ and the energetic tourist. My favourite sights and destinations are the Drakensberg, game parks, Blyde River Canon, the Garden Route, Cape Town and the various running and hiking trails across Kwazulu-Natal and the Western Cape. But there are still many places in South Africa I have




Lewis Kaplan with his German colleague Ralph Berchtenbreiter

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yet to visit and look forward to in the near future.

#### Would you recommend such an exchange to fellow lecturers and students alike?

In one word – DEFINITELY. To elaborate, we cannot live and work in isolation in the current global system of products and services. That is why it is up to each individual to develop and work in association with colleagues and students from other universities. I feel creating networks and personal exchanges is essential to individual and group development.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be a visitor both in Germany and at your wonderful university. 

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# University of Bologna

## Rimini Campus

Susanne Zaghini, International Relations Rimini Campus

### University history

The Rimini Campus takes its humble beginnings back to 1972 when first courses started to take place. In the 1980s, the first degree programmes in Economics and Statistics were offered on the campus. After adding further courses in Industrial Chemistry, Fashion, Pharmacy, Sport, Medicine and Educational Sciences a proper university was on a steady path of what university represents today.

To catch up with this exponential growth, there has been a steady rise of services and scientific-teaching areas supporting students (the centralized library, the student association, ICT laboratories, a Wi-Fi network, a language center, study rooms, services for international projects, a welcome and help desk for foreign students, the psychological support service), as well as laboratories for scientific and technological research on behalf of the teaching staff (laboratories for Chemistry, Pharmaceutical Chemistry and Biomedicine).

The Rimini Campus is also actively supported by local institutions providing concrete help to integrate and boost the university in a spirit of

awareness that working together towards common goals is a winning strategy for economic and social development.

Over the years the university has seen a considerable amount of young people from all over the world (from the USA to Japan, from Syria to Mexico). This shows that the quality of education is competitive not just within the Italian or European region, but internationally as well.

### Tourism programmes at Rimini Campus

The bachelor programmes (1st cycle degrees) in Tourism Economics (Economia del Turismo, CLET) and International Tourism and Leisure Industries (ITALI) are taught in two separate curricula in Italian and English. The programme provides students with the cultural and technical profile required to join private and public enterprises in the tourism industry as a professional manager. In order to achieve this aim, CLET/ITALI degree programmes offer excellent preparation in tourism planning and management and develop professional profiles which have a thorough knowledge of the complex interactions and interdependencies between creative and leisure industries, business strategies, governmental policies and tourism.



The master programme (2nd cycle degree) in Tourism Economics and Management aims to provide graduates with the competences required to fill highly qualified professional roles of responsibility in tourist destinations and tourism companies, tour operators, travel agencies, hospitality, tourist attractions and event management, nationally and internationally. Given the transversal nature of tourism, the graduates' skills will cover both the understanding of economic phenomena in the interaction between company and tourist destination, as well as accounting and strategic business management. Particular attention will focus on the concept of system governing the economic organisation and supply chain of tourism destinations, the organisation of events for cultural tourism, also with a view to sustainable tourism.

The mentioned programmes have received the quality assurance certificate TEDQUAL, granted by UNWTO and Themis Foundation.

### Research and international projects

The Centre of Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST) is also based at the Rimini Campus and is the only institutional entity of its kind in Italy. Its goal is to coordinate and strengthen research, dissemination and lifelong learning in the field of tourism. CAST offers joint initiatives connecting economic, business, statistical, socio-political, historic, geographic, juridical and institutional aspects of the tourism sector. Furthermore, it is also involved as partner in many European projects and collaborates with public institutions and local authorities in order to provide them with scientific support and consulting ("third mission" activities).



A group of international students during the so-called Welcome Day.

University of Bologna, Rimini Campus

Further information is available here:  
[www.unibo.it/en/campus-rimini](http://www.unibo.it/en/campus-rimini)  
[www.turismo.unibo.it](http://www.turismo.unibo.it)



# Professional higher education in tourism management

## Orientation guide

Marion Rauscher

“I would like to study Tourism Management” is the clear wish of many students – “But where?” This second question is often not so easy to answer as there is such a wide choice. The following article explains what in our opinion students should consider before choosing a university of applied sciences.

### 1. Background

The tourism sector is one of the most important and fastest growing industries worldwide. A higher education course of study in Tourism Management qualifies students to become a part of it. In addition to a diversified and international field of activity the course of studies prepares the students for professional work in areas and regions which for other people represent the nicest time of the year – or “only” a business trip. Due to these attractive conditions many young people decide to study in this field. Many universities of applied sciences have now recognized this fact and offer appropriate courses of study. Consequently, there is now a very wide range of courses of study in tourism on offer in Germany and it is difficult to get an overview. Online course directories give a very high number of hits for a Bachelor degree at different universities of applied sciences, and the trend is increasing.

Researching the offer that best meets one’s individual needs quickly becomes a very complicated matter. Moreover, the quality of the course offered is not clearly recognizable for the student. A differentiation between high-quality, sector-specific offers and specifics in general business administration or geography degree courses requires a deeper understanding of the respective curriculum which is at first glance often not obvi-



Panel discussion at the ITB fair 2019 on “Quality of Tourism Education” with professors from the universities of Heilbronn, Kempten and Munich.

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ous from the outside. The same applies to the fact that niche products are offered alongside and as equal in value to comprehensive degree courses in tourism management.

Clear and comprehensible criteria for high-quality courses in tourism are therefore needed. The following information is intended as an orientation guide.

### 2. Criteria for professional higher education courses in tourism management

#### 2.1 Quality characteristics

##### Excellent teaching

Top of the list is of course the quality of the teaching programme. A very good course of study in the field of tourism management assumes that the specifics of the branch are communicated up-to-date and practice-

oriented in their width and depth across the entire value-added chain. The conditions for this are offered in particular by universities of applied sciences which have an independent branch-representative organizational unit – for example their own department – in order to independently create curricular courses. In this way the requirements of the branch cannot only be efficiently implemented but can also be linked with other sectors of touristic practice. For this, a highly qualified and broadly-based full-time staff of professors with academic competence in this branch is essential in this organizational unit. In addition to these personnel resources, a modern infrastructure geared to the specific nature of the tourism industry should be available on the campus. Last but not least, the department should continuously be involved in research in order to be able



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to incorporate trends in the industry and future developments functionally into the teaching programme.

### Outstanding practical relevance in an international environment

A further characteristic of a quality degree course in tourism management is the communicating of application-oriented and international competencies. This requires a high level of internationally-oriented practical relevance. Universities which regularly carry out study projects or go on specialist field trips with students in connection with central touristic value-added sectors provide this. Internationality and cultural competencies are best experienced and learned on site. For this reason promoting and practicing both student and teaching staff mobility by sending them abroad is an important sign of quality. To facilitate this, a wide range of international university partnerships in different regions of the world should be established – also to facilitate an up-to-date exchange at home (internationalisation at home).

### Individualisation of the study course

To promote individual competence and character formation, a high degree of personal responsibility during the course of study is necessary. This requires a wide range of choices and specialization options as well as branch-related support from the teaching staff. A quality course of study in tourism management should therefore offer a wide range of curricular options. These options are guaranteed by a networked staff of professors with practical experience in all areas of the tourism economy. Support on a professorial level for individual students is another hallmark of a quality higher education course.

## 2.2 Indicators

So what points of orientation do students have when checking which universities of applied sciences optimally cover all the areas mentioned? As regards the teaching programme, it is a good idea to first of all look at the title of the tourism degree course and the range of options. These include

the number of areas of specialization and elective modules offered as well as the number of ECTS credit points for each module. It is also important to know the number of full-time professors respectively the number of part-time professors involved with tourism. To be able to offer such a wide and extensive range of options, in our opinion at least ten full-time professors are required.

At the same time it must be possible to actually put this wide range of options into practice and thus also guarantee the possibility to individualize the course. A sufficiently large and diverse student cohort is therefore also essential. As a benchmark, the minimum number of new students should be 50. An independent organizational unit and appropriate tourism infrastructure meet the requirements of the students. Ideally, [potential] students should have a look at the campus: what are the premises like, what software and hardware are available, what learning environments are provided, what supporting services can I expect etc. If it is not possible to actually go there in person, it often helps to scrutinize the information on the website, as research activities carried out by universities of applied sciences and their departments are also often listed on their websites. Current publications in specialized books, journals or textbooks also show how actively the professorial staff are involved in trends and developments in the industry.

The curriculum itself should of course also be examined. In addition to the theoretical aspects it should offer at least two excursions or practical projects per semester.<sup>1</sup> And finally, the number of university and college partnerships gives an indication of the level of internationalisation. International cooperation agreements with at least 30 universities ensure that sufficient places for student as well as for teaching staff exchanges are available.

Of course not every course of study is the right one for everybody. Different aspects may play a role, depending on individual plans and

<sup>1</sup> This recommendation applies to the entire student cohort across all semester groups.

aims. Targeted research is therefore still required. Students who are however looking for a comprehensive degree course in tourism management which focuses on all aspects of this subject are, in our opinion, well advised if they critically take into consideration all the criteria mentioned above.

## 3. Quality Alliance Tourism Studies (QAT+)

The Department of Tourism at the Munich University of Applied Sciences not only fulfils the above criteria in an optimum manner but to some extent even exceeds them. Studying in our Department of Tourism therefore means doing a holistic and high-quality degree course in the field of Tourism Management. This also applies to the Kempten University of Applied Sciences and the Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences. Thus, we have formed a Quality Alliance for Tourism Studies.



Our initiative stands for excellent teaching and research in Tourism Management in all its facets. It guarantees that the above minimum criteria are met and can thus make it easier for students to decide where they want to study. ■

## Interested?

For further information, please visit our website:  
[www.tourismus.hm.edu/qualitaetsallianz](http://www.tourismus.hm.edu/qualitaetsallianz)